



## PRIME MINISTER

TRANSCRIPT OF THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON P J KEATING, MP  
DOORSTOP HYATT HOTEL, SURABAYA, THURSDAY APRIL 23 1992

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PM: I just thought I would give you a few remarks on the visit. I am very happy with the visit, I think it's gone well, it's been a very friendly and I think a successful one. We came here to make it clear that Indonesia is in the top order of Australian priorities, to say that we are serious neighbours, that we have obviously the longer term to live together and that we want to concentrate on issues of substance. But I think we've got the balance right in talking about those issues and at the same time making clear our views on some of the matters which have been controversial in the past. So we said we come as neighbours, we've got much to do together, we can develop each others economies, we can come more closer together culturally and as well as that, we've been able to say the things that we feel strongly about and put a point clearly.

So I think that has been both understood and received well by the Government of Indonesia and hence I regard the visit as a successful one.

J: Should Prime Ministers and Ministers come here more often?

PM: Obviously one should be visiting one's neighbours more than one visits distant parts. We've had I think now 16 Australian Ministers here in the last couple of years so there's a great exchange and a substantial number of visits by Indonesian Ministers to Australia in the recent past. So there is a lot going on, and of course getting the Government's agreement to a Ministerial Forum will also help because it means we will have regular dialogue with a range of ministers

both foreign and economic ministers about that which is happening. Now I met eight Economic Ministers for lunch the other day and they're terribly interested in Australia, they're pleased Australia is investing in this country and I think they will welcome a greater frequency of official exchanges.

J: Prime Minister, what should we be expecting, maybe that is the wrong word, what should we be looking for from the Indonesians to put the flesh on the bones of this?

PM: I think from my point of view, I came here to make this a visit which would bring us basically closer together, to focus on the fundamentals, not to come here looking for any particular support for initiatives or ventures, but simply to say we are here as friends, we take you seriously, we want to be part of your development, we want you to be part of ours. They've responded in kind and I think the interest in Australia and the fact that they accept the fact that Australians are now looking at the Asia-Pacific seriously, it is no longer tokenism, that it really is a serious engagement by Australia with the region, makes us I think a very serious force here and I think they are the things of substance, all the other things follow.

J: Have you considered inviting President Soeharto to visit Australia?

PM: I extended an invitation to President Soeharto this morning, saying if he would wish to visit Australia we would be delighted to have him.

J: ... (inaudible)

PM: The response that I normally give when I'm invited is to say thank you very much, if I have an opportunity I'll think about it.

J: Would you expect to see him within a year?

PM: No, he's got an election on this year.

J: Foreign Minister Alatas yesterday indicated that it might not be productive for the relationship for President Soeharto to visit, he seemed to be indicating that President Soeharto could face some hostile reception in Australia due to the East Timor issue. Do you share that view?

PM: That's a possibility but again it would be the substance that matters. I would certainly believe that but again it's a matter for him and his own schedule.

J: Going on to Papua New Guinea, are you aware of the Herald Sun's report of the internal Australian defence industries memo alleging that Australian aid is being used to buy guns and American guns at that?

PM: I was told about it, that was all. I haven't seen the report.

J: Will you be asking about the direction of aid to Papua New Guinea.

PM: We fund budget aid to the Government of Papua New Guinea, what they do with their aid is a matter for them basically.

J: Prime Minister, you say you've got the balance right, you feel you've got the balance right between the economic push and the human rights movement, how do you respond to those critics back in Australia who say that you haven't, that in fact you've been too soft and too apologetic?

PM: I've put my views firmly, I repeated them at a press conference, everything I said to the President you know because I've said it to you and I made our position clear where we stand on human rights questions. But again the balance has got to be there, and the appropriate balance is to recognise, I think the stability which the Soeharto Government has brought to the region, held the Indonesian archipelago together, bounded together as a nation, lifted its material standard of living and in the process given Australia a quarter of a century of peace of mind it would not otherwise have had, and to say that we appreciate that, that the Government is a feature in our stability and that we want to do more with it. Now that's the issue of primary substance, that and economic development in the relationship and one's got to get the balance right, governments have got to get the balance right.

J: Mr Keating, any disappointments in your trip to Indonesia?

PM: None, as I said yesterday I couldn't have had it any better I don't think.

J: Will you be taking any further steps to promote your proposal about APEC heads-of-government meetings?

PM: Well, I've written now to President Soeharto, I've spoken with him and to Prime Minister Miyazawa and President Bush after a conversation I have with President Bush in January. This is something which, as I said, I've got no deadlines on. I think over time it is going to happen and the earlier, the better.

J: But what is your next step?

- PM: I've got no other next steps to fulfil. As I said yesterday, I'm not beating a drum about it. I didn't come here, you know, on the basis that I had to produce some sort of support by President Soeharto for this. I came for the other reason - to build the relationship, that is why I'm here. And he said himself that he thought it was inevitable that it should happen, it is only a matter of when.
- J: Mr Keating, do you think the Papua New Guinean carriers that helped Australian troops in World War II are entitled to compensation?
- PM: That is not an issue I've thought much or know much about to be honest.
- J: Could I ask you a very related topic, what significance do you think Kokoda has for Australia?
- PM: Well I think Kokoda has enormous significance for Australia. In 1942, Australia was threatened with invasion for the first time and that invasion force was repelled by Australian troops alone in Papua New Guinea. When I say alone, of course after the battle in the Coral Sea, but in terms of the land war, alone. And while much of the Anzac tradition has been developed in World War I and around Gallipoli and Flanders, Australia was never threatened with invasion in World War I - it was in World War II. But the Anzac tradition has in fact really enhanced itself in World War II. But that is not reflected much in our contemporary treatment of the history. So what I would like to do if nothing else, in visiting Kokoda is to pay tribute to the Australians who fought for our liberty and for those who died there and to remember them.
- J: Should a Kokoda day replace Anzac day?
- PM: Well I don't think that is at all appropriate.
- J: Mr Keating, Dr Hewson will be there for the Anzac Day celebrations as well. Will you be prepared to put aside the political differences while you are outside the country as the former Prime Minister did when he went to Gallipoli?
- PM: Well he is coming, so therefore it is pretty obvious that we have. But, again, Opposition leaders and Prime Ministers have always been involved in Anzac Day ceremonies.
- J: Does the study of the strategic and technical imperatives of the Kokoda campaign incline you in any way towards the policy of forward defence nowadays?

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PM: I don't think the bar room here is a time to discuss the defence policy of Australia, Dennis, but all good will towards you, I mean, I think probably on that note I should leave.

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