



PRIME MINISTER

REMARKS BY THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON P J KEATING, MP

DINNER HOSTED BY THE PRIME MINISTER OF SINGAPORE,
MR GOH CHOK TONG

Mr Prime Minister, distinguished guests.

Thank you very much for this generous reception.

For Australian Prime Ministers coming to Singapore has always been a pleasure - though it must be said that these days it is invariably business that we do.

The pleasure comes from doing business with people who I've always thought shared with Australians a certain personal style.

Some people say that we're both inclined to be a bit blunt - which I will accept on the condition that it doesn't imply we're not sharp.

I would prefer to think that we're candid - direct. We both like to get to the heart of the matter.

Getting to the heart of the matter is what this visit of mine to Singapore - and Japan and Cambodia - is all about.

I want to talk directly to leaders in the region which matters most to Australia.

As you and I both know, Prime Minister, these days we are seeking answers to very large questions

- . about the future of the world trading system
- . about the institutional arrangements we need to create in this part of the world
- . about the security consequences which flow from the end of the cold war

The frankness and frequency of the dialogue between Singapore and Australia sets a good pattern for what needs to develop more broadly in the region.

Prime Minister

No people are more conscious than Singaporeans that economies are dynamic and constant change is required if a country is to keep up with the pace.

The evidence of how well you know that is all around us here in Singapore.

Australians are developing the same awareness with a speed which may surprise you.

The last decade has been a great educator: a deregulated, less protected, much more outward looking economy, like necessity itself, is a great educator.

Being very much more engaged with the dynamic economies of Asia has the same effect.

Not that our engagement in Asia is new.

The presence here in February of 1,000 Australian war veterans and their families to take part in the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the fall of Singapore was a solemn and significant reminder of that.

But the form and extent of engagement has changed. More accurately, it is changing. Radically changing.

Our two way trade with Singapore grew by 18 per cent last year, to \$4.2 billion.

You are our fourth largest export market, our sixth largest trading partner.

The operative word is "partner"; that is what we seek in Asia - partnerships.

It is why I am here.

One of the themes of the Business Seminar which I will be addressing tomorrow is "strategic linkages". We are seeking ways in which business in Australia and Singapore can work together, bilaterally and in the wider region.

As we found during our discussions this afternoon, Prime Minister, it is a good theme for this visit, and for our broader relationship.

My visit tomorrow with Defence Minister Yeo to HMAS Brisbane, which has been exercising with ships of the Singapore Navy and other partners in the Five Power Defence Arrangements is a reminder that we have important defence ties.

The fact that 3000 Singaporeans are studying in Australia - and, indeed, I understand four members of your Cabinet studied there - is further evidence that our relationship extends beyond pure trade.

But trade is the foundation of it: so long as we do all that is necessary for business to flourish, we can be confident that the relationship between Australia and Singapore will deepen and expand.

I am very confident about our relationship, Prime Minister. I am very confident about the future.

I thank you for your hospitality tonight and for your equally generous remarks - and I propose a toast.

To you, Prime Minister, and Mrs Goh.

To the prosperity and well-being of the people of Singapore.

And to the friendship between our two countries.

SINGAPORE

24 September 1992