

VISIT TO JAPAN AND CHINA

I seek leave to make a brief statement on the visit by certain of my Ministerial colleagues and me to Japan and China.

The Ministerial delegation to Japan, for the second Australia-Japan Ministerial Committee, was the largest and most senior ever to represent Australia abroad. My visit to Peking was the first by any Australian Prime Minister. Both visits were marked by great warmth on both sides; both visits were characterised by frankness and firmness from both sides; both visits notably advanced the interests of Australia and our friendship and understanding with these two great neighbours, Japan and China.

On the visit to Japan - from 26 October to 31 October - I was accompanied by the Minister for Overseas Trade, the Treasurer, the Minister for Primary Industry and the Minister for Minerals and Energy. On the visit to China - from 31 October to 4 November - I was accompanied by the Treasurer and the Minister for Northern Development. In both countries my colleagues and I were supported by senior officials.

I firmly believe that the visit will prove to be of considerable importance and value to the whole of Australia. With Japan, we have both broadened and more clearly defined the Australian-Japanese relationship and formed a firm basis for its continuing and future development in the years ahead.

In China I consider that my visit symbolised the successful ending of a generation of lost contact between Australia and the most populous nation on earth.

Japan is our major trading partner in the world and China is the only one of the world's five major powers with which, until last December, we have not had any meaningful or regular official contact.

In Japan, the talks with Prime Minister Tanaka and Foreign Minister Ohira, and the wide-ranging and very frank and substantial discussions at the Ministerial Committee Meeting, have broadened the Australian-Japanese understanding which is vital to both countries.

I believe that any misunderstanding that existed in Japan about the nature of the Government's policies on minerals and energy and on overseas investment have now been cleared away. Likewise, any uncertainties the Japanese may have felt about the reliability of Australia as a long-term supplier of the raw materials which are essential to Japan has also been dispelled.

In Japan, too, I believe that valuable understandings have been reached about the long-term access for Australian primary products to the important and growing Japanese market.

The exceptionally close and important relations between Japan and Australia are to be expressed in a broad bilateral treaty. Mr. Tanaka readily accepted my suggestion, and himself announced that the Treaty be called the Treaty of Nara - bearing the title of Japan's ancient capital, which I also visited. It will be identified as the Nippon-Australia Relations Agreement NARA. Australian and Japanese officials will very soon begin detailed discussion on the Agreement.

I believe the Treaty of Nara will be seen as one of the historic treaties which Australia will have entered into.

Honourable members will note that we have also agreed to enter into two further agreements with Japan - a Cultural Agreement and an agreement on the protection of migratory and other birds - as well as to conduct wide-ranging official discussions on a number of issues including access for agricultural products, tariffs, and minerals and energy matters, including uranium. We have also agreed to renew the Agreement on Commerce with Japan, which was last revised in 1963. There was a useful exchange of views on developments in Papua New Guinea in which that country's Minister for Defence and Foreign Relations, Mr. Maori Kiki, participated.

I believe my visit to China was most valuable in restoring balance to our foreign policy and in diversifying our foreign relations. I had no less than 11 hours of formal talks with Premier Chou En-lai and over an hour with Chairman Mao Tsetung. As Honourable members will appreciate, in the extensive time accorded to me by Premier Chou the discussions extended over a very wide range of international issues of interest to both countries.

I believe that we now have a much greater understanding of Chinese attitudes on these issues. I believe, too, that on the Chinese side, there is now a much clearer and first-hand understanding of our policies. While there were areas of agreement, there were also issues on which our policies differed and, in such cases, I did not hesitate to put our position fully and frankly to my Chinese hosts. For example, I reaffirmed at the highest level the Australian Government's determined opposition to nuclear testing in the atmosphere. Our differences on these and other matters were discussed on a basis of mutual respect.

I believe that the warmth of the reception I and my party received in Peking demonstrates that China like Japan recognises, to a greater extent than some Australians may believe, the growing importance of Australia as a middle power, especially in the Asian and Pacific region.

As Honourable Members will know, important and valuable arrangements were made for the sale to China of up to 300,000 tons of sugar per year for a three to five year period commencing in 1975.

Arrangements were also made for the active promotion of closer consultations between Australian and Chinese officials and for a program of visits in both directions. The Australian and Chinese Foreign Ministers are to exchange visits at times to be determined in 1974. It was also agreed that we should develop a planned program of cultural, scientific, and technological exchanges between Australia and China, and that representative missions in these fields would be exchanged in 1974.

Honourable Members will be pleased to know that an understanding in principle was reached between the two sides on travel from China to Australia by relatives of Australian citizens of Chinese descent and Chinese citizens residing in Australia. This should facilitate family reunions.

I believe that my visit will give new direction and increased momentum to our existing relationship with Japan and will lead to the development of a more meaningful relationship and a continuing dialogue with China which, for so long, - for much too long - has been a closed book to this country.

I would like to pay tribute in the Parliament to the tireless efforts of the Australian Embassies in Tokyo and Peking during our visit. The ambassadors and their staffs performed, under considerable pressure, in a manner of which Australia should be proud. I would also like to record here my appreciation of the objective and constructive advice tendered to my ministers and me by the senior officials who accompanied us from Australia.

I table the Communique issued in Tokyo after my visit to Japan as Prime Minister, the Joint Communique adopted by the Australia-Japan Ministerial Committee, my statement to that Committee setting out the Government's policy on foreign investment in Australia, and the Joint Press Communique issued in Peking on 4 November.