

File marked to CS 29/6



(1)

FESTIVAL OF INDIA OFFICE

Prime Minister.

You would do this on 17 July, Friday,
from 18.30-19.30. Agree?

Government Offices (G64/G)
Great George Street
London SW1 2AH

23 June 1981

Handwritten initials

Yes.
Have we made any
progress with
getting a decision?
MT

The Rt Hon Margaret Thatcher MP
10 Downing Street
London

Dear Prime Minister,

FESTIVAL OF INDIA

Thank you for your letter of 2 June about the financial problems of the Festival of India. I naturally understand the difficulty of finding additional Government money in the present economic circumstances.

I am hopeful that we shall shortly be able to get off the ground a new financing operation which will prove more productive than the first. Lord Harewood and Sir John Cuckney (of Thomas Cooks) have recently agreed to join the Festival Trust, and the latter has kindly volunteered much active help in fund raising.

Sir John and I believe that one of the best ways of giving a fair wind to this financing operation would be to get together a group of 40 or so leading industrialists, including all those with significant investments in India and major Indian contracts in the offing. Part of the purpose of such a gathering would be to get over the point that to support the Festival of India is not simply a question of cultural charity but, to a degree, of enlightened commercial self-interest. The Indians, from Mrs Gandhi downwards, are keenly interested in the Festival and will take notice of the firms who are willing to contribute to

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its success.

Given your position as Patron of this Festival I wonder whether you would be able to consider helping us by hosting say a short early evening drinks party at No 10 to bring together these industrialists. To coincide with the new fund raising efforts, this would have to be sometime in July.

I make the suggestion with great diffidence because the event would add yet another burden to your programme. But I have no doubt at all that it could lead to a most important breakthrough in our fund-raising efforts. The financial situation of the Festival is still critical and I am most anxious that it should not long remain so, with all that could mean for a deterioration in relations with India. If this idea is acceptable to you and you are able to find a convenient date, I would quickly let you have a suggested list of prospective invitees if that would help.

It was very useful that you were able to see Mrs Jayakar earlier this month. She was pleased with the results of her visit to Britain and impressed by the progress made by the individual galleries putting on exhibitions. The fact that you received her registered with the Indians in a most effective way the high political, as well as cultural, importance which we attach to the Festival.

Yours sincerely,
Michael Walker

Michael Walker

