



# PRIME MINISTER

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SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER  
STATE BANQUET  
NEW DELHI - 9 FEBRUARY 1989

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The world sees in India a land of rich and ancient culture; a society of profound challenge and almost limitless opportunity; a nation whose hard won achievement of independence set an inspiring landmark in the new world order that emerged after the Second World War; a democracy where individual liberty and justice are the cherished attributes of daily life for hundreds of millions of people.

For Australians, India has been a comrade in times of war and a friend in peace; a great rival in sport, not least in cricket; a clear and influential voice in the United Nations, the Commonwealth, and the Non-Aligned Movement.

In our own colonial times, in 1854, in the famous act of defiance by the gold miners at the Eureka Stockade, there were, standing at the forefront of the struggle side by side with men from around the world, two gold miners from Bengal.

And in more recent times, Australians and Indians have shown their preparedness to fight and to die in defence of freedom. Last week, in Thailand, I laid a wreath at the Kanchanaburi War Cemetery, in honour of the Commonwealth prisoners of war who died building the Burma railroad - Australians, Indians and others who died in appalling conditions of exhaustion and hardship but who have left to us a powerful reminder of their resilience and indomitable humanity.

Today, some 80,000 Indians are welcome and valued members of our multicultural society, making tremendous contributions to our academic, cultural, professional - and, I might add, our culinary - life.

For all these reasons you will understand the depth of my sincerity when I say it is an honour and a pleasure to return to India, for this my first bilateral visit, and to bring you the friendly greetings of the Australian people.

Mr Prime Minister,

Since you assumed the Prime Ministership after the tragic death of your mother, we have worked together closely.

It was through the Commonwealth - in Nassau, London and Vancouver - that I came to know you and to appreciate your statesmanship, vision and the fresh and open-minded approach you bring to world affairs.

You also did us the honour of visiting Australia in October 1986. On all these occasions we have advanced a range of issues of importance to us both and we have, at the same time, become personal friends.

I look forward to working with you again when we next meet at the Kuala Lumpur CHOGM in October.

To you, Prime Minister, I bring the warmest personal greetings. I regard it as a great honour that tomorrow, when I deliver the Third Indira Gandhi Memorial Lecture, I will be able to pay tribute to the contribution you and your family have made to modern India and the world over three generations.

Mr Prime Minister, the foundations of the Indian-Australian relationship would be the envy of many. We share a language, institutions and many common values.

At the same time, I think it is fair to say that the relationship, and its economic aspect in particular, has not been developed at the pace or with the imagination and creativity that it merits.

Your visit to Australia injected into it new vigor and vitality. On this visit I am determined to build on those achievements by further expanding the links between us.

Tomorrow I will open the third meeting of the Indo-Australian Joint Business Council, which was established following agreement between us in 1986.

This third meeting takes place against an encouraging expansion of two-way trade: an 18 per cent increase in 1987/88 to a total value of well over A\$700 million.

Tomorrow we will also witness the signing of Memoranda of Understanding between our respective agencies responsible for telecommunications, meteorology and railways.

But these developments only start what I believe will be a much longer story of substantial growth in the economic dimensions of Indian-Australian co-operation.

Australia will be expanding significantly its bilateral development program in India.

I am particularly pleased to say that the discussions between our two governments in regard to the Piparwar coal project are now at an advanced stage and are expected to be brought to a successful conclusion in the near future.

This will be a very substantial achievement. It will not only be the largest project of its kind between Australia and India, it will also be a real stimulus to the relationship as a whole - a great demonstration of what we can do together.

Mr Prime Minister, there would be little point in doing the work required to build these links, unless we concurrently work for a peaceful and stable international environment within which such co-operative links can flourish.

My Government has watched closely your personal efforts and initiatives in response to the changes taking place globally and in the Asia-Pacific region - particularly your recent successful visit to China. For Australia's part we welcome this development; more harmonious relations between India and China will go a long way to promoting stability in the region.

In the immediate region we applaud the way in which you and Prime Minister Bhutto have improved the atmosphere of the relationship between your two countries, including at the recent SAARC meeting.

The decisive way in which India recently supported the democratic Government of the Maldives was welcomed throughout the Commonwealth.

