

Zhu's plainspeak

The Chinese Prime Minister during his recent Tokyo visit dispelled any notion that Beijing should improve ties with Tokyo on Japanese terms. KWAN WENG KIN reports

JAPAN apparently thought China needed aid for developing its vast western provinces so badly that Chinese Prime Minister Zhu Rongji was prepared not to pursue the subject of Tokyo's war atrocities when he came to Tokyo recently. For, before leaving Beijing, he told Japanese journalists he would not use the war issue to antagonise the Japanese people.

So when Mr Zhu, at a meeting with Prime Minister Yoshino Mori last Friday, brought up the subject and told the Japanese they must look history squarely in the face, the Japanese press undoubtedly felt betrayed by the Chinese leader.

Did he really come to improve ties with Japan, or to dredge up the past, newspapers asked.

"If China is really sincere about forming a partnership based on friendly ties for peace and development, it should dispel doubts over China by concrete actions, and deepen mutual trust and understanding," said the *Yomiuri Shimbun*, Japan's largest-circulating daily.

To the Japanese, "deepening mutual trust and understanding" seems to be synonymous with China never mentioning the war again.

This was what South Korea's President Kim Dae-Jung agreed to do when he came to Japan in 1998, a month ahead of Chinese President Jiang Zemin.

In contrast, Mr Jiang's insistence on a written apology rankled the Japanese and led to a cooling of bilateral ties.

The Japanese, expecting China to learn from Mr Jiang's failed trip to Tokyo, realised through Mr Zhu's remarks to Mr Mori, however, that Beijing remained firm on the war issue. In addition, the angry reaction in China to reports of Mr Zhu saying that the ordinary Japanese should not be blamed for their country's war atrocities underlined the depth of Chinese distrust of the Japanese. But was he insincere about



Zhu Rongji talking to a Japanese audience during a live television programme at Tokyo Broadcasting System's studio last Saturday. — APTI.

Japanese over the war issue, Taiwan and security had hurt Chinese feelings. It was a message Mr Zhu repeated many more times, including over television, during his six-day stay. The Japanese had also thought that he would come to Tokyo to express appreciation for Japan's ODA.

When he did little more than say he "highly valued" the aid, and that it was for the benefit of both sides, the Japanese were furious. Mr Mori issued Mr Zhu a veiled threat: Tell your people how much Japan's ODA had contributed to China's economic development, or else our people will not be convinced that we should continue giving aid to you.

The Chinese were clearly not amused. As one Chinese source put it: "If someone lends me money and I am obliged to tell everyone how grateful I am, do you think it is going to make me feel good?" On the other hand, how many ordinary Japanese, told by their government that the Chinese are ungrateful, are aware of what

their ODA to China really constitutes? In fact, about three-quarters of Japan's ODA to China comprise low-interest loans, not freebies that need not be repaid.

And, no matter how "untied" such loans are claimed to be, the projects that they finance in China are invariably handled by Japanese companies. If Mr Zhu's trip to Tokyo did not smooth relations, it certainly emphasised that Sino-Japanese ties continue to be under the shadow of the war issue, specifically whether or not the Japanese have said "sorry" to China for the war atrocities.

Mr Zhu said unequivocally on television last Saturday that Japan had never apologised to "the Chinese people" in any official document, although he acknowledged the existence of the 1995 Murayama statement, which is at best a vague Japanese apology addressed to "the peoples of Asia".

But Japanese officials, in their rebuttal of his remarks, chose to ignore his distinction between "the Chinese people" and "the peoples of Asia", and were adamant that China would get no more apologies. By this, Japan implied that the sufficiency of an apology was determined by the aggressor, not the victim.

But a recent television survey showed that only 20 per cent of the Japanese people agreed with their government that an apology had been made to China. The remainder either disagreed or were unsure. For their own reasons, the South Koreans seem to have come to terms with the Japanese. But the Chinese and most other Asians are not ready to let the Japanese completely off the hook.

Mr Zhu told the Japanese it was up to them whether they wished to apologise. But Japan is unlikely to do so of its own accord, thus ensuring that real friendship between China and Japan will remain an elusive goal for years to come.

— *The Straits Times/Asia News Network.*

Sino Jap

Making amends

CHINA'S PREMIER, Mr. Zhu Rongji, was in Japan for close to a week and it says much about the state of the Sino-Japan relationship that there was no new idea or plan that was decided on. Summitry normally takes place for signing new agreements negotiated by bureaucrats, and more recently, by businessmen and by info-technocrats. This was a summit with a difference. Mr. Zhu and his host, Mr. Yoshiro Mori, concentrated on damage limitation. All new ideas were postponed to "further study".

