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MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS The Hon. Kevin Rudd MP

TRANSCRIPT OF JOINT PRESS CONFERENCE WITH INDIAN EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

MINISTER SHRI S.M. KRISHNA

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E & O E – PROOF ONLY

KEVIN RUDD: Thank you very much ladies and gentlemen of the press.

First of all what I'd like to do publicly is to welcome our good friend and colleague Minister Krishna, the Indian Minister for External Affairs, to Australia. We have had the opportunity to meet on a number of occasions in the past, both in Australia and in Delhi, but it's particularly good to have him here in Melbourne today.

I'd also like to thank him very much for his kind expression of sympathy and support and solidarity for those Australians who are currently suffering the impact of floods. India, being the country that it is and coming from the region it comes from, understands full well the impact of natural disasters on her own people. And I thank you very much, Minister, for conveying the sentiments of your government and your people at a time when many in this country are going through a tough period.

India and Australia are old established and continuing democracies. We therefore, as countries share so many fundamental common values - India, of course, is the world's Minister's Office: 02 6277 7500 or 0434 664 589 Department: 02 6261 1555 2

largest democracy - but beyond its democratic status, and beyond it upholding the rule of law and those conventions which we also hold dear in this country, and the values which underpin that in the world at large, India is also a major power.

India now is the world's fourth largest economy, and within a couple of decades is likely to loom for Australia as significant as China looms economically for Australia today. India's economy was expected to have grown by nearly 10 per cent in 2010. India weathered the global financial crisis well. India therefore is a key contributor to the continued health of the global economy, and this therefore is significant to all countries, including Australia.

When I had the great fortune to visit India, then as Prime Minister of Australia, in October of 2009 moving into November of 2009, together with Prime Minister Singh, we agreed that we should formally declare this relationship between India and Australia as one of a strategic partnership.

And today the Minister and I have discussed a vast range of common challenges which those engaged in strategic partnership feel comfortable discussing. Within our wider region and the world, we have spent time discussing the future of the East Asia Summit where India and Australia are members.

This is an important emerging institution which over time will help shape the rules of the road for the wider Asia-Pacific region in political, security and economic terms, and we look forward to continue to work with our friends in New Delhi on how to shape those rules of the road.

Together with India, we are members of the G20, the premium body, the premier body of global economic governance, where we have worked closely and effectively together since the darkest days of the global financial crisis, and will continue to do so in the future given many of the uncertainties which continue to lie ahead in the global economy.

Also, India and Australia are Indian Ocean countries therefore we are members of an association which brings together the various Indian Ocean states, the Indian Ocean Rim Association where India is currently chair, and where Australia will be chair in the years which follows. And we're therefore looking at ways and means by which we can enhance that body's future role in ensuring that the wider Indian Ocean remains an area where the peace and security and prosperity of Indian Ocean countries is guaranteed into the future.

Australia also, beginning last year in 2010, began as an observer in the South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation, SAARC - beginning at the 2010 meeting in its summit in Bhutan.

Also globally we are active with our friends in India on the great challenges of climate change. We worked very closely together at the recently concluded UNFCCC meeting at Cancun. And I'd like to particularly pay tribute to the work done by Indian Environment Minister Ramesh in what was a difficult negotiation but ultimately a successful negotiation on so many fronts, particularly in the context of measurement and verification, where Minister Ramesh's role was important for securing the final agreement which we obtained. Minister's Office: 02 6277 7500 or 0434 664 589 Department: 02 6261 1555 3

Bilaterally, India and Australia are now engaged in a defence policy dialogue. Our inaugural talks were held in New Delhi in December 2010.

Beyond that, Australia and India are also examining the feasibility of an Australia-India free trade agreement and its joint feasibility study. These matters are still being deliberated upon by our colleagues in New Delhi, and we look forward to the conclusion of those deliberations on the possible commencement of FTA negotiations later this year by our friends in the Indian government.

The - also in 2010 we had the first biennial Australia-India Energy and Minerals Forum held in Perth which brings together, of course, the resources and energy sectors of our two countries. Australia right now has India as its fifth largest trading partner, and Australia is India's sixth largest trading partner. This therefore is important - an important commercial economic relationship for both countries.

So, in the framework of what is a strategic partnership, our global cooperation through the G20, our regional cooperation in the East Asia Summit and the Indian Ocean, as well as the work we do together in critical areas such as climate change and counterterrorism, these have been particularly fruitful discussions.

