



PRIME MINISTER

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E S O E - PROOF ONLY

JOURNALIST: Ms Bhutto has just told us that she is concerned, very much so in fact, about the military build-up in this region. Do we share her concern?

PM: We can understand her concern. From the perspective of Pakistan it naturally is a matter of concern. I've had some discussion with her about this issue and I will be discussing the matter with my friend Rajiv Gandhi when I go to India. On the basis that I will be discussing the matter with him soon, it's more appropriate that I don't say anything more about that other than to emphasise the fact that I fully understand the concern that my friend the Prime Minister of Pakistan has on this issue.

JOURNALIST: Have the talks been successful today?

PM: It's my assessment that they have been and in a sense, more importantly, I think it's the assessment of Ms Bhutto and her ministers that they have been. We've discussed a very wide range of issues, global, regional and bilateral. In respect of the global and regional perspectives we have very similar views and in regard to the bilateral issues there is no doubt that as a result of the talks I've had with the Prime Minister of Pakistan and with a wide range of her ministers that we've now established the basis for a much more substantial and growing economic relationship which will be to our mutual benefit. There are many areas of importance in the plans of the Pakistanis for their economic development in which we have an expertise and an experience. I have been able today to go through those in very considerable detail in terms of actual projects as well as economic areas. I believe that as a result of those discussions the opportunities for Australian involvement in economic expansion here is going to be significant. Of course, reciprocally, we'll do what we can to increase the opportunities for the import of relevant Pakistani goods into Australia. All in all I'm very satisfied and it's a satisfaction which I think is mutually held.

JOURNALIST: On nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, are you assured by Ms Bhutto's attitude?

PM: Yes, there is no doubt that as far as Pakistan is concerned, as the position has been put by her, she's given the unequivocal undertaking that the purposes of the Pakistani nuclear program are for peaceful purposes. She's been quite unequivocal about that and has indicated the preparedness of Pakistan, either in a universal sense or importantly in a regional sense, to arrive at some sort of agreement which would commit Pakistan to that position. Obviously they want a reciprocity as far as India is concerned and what I've said in my discussions with Bhutto is that we think it would be useful for us, Australia and Pakistan, to have bilateral discussions on disarmament issues, including nuclear issues. There's been a positive response by her to that proposal and quite obviously, without going into detail, I would be looking at a similar sort of concept with Mr Gandhi. So again, as you know always without overstating what Australia can do in these sorts of issues, I think this may be another case where with the very good credentials that Australia has in the field of disarmament generally and nuclear disarmament issues in particular, that we may be able to exercise some useful influence in perhaps getting a better and more acceptable outcome on this important issue, because as the Pakistani Prime Minister and myself have both agreed, it would indeed be a paradox and a tragedy if at a time when between the superpowers you are seeing a process which involves the reduction of armaments and of nuclear capacities, there were to be a build-up in this region - and she shares that view. It would, both in terms of security be a tragedy and a paradox, and it would be a gross misallocation of resources in a subcontinent which is desperately needing all the resources it can for the uplifting of its people.

JOURNALIST: Who would undertake those talks and when would you envisage that they would take place?

PM: What I've suggested with the Prime Minister is that those talks should be at an officials' level. I believe that that's what will occur.

JOURNALIST: She said that Pakistan would sign the NPT if India signed the NPT. Will you be pushing Rajiv Gandhi?

PM: As you know I don't make a practice of -

JOURNALIST: Ask him?

PM: - That was not the point I'm going to make. Occasionally you give little gentle pushes, but I don't make a practice of disclosing before I meet with a national leader just what I'm going to say to him. I don't think that's fair to him or in a sense to me.

JOURNALIST: Do you think it's up to Rajiv Gandhi to try to break the logjam over the NPT? Do you think that it's India's move now?

PM: Let me put it this way, that there is a clear statement of position by the Pakistani Prime Minister on behalf of her government and her nation. Clearly they put their position in terms of acquiring a reciprocity by India. So in a sense that now ... ask that what is the response of India, you've got to understand that in the case of India they would be putting into their equation and their calculation - not just ... relationship with Pakistan but consideration to relations with China. But obviously this is an issue that I will be talking at some length with my friend Rajiv Gandhi about. I believe that given the nature of our relationship and the discussions I've been able to have here, it should be another useful discussion.

JOURNALIST: Did you enjoy meeting Benazir Bhutto? Did you get along well with her?

PM: Yes, I think we got on excellently together. I wished I'd been 100% fit - I've had a little bit of the flu but I think that crisis is passing - but yes, I've enjoyed her company very much. One of the interesting things about it is the sheer joy she's experiencing in being in this position. When you consider the expectations that she would have had less than 12 months ago, the suffering that she had gone through and those close to her who now form part of the ministry, the imprisonment that they've suffered, the torture that some of them have suffered. Now to be in the position of power is obviously something which is in a proper sense very exhilarating for her. She's working extremely hard, she is well informed and briefed on the range of issues that I talked with her about and she obviously has a great sense of co-operation with her ministers. Yes, I find it interesting, stimulating, and I certainly look forward to working further with her in the future.

JOURNALIST: Are you expecting her to be a long term fixture on the Pakistani political scene?

PM: She deserves to be.

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