

Doorstop

PRIME MINISTER:

We're coming to the end of our visit here in Papua New Guinea. It's been a very successful one. We've reflected on the extraordinary sacrifice of Australians and Papua New Guineans 75 years ago, a sacrifice that secured for us freedoms that we enjoy today. We honour that and thank those men and women for the work they did and the sacrifices they made, of the mateship, endurance, courage and sacrifice that they showed in those dark years.

And our economic relationship and our relationship in every respect; defence and security, strategic gets stronger and stronger. We've had very constructive, warm practical discussions with Prime Minister O'Neill and his Ministers and of course our engagement with PNG is so multi-faceted in so many agencies, so many Ministers, Departments, our High Commissioner of course and his team doing an outstanding job ensuring that Australia was always there to work in partnership, to support PNG in its development and securing its future. So it's been a very good visit.

Now today I'm leaving to India as you know. What a remarkable story India presents. You know this is one of the great achievements of our times, 1.2 billion people, world's second most populous nation, shortly to become the most populous, growing at 7 per cent a year in terms of its economic growth, but above all consider this, a democracy, this giant democracy, this giant, vibrant democracy with more than a dozen languages, more than a dozen scripts, many, many religions, so diverse and a nation that had not been a nation within those borders prior to 1947. So this is an extraordinary political achievement. The very fact that India has succeeded is remarkable and a great tribute to the enterprise and the energy of the Indian people.

And of course led by a Prime Minister who is determined to super charge India's growth into the 21st Century. Indians used to lament about a low rate of growth they use to talk about the Hindu growth rate and compare their growth rate unfavorably to that of China. Well India is showing it can grow at a rapid rate and that is offering enormous opportunities for Australia.

Our two-way trade is \$20 billion a year versus say \$150 billion with China. So you can see that our trade with India has a lot, there is a lot of untapped potential there. Now this is a key part of my visit and of course all the other engagement that my Ministers and Australian business men and women are having with India at the present time. Of course we're supported by a very strong Indian community in Australia, half a million Australians of Indian background, it's the largest single source of migrants to Australia last year and that's a vital part of our most, ours is the most successful multicultural society in the world.

Education is a very big part of our relationship. 60,000 Indian students studying in Australia and Australia the most preferred place for foreign education for young Indians after the United States. That is a very big

statement. So there's going to be a lot to discuss. It is a relationship of enormous potential. India is a giant now and will become stronger and more substantial, more significant in the years ahead as it continues to grow.

So I'm looking forward to the visit and to the discussions with Prime Minister Modi, they play a key part in securing Australia's prosperity. Our future prosperity lies as I said in the room this morning, in free trade and in open markets. We Australians can do anything, we can be and we are the best in the world but we want to have the biggest field, the most open fields to run onto because that's how we can succeed.

JOURNALIST:

Mr Turnbull will you be promoting the Adani coal mine while you're in India as part of your energy talks?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well we'll certainly be talking about the importance of energy exports to India as you know India has a massive program of expanding electrification across the country and Australian coal has a very big role to play in that.

JOURNALIST:

Prime Minister, sorry if you can just take a question from my Papua New Guinean colleagues.

PRIME MINISTER:

Sure.

JOURNALIST:

[inaudible]

PRIME MINISTER:

Well this is a, that's a matter for the people of PNG absolutely but you know the relationship between PNG and Australia and the engagement between PNG and Australia is of vital importance to both countries and it continues before and after elections. We're democracies. We regularly have elections. We have them more often than you do, we have three year terms, yours are five-year terms, but it's important to continue that engagement and the visit and the timing of my visit is entirely unrelated to any domestic political events in PNG.

JOURNALIST:

The Russians [inaudible] cruise missile capable vessel to the Mediterranean off the Syrian coast, they also say that [inaudible] treaty that we were talking about yesterday has been cancelled. Could you give us your judgement as to whether the risks in the region have increased in the last two days or are you satisfied that this is posturing from Moscow?

PRIME MINISTER:

Firstly, on the question of deconfliction. And what we're talking about here is the arrangement whereby both Russians and coalition forces, US led coalition forces keep each other posted as to where they will be operating so as to avoid conflicts. I've spoken to the Chief of the Defence Force just a few minutes ago, my information is based on that discussion but in practical terms the parties are doing what I expected them to do as I said to you yesterday that is, acting in their own mutual self-interest which is to avoid operating in areas where there would be confliction that could occur. So that is the current practical position as I'm talking to you now based on my discussion a few moments ago with CDF.

In terms of Russia. The onus is now on Russia to pull Assad into line. Let's be quite clear, the Assad regime is a client state of Russia. Now the Americans have taken a very carefully calibrated response designed to prevent that airbase at Sharyat being used for further chemical attacks and to send a strong message to the Assad regime that they will not tolerate this breach of international law, this gassing of the Syrian population. Now the Americans are not, have made it very clear, that that is a one-off response, they are not proposing to escalate or take further steps in the absence of any other action by the Syrian Government.

So the onus now is on Russia to ensure that Syria does not engage in any other provocative actions and Russia itself is not engaged in any other provocative actions. The pressure now should be on all of the parties including Russia and the Assad regime to bring this conflict to an end. You've got to be very clear about this. The American response was swift, it was just and it was very calibrated.

JOURNALIST:

Prime Minister, is there any concern for Australia that the Papua New Guinea Government is broke? It's got a desperate search for credit internationally to shore up its Forex problems and it can't pay its own bills, you've just talked about the importance of Australia's business link to PNG, what if the PNG Government is in this position, is that a problem for you and for Australia?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well the management of the public finances of PNG is a matter for the PNG Government. The Australian Government works closely with PNG as you know. We have a very large development aid program here in PNG and we look forward to continuing that work. But matters concerning the administration of the public finances of Papua New Guinea should be addressed to the Government of Papua New Guinea and no doubt all of those issues will be lively ones in the weeks ahead.

Thank you all very much, and I look forward to seeing the travelling party in India.

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