Of course we also discussed areas which have been of continuing concern in our bilateral relations. We spoke about the challenges which Indian students have faced here in the past and we discussed in particular those measures which have been taken by the Australian Government and by the Victorian and other state governments in dealing with the security of Indian and other international students.

On the question of Australian uranium sales to India, of course we discussed these matters as well, as we have done in all previous discussions that I've been party to in the period that the Australian Labor Government has been in office.

Obviously our two countries have different views on this. We'll continue to discuss our differences on these matters into the future.

Australia fundamentally respects India's longstanding credentials on the non-proliferation question. India has not been responsible for a single act of nuclear weapons proliferation anywhere in the world, something which we place on record again as being our view of India's public policy posture and operational behaviour over a long period of time.

Notwithstanding that, Australia's position in terms of NPT accession remains.

We'll continue to discuss these matters as friends do, particularly within the framework of a strategic partnership of the type that we now have between India and Australia.

So, again, Minister Krishna you're a very welcome guest in Australia, you're a very welcome guest here in Melbourne. We look forward to the continuation of this dialogue into the

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future. I look forward myself to being in Delhi later this year to continue our work together on so many of the challenges that I've run through in my opening remarks today.

Minister.

SHRI SM KRISHNA: Thank you very much Minister Rudd, friends from the media.

I am delighted to be back here again in Australia. The first time when I came here it was in 2009 and since then there have been many developments of which India is very pleased and I have come back here to re-engage Australia in a number of issues which are of most concern on a bilateral level.

I have had the privilege of meeting Mr Rudd in his capacity as Prime Minister when I came here in 2009, and when he visited India as Prime Minister.

And I am looking forward to his visit to India. I have invited him to come to India some time in the course of this year, and I am glad that he has agreed to visit India.

We have had wide-ranging talks, extensive discussions which deal basically with our bilateral relationship. And, while doing so, we have also discussed the global situation, the situation in and around our neighbourhood. And, as a result of that, there has been a congruence of opinion on a number of issues which we have discussed, and I am very happy about this.

And we have discussed regional cooperation. We have discussed multilateral cooperation, particularly in the context of East Asia Summit and the Indian Ocean Rim Initiative issues.

We have also discussed the issues which concerned the question of the student community in Australia. I was very happy that since I came here in 2009, I came with considerable anguish and worry. But on this visit, that worry is missing, that anguish has disappeared.

I think the number of steps that were initiated, Mr Rudd primarily by you when you were Prime Minister, I think which have led to a situation where Indian students feel quite secure, they feel quite confident, and they feel that they could pursue their studies without any anxiety, without any concern.

India and Australia have very cordial relationships. There are no basic differences in our approach, even though on a couple of issues there could be different perceptions, and those perceptions emanate from certain historical factors. And we certainly respect Australia's stand on some of these issues.

I did raise the question of uranium supply to India.

In the larger context of climate change I think that has to be looked into in that perspective.

What the world is looking forward, and what inter-governmental cooperation can lead is to provide every country an opportunity so that clean energy would be provided to the people.

And if you have to have clean energy then, according to India, the only option is to have nuclear energy. And if you have to have nuclear energy then you certainly need uranium. Minister's

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But we respect Australia's position on this because it is not India-centric, it is not India-specific. Across the board, they have taken their decision and I would only plead, and I have pleaded with Mr Rudd, and I would be pleading with others with whom I will have interaction. Yesterday I pleaded with the - Minister Ferguson who deals with energy related issues. I wanted them to look at India's request in the larger context of climate change. And if we have to arrest this climate change, if we have find the solution to this climate change, then cleaner energy is the only alternative that is available to us. And it is in this context that I have - I want Australia to go in for a larger public debate on this question.

Thank you so much.

KEVIN RUDD: Thank you very much Minister.

Now, consistent with our practice in Canberra on these occasions, we normally have two questions a side; two Australian journalists and two journalists from India.

So, if I might open the batting by calling for an Australian journalist, and then I'll ask Minister Krishna to identify an Indian journalist then to ask a question, then one a side following that as well.

So, Australians? Chap up the back there.

QUESTION: Minister...

KEVIN RUDD: Can you just self-identify.

QUESTION: Certainly. Luke Waters from SBS television in Melbourne.

Minister, there's been some issues with regard to Australian contractors from the Commonwealth Games not being paid. Are you in a position to explain why they haven't been paid as yet, and if they are in fact going to be paid?

KEVIN RUDD: Commonwealth Games contractors, Minister. The question of payments to do with the Commonwealth Games.

