

Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull visits Sri Lanka

Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull has held productive discussions with the President and Prime Minister of Sri Lanka, during a visit to Colombo.

The visit marked the 70th anniversary of bilateral relations and highlighted the strong friendship between the two countries.

The leaders identified new areas of collaboration including in trade and investment, defence and security matters. Prime Minister Turnbull expressed appreciation for Sri Lanka's strong cooperation in countering people smuggling.

In discussions with President Sirisena, Prime Minister Turnbull announced three Australian Stabicraft vessels will be given to the Sri Lankan Coast Guard to boost maritime security, as well as assistance from the Australian Federal Police to reinforce Sri Lanka's counter-narcotics efforts. This builds on the strong existing cooperation between Australia and Sri Lanka in addressing transnational crime, and people smuggling.

Prime Minister Turnbull also offered Australia's support to establish Sri Lanka's proposed National Defence College, with a senior Australian military officer to be seconded to the College for two years from 2018.

The leaders discussed shared strategic interests and agreed that Australia and Sri Lanka, as Indian Ocean trading nations, had a strong common interest in working together to preserve the rules-based order that has underpinned the region's peace and prosperity.

During the visit, Prime Minister Turnbull and Prime Minister Wickremesinghe witnessed the signing of a bilateral Trade and Investment Framework Arrangement, which will establish regular senior officials' talks to facilitate trade and investment. The Framework follows on from the Joint Declaration on Enhanced Cooperation signed during President Sirisena's visit to Australia.

With two-way trade approaching A\$1billion, strong recent growth in education links and tourism, opportunities in energy and resources and agribusiness, and the resumption this week of direct flights between Sri Lanka and Australia, Leaders agreed that the economic relationship was poised to take off.

The Prime Ministers discussed the planned establishment of Sri Lanka's Parliamentary Budget Office, and Prime Minister Turnbull extended an offer of capacity-building and training assistance once the Office was in operation. This was in keeping with Australia's wider support through the World Bank for Sri Lanka's reform efforts in innovation, trade facilitation and ease of doing business.

Prime Minister Turnbull's visit completed the celebrations for the 70th anniversary of bilateral relations between Australia and Sri Lanka this year, and laid the foundation for even closer ties in the years to come.

Visit to Israel and the Palestinian Territories

The Australia-Israel relationship is in great shape.

This week, Prime Minister Netanyahu and I agreed initiatives that will advance our two countries shared interests in national security, counter-terrorism, cyber security, innovation, and trade and investment.

We witnessed the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding on Defence Industry Cooperation to strengthen ties between the Australian Department of Defence and the Israeli Ministry of Defence, especially in the area of defence industry innovation. And we agreed that our two defence departments will now hold annual discussions on strategic and security priorities.

Prime Minister Netanyahu and I also committed to share our national experiences and expertise in aviation security and the protection of crowded places. Australian security officials will soon travel to Israel to gain insights into Israel's world-class methods in targeting and screening air cargo, and in securing public spaces. And I have invited Israeli officials to Australia to learn about border management technology and the measures in our newly launched Strategy for Protecting Crowded Places from Terrorism.

Australia and Israel are embracing the digital world with a sense of enthusiasm and optimism. Australia's Landing Pad in Tel Aviv is connecting Australian businesses and entrepreneurs with Israel's sophisticated network of global investors, research and development centres, startups and service providers.

To consider how our two countries can best promote global cybersecurity efforts that enhance an open, free and secure Internet, my Cyber Minister, Dan Tehan, attended a Roundtable on Cyber Security. With senior representatives from the public and private sectors and academia, a forward work program was established that will help protect our citizens from emerging cyber threats. We look forward to the first of these 1.5 Track Cyber Security Dialogues to be hosted in Australia next year.

Australians should be proud of the support we offer to the Palestinian people. Through our foreign aid program, we assist the Palestinians to foster economic growth, fund education and improve services. This week, I travelled to Ramallah to convey Australia's ongoing commitment to an independent Palestinian state sitting side by side a secure Israel. This was the first

visit to The Palestinian Territories by an Australian Prime Minister since 2000.

2017 marks a historic year for the Australia-Israel relationship. Prime Minister Netanyahu's visit to Australia in February this year was the first by a serving Israeli Prime Minister, and my visit to Israel was the first by a sitting Australian Prime Minister in 17 years. I am confident that my strong personal commitment and friendship shared with PM Netanyahu will propel the relationship to new heights.

Remarks at the Australian Strategic Policy Institute Beersheba Dialogue

PRIME MINISTER:

I want to acknowledge Jeanne and your late father, Fiona and the whole family.

