

MASTER

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PRIME MINISTER

SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON P J KEATING, MP
OFFICIAL DINNER HOSTED BY PRESIDENT KIM YOUNG-SAM
CHONG WA DAE (THE BLUE HOUSE), SEOUL, 21 JUNE 1993

(EMBARGOED UNTIL 8.00 PM KOREAN TIME, 21 JUNE 1993)

I appreciate very much the warm welcome I have received on this my first visit to the Republic of Korea.

Ours is a friendship of long standing which spans the turbulent history of the Western Pacific in this century.

Our first contacts date from the arrival here around the turn of the century of Australian missionaries.

In 1950, Australia was one of the 16 countries which sent military forces under the United Nations flag to assist the Republic of Korea in its bitter struggle against aggression.

About 17,000 Australian soldiers, sailors and airmen served in the United Nations forces. Australians will always be proud of the service they gave.

The loss of life and devastation caused by the Korean War was horrendous, and it has demanded of the Korean people great qualities of faith and endurance, not just to withstand the hardship and suffering, but to overcome it and build this modern Korean society.

Australians who know Korea well admire Koreans' courage and resilience.

They respect not only your recent achievements: they respect also your long struggle earlier this century to achieve independence and to reassert the rich tradition of your national heritage and culture.

As one of the world's oldest democracies, Australians also applaud the great achievement of the Korean people in establishing democratic political institutions.

We congratulate you, Mr President, on your decisive win in last December's presidential election.

My own Government was returned in the Australian election which was held in March.

So like you, I know something of the excitement and challenge of the electoral process.

Your election as the first civilian President in 35 years is itself a great step forward in the maturing of the Korean political system.

We admire the vigour with which your new Administration has set about the task of stimulating and revitalising the economy.

We are no less impressed by your campaign to strengthen democratic institutions and create in Korea honest and open government.

Mr President, what I have seen in Seoul today helps me to understand in new ways the pride of your people in their achievements - in economic development and nation-building.

Korea's record of economic growth and dynamism over the last four decades has been truly impressive.

We value greatly the partnership that we have forged with you in the course of your extraordinary economic advance.

In 1992, Australia-Korea two-way trade was worth over five billion Australian dollars.

The size of Australia-Korea trade and the interdependence it generates between key industries on each side give our economic relationship a strategic character which commits us to an enduring, long-term partnership.

We are a reliable source of high quality and competitively priced mineral and energy commodities for Korean industry, and this is a role we take very seriously.

As well as expanding established areas of commerce, we are interested in widening and diversifying the base of our economic and business relationship.

We also would like to see expanding air links to support the growth of tourism, education and business travel in both directions.

Increasing numbers of visitors in both directions, establishment of parallel cultural foundations, and efforts to promote the study of the Korean language in Australia will increase awareness of each other's society and culture.

And that can only deepen our friendship.

Mr President, our strong and successful bilateral relationship also provides Australia and Korea with an opportunity to work together in helping nurture a stronger sense of community among the countries of the Asia-Pacific region.

Australia and Korea share a fundamental interest in the maintenance of an open and non-discriminatory multilateral trading system.

We also share a vital interest in encouraging economic cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region, and in having the countries of North America and the Western Pacific remain together within the same vibrant trading community.

In 1989, our countries played decisive roles in helping launch the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation or APEC process which is now showing such promise as a vehicle for promoting open economic regionalism in the Pacific area.

I have been encouraged by the strong support given by the Korean Government to the proposal I made last year to establish a process of periodic meetings of APEC leaders.

Interest in this proposal is now gathering momentum.

If realised, it will add status and authority to APEC and ensure that it becomes the pre-eminent vehicle for advancing economic cooperation and trade liberalisation in the Asia-Pacific region.

The economic dynamism of the Republic of Korea and other East Asian countries provides a very positive outlook for our region.

But to achieve this great promise it will be important that our efforts towards economic institution-building through APEC are complemented by appropriate attention to regional security.

Australia recognises continuing uncertainty in the security situation on the Korean Peninsula.

More widely in the region, a general trend towards a more favourable security outlook is tempered by increased fluidity in strategic affairs.

Maintaining in good order the bilateral alliances that Australia, the Republic of Korea and Japan each have with the United States is therefore very important.

In addition, both our countries welcome the increasing support throughout the region for processes of security dialogue.

Mr President, as I explained in our talks today, Australia is now embarked on a sustained effort to make our economy more competitive, more open and better placed to take full advantage of economic dynamism in East Asia.

For Australia, the economic imperative of integrating more closely with Asia coincides well with the regional focus of our diplomatic and security policy.

The Asia-Pacific region is where Australia must work out its destiny: the changes we have made and are continuing to make, to our economy and to our business and industrial culture, have been expressly geared to this.

These efforts are now finding expression in an increasingly confident and independent view of Australia's national identity, and a broad debate about the institutional forms and symbols of our nationhood reflects this.

As we strive to transform our economy and engage Asia more closely, we value all the more the relationship we enjoy with the Republic of Korea.

Based on trust and friendship and a congruence of economic and regional interests, our relationship with you can only advance and prosper.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I should be glad if you would join me in a reciprocal toast

- to the good health of President and Mrs Kim
- to the success and prosperity of the Republic of Korea, and
- to Australia-Korea friendship.