



Foreign & Commonwealth Office

South Asia Department
Foreign and Commonwealth Office
King Charles Street
London SW1A 2AH

Website: <https://www.gov.uk>

24 July 2017

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000 REQUEST REF: 0420-17

Thank you for your request for information which we received on 27 April 2017. In your request you asked for:

'I request any biographical information/records on Mangala Moonesinghe (born 27 July 1931 died 23 July 2016), who served as Sri Lankan High Commissioner in London from 2000 until 2002 as well as any analysis on his personality of political views.'

I can confirm that the FCO does hold information which falls within the scope of your request. A copy of the information which can be released to you is enclosed. Some of the information is being withheld using the following exemptions:

Section 27 (international relations);
Section 40 (personal information); and
Section 41 (information provided in confidence).

Section 27 International Relations

Section 27 is a qualified exemption and is subject to a public interest test. Under Section 27(1) (a), (b) and 27(2) of the FOIA, information is exempt if its disclosure would, or would be likely to, prejudice relations between the United Kingdom and any other State, or the relations between the UK and any international organisations. I have considered whether the balance of the public interest favours releasing or withholding this material, balancing open and transparent government against the possible impact to our international relations and foreign policy objectives. Having examined the material available, we acknowledge that releasing information on this issue would increase public knowledge about this subject. However, Section 27 (1) and (2) recognises that the effective conduct of international relations depends upon maintaining trust and confidence between governments and international organisations. This relationship of trust allows for the free and frank exchange of information on the understanding that it will be treated in confidence. If the UK does not respect such confidences, its ability to protect and promote UK interests through international relations will be hampered. The states concerned may be reluctant to share sensitive information with the UK Government in future and may be less likely to respect the confidentiality of information supplied by the UK Government to them, to the detriment of UK interests.

Section 40 Personal Information

Some of the information you have requested is personal data relating to third parties, the disclosure of which would contravene one of the data protection principles. In such circumstances sections 40(2) and (3) of the Freedom of Information Act apply. In this case, our view is that disclosure would breach the first data protection principle. This states that personal data should be processed fairly and lawfully. It is the fairness aspect of this principle, which, in our view, would be breached by disclosure. In such circumstances, s.40 confers an absolute exemption on disclosure. There is, therefore, no public interest test to apply.

Section 41 Information Provided in Confidence

Some of the information that you requested has been withheld under Section 41 (1) of the Freedom of Information Act – information provided in confidence. This allows for information to be exempt if it was obtained by the public authority from any other person and the disclosure of the information to the public (otherwise than under this Act) by the public authority holding it would constitute a breach of confidence actionable by that or any other person. Section 41 also confers an absolute exemption on disclosure, and therefore a public interest test is not required.

Yours sincerely,

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We keep and use information in line with the Data Protection Act 1998. We may release this personal information to other UK government departments and public authorities.