



**DEPARTMENT OF  
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PRIME MINISTER'S VISIT TO INDIA

Following is the text of a speech given by the Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Whitlam, at a dinner given in his honour by the Prime Minister of India in New Delhi on Monday, 4 June, 1973.

"It is a moving occasion indeed for me to be here on your invitation as Prime Minister of Australia, in your capital - in this ancient seat of kings, emperors, viceroys and now the centre of the world's largest democracy.

Your gracious invitation came very soon after the change of Government in Australia. Nothing could have been more gratifying to me, nothing could be more attuned to my own desires than that I should return to India as soon as possible in the life of my new Government. The honour you have done me, and through me, Australia, is deeply appreciated and will not easily or quickly be forgotten.

In the countries I have so far visited as Prime Minister, in New Zealand, in Indonesia, in Canada, in Britain, I have been at some pains to emphasize the continuity of Australian policy despite the change of Government.

I do so again here in India. There was, for example, no disagreement between the two sides in the Australian Parliament about the support given by the previous Government to the emergence of Bangladesh as an independent nation.

The previous Government's prompt recognition of Bangladesh was warmly supported by the whole Australian people. Nevertheless I cannot help but feel that there has been something missing in recent years in the relationship between our two countries.

There has been perhaps too much of the feeling that we can take each other for granted. It is, for instance, just not good enough that I should be the first Australian Prime Minister to visit Delhi for fourteen years. It may be that because of our recent preoccupation with Indo-China and the fascinating possibilities Australia has before her in developing new relations with China and Japan, our relations with India have not been given the attention they should have. If this has been so I intend to amend it and amend it thoroughly.

I particularly look forward to closer co-operation with India in the United Nations. We are now both members of the Security Council. When my Government took office I gave a number of new instructions on the way our votes would be cast in the Security Council and the General Assembly.

It is significant I think that all the departures from the previous pattern of voting have brought us in line with India. It has not been, of course, a question of our just following

India: but it is an indication of the closeness of our views on a great range of issues facing the world - on race discrimination, on de-colonisation, on Southern Africa, on human rights, on the need to keep this region free of great power rivalries.

We gratefully acknowledge the moral leadership India has so often given in the cause of world peace. In that continuing quest we can never forget or overestimate the pioneer role played by your father.

Perhaps never in human history and certainly not in the history of the democracies has so great a man had his works so faithfully and splendidly carried forward by his daughter.

The generation in which India achieved independence was one not lacking in great world leaders. None lives so brightly in the memory, not only of the millions of his fellow countrymen but all mankind, as Jawaharlal Nehru.

I find it fascinating to read in his great work, "The Discovery of India", his observations about Australia - fascinating and moving at the same time, because this profound book was written in a British prison when his work and the work of his own father for independence seemed smashed beyond hope. And I find that in a book in which he has drawn deep lessons from the history of India covering 5,000 years, he drew an example from an event then occurring in my own country - a referendum whether to give greater social powers to the Central Government of Australia.

He speaks of the continuing difficulty confronting Central Governments in Federal systems in persuading the States to abjure any morsel of their powers, even in war.

The defeat of that referendum in 1944 happened to be a crucial event in the development of my own political thinking. I find it profoundly moving that such an event in such a far off country provided a lesson for so great a man at such a crisis in his own life. The lesson, I'm afraid, is still to be learnt in my own country.

It was also in that work that Nehru said that the measure of Indian progress would be the role India would give to her women. Your premiership, Madam Prime Minister, is certainly a striking symbol of that progress. Never in history has a woman faced so formidable a task and met that task with such skill and devotion.

With the change of Government in Australia, my country looks for a fresh approach - and we hope, a more fruitful approach towards all our neighbours. I have indicated that we are seeking no sharp break with our past role but we are certainly not satisfied by all the aspects of the role Australia has played in the past.

My Government could not, for instance, be content to maintain the old course of a generation of unthinking hostility towards China.

Yet our policy is not by any means to place China at the centre of our affairs: rather we seek to ratify the reality of

China as a significant member of the world community.

We do not propose any radical change from our traditional close friendship with the United States: but we now look for a more mature, a give-and-take relationship. Again, we will continue our very close friendship with Britain: but we want a relationship based less on kin and more on kind - namely on the basis that we are two independent nations of a kind, with common interests as well as common institutions.

So I would want our developing policies to be seen more as an effort to remove anomalies rather than as a complete breaking with the past.

This is particularly so in the case of India. The anomaly I find is this:- here are two great democracies - bordering the Indian Ocean, both members of the Commonwealth, both deeply dedicated to world peace, both with Federal systems, both holding great institutions in common: and yet we haven't forged the very close relations I believe we should have.

I profoundly believe that Australia has everything to gain by the closest possible co-operation with India. With all that we hold in common there is no need for formal or written arrangements: our friendship need be no less enduring and fruitful for that.

Madam Prime Minister: Australia is proud to be as closely related with so great a nation, so remarkable a civilization, as India. Of course, our views - sometimes

perhaps our interests - will not always coincide. I believe what both our countries seek is a relationship mature enough to acknowledge such differences and to discuss them freely whenever they arise.

It is a deep honour you have done me, and my country, in inviting me to your country to help further, as assuredly we shall, that relationship."