What you've done, really, is with the Beersheba commemoration, it adds such an important additional tie, context to the Australia-Israel relationship.

So many Israeli's said to me in the last week there has never been so much about Australia and New Zealand in the Israeli media.

Our relationship is, I believe, is stronger than it has ever been, closer than it has ever been. This dialogue is a good example of that. And this is the year in which the first Israeli Prime Minister has visited Australia, when Bibi came in February to a rockstar welcome. And of course, I'm visiting here as PM, although I'm by no means the first Prime Minister to come here, but the first since 2000, so that is quite a while.

Our memorandum of understanding on defence industry cooperation is critically important.

The growing collaboration on cyber is important.

We are establishing an annual bilateral strategic dialogue.

And generally right across the board we are getting closer than ever and the collaboration is very intense. A lot of it we can't really talk about but we have the same values, and we know that to defend those values and maintain those values generation after generation has to be prepared to fight for them. They are maintained with blood and treasure over the generations.

And we face the same threats from Islamist terrorism, or militant Islamist terrorism as Bibi described it, and it is in the cyber context that we need to work more closely than ever.

Sometimes people talk about cyber as being an additional theatre – land, sea, air, cyber. I think the reality is that cyber affects everything. It is in a completely connected world where distance has been abolished by technology. The need to work more closely together is more and more vital.

Nowhere is far away from anywhere else. That is a critical thing to understand.

You are in a position, and I'll tell you, the recent aviation plot that was disrupted in Sydney, and this was a couple of people who had a bomb, they were going to blow up an airliner, a A380 – you could imagine what a shocking crime that would have been. And they were working on a chemical bomb, chemical dispersal device. They were being directed over the internet, over encrypted applications from the Middle East.

Now that ability for somebody to be sitting in Syria, or anywhere else in the world and to be able to direct operations seamlessly as though they were in the room next door, makes in this great big world of ours the threat of terrorism so much closer.

Nowhere is far away from anywhere else.

The Middle East is not a long way away from Australia. As Bibi said it is a big schlep, yeah sure, on an aeroplane but in terms of communications it is just nanoseconds.

So that is why dialogues like the work that is being done by our National Security College right across the board, the more closely we can work together on counter-terrorism, on cyber in particular, the more effective we will be at keeping our two nations safe.

And I'll just conclude on a more physical threat – we saw yesterday the tragic terrorist attack in New York.

A truck attack. We've seen this in Australia of course.

It is a technique that has proliferated ever since the Nice truck attack. Remember, last year, when a terrorist drove a truck down the Promenade des Anglais in Nice and killed many people. This drive-down technique is very available obviously because you can, we've been successful of keeping terrorists out of aircraft but how do you stop people getting a truck or a van, as we saw on the London Bridge attack. Just an ordinary van with sandbags in the back to make it heavier.

So protecting crowded places is vitally important. Our national Crowded Places, Protection of Crowded Places Strategy, which was released in August, was a piece of work I commissioned last year after the Nice attack and recognising that we needed to do more and to ensure that we were coordinating more thoughtful design, more thoughtful responses, more effective responses into protecting crowded places.

Now we have had very strong assistance and collaboration, it is a two-way street of course, with Israel and a number of other international partners.

Again, we have to use all of our connections, all of our relationships in order to fulfil our commitment, our most important commitment as leaders to keep our people safe. That is the first duty of government.

We have outstanding defence forces, national security forces, intelligence forces in Australia, just as Israel does and we must always commit to give them the resources they need, whether it is the financial resources, the legislative resources, the technical resources to keep our people safe.

And the partnership, the collaboration of Israel is a very important part of that.

Thank you very much for holding this dialogue. Congratulations. Anthony, Mark and all of your team, Colin – it is good to be here.

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Doorstop at Grove of Nations

PRIME MINISTER:

Lucy and I have been very honoured by the very warm welcome we have enjoyed here in Israel.

I've had very, very productive discussions with the Prime Minister, with the President and, of course, with the Opposition Leaders this morning as well.

The visit to Yad Vashem as I'm sure you all know is one of the most moving, confronting experiences anyone can have anywhere in the world.

As I said, when I signed the book at the end, all the oceans of the world can't contain our tears but all the world's steel can't match our determination standing with Israel and the Jewish people to resolve never again.

The Holocaust, this unspeakable crime against the Jewish people can never be forgotten and it is a reminder never again why the State of Israel must be strong, why its territorial integrity must be defended and why we work together so closely and more closely all the time.

