# Chinese Premier Li and Australian PM Albanese Foster Bilateral Relations Amid Differences



Chinese Premier Li Qiang and Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese agreed to manage differences between their countries as they navigate a period of improving relations. The two leaders, accompanied by senior ministers, met at Parliament House in Canberra on Monday, June 17, 2024, to discuss various issues, such as trade barriers and military conflicts in international waters. This was the first visit by a Chinese premier to Australia in seven years.

Premier Li emphasized that the relationship is "on the right track of steady improvement and development." Albanese described the discussions as "constructive," stating that Australia seeks a regional balance without domination. The meeting marked a significant step in a thawing relationship after years of tension, highlighted by lifted trade barriers and resumed diplomatic engagements.

China announced it would include Australia in its visa waiver program, allowing Australians to travel to China for up to 15 days without a visa. This decision underscores an effort to deepen bilateral ties.

The leaders signed multiple agreements on cooperation in trade, education, climate change, and culture. They also agreed to enhance military-to-military communications following recent incidents at sea.

During the visit, Premier Li also addressed China's interest in Australia's critical minerals sector, essential for global renewable energy transitions. His agenda included visiting a Chinese-controlled lithium processing plant in Western Australia.

Relations had soured over issues such as foreign interference laws in Australia and the country's exclusion of Huawei from the 5G network. Improved ties have been marked by the easing of trade restrictions imposed by Beijing in 2020.

An incident during the press conference highlighted lingering tensions. Chinese officials reportedly attempted to obstruct Australian journalist Cheng Lei, who was detained in China for over three years, from being seen by cameras. Despite this, both leaders expressed a commitment to maintaining open dialogue and steady improvement in relations.