

Press Conference given by the Prime Minister of Australia, Mr E.G. Whitlam, at Vigyan Bhavan, New Delhi, at 3.15 p.m., 6 June 1973

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Prime Minister: Mr D'Penha and ladies and gentlemen: You already have a copy of the communique that your Prime Minister and I have issued, so I think I'll just invite you to ask questions of me forthwith. When I give my weekly press conference in Canberra, I start off with the decisions that the Cabinet has made that day. Then I have questions. Well, of course, I can't announce any Cabinet decisions, so we'll just have the questions.

Mr. Virendra Mohan, U.N.I.: Sir, you have been talking about creating a peace zone in the Indian Ocean and you want to play a leading part in that. Since Australia has so many military alliances with the Western countries, could you please explain how would the countries in this region establish the bona fides of Australia ?

Prime Minister: The proposal for a zone of peace in the Indian Ocean came from Sri Lanka at the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1971. At that time, India supported the proposal. My memory is that the then Australian Government, our predecessors, did not. When the same proposal came up six months ago, my Government supported the proposal and, in particular, the new aspect of it that there should be an ad hoc committee to examine and develop proposals for this zone of peace. And Australia, like India, was elected to that committee, that ad hoc committee. Accordingly, this was one of the things that your Prime Minister and Foreign Minister and I discussed because we not only belong to this ad hoc committee, but this year we both belong to the Security Council of the United Nations. Now, it's true that there are some military installations in Australia under agreements with the United States. There is one particular one at North West Cape in Australia, whose title describes where it is. But these at this stage are purely that the ad hoc committee is examining, purely exploratory discussions and it will take some time, presumably, before a zone of peace can be achieved. But we want to play our part. I don't think I should accept your description we want to play a leading part. We want to play our part, full part, in seeing that any disarmament proposal which is available for support or ratification by the littoral and insular States in the Indian Ocean is supported or ratified.

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My Government has already ratified all such proposals and which are available up to this stage.

Suresh, of Reuters: Are you comparing the situation why Australia would ask for the scrapping of installations in Australia ?

Prime Minister: The installation at North West Cape operates under an agreement which was made 10 years ago for a space of 25 years if there is a treaty that extends until 1988. Our Minister for Defence is proposing later this year to go to the United States to seek modifications of that treaty, both as to the duration of it, and also as to the scope available to Australia under the treaty, to ascertain and approve the use of it.

Chakravarty, from "The Hindustan Times": Would you, Sir, kindly explain really what this peace zone implies. For one thing the assumption is that the big powers really are the naughty boys who come and create tension. As far as I know, none of the littoral States, including Australia, has really any naval force worth the task it will undertake, even for surveillance, much less to prevent the big powers from coming in. Now, how do you go about it ? Is it merely a wish depending upon the goodwill of the big powers, or just a self-satisfaction, or what is it really ?

Prime Minister: Obviously, one can't have a zone of peace in the Indian Ocean unless the great powers, particularly those powers which have great naval forces, agree. Nevertheless, there can be quite a deal of suasion exercise on the great naval powers, none of which, of course, abut on the Indian Ocean. If all those nations who do abut on the Indian Ocean concert measures to dissuade them. This will take some time, but I am prepared to let bygones be bygones. Well, I don't think anybody should dispute the great power rivalry has been a cause of major tension and violence in the area between India and Australia, particularly in South-East Asia.

Question: Mr. Sabharwal: Can there be a zone of peace in the Indian Ocean while the United States has military bases all over the region ? The seventh fleet is roaming about. It is being followed by the Soviet fleet. China is augmenting its naval power, so is Japan. So, it is just a wishful thinking don't you think so ?

Prime Minister: There are fewer naval ships in the Indian Ocean than in the Atlantic or Pacific Ocean, as I understand it. We certainly can agree not to promote naval rivalry in the Indian Ocean. I don't think one should exaggerate the size of the Soviet or the American fleets which roam the Indian Ocean.