SHRI SM KRISHNA: Well, I think it has occurred in one of the newspapers also today. Yes, I think some amounts are due to some agencies in Australia who helped us to successfully hold the Commonwealth Games.

There have been - it has been brought to my notice that there are outstandings from India's side. As soon as I go back to India I will take it up with the Minister of Sports and I will certainly be the interlocutor on behalf of Australia so that their dues can be settled.

QUESTION: Are you able to put a timeframe on that at all?

KEVIN RUDD: Is there a timeframe possible to be put on that.

SHRI SM KRISHNA: Mmm? Minister's Office: 02 6277 7500 or 0434 664 589 Department: 02 6261 1555 6

KEVIN RUDD: The gentleman's question was - is a timeframe possible on that?

SHRI SM KRISHNA: Well, as soon as I get back, you know. I think in the coming few days I think we should be able to address this question.

KEVIN RUDD: To add to the minister's answer myself, we did discuss these matters and we, in Australia, are comfortable about the Indian government's response about the processes they have in hand. These are complicated by a number of domestic matters in India itself. And - but these matters are now well in hand with the Indian government.

And you might choose an Indian journalist now.

QUESTION: I have a question for Mr Rudd.

KEVIN RUDD: Sure.

QUESTION: We know there is a longstanding demand of India in uranium. And we also know the Labor government's stand on it. How much of the issue is a thorn in the relationship? And is there a possibility for Labor government to review this stand?

KEVIN RUDD: When we took a decision only in November 2009 to create a strategic partnership between Australia and India, this difference existed then as it does today.

The second point I'd make is that there are overwhelming strengths in this relationship across politics, across security matters, across economic matters, across environmental matters, across education exchanges which provide the relationship with great ballast and strength so that it is capable of sustaining some differences.

The third point I'd make is, in Australia's other major relationships around the world I cannot think of one of them where we don't have a difference or two with those governments and those countries. And the challenge of diplomacy is to work your way through those matters.

And so, in answer to the first part of your question, we believe that the overwhelming strength of the relationship can sustain a difference of this type, both now and into the future.

And it's done so on the basis of a deep attitude of mutual respect. India's posture, our posture, these are not flippant deliberations. These are the product of longstanding policy deliberations within our respective countries, and which we have different perspectives. But there is very much an atmosphere of mutual respect.

Secondly, on the point about India's future energy needs concerning its civil nuclear industry, the Australian Government back in 2008 took a decision deliberately within the Nuclear Suppliers Group to back the initiative then by the United States, and certainly in partnership with our friends in India, to open up the possibility of other countries around

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the world to extend nuclear supplies to India if they so chose, consistent with their own domestic policy and legislative and regulatory requirements.

We did so because we recognised first of all India's longstanding credentials on non-proliferation. Secondly, some of the climate change matters which were raised by the minister. And so those countries around the world which have chosen to provide nuclear supplies to India, by virtue of those changes which we supported, are now doing that.

Thirdly, we in Australia however have a continuing policy on NPT accession which has been around not for 12 months, it's been around for 20 or 30 years.

And our twofold policy is NPT accession on the one hand and, secondly, bilateral nuclear safeguards agreements on the other with whom - of which we have about 20 around the world with various governments. That remains the continuing position of the Australian Government. But, as I said before, within the atmosphere and the environment and the culture of mutual respect, we will continue to discuss this matter with our Indian friends. Our policy positions are clear but we will continue to discuss these matters.

On the broader climate change question, of course India and Australia have common endeavour through the agency of the UNFCCC as well as our domestic bilateral actions to deal with the enduring challenge that we face on that front, and will continue to do so.

Now, if I might ask for an Australian question. Over here.

QUESTION: [Indistinct] from The Australian. You mentioned you're going to continue the discussions about future changes to the ban, what are you doing now after these talks? Are you going to go and speak to your colleagues in Canberra and have a rethink about it? What's kind of next? Is there going to - is there any room for movement?

KEVIN RUDD: That's what I'd call a wonderful piece of verballing. What you just said was discuss what possible future changes to the ban. What I said is that we'll continue to discuss this matter where we have different policies. And I said also that our policy continues into the future, and those discussions would continue to be based on the principles of mutual respect.

That does not foreshadow any change of position in terms of policy on the part of the Australian Government. And, as I imagine - not wishing to speak for the Minister - does it presage any change of position on the part of the Indian Government either.