Mr Prime Minister, when we met in Canberra in 1986 we did so against a background of international distrust. The global context of our conversations this time round is considerably brighter.

We have both seen, at first hand, General-Secretary Gorbachev's determination to reform Soviet society and the Soviet economy, and to find new directions in his country's foreign policy, often in quite dramatic ways, Afghanistan being the most immediate example.

Mr Gorbachev has already made a more substantive contribution to the lessening of international tension and the building of a constructive relationship with the United States than any previous Soviet leader.

At the same time I am confident that under George Bush the United States will continue to play an active, responsible and constructive role in shaping the international environment.

Mr Prime Minister, there is now a very real opportunity for us to capitalise on these developments and to encourage the process even further. We must set our sights high.

This is especially true in the field of disarmament. Substantial progress has already been made. Nevertheless, arms control and disarmament remain the greatest challenge facing all of us as we seek to transform decisively an international environment which has encouraged a massive and wasteful diversion of scarce resources towards the creation of the instruments of war.

Australia and India have different views on some elements of the disarmament debate, notably over the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. India's views are well known. For our part, we regard the NPT as a vitally important instrument of arms control.

But our overall objective must be - and I believe is - the same: neither of us can accept a world held ransom by the threat of nuclear holocaust.

In South Asia, Australia has watched with concern the threat of nuclear proliferation. We therefore welcome the recent positive step taken by you and Prime Minister Bhutto in signing an agreement prohibiting attacks on each other's nuclear installations. We earnestly hope this will lead to further steps which can help to assure that nuclear programs pursued in the region are directed solely towards peaceful non-explosive uses.

We are both committed to the concept of creating an Indian Ocean Zone of Peace as an integral element of a co-operative and interdependent region.

Just as a concerted effort is required in the area of arms control, so too we must work towards the establishment of a freer and fairer trading environment. We must ensure that the disappointment of the Montreal mid-term review of the Uruguay Round of GATT negotiations is not repeated in Geneva in two months time.

Australia stands ready to work more closely with India to achieve a world where peace and security, democracy and economic well-being are realities, not just distant aspirations.

These are, of course, highly ambitious goals. But neither Australia nor India has ever been afraid of setting our sights high, whether in the pursuit of better lives for our peoples, or in the shaping of the world political and economic environment. Neither of us has ever seen this as a task to be left exclusively to the superpowers or to the major world economies. We both demand a right to have our voice heard.

Our prospects of success in these great endeavours, Mr Prime Minister, are significantly enhanced by the fact that we are working towards these goals together.

In particular we have a great task ahead of us in keeping pressure on the South African regime to dismantle its ugly and abhorrent system of apartheid, I pay tribute to the leading role that you have played, Mr Prime Minister, in the Commonwealth and in other forums, in articulating the arguments and increasing the pressure for action in this vital field.

We both welcome, I am sure, the recent consensus decision by the International Cricket Council to maintain bans on South Africa and thus to ensure the continuation of Test cricket into the future.

Prime Minister and Mrs Gandhi, Hazel and I would like to thank you again for your wonderful hospitality. As in the past, we have enjoyed your company. We both look forward to seeing more of the magnificent Indian cultural heritage on Saturday, when we travel to the legendary city of Agra.

Mr Prime Minister,

India is the last of four countries I have visited in the past fortnight. In Korea, Thailand, Pakistan and now in India I have had the privilege of informing myself through discussions with the leaders about developments in the rapidly changing and vitally important Asia-Pacific and South Asia regions.

In this way Australia seeks to improve its knowledge of and involvement in the challenges and opportunities of these countries. I trust too that visits such as this demonstrate again the commitment of Australia to these regions, our determination to become involved in a positive way in them, our openness to them and our identification with them.

In all of the countries I have visited, the flame of democracy is burning bright. It is fitting, and enormously uplifting, to conclude my visit in this great nation that is proudly, deeply, unalterably democratic.

I close on this point: as we enter the 1990s, with hope and confidence and prudence, Australia and India will draw strength and wisdom from the certain knowledge that it is only democracy that will fully equip us to meet the challenges that await us.

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