In the fight against terrorism around the world tight collaboration, we share the same values and we have the same threats to our democracy and our way of life.

On that point, I want to express our very great sadness at the shocking terrorist attack in New York, which has coincided with another terrorist attack in Kabul.

Our prayers and love are with the victims and we are resolved more than ever to defeat terrorism and keep our people safe.

Now, on the subject, on that particular subject, as you know, the attack in New York was a truck attack – what they call in Israel a drive-down attack. You would know that we recently released a strategy document, a very substantial strategy document and planning document for protecting Crowded Places from terrorist attack in Australia.

This was something I initiated last year after the Nice truck attack and we had considerable assistance and co-operation with Israeli authorities in preparing that Crowded Places Strategy and the strategies and techniques to protect Crowded Places was one of the many security topics that I discussed with Prime Minister Netanyahu.

So its been a very strong visit and, of course, it has been framed by that extraordinary charge of the Australian Light Horse. 100 years ago those young Australians and their horses, many of which they brought from Australia, captured the town of Beersheba from the Ottoman Turks that enabled then the liberation of Palestine, which enabled then the creation in the years to come of the State of Israel.

It was that victory in Beersheba, that Anzac victory at Beersheba paved the way for the State of Israel.

Perhaps beyond the imagination of the young men who were so brave on that day, but they defied history with that courageous charge, they made history and they fulfilled history.

JOURNALIST:

Prime Minister, Barnaby Joyce says he can't be certain if there are more dual citizens or not in the Parliament. Do you agree? And if so, do we have to have some sort of audit for certainty.

PRIME MINISTER:

It is very important to remember that every member and senator has an obligation to comply with the Constitution.

Now, any member or senator who believes that they are not in compliance with the Constitution, who believes they may be a dual citizen, should take steps to confirm that and if they believe that is the case, then they can take steps to ensure that it is referred to the High Court.

The only body that can declare somebody disqualified from the Parliament for this reason is the High Court of Australia and, of course, ultimately it's the only body that can resolve disputes about it.

But the obligation is a personal one on each member and senator.

After all, when you run for Parliament, you sign, you tick a box on the form which says you're not in breach of Section 44.

JOURNALIST:

Given this issue has been dragging on for months now, Prime Minister – given this issue has been dragging on for months and Senator Parry says he only raised a few days ago to report this. Is that explanation deceptive or just dumb?

PRIME MINISTER:

Look, Senator Parry, I'm disappointed that Senator Parry didn't make public this issue, this issue some time ago, quite some time ago.

JOURNALIST:

When did you first learn about it?

PRIME MINISTER:

I learnt about it probably about the same time you did on Tuesday, yesterday.

So it was – so he chose to delay his reporting of it, he should have reported it much earlier and it could have been referred to the High Court together with the other matters that were dealt with, the other citizenship by dissent cases.

JOURNALIST:

Does that mean he should repay any wages from the time he should have declared it?

PRIME MINISTER:

There are past practices for dealing with those issues and I'll leave that to the Finance Minister. They've been dealt with in different cases in the past.

But, look, the fundamental point, though, and let me go straight to this point you raise of an audit – I mean – what is an audit? Does that mean that somebody is going to undertake extensive genealogical research on every Member of Parliament and Senator? Undertake extensive research into foreign laws?

The fact is every member and every senator has a personal responsibility and an obligation to comply with the Constitution.

And so everyone should ensure that they are in compliance and if they're not, they should say so and if there is a question of doubt, then, of course, it can be referred to the High Court.

JOURNALIST:

How worried are you if one senator can keep it hidden for four months that others aren't doing the same?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well, I expect every member and senator to take their obligation very seriously and to – if they feel they're not in compliance with the Constitution to say so.

You have got to remember these issues are not without some complexity.

It is not just a question of where your parents were born or were your grandparents were born.

The reality is about half of all Australians were either born overseas or have a parent born overseas so the High Court's decision is of great significance and huge impact on millions of Australians, potentially.

But the important thing is that it's the responsibility of each member and senator to examine their own affairs, form a view and if they feel that they are not in compliance with the constitution, they should say so.

JOURNALIST:

Prime Minister, is there an obligation on you though to go back to all those MPs-

PRIME MINISTER:

Pardon?

JOURNALIST:

Is there an obligation on you now though to go back to all of your MPs and all of your senators and request more information?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well, the point is the senators and members are not – the senators and members who have put their hand up and said that they have, that they are not in compliance of the Constitution are the ones that have done so.

So the reality is it is a personal responsibility of each member and senator and the only body that can actually make a finding that somebody is not qualified to sit in the Parliament is, in fact, the High Court. That is a critically important point.