HD-25

The relationship between Tokyo and Beijing needed damage control because it soured when China's President, Mr. Jiang Zemin, came to Japan in November 1998. Mr. Jiang constantly hectored Japan about not being apologetic about its past actions. He had tried to insert a Japanese apology into a joint document. Japan refused to sign it.

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China had miscalculated. A month before Mr. Jiang came to Tokyo, the South Korean President, Mr. Kim Dae Jung, visited Japan. Japan and South Korea issued a joint declaration where the then Prime Minister, Keizo Obuchi, accepted the historic fact that Japanese colonial rule inflicted "unbearable suffering and pain on the Korean people and expressed painfully deep repentance on the past and a heartfelt apology for the ordeal".

What distinguished this apology from all others was that Japan specifically referred to the Korean people and Mr. Kim agreed to close the chapter, unlike China. Mr. Zhu this time complained, accurately, that Japan has not specifically said sorry to the Chinese people. But, keeping the broader relationship in mind, he did not press the issue and tactically took the wise step of saying that China makes a distinction between Japanese militants and the Japanese people. More important, he said that this Japanese generation should not be held responsible for the atrocities of 60-odd years ago. In fact they too "were victims of militarism".

Japanese consortia and companies are indeed looking for mega-contracts on mainland China, such as the Beijing-Shanghai bullet train link. But, the economic stakes for China are much bigger. In the real world, this is a relationship between the giver and the

taker. China just cannot risk further political stress with Japan.

Mr. Zhu did not hide the purpose of his mission, nor the way he would go about it. He said the right things about the past but emphasised the need to look ahead. China needs help and investment from Japan, the source of nearly 47 per cent of all aid to China. Over the next decade, China will undertake development of its hinterland, in troubled areas such as the Xinjiang Autonomous region. One flagship project for which Mr. Zhu wants money is the Western Development Project, including a gas pipeline from Xinjiang to the coastal areas, with an estimated cost of \$ 12 billions plus, about 65 per cent of all Japanese soft loans assistance to China over 20 years.

China knows that sentiment

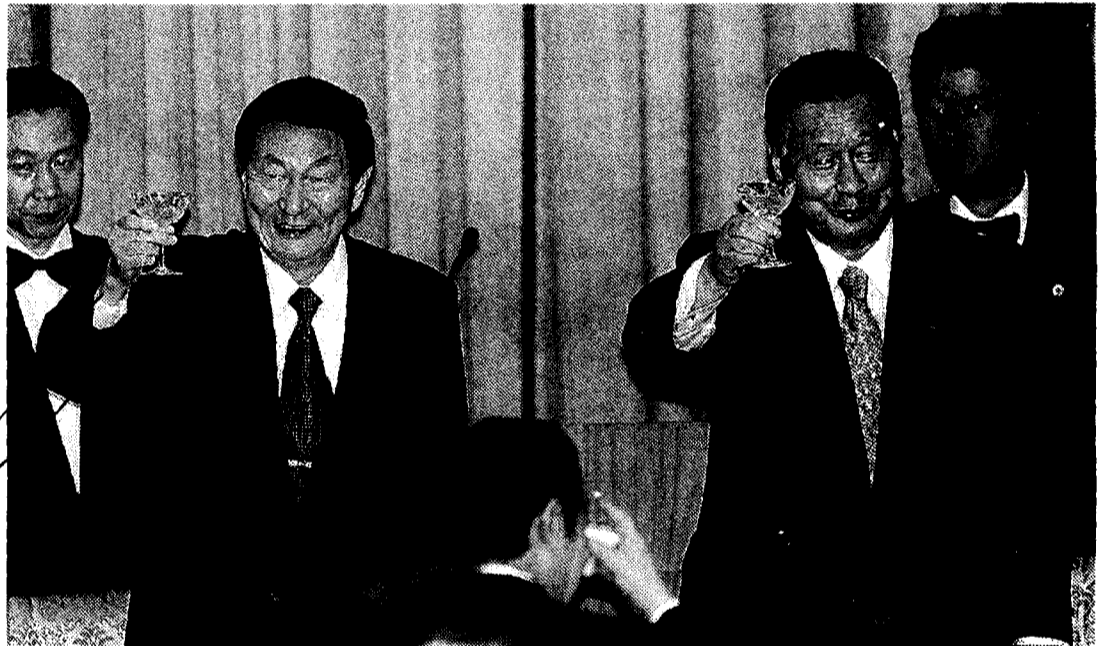
among the Japanese public and legislators is not what it was 15 years ago, when an earlier generation felt the guilt of Nanjing and all else that Japan did during World War II and before. Additionally, present-day China was into heavy defence spending, about which there was little transparency. Japan takes umbrage that its main potential adversary is borrowing money from Japan, to free up resources that go into developing weapons systems.