Swaminathan, "Deccan Herald": In the joint communique it is stated that the Australian Prime Minister stated that his Government not only intends to expand the present programme of assistance engaged here, but has also given consideration to further changes in Australia's preferential trade with developing countries. Could you expand on this please ?

PRIME MINISTER: I couldn't list any specific proposals at this stage. We were discussing many of these matters, the fields in which there can be co-operation between India and Australia. Much of the Australian interest in India, I gather, has been particularly effective and welcome because it is appropriate to the climate, to the pastoral, the agricultural situation of India. Australians have developed, as you expect, skills in respect of dry land agriculture. They have participated in several stations with cattle and with sheep, I think to a certain extent with grains. We have also shared in the development of better varieties, more palatable, more nutritious varieties of bread and these are not immense schemes, they are not dramatic schemes, but they have gone on for quite some years and I have been gratified on this visit to hear the extent to which these schemes between Australia and India are appreciated by Indian Ministers and officials. I have brought with me on this occasion Sir John Crawford, who has had a long record in administrative and academic circles. He would, I suppose, have visited India more often than any top official and he has had discussions with your Ministers and officials and I have also brought Mr McKay, who is the Permanent Head and Secretary of our Department of Overseas Trade. So, while I would claim no great expertise in in these matters myself, you will see that Sir John Crawford and Mr McKay's presence indicate that I want to involve the top experts available to my Government in arrangements with the Government of India in these respects. Now ^{as} I can't list further schemes, I suppose that if you want to know more later, I can get some addresses or names from the High Commissioner or his staff. But, nevertheless, the general scheme we want to develop is that Australians as individuals, coming

from a country which has had many of these problems, a country which I think can be said is not so overbearing economically, that it doesn't understand the problems of India.

Question: This morning the Minister for Agriculture met you Sir. Did he discuss with you the food position in India and did he ask for any assistance from your country ?

Prime Minister: He discussed the food position in India, but he didn't ask for food assistance because as our representatives in Delhi have made known, this last season has been a very bad one for Australia. We have no spare wheat, for instance, ourselves, nor I think any spare rice. And we, in fact, were not able to fulfil some orders which were offered to us for wheat and rice. There are limitations in Australia on the number of acres, I think you call them hectates, which can be planted with such crops. But those limitations have been virtually lifted for this coming season. That means that we would expect, unless there is some weather reverse, to produce much more grain in the next season. That doesn't mean, however, that there can be any wheat available before next February, nor rice, I think, before next May.

Bill Mann, Associated Press: You mentioned the possibility of renegotiating with the United States about the communications station at North West Cape. Are these negotiations already in progress, or does your Government want to start such negotiations now ?

Prime Minister: They have been initiated through America's and Australia's diplomatic representatives in their respective capitals, but there will be no negotiations until later in the year. I think I should say that the agreement which was made in 1963 was one which America would not expect any country now to undertake and which, I am certain, no country now would undertake. But it is there until 1988. Its conditions are not satisfactory in the present climate of international opinion. I don't want to pursue matters concerning the United States and Australia when I am outside my own country. I don't want to go into any further detail on this subject.

Vinod Gupta, Samachar Bharati: Mr Prime Minister, you had a discussion with our Prime Minister on the situation in the sub-continent. What do you think are the prospects of peace here and would you like to make an observation about the Pakistan move in the World Court or certain other matters taken by Pakistan in the international community ?

Prime Minister: I don't want to accept many invitations^{to}/comment on relations between India and other countries because I've been at many places over the years where I know that relations between India and Pakistan have dominated discussions to the exclusion of most other matters. I am optimistic that the de facto situation of Bangla Desh and Pakistan will now be accepted by Pakistan and by China. I would not only be naturally distressed, but I would be very much surprised if there was an outbreak of war again.

Mukherjee, The Times of India: Question not clear.