Senator Parry has made a decision, he believes it's clear-cut and he's resigning from the Senate.

But it will still have to go to the High Court to confirm that he was disqualified and may well be a very short hearing and then to make a decision as to how the vacancy will be filled.

So Senator Parry's case will have to be referred to the High Court when the Parliament resumes.

JOURNALIST:

Barnaby Joyce has backed a call from Wacka Williams for him to become President of the Senate? Are you open to that going to a National, not a Liberal?

PRIME MINISTER:

It is a matter for the senators and the Liberal Party as the larger party in the Coalition has always chosen from its senators the President when we are in government.

JOURNALIST:

Did you raise the issue of Israeli settlements with Prime Minister Netanyahu?

PRIME MINISTER:

Yes I have. We discussed the settlement issue and the peace process at some considerable length and I look forward to – as I have with other Israeli leaders during my visit – and I look forward to discussing that with the Prime Minister Rami Hamdallah later today.

JOURNALIST:

What did you say and do you see them as undermining the two-state solution?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well, Australia supports a two-state solution – that's to say it is two states for two peoples.

Obviously, agreement has to be reached and the boundary line has to be agreed, but it's not for us to draw that line, that is a matter to be negotiated between the parties. I look forward to-

JOURNALIST:

Do the settlements undermine that process?

PRIME MINISTER:

Again, I will – that is a matter between the two parties, where the lines are drawn. But they, obviously, it has to be negotiated.

JOURNALIST:

Prime Minister, you are clearly quite good mates with Benjamin Netanyahu and have embraced him literally here in Jerusalem. Considering that the Israelis turned yesterday into some extent into a day of nationalism, flag waving on the streets of Beersheba, how does that fit into the context of you now going to the Palestinian authority and trying to engage them in a conversation about Australia's policy for a two-state solution?

PRIME MINISTER:

I don't see any conflict there at all. I don't, I'm not quite sure what point you're trying to make.

JOURNALIST:

Well a lot of the, with respect, a lot of the Palestinian families say that the role the Palestinians played in that battle was largely overlooked, that it was very much focused on this giving birth to the Israeli State when many Palestinians fought alongside the allied troops and hoped that they would perhaps have self-rule. So there is some concern about the extent that it was an Israeli event in that sense. What are your thoughts on that?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well, Beersheba is an Israeli city. We are in the State of Israel. Israel are our hosts and we, they have been warm and generous hosts and I want to thank again the Prime Minister and the people of Israel for the very warm welcome they have given all of their Australian and New Zealand visitors.

JOURNALIST:

Do you accept that the West Bank is occupied?

PRIME MINISTER:

Look, again, I have had some very productive discussions with the Prime Minister and other Israeli leaders and I look forward to discussing this with the Palestinian Prime Minister.

Now, just before we go, I just want to, I thought you might ask me about this, but I want to just restate the absolute commitment that Australia has to ensuring the territorial integrity, the peace and safety of the State of Israel.

This is a remarkable, a miraculous country. Its achievements are extraordinary in every respect. It faces overwhelming odds and yet it has prospered out of the darkness, the unspeakable darkness of the Holocaust and those oceans of tears, look at what has been created here in Israel – it is a great, this is a great achievement. It is a triumph of hope and determination and optimism and passion over the worst evil imaginable.

And we are very good friends. Our relationship, our collaboration gets closer all the time and I am very honoured to have been the first Prime Minister to visit Israel since, Australian Prime Minister, since 2000. And of course in this year, 2017, PM Netanyahu was the first Israeli Prime Minister to visit Australia. So it is a great year in stronger and stronger relations between Australia and Israel.

Thank you all very much.

[ENDS]

Remarks at Yad Vashem – The World Holocaust Remembrance Center

PRIME MINISTER:

All of the world's oceans cannot contain our tears but all of the world's steel cannot match the strength of our determination as we stand with Israel and the Jewish people and resolve, never again.

Thank you for this and thank you again for being our hosts here today. This is the second time Lucy and I have been at Yad Vashem.

It is one of the most moving experiences that anyone can have.

The sheer banality of evil, as Hannah Arendt said, shocks us to the very core. The mind recoils from it.

Lucy and I have visited the Wannsee House where the Final Solution was planned by bureaucrats and it reminds us that the smartest, the most technological, the most educated can do the most terrible things.

That is why we must never forget and why we must resolve with strength, the strength of all the world's steel never again.

Thank you very much for hosting us here today.

Thank you.

[ENDS]