



PRIME MINISTER

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**SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON P.J. KEATING, MP
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Well, it's a great pleasure to welcome our Indonesian guests to Canberra for this Ministerial Forum.

As you know, in 1992, President Soeharto and I agreed that it would be to our nations' mutual benefit if our Ministers from across the whole range of government activity got together on a regular and formal basis.

We agreed on the Ministerial Forum because we both had a very strong sense that, by being a bit more creative and enterprising across a wider range of Ministerial portfolios, we would find new avenues for cooperation.

Back in 1992, President Soeharto and I realised that the relationship was moving beyond the single purview of even the most activist Foreign Ministers - and they don't make them much more activist than Gareth and Ali.

I should mention that the outstanding work that Gareth and Ali have put into this relationship over a long time - their intelligent and persistent efforts - have been critical in constructing the foundation on which we now build and our thanks go to them for that.

But Gareth and Ali would be the first to agree that the Australia-Indonesia relationship is growing richer and deeper by the close engagement of their colleagues from other portfolios.

Nothing brought this home to me more clearly than the Australia Today promotion, which I and a large number of my cabinet colleagues attended in Jakarta in June this year.

And let me again thank Coordinating Minister Hartarto for his great support as patron of the promotion.

The business forum and the trade exhibition, which together formed a key part of the Australia Today promotion, showed an Australian business community eager to expand its commercial links with Indonesia.

More than 200 Australian business people made their way to Jakarta in what was the largest business mission ever to leave Australia.

But in many ways we shouldn't be surprised by this level of interest - after all, our two way trade has grown at a trend rate of 22 per cent for the past five years to reach \$3 billion in 1993. And Australia is one of the top ten investors in Indonesia with investments of over \$2.5 billion.

Maintaining that strong growth in the commercial relationship is one of the key aims of this Ministerial Forum. And even in its short life, the Forum has been a catalyst for growth in new areas.

Let me briefly touch upon just some of those areas because they show us all just how much is actually being done.

Through the Forum we have developed bilateral agreements on copyright protection, education and training, customs and health.

We have also set up a program of training and technical assistance to strengthen Indonesia's intellectual property regime.

The Forum's Working Group on trade, industry and investment has helped to resolve a number of impediments on the trade and investment front while also promoting industry collaboration in sectors as diverse as shipbuilding, aerospace, automotive components, medical and scientific equipment, and textiles, clothing and footwear.

The Working Group on agriculture and food cooperation has already facilitated three joint ventures in meat and livestock and two potential joint ventures in horticulture. And the joint venture in cattle breeding involving the Australian Heytesbury Pastoral Group should be operational this year.

The Working Group on education and training has promoted cooperation in areas ranging from university management to training in tourism.

And under the Memorandum of Understanding on Education and Training, we have identified legal education as a priority area for cooperation.

As part of the reform of its legal system, Indonesia has identified a need to build its legal teaching profession.

So I am very pleased to announce tonight that the Australian Government will establish an Australia-Indonesia Legal Education Fellowship.

This fellowship will enable an eminent Indonesian nominee to undertake a period of study in Australia which will contribute to legal teaching in Indonesia.

Of course, the things that are happening in the Australia-Indonesia relationship are not confined to the Forum and its Working Groups.

Our Transport Ministers who met here in Canberra last month have laid the ground work for greater cooperation on transport links between northern Australia and eastern Indonesia.

In the science and technology fields, we have had an active program of collaboration and I am delighted that Foreign Minister Alatas and Senator Cook will tomorrow sign an umbrella agreement on science and technology.

My colleague Brian Howe and his Indonesian counterparts have also been exploring opportunities for cooperation in housing and urban development.

In the past two years, we have exchanged ministerial-led tripartite industrial relations missions with Australia supporting trade union training and occupational health and safety projects in Indonesia.

Following Senator Ray's recent successful visit, our Defence Ministers have agreed to hold annual meetings.

As you can see, there are few areas of government activity where we're not doing something new. The relationship is growing in all directions.

For Australia's part at least, it's hard to think of any single bilateral relationship where so much is going on.

But, of course, our cooperation is by no means confined to the bilateral agenda.

We are working together on many multilateral issues. Links between AFTA and CER, the ASEAN Regional Forum, regional issues such as Cambodia, and global issues like the World Trade Organisation, are all areas where Indonesian-Australian cooperation has helped shape productive outcomes.

We are, of course, particularly looking forward to cooperating with Indonesia and our other APEC partners in ensuring the success of the very important APEC leaders' meeting which President Soeharto will chair in Bogor in November.

As I have said before no country is more important to Australia than Indonesia. The relations between us have never been better or more broadly based than they are now.

That's not to say that we won't encounter problems from time to time, or that we don't have to work hard to make the relationship work. Nor is it to understate the differences between our societies.

But it is to say that the compelling logic of our geography and our economic development will continue to open up more and more areas for cooperation.

I have no doubt that this Forum will be fruitful. What we are learning from each such meeting, from every new contact, is that this relationship between Australia and Indonesia has much more to give us than we have yet taken from it - that the more things we do together, the more we discover what new and exciting opportunities lie within our grasp.