Prime Minister: We have taken no steps to seek an invitation to attend the non-aligned conference at Algiers. If we are asked to attend, we shall accept that invitation. We would do so as an observer, because it can't be said that Australia is a non-aligned nation. To give you an example, however, of a country which is very similar to Australia in most aspects which you like to contemplate, Canada. Canada is not a non-aligned country, but it has, on occasion, accepted an invitation to attend the non-aligned conference as an observer. The idea about this came two or three months ago when the Prime Minister of Yugoslavia after visiting India came on to visit Australia. Yugoslavia, India, Egypt, I think, were the original sponsors of the non-aligned conferences, the first being held in Belgrade back in the 1950s, and he mentioned this subject. We didn't seek an invitation, but we said to him, as we have said when this matter has arisen since then, that if we receive an invitation, we shall accept it.

Question: Sir, did you discuss this matter in your discussions here with Mrs Gandhi ?

Prime Minister: I forget whether it. I think that just about one sentence, I think it didn't occupy about as much time as I have

taken in answering the question. The fact is that we are not a non-aligned country, but if we receive an invitation to attend the conference as an observer, we would accept it. But it came up in the general context of the arrangements that each of our countries has or is to have with other countries.

Question:your idea of forming an association of Asian and Pacific countries and the general discussion here with the Prime Minister ?

Prime Minister: Not with the Prime Minister. The Foreign Minister asked me what I had in mind in this regard and I told him that the matter proceeded no further than that. You will understand that while I was having direct discussions with your Ministers, and their advisers and my advisers were decided that we each sought the views of the other on matters which concerned either of us. It was an excellent opportunity to deal directly and, if necessary, intensively with any of these matters. Now you will appreciate that historically Australia has belonged to certain organisations - they aren't correctly described as regional - but, nevertheless, we have during the 1950s and 1960s joined certain organisations. Perhaps to help you while we are all here together, I were to go through them. The first was in 1951 when Australia, New Zealand and the United States formed the ANZUS treaty. This was a week before there was the peace treaty signed with Japan in San Francisco as part of the deal. And this is a treaty which all three of us regard as still relevant and valuable. After the Geneva Conference in 1954, the Manila pact was drawn up and SEATO was formed as its instrument in about 1955. Eight nations belonged to it - not all of them, of course, in the region. Two of them have now withdrawn from the organisation - Pakistan and France. Its objective was to contain China. That, of course, would now ^{is} ~~would~~ ^{seen} seem to be a futile objective. I have said that the SEATO treaty is moribund. We haven't done anything so dramatic as to withdraw from it. But, we will not tolerate any anti-Chinese aspects of it. It's already pulled its head ~~in~~..... The Manila Pact may still have some residual virtues. We are prepared to give it a chance, but not if it involves any anti-Chinese containment. Dulles, we hope, is dead. Next, there was 1966 when President Lyndon Johnson was seeking support to legitimate or dress up America's intervention in Vietnam. In Manila again ASPAC was formed.

It's entirely a regional organisation. It is the only regional organisation of a political character to which Japan belongs or Australia belongs, which has the vice, however, of having among its members Taiwan. Half the members no longer recognise the Government in Taipeh as the Government of the whole of China. They now recognise the fact that the Government in Peking is the Government of the whole of China and that Taiwan is a province of China, as of course Chiang Kai Shek says just as much as Mao Tse Tung says. Australia, New Zealand, Japan now accept the fact. In these circumstances the utility of ASPAC is greatly reduced. It is now an obstruction to regional arrangements. Finally, there are the Five Power Arrangements under which Britain, Australia and New Zealand have made defence arrangements in case of contingencies with Malaysia and Singapore. My Government supports the Five Power Arrangements because the reasons they provide for building Malaysia and Singapore's defence capacity, enabling them to stand on their feet and providing for consultation in the case of attacks from outside upon them. We don't support the feature of stationing a battalion or battery in Singapore. Singapore had never asked for them and the presence of the battery or battalion are not necessary under the Five Power Arrangement. The Five Power Arrangements are transitional arrangements and we accept them. We are quite happy in Australia to consult with other countries in any respects which will make them better able to stand on their feet in defence matters. Now those are the three regional arrangements to which Australia is a party. You will see that they are even moribund, objectionable or transitional. We don't want to be entirely negative. We just don't denounce or pull out of such arrangements. It is better to give some other arrangements if one can. They are dealing, I should imagine, to have something like the Organisation of American States or the Organisation of African Unity. To give the situation which Australia finds, South Australia and New Zealand both have very great links with Japan, but there is no organisation to which they belong other than the Asian Development Bank or the ECATE. So, we would envisage the creation of some arrangement under which the nations between us should consult regularly. I hasten to assure you there is no suggestion that this should be a military pact. There would never be, I would guess, another military pact drawn up anywhere in the world. Nor would it be primarily a political one in any

