



PRIME MINISTER

FOR PRESS

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PRIME MINISTER'S ADDRESS AT LUNCHEON FOR CHINESE PARLIAMENTARIANS

I am very pleased to join with the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House in welcoming our distinguished guests from the Peoples Republic of China.

This visit marks an important step in the development of the history of relations between our two countries.

This is the most senior delegation to visit Australia from the Peoples Republic of China, and this is the first time we have been visited by a member of the Politburo. This visit indicates the degree to which contacts are now developing between the Peoples Republic of China and the international community. For far too long a number of forces had arrested these contacts. This makes it even more important that we work to develop them now, and both our countries are doing so.

The Peoples Republic of China is now Australia's fourth largest export market and our countries are exploring ways of expanding trading relationships further.

Alongside this expanding trade relationship, there is growing contact across a broad range of interests. In recent months, there have been reciprocal visits by senior officials and Ministers. Mr. Hunt, the Minister for Health, visited China in June, and we have recently welcomed China's Vice Minister for Foreign Trade to Australia. Chinese journalists have visited Australia and arrangements have been made for a party of our journalists to visit China. A delegation from our Academy of Science has visited China - your Academia Sinica has sent a delegation here - and the Academies have established most beneficial contacts with one another.

The Chinese Archeological Exhibition, so generously mounted by the Peoples Republic of China, has been seen by over 600,000 Australians and contributed to our understanding of the splendour of Chinese civilisation and the talent of its craftsmen and artists.

It is important that there be frequent contacts at all levels between people of different histories and cultures, and the Australian Government has before it a series of important proposals aimed at promoting non-official contacts between our two nations in cultural and other areas.

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Australia's former Ambassador to Peking, Dr. Stephen Fitzgerald, has been heading a task force to advise the Government on this matter.

Frequent contacts at Government level are also vital because they serve to highlight our common interests and shared assessments of world affairs. By being prepared to speak plainly and directly with each other, we can work together for peace and stability in the world and in our region.

The talks I had with Chairman Hua when I visited China, and the communications I have had with him since, indicate that we can speak plainly with one another on issues that concern both our nations. I was very pleased to receive the assurance Premier Hua gave me during my visit to China last year, that the Peoples Republic of China would not allow party to party contacts to interfere with state to state relations with neighbouring countries in the South East Asian region.

Against that background, we are conscious, Mr. Vice Chairman, that your country is taking positive steps to develop relations with other countries of the region, and that while ideological differences exist, China does wish for peace and stability in South East Asia.

Mr. Vice Chairman, I was very pleased to see that the official Chinese News Agency, Hsinhua, a few days ago expressed support for ASEAN's Kuala Lumpur Declaration, and for ASEAN's plan to develop economic relations with Japan, Australia, New Zealand and the EEC. Both our countries have a common interest in the peace, security and economic development of the region.

Distinguished delegates, we hope that your stay in Australia, brief that it will be, provides you with the opportunity to observe our Parliamentary process, and the friendship of the Australian people and Government towards China.

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