



PRIME MINISTER

FOR MEDIA

16 SEPTEMBER

The Australian Government warmly welcomes Pakistan back into the Commonwealth after an absence of eighteen years.

During my visit to Pakistan in February this year, following Pakistan's return to democratic government, I raised with Prime Minister Bhutto the question of Pakistan rejoining the Commonwealth. I am delighted, therefore that Pakistan is now back in the Commonwealth. This move will broaden the friendly ties between Australia and Pakistan through our work together in the Commonwealth's many institutions and forums.

The return of such an important country in the South Asia region, and the valuable contribution which Pakistan will make, will undoubtedly strengthen the Commonwealth which already spans a quarter of the world's nations and people. It embraces tremendous racial, economic and religious diversity, bringing nations from every continent to work together to address issues of concern to us all.

I am sure that, like Australia, Pakistan will find its interests well served through the contact with other world leaders the Commonwealth offers, and the access it provides to a diverse and important range of information and programs in such areas as the environment, education and development assistance.

I am looking forward to working with Prime Minister Bhutto at the forthcoming Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Kuala Lumpur in October this year.