military sense. There is at this stage only one regional organisation which has coherence and a future. That is ASEAN, the Association of South East Asian Nations - Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand and the Philippines. ASEAN wants to consolidate itself for expanding. It gives priority to new membership by Burma and the four Indo-China States.

Question: Question not clear.

Prime Minister: I don't subscribe to the idea. The general principle is, of course, that the ships of any nation, whether they are merchant marine or Navy, can sail anywhere on the high seas.

Question: Fred Bridgeland, Reuters: Clearly as a result of your visit here, there has been intensification of friendship between India and Australia. But what I am wondering at is has there For example, India is very keen on exporting its manufactured products to other countries and I don't see in your communique that you speak of the desirability of securing greater diversification of economic relations. Have you made any...commitment to import, for example, Indian made engineering goods ?

Prime Minister: I am not in a position to make commitments in such particularities. It is true, and I welcome the opportunity to say, that India is now a great industrial nation. India's engineering is first class. I hope that other nations will realise how skilled and dependable India's factories and workshops are in this regard. Australia, however, even more than India has a mixed economy.....There are a great number of activities in Australia - industries - where the decisions to purchase must be made by directors of companies. I would hope that this visit will alert people in Australia and in India to the fact that there are more goods which we can buy from each other. But there is not a specific proposal in this regard. I think that somewhere else in the communique ^{there is} a phrase about extending the arrangements which our predecessors initiated of giving tariff preference for goods from developing countries. Yes, in paragraph 15 of the communique you will see something that was deliberately put in and I think it was an initiative by Australia and a tribute to our predecessors in office for having ^{taken} that initiative....and we would be happy to

extend it.

We have discussed questions today -- there was a reference in one of the earlier questions - for extension of agricultural co-operation and then there were discussions between me and the Agriculture and Commerce Minister on, say, the wool industry and the iron ore industry, particularly the exports. These are matters which we didn't conclude today. I am not the relevant Minister in these matters, although it was very useful for me to hear your Ministers on these subjects. But my principal public service advisers, as I have named, who are here, and I think there is a chance of following these things up. I take the general view that any Government, any enterprise should bear in mind that India is not only the second largest nation in the world in terms of population, but has, by comparative standards, a very stable and durable set of institutions.

Mr. Suri: Mr Prime Minister, I'm continuing the same question asked by my predecessor. There has been a talk of joint ventures between the two countries. So far Australia's trade with Indiahas been of very small and meagre...
Cannot it be possible for us to get together also...

Prime Minister. There is no plan at this stage, but I think you can be assured that there will be a consultation between India and Australia and some other iron ore exporting countries of these matters. Now, I don't want to beI'm not suggesting for instance, the.....
OPEC tothe price and quantities at which we will sell petroleum products to thirsty industrial countries on either side of the North Atlantic. I'm not suggesting that. My Government is very much aware of the need to develop some resources policy. We have a federal system in Australia as you do in India. And, unfortunately, from the point of view of my Government, the arrangements which have been made for the exploitation, transportation and processing and sale of our minerals have been made by multi-national corporations under the auspices of our State Governments. The State Governments have fallen.....
My Government has been in just for six months and I would imagine

