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“Big guy” China full of opportunity

China’s growth brings further opportunities.



TRADE PARTNERS: Prime Minister Tony Abbott and Chinese President His Excellency Xi Jinping.

China’s President His Excellency Xi Jinping made the first state visit by a President of the People’s Republic of China since 2007 and it coincided with the announcement of a free-trade agreement between the two countries.

China’s remarkable economic development has propelled it to become our largest trading partner and a significant investor, and President Xi said that economic and cultural interactions and cooperation between the two countries are flourishing.

“Two-way trade grew from US\$86 million in the early years of our diplomatic relations to US\$136.4 billion in 2013, and China has been Australia’s biggest trading partner for five consecutive years while also being Australia’s largest source of international students and tourism revenue,” the President said.

President Xi said that his government has set two goals for China’s future development.

“The first is to double the 2010 GDP and per capita income of urban and rural residents and build a society of initial prosperity in all respects by

2020. The second is to turn China into a modern socialist country that is prosperous, democratic, culturally advanced and harmonious by the middle of the century,” he said.

President Xi noted that some nations have concerns about China—that as a country of over 1.3 billion people, it is the ‘big guy’ in the crowd.

“They wonder how the ‘big guy’ will move and act and they may be concerned

that the ‘big guy’ may push them around, stand in their way or even take up their place,” he said.

“But while China is big in size, our forefathers realised over 2,000 years ago that a warlike state, however big it may be, will eventually fall.”

It is estimated that in the next five years, China will import more than US\$10 trillion of goods, its outbound investment will exceed US\$500 billion, and Chinese tourists will make over 500 million overseas visits.

President Xi said all this will provide a bigger market, more capital and products, and valuable cooperation opportunities for Australia.

“As the Chinese saying goes, true friendship exists only when there is an abiding commitment to pursue common goals. With our joint efforts, the friendship between the Chinese and Australian people will span over mountains and oceans. Such friendship will withstand rain and storm, and will be as strong and everlasting as the majestic Uluru rock in Central Australia and the Great Wall in northern China.” ■

Inquiry votes NO for electronic voting

At the next election, will we be voting with a pencil and paper or the click of a mouse?

Brazil has used electronic voting machines since 2000 and in Estonia, the electorate votes via a click of the mouse over the internet. Advocates for electronic voting argue that it is a logical next step and potentially more secure.

In Australia, we still vote with a pencil and paper and then the sheets are counted manually.

The Electoral Matters Committee has tabled its second interim report on its inquiry into the conduct of the 2013 federal election: An assessment of electronic voting options. The report reveals that, for the present, electronic voting is not a feasible option in Australia.

Committee Chair, Tony Smith (Casey, Vic), said that our voting system has changed and evolved over the 113 years since the first federal election in 1901, but that electronic voting for the next federal election will not happen.

“In logistical terms, it would be impossible for our electoral authorities to roll it out next polling day, which is less than two years away,” Mr Smith said.

But what about future elections? With electronic voting, the results are known within minutes of polls closing rather than hours, days or weeks, and there would be none of the human error that occurs in the long paper ballot count.

With internet voting, voters would no longer have the expense or inconvenience of physically going to the polling booths and waiting in line.



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Mr Smith said that for this reason, internet voting seems to be the most attractive options for voters.

“As an election expert from the USA recently said to me: ‘when it comes to voting, folks would rather be online than in line.’”

However, the inquiry found that Australia is not in a position to introduce any large-scale system of electronic voting in the near future, without catastrophically compromising its electoral integrity.

“Over the course of the twenty hearings to date and in reviewing the 207 submissions received, after hearing from a range of experts and surveying the international electoral landscapes, it is clear that internet electronic voting is highly vulnerable to hacking,” said Mr Smith.

“In future, it is likely, given the turbo-advances in technology, that a system of online electronic voting could be delivered with acceptable safety and security.”

Mr Smith said there are other aspects of our voting process that should be brought into the modern electronic world; aspects that will not compromise the security, sanctity and secrecy of the ballot.

“At present, every electorate booth has a paper roll and when you vote your name is crossed off. With an interconnected electronic roll, when your name is crossed off and you are provided with a ballot, it will be simultaneously crossed off at every other booth, reducing the opportunity for multiple voting in your name.

“At the same time, we should start to introduce electronic scanning of ballot papers. This enables an electronic count, the results of which would be delivered minutes after the close of the polls. The same physical count that occurs now would still be performed for verification,” he said. For the full report, see www.aph.gov.au/em. ■

LINKS

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Sharing more than a love for cricket with India

Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi urges the separation of religion and terrorism.



▶ A ROCKSTAR'S WELCOME: Indian-Australians came out to see Narendra Modi.

Narendra Modi made the first visit to Australia by an Indian Prime Minister since 1986 and he received a rockstar's welcome.

Following Prime Minister Tony Abbott's visit to India to continue discussions on strengthening trade and economic links between the two countries, tens of thousands of Indian-Australians welcomed Mr Modi into the country.

His entrance into the House of Representatives was received just as warmly, as Mr Modi described the two countries as united by the ideals of democracy and proud of their many shared values.

“We celebrate the legend of Bradman and the class of Tendulkar together. We are impressed by Australian speed as you are charmed by Indian spin, until, of course, Shane Warne came along!”

“Australia evokes images not just of immense beauty but also of a great quality of life. Today, its cities are alive with the richness of this world's diversity. And it is home to 450,000 Indians, who are as proud to be part of Australia as they are of their Indian heritage,” he said.

Prime Minister Modi sees Australia as a major partner in every area of India's growth, including health and education.

“We will partner to provide skills and education to youth, a roof over every head and electricity in every household, the most affordable health care for the most difficult diseases, the next generation of infrastructure, and energy that does not cause our glaciers to melt.

“In turn, India will be the answer to your search for new economic opportunities and your desire to diversify your global economic engagement,” said Mr Modi.

Like Prime Minister Cameron, Prime Minister Modi spoke of his region's security and said that terrorism has become a major threat for all.

“Terrorism is changing in character and expanding in its reach. It will require a resolve to isolate those who harbour terrorists, a willingness to empower states that will fight them, a social movement against extremism in countries where it is most prevalent, and every effort to de-link religion and terrorism,” Mr Modi said.

“So we stand together at a moment of enormous opportunity and great responsibility.” ■