The ruling Liberal Democratic Party provided Mr. Zhu a reminder of present-day Japanese sentiment by holding back a yen 17 billions plus soft loan (\$ 160 millions) until Beijing clarified details about some suspicious naval activity in waters that Japan considers its Exclusive Economic Zone. The loan

humour, he nonetheless made his point. On China's birth control policy: "If my country's citizens continue to bear children, the Earth would be full of Chinese."

Complaining about being pilloried at home for not being tough on Japan, Mr. Zhu drew attention to what he had said earlier; he did not wish to stir up feelings among the Japanese people. On the Nanjing massacre: "I do not want to touch on the issue, but since you asked, I say it was a fact."

The visiting Premier rightly assessed that Chinese angst against Japan would not disappear, but he could not afford to waver in his mission. Kyodo News carried the results of an Internet poll done by Time magazine. Among young people, 65 per cent identified Japan as their least favourite coun-



The Chinese Premier, Mr. Zhu Rongji, and his Japanese counterpart, Mr. Yoshiro Mori... looking to the future.

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was eventually cleared, but only after China agreed to discuss an early notification system. China was forced to gulp this down despite its differences with Japan on maritime demarcation.

Mr. Zhu's charisma and methods served his mission. He reached out directly to the Japanese people through a televised town hall meeting. He played a Chinese stringed instrument to show he was not all politics and economics, but he also demonstrated an excellent grasp of his charge, with panache. Lacing his replies with

try. In Japan, on the other hand, Mr. Zhu's wooing was debated. Many felt the Chinese Government's humility was feigned and tactical.

After the Jiang Zemin act, the Sino-Japan relationship had not raised its head above the water despite some top level visits. Then came the Japanese Self Defence Agency's report that said that this year alone Chinese surveillance or naval vessels had made 17 'intrusions' into Japan's economic zone. The Zhu visit was an attempt to restore calm.

110-19 Zhu makes the right noises in Japan 11/10

By F.J. Khergamvala *Siw, sap*

TOKYO, OCT. 13. The Chinese Premier, Mr. Zhu Rongji made all the right noises at his meeting with his host, Mr. Yoshiro Mori, but the Japanese establishment, media and public are sceptical that this temporary goodwill may be geared only to obtain economic assistance.

At his meeting with the Japanese Prime Minister, Mr. Zhu exempted the Japanese public from responsibility for Japan's actions during World War II and before and suggested both nations look ahead, without forgetting "the lessons of history," according to Japanese officials briefing the media. "The Japanese people were also sufferers," said Mr. Zhu, who added that "we should head for the future."

This shift in emphasis to look ahead is in marked contrast to the Chinese President, Mr. Jiang Zemin's constant demand for an apology during his visit here in November 1998, when Japan suggested the two countries build afresh in the new millennium. Mr. Zhu essentially repeated what he has been saying in recent interviews and it would appear that Beijing is exempting the present generation from culpability. The likelihood of him repeating this theme at a town hall meeting on Saturday eve-

ning suggests to the Japanese that a tactical ploy is afoot to pay a diplomatic price to woo Japanese economic assistance.

Before getting to the actual purpose of his journey, that of asking for money for the Great Western Development project in the China's hinterland, the visiting Premier also had to address complaints from Japan's public and media that China has not been sufficiently thankful for the yen two trillions plus aid over two decades nor has the Chinese Government done its bit to increase awareness about Japanese aid. The Japanese Foreign Ministry said in an announcement that Mr. Zhu did express gratitude.

Mr. Mori responded that on the assistance for the hinterland, estimated at \$12 billion plus over five years just for a natural gas pipeline, this matter should be revisited in March. By then, Japan would have completed its review of the overseas assistance policy on China. But Mr. Mori reminded his guest that as a general rule, China might get less aid because his Government is finding it difficult to get public support for aid. China was also asked to get its investment environment in order. The Hainan International Trust and Investment Corp. (HITIC), one of the so-called ITICs fuelling development

on the mainland failed on the Samurai bond market when it defaulted on interest payments of over \$2 million on a \$130 millions bond repayment in late September. Japanese creditors who bought the bonds suspect that the HITIC could sell assets to pay only the Chinese creditors and leave the rest to litigation.