that in the sense of resources, our greatest achievement has been to transform the practices with respect to these very valuable natural resources. We are now setting up a Federal Pipeline Authority for the natural gas in Australia. We have applied to all minerals what hitherto had been applied to some minerals only -- mainly an export programme, so that the contracts which are made from now on for the export of our minerals will be approved on a national basis. We have renegotiated the agreements for the sale of Australian iron ore to Japan, which had been made in U.S. dollars. These required renegotiation since just before Christmas we upvalued the Australian dollar against the U.S. dollar and then, four months ago, the U.S. dollar was devalued by its Government. So, we have renegotiated those again and then, lastly, we have made arrangements to assert the national jurisdiction over the continental shelf and the seabed and the resources of them below and beyond the low-water mark. Our States have found this far too revolutionary an idea. They are going off to London at the moment asking the British Government to save them from the Australian national Government.

Question: U.P.I.: Question not clear. Why is the communique shy of naming *France*

Prime Minister: France is not the only country which carries out nuclear tests in the atmosphere. China also carries them out. Australia has taken proceedings against France and not against China in the International Court of Justice because France is - China is not - a party to the statute of the International Court of Justice and because France is - China is not - a party to the 1928 for the peaceful settlement of international disputes. Australia has, therefore, asked the Court to rule that this international dispute between signatories to the 1928 General Act falls within the jurisdiction of the World Court. We can't take these proceedings against China because it is not a party to the.....Act.

Question: Mr Prime Minister, I'm told that your Government is reviewing your relations with U.K. Are you adopting a more radical policy. Had you any discussions with India having joint moves in the Commonwealth?

Prime Minister: No, No, there have been no suggestions, no discussion on this aspect. I'm not quite sure that I get the intention behind your question, the drift of it. As for the Commonwealth, my Government lays great stress upon it because more than half the members of the Commonwealth are around or in the Indian Ocean and the South Pacific Ocean, the two Oceans which wash Australia's shores. The Commonwealth thus provides a natural forum within which Australia and all these other countries can discuss any matters at all. You scarcely would find such a diverse set of nations economically and politically as there are in the Commonwealth, but the discussions which take place between them in that framework are much more tolerant, patient, than take place between such diverse nations in any other circumstances. Now that beingbetween Australia and Britain. There are two particular matters where we want to make a change. We still have God Save the Queen as our National Anthem and, particularly, among younger people who are interested in sporting events and so on, they find this is a matter of shame or at least ridicule that if any of our people win an international event, the British National Anthem is played to commemorate the occasion. And we are holding a competition to devise a National Anthem of our own. Now this is scarcely a revolutionary idea. It should have happened ages ago. Australia really is one of the oldest States in the world. Now, we have had independence throughout this century. We still kept on this relic. There is another thing that we want to change. I told you that we are a federal system and it is still possible for litigants to take their disputes in appeal from the Supreme Courts of our States to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council in London. It is, of course, absurd that citizens of any country can litigate their differences before a court sitting in another country, composed of Judges appointed by the Government of that other country and giving judgements in the form of advice to the head of State of that other country. The Judicial Committee of the Privy Council delivers judgements which are advice to the Queen of the United Kingdom, not to the Queen of Australia. Well, this is a matter which we are aiming to alter. I am embarrassed and also I am ashamed because it find it more ludicrous than anything else, but the Australian States are now asking the British Government to keep the Privy Council to save them from Australia's own courts. I have no doubt Australia's Judges are not amused. You must bear with it - these colonial hangovers. Now, incidentally, the title

of the Queen in Australia has been for the last 20 years, Elizabeth II, by the grace of God, of the United Kingdom, Australia and her other realms and territories Queen, head of the Commonwealth, Defender of the Faith. Now over Easter it was arranged between us that the title should now be and there is an Act before our Parliament to ratify this, Elizabeth II, by the Grace of God, Queen of Australia and other realms and territories, head of the Commonwealth. The Queen positively welcomes being described as Queen of Australia, instead of Queen of the United Kingdom, Australia, etc. She positively welcomes that and there is no disagreement about dropping the title Defender of the Faith, which has no historical or constitutional validity in Australia. We are a separate country from Britain. We are an entirely independent country. We have the same head of State, but the head of State functions are carried out by the Governor-General, who is nominated by the Queen on the advice of the Australian Government and now it will always be an Australian citizen who is the Governor-General.