But, as I said, we have a relationship based on mutual respect which is capable of tolerating different positions.

QUESTION: I meant more I'd be interested in discussions that you will have with your colleagues in Canberra. I appreciate that you were dis... but I wanted to know are you going to have more discussions in Canberra about this issue? Minister's Office: 02 6277 7500 or 0434 664 589

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KEVIN RUDD: Well, first of all, as far as Cabinet deliberations in Canberra are concerned, one of the principles of Cabinet in government is I don't tell you what we're going to discuss in Cabinet. And on the second point is... unless they go out through WikiLeaks at some later stage...

[Laughter]

...and that's a separate matter.

On the second point though, we will continue to discuss with colleagues in Canberra the posture of the Government of India and ourselves on (a) non-proliferation and disarmament worldwide, and (b) climate change and responses to climate change worldwide.

That does not contain within it any assumption that there would be therefore a change in the Australian Government's position.

And now I think the Minister's turn to choose an Indian journalist.

QUESTION: Kerry [indistinct] from TIMESNOW.tv in India Minister Krishna, and also this is for you too Minister Rudd.

In the statement today the Victorian Chamber of Commerce appears to be blaming Indian students for the vicious attacks on them, by insinuating they don't know how to travel safely in Melbourne, that tertiary institutions should be telling them how to get from point A to point B. What do you say about that?

SHRI SM KRISHNA: Well, since my last visit to Australia, some of these issues which cropped up have been addressed back home.

The students, before coming into Australia, I think they go through an orientation program and, as a result of that, the students who come here, they come fully prepared as to what they can expect in Australia, whether it is in Sydney or Melbourne and Perth or anywhere else.

So I think the students, by and large, they would have to [indistinct]. And Australia is not the only country where Indian students are studying, are pursuing their studies. There are 100,000 Indian students in the United States of America.

So I think both in the United States, in Australia and elsewhere, you know, I think the Indian students now are beginning to get acclimatised to the atmosphere, to the new world to which they come, and they'll get used to it.

QUESTION: Yeah, acclimatised to the atmosphere, but acclimatised to being attacked? Why should they be blamed for the attacks on them? Minister's Office: 02 6277 7500 or 0434 664 589

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SHRI SM KRISHNA: Well, you know, the attacks could take place because of so many other reasons, you know. You cannot - every single attack will have to be investigated and then, you know, ultimately the responsibility fixed.

And I don't think that it will help things by generalising. As it is, the number of students who come to Australia has fallen. I think some say it is 80 per cent and I say it is about 40 per cent. So now if you want to arrest this tendency of the falling number of students who come into Australia, then I think the atmosphere within the country should be such where Indian students feel that they are secure, Indian students feel they are welcomed, Indian students feel they can get integrated into the Australian society, and that would be helpful.

KEVIN RUDD: Thank you very much, Minister. I was asked I think to answer the same question. First of all, I won't comment on a report I haven't seen from the Victorian Chamber of Commerce or anybody else.

The second point I'd say is this country is intensely proud of its history and its current practice and its future in relation to multiculturalism.

This is a country which proudly has people from all corners of the world who come here, who make their life here, become citizens of Australia and create the modern Australia that we enjoy today.

The other point I'd make is this - as Foreign Minister of Australia, and I think all governments of Australia must take seriously our responsibility to ensure that those who are guests in our country are as absolutely safe as possible.

It's the first responsibility of the state. And therefore, for me, any foreign student who runs into a security problem or suffers a threat or an actuality of violence is one too many. Therefore, as the Minister indicated in his remarks early on, there has been a range of measures taken in the last year or so and those measures have borne some considerable fruit, and he's himself commented on the change of atmosphere in this country.

But from my point of view, the responsibility first and foremost, lies with those responsible for the law enforcement agencies of Australia. This is important not just for Australian citizens, but for all those who are here as guests, short-term, medium term and long-term.

The Minister also made reference to recent declines in student numbers.

This of course is happening across students also from other parts of the world and there are a range of factors involved. One of those factors is currently the high rate of the Australian dollar. This has changed dramatically in the course of several years. And when you have parity with the US dollar, obviously it has an impact in terms of people choosing to purchase education services in this country as well. And I say that is simply one of the factors which is at work here.

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But to conclude where I began on the core point which you raise; as Foreign Minister of this country I take fundamentally seriously our responsibility to provide maximum guarantees of security for everyone who is in this country as a foreign student, whatever part of the world they come from. That is our job. And I say that with due respect to what any others may have said elsewhere earlier today.

