



PRIME MINISTER

PARTIAL

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E & O E - PROOF ONLY

JOURNALIST: Do you believe that President Mitterand ... Goa defence contract ... do you believe that that should have been kept to the level of economics and business rather than politics?

PM: Well we can't change the course of history, can we. I think if you look at the sorts of events, political influence is often brought to bear. I know that since I've been Prime Minister I've always been prepared to use my influence on behalf of Australian contacts where we are satisfied, and we always are, about the quality of the Australian tenders. Where an Australian tender for an overseas contract looks as though he should get it, then they'll have my support. We're not unique in that respect. In fact, without going into the details, not long after I'd been Prime Minister, in a country in our region it got down to the French and the Australians and I happened to be visiting the country and I put in a plug for Australia. The French were there just about signing a contract and we were able to ... a very substantial contract for Australia. And may I say the Australian contractor did the job extremely well and the nation ... very pleased they did what they did. Now that's the way of life. So I'll be in there fighting for the Australians when I'm in India, and they deserve to win.

JOURNALIST: Prime Minister, what will be the highlight of your trip to South Korea?

PM: I think it's really a consolidation of the visit of President Roh last year and what impressed me was then the quite dramatic new approach of the new President in terms both with the relationship of the Republic of Korea with the North, and with the rest of the world. I want to follow up on my discussions with him the implications of that both for Korea itself and for the region. I think it's one of the more significant things that's been happening in recent times in our region. So I think the discussions on that issue will probably be as important as anything else. Of course we agreed during his visit to Australia last year to accelerate the processes of cooperation between our two countries in a number of areas beyond purely the trading and economic relationship and we will be reviewing just how well the mechanisms are going for establishing

those things upon which we agreed, for instance in the area of the Cultural Commission for accelerating exchange there across a whole range of areas of activities and in the establishment of the Business Forum. We agreed then that we'd meet as soon as possible this year to make clear to bodies and individuals in our two countries the extent of our commitment to these processes. The Korean economy is growing strongly, our trade is increasing, I want to ensure that Australia gets the benefit as rapidly as possible of that growth, and in turn that we can make some contribution to the development of Korea.

JOURNALIST: Is Australia's trade performance with the four countries you're visiting as good as it ought to be given the levels of growth they are experiencing?

PM: Well it's improving and the reason for the visit is to try and increase the rate of Australian involvement. I am never satisfied with where you are, I always think you can do better. It's these sorts of areas where I think that personal relationships are important and I do have the good fortune of already good relations with the President of Korea and the Prime Minister of India. This will be the first meeting for me with the new Prime Minister of Thailand and of course with Pakistan. So I hope that out of these personal contacts, with the renewal in the former two countries that I mentioned and the opening up of personal relations in Thailand and Pakistan, that we will be able, as I say, to get the greatest benefit of the fact of that economic growth because they do have rates of growth which - speaking of them generally - are more than twice the rate of the OECD average for instance. So it is essential for Australia where you're in a region of rapid growth as I've said so often, and you've heard me say it - we want to be in there and get as much benefit from it and make as much contribution to it as we can.

JOURNALIST: What are the sorts of products ...?

PM: It comes really into two categories. There is our traditional export base and we are competitive producers and exporters of raw materials. We have iron ore, coal as well as in the aluminum area, and our agricultural products. Now those basic and traditional quantities are available from Australia in terms of reliable supply and competitive prices. We are the best suppliers in the world in those areas. So I want to stress that to our friends where we go. But, the second area where I will be particularly stressing the relevance and the competitive nature of Australia is in the areas of telecommunications, the telecommunications industry, the construction of stations in the power generation industry, like we have built

now coal-fired power stations in a way which gives us some expertise which is second to none in the world. On a whole range of infrastructure developments, roads, ports, those sorts of things, Australia is becoming an increasingly capable, sophisticated, competitive supplier of the infrastructure, developing infrastructure needs of these countries.