Question: Are you convinced that Britain is interested in the Commonwealth ?

Prime Minister: Britain is no longer obsessed with the Commonwealth. *She* doesn't place much emphasis on it. *as she did* but that doesn't mean ^{it} the other members of the Commonwealth shouldn't place emphasis on ~~that~~. There would be relations between Australia and Britain whether there was still a Commonwealth or not, or whether Britain and Australia were both or either in the Commonwealth or not. I value the Commonwealth particularly because as I say it is very wide-spread and a tolerant organisation to which so many States within Australia's general environment belong. I believe there is value for us in this connection.

Mr Raghavan, P.T.I.: Mr Prime Minister, what is the position of the Asian-Pacific Association.....Is it correct to assume that you are not having in mind any security arrangements as such or any security ideas and if it is an organisation that you are envisaging like the Organisation of African Unity or the Organisation of American States ? In the United Nations itself Australia is clubbed together with the West European countries, or you plan to have some changes in this direction ?

Prime Minister: I certainly wouldn't envisage that any arrangements which are made in the Western Pacific or South-East Asia would have any military connotations. I wouldn't wish it. I would think it quite unrealistic to expect them even if I did wish them. Australia, Canada and New Zealand, I think, are grouped with the Western European nations for the purpose of filling the vacancies on the Security Council and on the various organs of the United Nations. It's purely a voting pattern, purely for electoral purposes. There is no ideological.....

It's just for electoral purposes. And the.....

in that group don't get together, as I understand it, to have political discussions or to caucus on decisions they will take. I take this opportunity of saying that I have made it plain to our representatives in the United Nations that from now on they are not only to ascertain what the intentions on any resolution are by Britain and America. I also want to be informed what company we will be in in the Indian and Pacific Oceans. To give examples, I don't say that this is exhaustive. I want my officers to advise me always what they believe the voting intentions will be of Canada, Japan, Indonesia, India and some of the African countries, for example Tanzania. I find it quite objectionable that so often in the past Australia found herself voting on the other side to all her neighbours, including all the Commonwealth countries in the Indian Ocean. I think this is irrational. I think it is counter-productive. It doesn't mean that one disregards on how Britain and America are going to vote, but they are not the only people to whose vote one will pay regard. There can be instances where the interests of Britain or America may diverge from those of Australia. And, of course, there can be instances where the interests of India and Australia can diverge. The main thing is, however, that we should at least understand what each of us has in mind, what we regard as our interests.

Question: Question not clear - relates to the massive arms deal concluded with Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Iran. Don't you think this.....reckless and irresponsible ?

Prime Minister: I have really only discussed these matters in any degree.....this week and I wouldn't like to express a view on the short and shallow opportunity I have so far had

to discuss the matter. The Persian Gulf is very obviously now in every sense the Persian Gulf and these small States around the Gulf with a total population of, I think, only 200,000, have very great oil revenues and they are able to establish very considerable air forces. I think they are only fighter aircraft, but I really should look into this more before expressing a view upon it. Iran is a nation of considerable population and, in some respects, of very great resources and it also has as its head of State an experienced and determined man.

When one looks at any strategic situation, one obviously has to have regard to the cohesion of the nations concerned. But the fact that Iran, one of the oldest nations in the world, is now developing a degree of cohesion in international significance is a matter which doesn't worry me. I would expect that a nation of that location, of that history, of that population, would develop significance.

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