QUESTION: Thank you.

QUESTION: [Indistinct] from...

KEVIN RUDD: We've broken our two and two rule, so we'll give you one each from each side. So over to you, Minister.

QUESTION: Thank you very much, Minister.

Changes in immigration law [indistinct] Australia so that Mr Rudd has given any assurance that is there any [indistinct] immigration law for visas for students?

SHRI SM KRISHNA: Well, I have drawn the attention of the Minister for Foreign Affairs Mr Rudd about the genuine difficulties that students who had come here earlier and who are continuing here. So I have suggested and I have requested that they be treated as a separate lot so that their cases can be [indistinct] as on a different footing than those who come here after.

KEVIN RUDD: What I'd - - the Minister and I did discuss this matter.

The first thing I would say to all of our friends in India, as I say to those in Australia and elsewhere in the world, is anyone who comes here to study as a student, under Australian law going back decades and decades and decades has no guarantee of Australian citizenship, none whatsoever.

They've never had that in the past and they'll never have that in the future. That's the way in which we operate.

You come here to study; if your skills are then relevant to Australia you apply for permanent residency, and then if other criteria are met you apply then for citizenship. This is applied to people from all parts of the world when they come here to study and it's applied on a non-discriminatory basis.

Secondly, what did happen in July of last year - and this is consistent with Australian practice under our migration policy going back decades and decades - is that we altered some of the categories of skills need in Australia.

This is subject to permanent rolling review depending on the needs of the Australian economy and the Australian workforce at a particular time. And what happened in July of last year is that certain categories, for example, for cooks and for hairdressers, were taken out of the skills need category. Minister's Office: 02 6277 7500 or 0434 664 589 Department: 02 6261 1555 11

Now, as the Minister has raised with me, obviously this may have created some problems of perception and reality for a number of students from India and other parts of the world who may have saved a lot of money in the past and funded by their families to come here with an expectation that citizenship was inevitable. I go back to my earlier point, it's not inevitable for anybody in this country unless you are born here.

So therefore the Minister has raised with us whether there are particular cases of need here. We will take on - we have taken note of what the Minister has said. We will examine these cases to see if there are any particular cases of hardship with which we can assist in any appropriate way consistent with Australia's migration law and regulations, and we'll keep in continued dialogue with the Indian Government on this.

I have extended the privilege to our friends from India for a third question. I should do so for our Australian friends as well. Over here.

QUESTION: Two of the businesses that are owed money from the Commonwealth Games, one of them has actually gone bankrupt and the other one is going into receivership. They say that they have written you a letter, as the Foreign Minister, and have had no response. Why is that?

KEVIN RUDD: Well, first of all, you would have to identify the names of the businesses for me, sec...

QUESTION: [Indistinct]...

KEVIN RUDD: ...secondly, when the letters were sent and, thirdly, were there any other forms of communication that have occurred with them.

The point I would make - and, thirdly, whether there's been any other engagement with other officials of the Australian Government.

Remember these are private contractual arrangements between individual companies on the one hand, and authority responsible for the management of the Commonwealth Games on the other. Therefore these - and I said in their essence - are private international legal contractual arrangements.

The second point, consistent with any other Australian company which experiences difficulties around the world, we will work with them to ensure that appropriate payments and proper payments are made. And that is why I raised these matters, of course, with the Minister today, given the opportunity which this bilateral discussion represented. And the Minister has already provided the response which was reflected in his earlier answer.

On the details concerning individual companies, I'm sure if you provide those to officials here that those officials will be in contact with the companies to see if there are any other particular individual forms of assistance which can be provided. Minister's Office: 02 6277 7500 or 0434 664 589 Department: 02 6261 1555 12

The last thing I would say is this: we've got to make sure that each of the contractual arrangements are as they are purported to be as well. And that is why governments always enter into these things cautiously if there are private contractual arrangements with different contractual details and provisions, and individual and separate contracts with an entity abroad. So there is no simple generic answer to every individual company's circumstances given there may be problems with individual contracts.

But the Australian Government's responsibility is to get in there and support Australian businesses wherever we can. We will do so with these and that is why prior to your question being put today, these matters were raised by me in my discussions with the Indian Minister. So, folks, thank you very much for your attention today and thank you very much for your attendance.

And, Minister, thank you for your time in Australia and we look forward to catching up with you again in Delhi during the course of 2011. Thank you.

SHRI SM KRISHNA: Thank you.

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