JOURNALIST: Are we having ... the Thais are making on cracking down on the drug problem out in the triangle ...?

PM: We have close cooperation with them. As you know we have people working in cooperation with them. This is one of the areas I'll be discussing with our friends in Thailand to review the cooperative program that we work on together and of course if they have any suggestions to make to me as to how there may be areas for improvement, then I'll certainly be receptive to that.

JOURNALIST: On a domestic level I understand Justice Muirhead delivered the first four case reports to the Government last Wednesday. Do you see any reason why those reports can't be released immediately?

PM: I need to discuss that with the Minister. I mean, I just don't make a unilateral decision on that. I haven't had an opportunity of talking with Mr Hand yet.

JOURNALIST: Do you agree with Justice Muirhead that they should be released individually case by case as they're finished?

PM: I haven't specifically discussed that with Mr Hand. My view would be that if the Minister was of that view then I'd be satisfied with that. But these are matters for the Minister concerned to have an involvement in. I don't impose my - generally speaking at any rate - I don't impose my will on Ministers. There's some times perhaps where that is necessary. But you know that that's the way I run the Government. Mr Hand is the Minister there. If he had a contrary view to that of the Royal Commissioner I'd want to hear it. But if he didn't I'd certainly say yes.

JOURNALIST: So we could expect them to be out before the West Australian election?

PM: Could be. I don't know. You really need to talk to Mr Hand about that. I'm leaving today and Mr Bowen will be acting Prime Minister in my absence. Mr Hand will have a view about it.

JOURNALIST: Do you have any progress on the proposed Aboriginal treaty?

PM: I'll say this. In the sense that we still have commitment to the concept and just last Sunday week I had

further discussions in Melbourne with Mr Hand about it. There are two sides to it as you'll appreciate. There is the continuing process of consultation within the Aboriginal community in this country and that is a long detailed process. We are not going to rush that. We want to get the full sense of appreciation from the Aboriginal people as to what the issues are in their mind to be dealt with by such a treaty, a compact. We are also addressing the point of how within the non-Aboriginal community there should be ... developed so that the people of Australia as a whole are going to have the opportunity of being informed about the issues, the concepts. This is particularly important in view of the fact that the Opposition has chosen so maliciously and dishonestly to misrepresent what is involved in this concept. So I've made it clear that it would be impossible ... to achieve this position in the life of this Parliament. But I've always had the view that if that were not possible, if the processes that I'm talking about had not been satisfactorily completed, then there wasn't going to be any artificial date in my mind that it had to be done in the life of this Parliament. What's important is that at the end of the processes within the Aboriginal community and in the non-Aboriginal community that there is understanding and acceptance of the concept because there is no doubt in my mind that this and future generations of Australians are going to be better off. They're going to be better able to live in good conscience if we've done this thing. It's got such historical importance. It's not something that should be rushed with an artificial date.

JOURNALIST: ... media should get off Pat Cash's back?

PM: I think that it is not really appropriate for me to be saying who should get off Pat Cash's back but I think he has a few people on his back.

JOURNALIST: What is your decision on Australia's involvement in the international peacekeeping force in Cambodia if that situation should arise?

PM: We have made it quite clear over a number of years that Australia is prepared to play its part in finding a peaceful resolution to that continual tragedy in Cambodia. And if in the now much more encouraging scene that we see there where I think we have more grounds for optimism than we have had at any stage, it would be suggested that there would be some international force to supervise the situation following the withdrawal of the Vietnamese forces both in security terms and in ... intermediate sense, and perhaps in election supervision. If it were suggested that Australia could play a role in that, of course consistent with our whole ... in this matter, we would be prepared favourably to consider that.

PM: (cont) But we are not there in this or any other area in the world trying to impose Australia but we do have legitimate interests, historical concerns, and we will be prepared to play a part in getting, finally, a resolution of what has been such a long continual tragedy for the people of Cambodia.

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