

Prime Minister

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22-24 March are absolutely clear in the diary at present but you have little room for manoeuvre.

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

14 July 1981

Agree to open the Gala Concert & the Hayward Gallery Exhibition but not the Science Exhibition? Three openings would be too much, I think.

Dear Michael,

Visit by Mrs Gandhi to UK: March 1982

Thurs 14/7
If Mrs Gandhi is here - we have to do

When the Prime Minister visited India in April, she invited Mrs Gandhi to visit the UK in March 1982, at the time of the opening of the Festival of India. You agreed earlier that 22 to 24 March 1982 would be acceptable planning dates. The Festival will formally begin with a Gala Concert at the Royal Festival Hall on 22 March. On 23 March two major exhibitions will open, one of the History and Present Day Achievements of Indian Science and Technology at the Science Museum.

as much as possible.

Mrs Gandhi's initial response to the invitation was to say that it was too early to make up her mind. The Indians have now confirmed that Mrs Gandhi has agreed to visit the UK in March. They say that a visit starting on 22 March would 'probably be all right', but add that the precise dates of her visit must still depend upon the Parliamentary timetable in India. The Indian budget will still be under discussion at the time.

We now need to press for Indian agreement to exact dates for the visit. Although the Festival would not be its sole purpose, an early announcement would give added prestige to the Festival and be of assistance in the renewed fund-raising activities. It would be valuable to be able to confirm that the Prime Minister and Mrs Gandhi, as Joint Patrons of the Festival, would be able to attend the Gala Concert on 22 March. As the first event of the Festival and the one which potential sponsors see as the most effective from the point of view of advertising their involvement, it is important that it be seen to be a prestigious event. It would lose much of its impact if the Patrons were not able to be present.

The Indians have also suggested that the two Prime Ministers might jointly open the Hayward Gallery Exhibition on 23 March. They have not mentioned the Exhibition at the Science Museum, perhaps because it is at an earlier stage of planning. Nevertheless, the Science Museum Exhibition is very much an Indian initiative, and it is known that Mrs Gandhi considers it important that modern India and its technological achievements should be properly represented. It is quite likely that Mrs Gandhi may want to open the Science Exhibition herself, or in conjunction with the Prime Minister. Neither of the Exhibitions would be inappropriate for involvement by the two Prime Ministers, but given the likely extent of Mrs Thatcher's other commitments it is important to establish an order of priorities. We consider that the first priority is attendance at the



Gala Concert which launches the Festival.

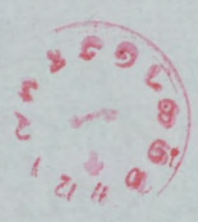
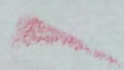
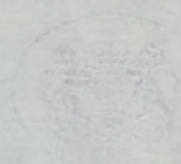
We shall of course consult you about other aspects of the visit nearer the time.

Subject to your views we shall now instruct Sir John Thomson to seek precise dates for Mrs Gandhi's visit. It would be helpful to know whether we may go firm on the dates 22 to 24 March and whether, if the Indians see difficulty, there is any possibility of adjusting the dates (though we think it essential that the period of the visit includes 22 March). As you know, we are separately seeking dates for the State Visit of Sultan Qaboos which will not conflict with Mrs Gandhi's.

yours ever
Roderic Lyne

(R M J Lyne)
Private Secretary

M O'D B Alexander Esq
10 Downing Street
LONDON
SW1



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