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AUSTRALIA-CHINA TENNIS TOURNAMENT
ANNOUNCEMENT BY PRIME MINISTER

19 MAY 1986

IN THE PRESENCE OF MY FRIEND AND VERY FORMIDABLE OPPONENT ON THE TENNIS COURT, VICE PREMIER WAN LI, I AM HAPPY TO ANNOUNCE THAT IN PRINCIPLE AGREEMENT HAS BEEN REACHED TO ESTABLISH A TENNIS TOURNAMENT BETWEEN AUSTRALIA AND CHINA.

TENNIS IS AN INCREASINGLY POPULAR SPORT IN CHINA AND I KNOW THAT THE RECENT VISIT OF PAT CASH GENERATED GREAT INTEREST. THIS IS A SPORT IN WHICH AUSTRALIA HAS A LONG TRADITION.

THE CONCEPT IS TO CREATE AN ANNUAL TENNIS CHALLENGE WHICH WILL ALTERNATE BETWEEN VENUES IN AUSTRALIA AND CHINA. IT WILL INVOLVE FOUR MEN AND FOUR WOMEN PLAYERS IN A DAVIS CUP CHALLENGE FORMAT - SINGLES, REVERSE SINGLES AND DOUBLES.

THE AUSTRALIAN TEAM IS EXPECTED TO CONSIST OF YOUNG PROFESSIONALS OF HIGH CALIBRE AND I UNDERSTAND THAT PAT CASH HAS EXPRESSED KEEN PERSONAL INTEREST TO PLAY IN THE FIRST CHALLENGE ROUND.

THE ORGANISERS IN AUSTRALIA ARE WORKING ON THE BASIS THAT THE FIRST ROUND COULD BE HELD IN MELBOURNE IN EARLY DECEMBER 1986, PREFERABLY ON GRASS COURTS. THIS WOULD GIVE THE CHINESE PLAYERS EXPERIENCE OF GRASS COURT TENNIS.

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WE HOPE IT WILL BE POSSIBLE TO ARRANGE FOR AUSTRALIAN PLAYERS TO PARTICIPATE IN COACHING OF YOUNGER CHINESE PLAYERS WHEN THE CHALLENGE TAKES PLACE IN CHINA.

I LOOK FORWARD TO SOME OF OUR FINE YOUNG PLAYERS PARTICIPATING IN THIS COMPETITION. THE OPPORTUNITY TO PLAY AGAINST COUNTERPARTS IN CHINA WILL NOT ONLY BE GOOD FOR TENNIS IN BOTH COUNTRIES BUT WILL MARK A NEW STEP IN THE GROWING PEOPLE-TO-PEOPLE RELATIONS BETWEEN AUSTRALIA AND CHINA.

PLANNING FOR THE EVENT IS WELL IN TRAIN AND AN ANNOUNCEMENT REGARDING SPONSORSHIP IS EXPECTED TO BE MADE LATER THIS YEAR.
