



PRIME MINISTER

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

EMBARGOED UNTIL DELIVERY

PARLIAMENTARY DINNER IN HONOUR OF HIS MAJESTY,
BIRENDRA BIR BIKRAM SHAH DEV, KING OF NEPAL,
CANBERRA, 3 SEPTEMBER 1985

Your Majesties
Your Royal Highness
Minister
Ambassador
Other Distinguished Guests
Ladies and Gentlemen

On behalf of the Government and people of Australia may I formally welcome you and your party to our country.

Your state visit to Australia, following as it does the recent visit to Nepal by our Foreign Minister, Mr Hayden, reflects our mutual desire and interest in further developing the relationship between our two countries.

Your father King Mahendra's visit here in 1971 was an important step in the development of friendship between our two peoples which now exists at many levels.

The establishment of the Australian Embassy in Kathmandu last year is further evidence of progress in our relations.

Nepal is a tourist destination for over 5,000 Australians a year. This is increasing with the growing interest by Australians in trekking and climbing in the Himalayas.

Your Government's assistance to a number of Australian expeditions in their attempts to climb Mount Everest is greatly appreciated. We thank you, too, for your assistance with the tragedy which befell one of these groups last year.

Over the years many Nepalese students have passed through our educational institutions both under Government sponsorship and privately. We are pleased that they have been able to contribute to Nepal's development, particularly in forestry and agricultural science.

Many Australians have worked in various capacities in development projects in your country, and have returned enthusiastic about your people and your rich and varied culture. The Australian National Gallery's recent acquisition of Nepalese sculpture is an example of the interest here in Nepalese artistic tradition.

The goodwill and understanding generated through such contacts and exposure to each other's societies are important elements in the development of the relationship between our countries. It has done much to strengthen the very real interest in Nepal among Australians.

Your Majesty

During your visit to Australia you will have the opportunity to see something of the diversity of our country - from our tropical islands to the Snowy Mountains. While our mountains cannot compete with yours, you will be interested in the achievements of our engineers in developing the Snowy Mountains Hydro-electric scheme. This realised a dream many had regarded as impossible to achieve, and benefitted our community in a wide range of areas, socially and economically.

Australia and Nepal are both actively doing what we can to promote international peace and security. Our Government is aware of the constructive, good neighbourly role Nepal seeks to play in its region, which includes some of the major Asian powers, as well as in the non-aligned movement. We acknowledge the personal part you have played in Nepal's international activity.

For our part, at the recent South Pacific Forum in Rarotonga eight countries, including Australia, were able to sign the Treaty for the establishment of a Nuclear Free Zone.

We believe that the Treaty, endorsed on the 40th Anniversary of the nuclear devastation of the city of Hiroshima, is a real step forward in arms control in a global as well as a regional sense.

Your Majesty

Your visit to Australia has provided the opportunity for us to reaffirm our commitment to continuing our friendly relationship.

I am confident that this friendship will grow in the future.
