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## PRIME MINISTER

FOR MEDIA

SATURDAY, 30 MAY, 1981

### DEATH OF PRESIDENT ZIA

I was shocked to hear today of the untimely death of the President of Bangladesh, His Excellency Zia Ur-Rahman.

President Zia took office at a time of particular difficulty for Bangladesh, shortly after the death of the first President and father of the newly independent nation, Mujibur Rahman.

He worked hard to overcome the many difficulties facing the new nation, including the crushing problems of food shortages, starvation and poverty. As a result, he was able to announce this year that food production in Bangladesh doubled during the previous 12 months.

In a country facing the population and food problems that Bangladesh faced this was a remarkable achievement indeed.

President Zia was a strong supporter of the Commonwealth and I had many contacts with him through the Commonwealth link.

It was especially gratifying that President Zia attended the first Commonwealth Heads of Government Regional Meeting in Sydney in 1978.

All Australians will join with me in expressing their sorrow at this tragic event and their support for the Government and the people of the Bangladesh nation in meeting the difficulties that lie ahead of them.

Australians will be particularly concerned that the President was apparently killed by an assassin. This is the third occasion in a matter of months that a world leader has been the subject of political violence. Words cannot express the abhorrence that Australians feel about events of this nature; they deserve the strongest condemnation by all people.

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