



# PRIME MINISTER

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SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER  
STATE BANQUET - PAKISTAN  
6 FEBRUARY 1989

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Prime Minister,

It gives me enormous satisfaction to bring greetings from Australia to you and the Government and people of Pakistan as you once again assume your place among the democratic family of nations.

It is also a great personal pleasure to be the first head of government making a bilateral visit to Pakistan since your election as Prime Minister.

The last Australian Head of Government to visit Pakistan was the previous Labor Prime Minister, Gough Whitlam, who was received by your late father, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, in January 1975.

Prime Minister,

In your autobiography, you quote the great American revolutionary, Thomas Paine: "Tyranny, like hell, is not easily conquered; yet we have this consolation with us, that the harder the conflict, the more glorious the triumph".

You and the people of Pakistan have indeed been through difficult years. But as you yourself wrote, you kept the flame of democracy alive during those years, and now with the restoration of democratic rule, you have won the glorious triumph of which Paine wrote.

Your personal struggle in support of representative government and democratic processes has been much admired in Australia and throughout the world. There is no need for me to dwell on the cost of this struggle to you and your family.

But I do say that the successful and peaceful elections held last year, and your firm commitment to strengthening democracy in Pakistan, give cause for the greatest optimism and deserve the congratulations and support of the international community.

Prime Minister,

As a former political prisoner yourself, you have already, since you assumed office, been active in advancing human rights issues, including the release of large numbers of such prisoners. You have also announced policies to alleviate illiteracy and poverty, to improve the status of women in society, to tackle corruption and to combat the narcotics trade.

These initiatives together make up an important and challenging agenda for domestic reform. Your commitment to combat drug abuse and the cultivation and trafficking of narcotics is one area in particular where my Government is very keen to assist your efforts and enhance our co-operation.

Prime Minister,

Now that representative government has returned to Pakistan, we should look for opportunities to build a more substantial bilateral relationship between our two countries.

In this task we start from a reasonable base of existing links between us.

Australia was one of the first countries to open diplomatic relations with Pakistan, with an Australian diplomatic mission being established early in 1948.

Australia's first Muslim community consisted of people from what is now Baluchistan and the North-West Frontier province of Pakistan. This community built Australia's first mosque, and some of their descendants are numbered among the 250,000 Muslims who live in Australia today.

Since the independence of Pakistan, our two countries have worked together on a range of political and humanitarian issues, including those associated with the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan.

Sport provides another sort of link, one that draws our peoples, not just our governments, together.

Names like Mushtaq Mohammed, Asif Iqbal, Sarfraz Nawaz and, today, Imran Khan, Javed Miandad and Abdul Qadir are as familiar to Australians as they are to Pakistanis. We look forward to your cricketers making a full test tour of Australia next year.

In addition to our shared obsession with cricket, hockey and squash, our two countries have much in common.

And yet Prime Minister we can do better. We can add new substance to the relationship. This, I believe, is particularly so in the field of trade and economic co-operation.

These are areas which, if developed properly, could see significant benefits accruing to both countries. We need to encourage a greater understanding in our respective business communities of the opportunities that exist, and we need to encourage proposals for expanding business and commercial links. One specific form of activity which could be pursued more vigorously is the setting up of joint ventures, particularly those centred on the transfer of technology.

Prime Minister,

In suggesting closer economic co-operation, I am aware that our two economies are at different stages in their development, and that there is a number of immediate challenges which you face in the economic sphere.

I know that among your current concerns is the shortfall in Pakistan's wheat supply because of the drought. I would like to take this opportunity to assure you publicly that my Government is sympathetic to these concerns. To this end we will provide an immediate emergency aid contribution of 25,000 tonnes of wheat valued at some A\$5.5 million.

Australia has always stood ready to provide humanitarian assistance to people in need and we hope that this contribution can assist in overcoming the difficulties facing your people.

In addition to the immediate food aid, my Government is also interested in enhancing our development co-operation program with Pakistan. I look forward to exchanging ideas with you tomorrow on what we might be able to do.

Prime Minister,

One of the greatest challenges facing us as we move towards the last decade of the twentieth century, a century sadly characterised by bloody global and regional conflict, is establishing the basis for a peaceful and more prosperous twenty-first century. We cannot leave as our legacy to future generations an international order that is characterised by instability, intolerance and fear.

There are encouraging developments, as a result of moves by the Soviet Union, the United States and China, to replace the confrontation of the past with constructive dialogue. In my recent meetings with the leadership of these countries, I have been impressed by their determination to tackle difficult questions and to take forward issues that were once the subject of impasse or inertia. Australia has done whatever it can to encourage that process.

One issue that has affected both of us is Afghanistan, which was not only a cause for regional and international instability, but also a focus of humanitarian concern.

The conclusion of the Geneva Accords leading to the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan was an important and commendable achievement. It highlighted the very positive changes underway in the Soviet Union and was a profound demonstration of the way in which improved superpower relations can have a direct and real impact on regional disputes.

The international community appreciates the substantial contribution by Pakistan in providing a safe haven for the estimated 3.5 million refugees from Afghanistan. As you know, Australia has rendered assistance to these refugees through contributions of food aid and other assistance worth over \$45 million. We have also pledged a contribution of \$20 million to the appeal launched by the United Nations special co-ordinator for Afghanistan to assist Afghan refugees in returning to their homeland.

Another area in which we have witnessed the positive benefits from this new spirit of co-operation between the superpowers, is in the field of disarmament, where important commitments have been made to reduce the nuclear and other weapons arsenals which threaten our very existence.

In South Asia, Australia has watched with concern the threat of nuclear proliferation. It was in this context that we welcomed the recent initiative taken by you and Prime Minister Gandhi in signing an agreement prohibiting attacks on each other's nuclear installations. It is our hope that this agreement will lead to further steps which can help to assure that the nuclear programs pursued in the region are directed solely towards peaceful non-explosive uses.

I would like to restate the Australian Government's firm conviction that the widest possible adherence to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty is essential if we are to eliminate the spectre of a nuclear holocaust.

Prime Minister,

We acknowledge Pakistan as an important member of the South Asian region. Australia, indeed the world, has a clear interest in stability and peace in South Asia. It is for this reason, as well as the potential for improving the living standards of the member countries, that we welcome the dialogue and co-operation being forged through the SAARC. It is for the same reason that we applaud the steps which you, so early in your period in office, and Prime Minister Gandhi in India have taken to reach out to one another and reduce the tensions which have too often affected relations between your countries.

Let me place on record that Australia warmly welcomes your Government's decision to rejoin the Commonwealth. We have always supported this and speaking for Australia would welcome without hesitation your representing democratic Pakistan at the next Commonwealth Heads of Government in Kuala Lumpur in October.

I began, Prime Minister, by referring to your autobiography.

Since the author does not exist who resents favourable quotation, let me end in the same vein.

"Nobody who loves Pakistan," you wrote, "can help dreaming of a great and prosperous future for our country and for the people. But drastic steps must be taken to preserve that vision."

You are ushering in a new period in Pakistani history - a period of hope and reform, and we hope, of peace and prosperity.

We wish you well as you undertake the hard work that lies ahead of you.

I thank you for your hospitality, and I look forward to welcoming you soon to Canberra.

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