



PRIME MINISTER

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New Delhi
February 8, 1988

Dear Ronald,

In the context of our talks during my visit to Washington last October and our subsequent correspondence, I thought I should keep you informed of certain developments in regard to the situation in our region and our perceptions about these developments.

In response to the suggestions made when I was in Washington, we had initiated contacts with various groups within and outside Afghanistan. These contacts are still in the preliminary stages and nothing concrete has emerged. Ambassador Dean will be briefed in detail on these aspects.

In pursuance of our discussions in Washington, we had also emphasised upon Soviet leadership the primary importance of an early withdrawal of their troops from Afghanistan in a reasonable time frame and phased in a manner which should be credible and widely acceptable. This had been emphasised by us not only during Prime Minister Ryzkhov's visit to India, but in our subsequent discussions with the Soviets at the official level late last month. This morning I received a message from General Secretary Gorbachev through First Deputy Foreign Minister Vorontsov that the Soviet Union would be willing to begin the withdrawal of their troops from May 15 and complete these withdrawals within a period of ten months on the understanding that agreements on the settlement would be arrived at by March 15. I have also been told that the Soviet Union will withdraw around half their troops during the first phase. This is a positive development. I hope that the relevant agreements which have

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been discussed in the Geneva process will be finalised soon.

I am glad that the Soviet Union has responded to the concerns expressed by us and I hope that this will lead to an early resolution of the issues in Afghanistan. I am confident that our two countries will remain in close touch with regard to further developments for ensuring our common objective of an independent and non-aligned Afghanistan, free from outside interference and intervention. I will welcome a first hand account of US perceptions and sensitivities regarding the evolving situation.

I also recall your sympathetic interest in developments in Sri Lanka and your valued support to our efforts to restore ethnic harmony and peace in that country.

President Jayewardene visited us last week as Chief Guest at our Republic Day celebrations. Our discussions centered on further steps required for the implementation of the Indo-Sri Lankan Agreement, which represents our resolve to find a durable solution to the ethnic problem and safeguarding the unity and integrity of Sri Lanka.

Not unexpectedly, some difficulties have arisen. Our major task is to see that popular aspirations for the restoration of democratic processes are not impeded by terrorist violence. The Indian Peace Keeping Force has restored a great deal of normalcy in the Northern Province in Sri Lanka and it is currently increasing its activities in the Eastern Province for creating conditions by the middle of this year in which elections to the newly created Provincial Councils could be held. I hope that the democratic processes will ensure that the objectives of the Indo-Sri Lanka Agreement are met.

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To facilitate these elections, President Jayewardene and I agreed on the need to expedite the return of their homes of persons displaced in the wake of the violence in recent years. President Jayewardene assured us that credible measures will be taken to prevent Sinhala 'colonisation' in traditional Tamil areas. There is also the need to undertake large-scale reconstruction work to repair the damage caused by last five years of ethnic strife. I am glad that the Aid Sri Lanka Group meeting in Paris in December agreed to contribute generously to this effort.

President Jayewardene handed over a draft treaty of peace and friendship between India and Sri Lanka. We are now in the process of examining this draft. The visit of President Jayewardene further underlined the importance that both our Governments attach to close and cooperative relations. It also served to reiterate our common determination to implement the Indo-Sri Lankan Agreement in its entirety.

I understand that some concern has been voiced with regard to the Soviet Union providing us with a nuclear-powered submarine on lease. This submarine is essentially for training of our naval personnel. The reactor unit is sealed and the spent fuel is to be returned to the Soviet Union. There is a clear understanding that the submarine shall not be used in any manner in the event of any hostilities. There is thus no ground for any apprehensions.

*With regards, to both
Nancy and you.*

The Hon'ble Ronald Reagan
President of the United States of America
Washington, D.C.

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