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Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

23 December 1983

Prime Minister ①

Agree attached message  
plus photograph?

Yes. mb

Dear John,

DMS  
23/12

The Asiatic Society, Calcutta

The Asiatic Society, Calcutta (formerly the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal) is celebrating its bicentenary, to be inaugurated by Mrs Gandhi, on 11 January 1984. The Society have asked our High Commission in New Delhi for a message of good wishes and a photograph from the Prime Minister.

The Society is a distinguished organisation, having been founded by Sir William Jones, the eminent jurist and Sanskrit scholar. Its members have carried out some important research and studies in literary, scientific and cultural and geographical fields. Its prestige has somewhat declined in recent years, but it still commands considerable respect. Given Mrs Gandhi's presence at the inauguration of the bicentenary celebrations, and the strong emphasis on cultural matters in our bilateral relations with India, as indicated by last year's Festival of India and the Prime Minister's presentation of the Bharatiya Jnanpith award last month, we recommend that the Prime Minister should agree to send a message on the lines of the enclosed draft, which has been proposed by the High Commissioner.

Yours ever,

Peter Ricketts

(P F Ricketts)  
Private Secretary

A J Coles Esq  
10 Downing Street

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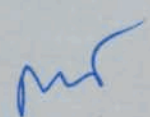
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## DRAFT MESSAGE TO THE ASIATIC SOCIETY, CALCUTTA

'The occasion of the bicentenary celebrations of the Asiatic Society is one which reminds us all of the illustrious scholars who have been associated with the Society, going right back to its founder Sir William Jones. It is inspiring that such an institution, dedicated to the disinterested pursuit of knowledge, should have ~~triumphantly~~ survived the vicissitudes of the past two centuries. It is an example, too, of the way in which scholars from both India and Britain can, by their joint and collaborative endeavours, work fruitfully and harmoniously together to advance their disciplines and enrich the minds of men.

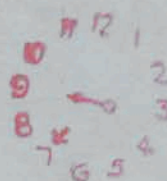
As the Asiatic Society embarks upon its third century I confidently believe that it will build upon the foundation of the past, and move on to the achievement of even greater things.

I send you, Mr General Secretary, and the Committee and members of the Asiatic Society my warm congratulations, and my best wishes for the future''.



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23 DEC 1983



TRP



10 DOWNING STREET

THE PRIME MINISTER

The occasion of the bicentenary celebrations of the Asiatic Society is one which reminds us all of the illustrious scholars who have been associated with the Society, going right back to its founder Sir William Jones. It is inspiring that such an institution, dedicated to the disinterested pursuit of knowledge, should have survived the vicissitudes of the past two centuries. It is an example, too, of the way in which scholars from both India and Britain can, by their joint and collaborative endeavours, work fruitfully and harmoniously together to advance their disciplines and enrich the minds of men.

As the Asiatic Society embarks upon its third century I confidently believe that it will build upon the foundation of the past, and move on to the achievement of even greater things.

I send you, Mr. General Secretary, and the Committee and members of the Asiatic Society my warm congratulations, and my best wishes for the future.

*Margaret Thatcher*

December 1983

HL



10 DOWNING STREET

*From the Private Secretary*

29 December 1983

THE ASIATIC SOCIETY, CALCUTTA

Thank you for your letter of 23 December to John Coles. The Prime Minister is content with the draft message to the Asiatic Society, and I should be grateful if you would arrange for its despatch. A signed version will follow.

The Society have also asked for a photograph of the Prime Minister. When we discussed this on the telephone, we left it that the High Commission would provide one unless you told me that we would need to do so ourselves.

DAVID BARCLAY

P.F. Ricketts, Esq.,  
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

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