This ill-timed trust corporation failure and the fact that on Friday China launched its largest display of military might in 36 years, could generate further hostility among Japanese against aid to China, which gets over 45 per cent of its total aid from Japan. Japan has been questioning the wisdom of assistance to a country whose military expenditure is opaque and which has been undertaking suspicious naval excursions into waters that Japan claims as its Exclusive Economic Zone. Mr. Zhu and Mr. Mori confirmed that both countries wanted to establish a hot line. This was also decided two years back but no action was taken. Likewise, as expected, there was disagreement on the base standards to be applied for measuring maritime economic zones. Therefore, the two leaders were forced to mask their inability to establish a prior notification mechanism on maritime activity by saying they agreed to expedite work on a mechanism.

THE HINDU

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Japan, China agree to resolve disputes later

By F.J. Khergamvala 119-18

TOKYO, AUG. 31. The Japanese Foreign Minister, Mr. Yohei Kono returned home from Beijing after complaining to his hosts that China's conduct was not what Japanese politicians expected from a country that is the largest recipient of Japanese economic assistance.

Agreeing to disagree on the areas of serious differences, both sides glossed over the problems which eventually might lend themselves to some solution during the visit to Japan by the Chinese Premier, Mr. Zhu Rongji. The Chinese Premier is to visit Japan in mid October. By then, Mr. Kono must woo his own ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and his own maverick politician son into recognising Beijing's importance to China. One particularly thorny problem is Japan's withholding of \$161 million set aside for two transport infrastructure projects in China.

Much against his own pleas and that of the Japanese Foreign Ministry, Mr. Kono was instructed to tell Beijing that this amount would not be released until China assured Japan there would be no more unannounced movements of Chinese naval or survey vessels through waters that Japan considers within its Exclusive Economic Zone. Japan has noted 17 such "intrusions" into its EEZ during the year, including a prolonged mission by a topographical survey-cum-intelligence ship.

graphical survey-cum-intelligence ship.

China disagrees on Japan's contours about the EEZ and both sides have scheduled a third round of officials' meeting to narrow their differences. The best gloss that Mr. Kono and his Chinese hosts could put on putting off a resolution is to say that both sides agreed to discuss a mechanism for advance warnings to the other about such maritime missions. Neither Mr. Kono, nor the Chinese Foreign Minister, Mr. Tang Jiaxuan offered explanations about the extent of maritime activity that would require such advanced notification.

Any agreement by Beijing to comply with the Japanese demand would be tantamount to its influential People's Liberation Army accepting the Japanese EEZ. The Chinese web site china.org.cn, quoting *The China Daily* and *Kyodo News* of Japan presented the interim compromise in almost similar language. *The China Daily* said "China and Japan have agreed 'in principle' that each side should now inform the other about its research in the disputed waters," while *Kyodo* said both countries agreed to "create a framework requiring each nation to give advance notice."

The language suggests that the Foreign Ministries intend to reach some compromise during the Chinese Premier's visit, but are not quite there as yet. But a compromise might have to factor in Mr. Tang's insistence that the

exchange of information is an independent act by each side, and does not affect China's position on the demarcation of boundary lines in the East China Sea. Mr. Kono also pointedly told China about the "mistrust among the Japanese people" about China's military spending that has exceeded 10 per cent annually over the past 12 years and has not been transparently explained. Japanese dailies uniformly pepper their editorials with the word "mistrust."

In a timely move, on the day Mr. Kono began his visit, China recalled a vessel from a mission near Japan. In another indication of a softening of positions, Mr. Zhu dispelled rumours about Germany bagging a \$16 billion Beijing-Shanghai high speed railway contract. He told Mr. Kono that Japan was certainly in the running and he did intend to inspect the new magnetic levitation (maglev) system trials. Mr. Zhu also told his guest that the visit of Mr. Hajime Morita, the Japanese Transport Minister was being rescheduled. In a controversial move, China had suddenly withdrawn its invitation a fortnight ago. In Japan, it was believed that Beijing was angry over the Minister visiting a shrine for dead "war criminals."

The Japanese LDP is likely to balance any compromises with its desire to appear assertive.

THE HINDU

2000

China slams Japan defence plans

BEIJING, Sept. 1. — Beijing's military mouthpiece has lashed out at Tokyo for planning to launch three reconnaissance satellites, and at a reported Japanese move to create an island defence force.

"Japan has taken two new actions ... it has decided to launch three spy satellites before the end of March 2003, and it has decided to set up an island defence force to counter the activities of Chinese vessels in waters near Japan," said *The Liberation Army Daily*.

— *The Straits Times, ANN*