



## PRIME MINISTER

**SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON P.J. KEATING**

**OFFICIAL BANQUET GIVEN BY PRESIDENT SOEHARTO  
ISTANA NEGARA, JAKARTA, 21 APRIL 1992**

I am very pleased to be here in Indonesia on this my first visit abroad as Prime Minister. As one of the new Heads of Government in the region, I appreciate the warm words of welcome from the region's undisputed elder statesman.

I wish to congratulate you, Mr President, on your election as Chairman of the Non-Aligned Movement. The Movement's summit in Jakarta this September will demonstrate once again the leading role Indonesia plays in important international forums.

Mr President, more than forty years ago, the political party which it is my privilege to lead - the Australian Labor Party - lent its support to the people of Indonesia in their struggle for independence.

We in the Australian labour movement have always respected Indonesia's determination to pursue an independent course in the world. Indeed, that same independent frame of mind is something which my government is keen to foster in Australia.

It is important to our strength as a people and as a nation.

Mr President, at a time of rapid economic and strategic change, Indonesia and Australia have more in common than our different histories and cultures would suggest.

We both understand that our ability to participate fully in the rapid economic growth of the Asia-Pacific region depends on more than the natural resources with which our countries are so richly endowed.

Nations need more than this. Success also depends on what you, Mr President, have long referred to as "national resilience".

We recognise this in Australia.

We know that to reach our full potential we must work cooperatively, combine our talents and energy, harness our human and material strength, and make Australia more truly one nation.

I think you will understand some of the challenges we see ourselves facing.

Australia is a vast continent. It is also a sprawling federation.

The great distances, and the cultural gaps which emerged over time, have consequences for economic and political efficiency, for national cohesion - for our ability to pursue and achieve national goals.

In the 1990s I believe you will see Australia face these long-standing realities as never before. I think you will see us pursue our goals as never before - with an unparalleled sense of purpose and efficiency.

Under your leadership, Indonesia has undergone an economic transformation which has dramatically improved living standards in your own country, and contributed to wider regional stability.

You have made the difficult judgements, the tough decisions, required to turn your economy towards the global economy.

We have sought the same goal of international competitiveness and, in the past decade, we have followed a very similar path towards it.

As our two countries have become more outward looking, our trading relationship has become more significant.

Australian exports to Indonesia are nearly four times greater than they were ten years ago. Indonesia, which was Australia's 17th largest export market ten years ago, is now our 10th largest export market.

Our trade has diversified in much the same degree as it has grown.

Minerals and primary products remain important but they no longer dominate.

Much of the increase in exports to Australia in recent years has been in manufactured goods.

Australian exporters have found in Indonesia new markets for manufactures, machinery, computers, and telecommunications products, as well as in education services, engineering consultancies, construction, banking and finance.

Mr President, our countries also share fundamental interests in the stability and security of our region.

Both governments were active in the long negotiations leading up to last October's signing of a comprehensive political settlement in the Cambodia conflict.

Australian and Indonesian armed forces are now serving together in Cambodia as part of the United Nations peacekeeping force.

Let me also take this opportunity to applaud the active and substantial role that Indonesia has played in ASEAN.

ASEAN's creation in the 1960s, and its success and maturity today, owe much to you Mr President. The region owes much to you.

We are very conscious of the benefits which flow to Australia from Indonesia's positive contribution to regional affairs.

We also welcome the ASEAN countries' recent decision to create an ASEAN Free Trade Area.

Mr President, your country's role in ASEAN has been complemented by the active role you have played in APEC. We both understand the contribution which APEC can make to the development of the broader Asia-Pacific region.

As fellow members of the Cairns Group, we are also united in our appreciation of the need for a successful conclusion of the Uruguay Round.

An open multilateral trading system with strong, clear rules covering all areas of international trade - including agriculture - is in our interest, just as it is in the interest of the other members of the GATT.

In the past three years, our two countries have begun to build a network of connections and institutional links which has given greater substance to our bilateral relationship. The hallmark of these growing connections has been practical co-operation and substantive dialogue.

Of particular importance has been the 1989 Timor Gap Zone of Co-operation Treaty, which establishes a system for joint exploitation of petroleum resources in the Timor Sea.

In 1989 our two countries also established the Australia - Indonesia Institute in order to promote greater mutual understanding, especially in the fields of culture and education.

The growing web of bilateral connections has also been strengthened by the greatly increased numbers of Ministerial visits.

These substantive links have enabled our Governments to maintain a frank and constructive dialogue, especially

during the past few months, following the tragic events in East Timor last November.

The signing of a number of bilateral agreements during my visit is an important demonstration of the sorts of links which we would like to see developed.

We are especially keen to expand bilateral commercial links, and to encourage our private sectors to take advantage of the opportunities created by the reform of our economies.

Mr President, a hundred years ago, in what became known as a Golden Age, the infant Australian nation forged an identity and political system which still very largely defines us to ourselves and to the world.

It was a reflection of the country's origins and the imperial values of the day that the identity and the system were often, in both spirit and substance, anti-Asian.

In the 1990s I believe the Australian identity is being re-shaped in a way which is consistent with the multicultural reality of our society, and the final passing of the vestiges of our colonial past.

Much will not be changed. Much we would defend against change.

But the new identity will be emphatically different in this - it will positively engage with the region in which we live.

Mr President, it is my most sincere hope that we shall continue to make our relationship broader, deeper and more stable.

In an important sense, each of us is the other's best test of how effectively we will be able to deal with the social and political diversity, and the rapid change, which will mark our region and the world in the 1990s.

My visit may be seen as a signal of Australia's determination to pass that test.

Mr President, I am very glad to be here. I look forward to our discussions tomorrow on important bilateral, regional and international developments.

Your Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen, I would now like to ask you to join me in a toast to the health of His Excellency the President and Mrs Soeharto, to the prosperity of the Republic of Indonesia, and to further progress in friendship and co-operation between our two nations.