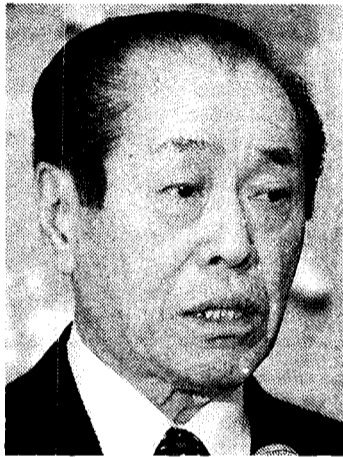


## Aide's exit deals another blow to Mori

<sup>HD-16</sup>  
**TOKYO, DEC. 1.** The secretary-general of Japan's ruling Liberal Democratic Party resigned on Friday, a move that could further undermine the already shaky administration of the Prime Minister, Mr. Yoshiro Mori.

Mr. Hiromu Nonaka, the party's second-in-command, sub-



**Hiromu Nonaka**

mitted his resignation to Mr. Mori saying he was stepping down because he was "tired and would like to rest." The announcement sent a jolt through the ruling party, and intensified jockeying for posts in a shake-up of the Cabinet and ruling party leadership scheduled for early next week.

A spokesman for Mr. Mori said the Prime Minister accepted Mr. Nonaka's resignation after repeated attempts to convince him to stay on. Mr. Makoto Koga, a former transport minister, was reportedly the top candidate to suc-

<sup>50-1212</sup>  
ceed Mr. Nonaka. The Cabinet shake-up is meant to refresh the image of Mr. Mori's administration following a no-confidence motion in Parliament last week that nearly split the ruling party.

Mr. Nonaka, one of the party's most powerful veterans, was generally credited as saving Mr. Mori, Japan's least popular Prime Minister in years, by dissuading rebellious ruling-party members from voting against him. 2/12

Mr. Mori was expected to announce the new lineup as early as Tuesday. But filling the new Cabinet could be a problem.

Before Mr. Nonaka's resignation, the chief economic planner, Mr. Taichi Sakaiya, said he would not accept a post in the new Cabinet. The Finance Minister, Mr. Kichichi Miyazawa, the Cabinet's most powerful minister, has expressed hesitation as well.

Though not a Cabinet member, Mr. Nonaka (75), had been expected to continue in his role as party secretary-general. Mr. Mori is the party president. Mr. Nonaka's absence could weaken the coalition arrangement under which the Liberal Democrats and two smaller parties govern Japan.

Though Mr. Nonaka was able to guide Mr. Mori through the no-confidence crisis, Mr. Mori's hold on power remains shaky at best.

His support has fallen below 20 per cent in recent polls, and he is reportedly under pressure to resign soon so a new administration can rebuild support ahead of parliamentary elections due next summer. — AP

THE HINDU

- 2 DEC 2000

## Mori guards his flock ahead of reshuffle

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

TOKYO, Dec. 3. — Japan's Prime Minister Mr Yoshiro Mori today sought to retain key ministers ahead of a Cabinet reshuffle this week, following the resignation of his party's second-ranking official.

Mr Mori met chief Cabinet secretary, Mr Yasuo Fukuda, his right-hand man, today to fine-tune a new Cabinet line-up to be announced on Tuesday.

Mr Mori, who survived a no-confidence motion two weeks ago against his eight-month-old government, has decided to retain Mr Fukuda, foreign minister, Mr Yohei Kono and finance minister, Mr Kiichi Miyazawa.

Economic Planning Agency director-general, Mr Taichi Sakaiya is also expected to stay on. He said in July that he wanted to step down.

The reshuffle has long been scheduled to set up the Cabinet framework which can be easily adopted to the consolidation of government branches set for early January.

The core line-up was drawn up when Mr Mori held talks yesterday with the ruling Liberal Democratic Party secretary general, Mr Hiromu Nonaka. He redoubled pressure on the beleaguered Prime Minister when he quit his post on Friday.

THE STATESMAN

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# Mori loyalists may be rewarded in

By F.J. Khergamvala 110-16

TOKYO, DEC. 4. The Japanese Prime Minister, Mr. Yoshiro Mori is to announce a Cabinet reshuffle on Tuesday. This is probably his last reshuffle but judging from the list of Ministers in the new Cabinet, its main feature is to reward loyalists, not respond to public disaffection.

A feature of the reshuffle, on the eve of a central government reorganisation, is the retention of a discredited 81-year-old, twice failed Prime Minister, as Finance Minister. Mr. Kiichi Miyazawa was offered and has agreed to stay on in the post. On the other hand, in another telling comment, the publicly respected head of the Economic Planning Agency, Mr. Taiichi Sakaiya has refused to stay on.

At the moment, the disapproval rate of the Mori Cabinet stands unchanged, at over 71 per cent, from a fortnight back when it was rocked by elements within the ruling Liberal Democratic Party joining hands with the united Opposition. Yet, Mr. Mori seems to turn a deaf ear to public opinion and prefers to depend on people who would prop him up in case of another challenge rather than attract bold people who would help initiate actions that could sway public opinion in his favour.

The timing of the reshuffle is dictated pri-

marily by the central government reorganisation, to take effect on January 6. This is why it will be a full reshuffle. In the biggest post-war reorganisation, the P.M.'s office and 22 ministries and independent agencies will be compressed into a Cabinet office and 12 ministries-cum-agencies. One intention of the reorganisation is to empower Ministers and elected politicians over bureaucrats. It was therefore the right moment to shed geriatrics and bring in fresh, inquisitive minds to head the ministries. It would appear that in that direction, the only positive note may be the induction of Ms. Makiko Tanaka, daughter of the former Prime Minister, Mr. Kakuei Tanaka.

Ms. Tanaka has a reputation for taking on the bureaucracy and has the highest public rating among LDP politicians. However, "within the party, there will be much opposition to her induction to a high position," said Mr. Takao Iwami, a well-known T.V. commentator and senior editorial adviser to the *Mainichi*.

Almost all newspapers have leaked the entire new Cabinet list. This is not new in Japan, but if at all it was Mr. Mori's intention to orchestrate the leaks to obtain public feedback, it is negative and will do little to improve either his image or the stock index numbers. The world's second largest economy and the

globe's most secure democracy will have a Finance Minister who will dislodge Mr. Mori from his leadership and help news of Mr. Mori's market and this week, Mr. Mori's confidence in the Prime Minister's backroom discussion quit his job as

Almost all and distance himself from him (Mr. Mori) mid-January," said Mr. Takao Iwami, a well-known T.V. commentator and senior editorial adviser to the *Mainichi*, replacing Mr. Mori in elections to half and welcome in Masahiko Kouchi as Foreign Minister, Kouchi who is successor to Mr. Mori.

said adding accountability

He said Mori well to set up wide-ranging for studying making rec their redress for New De the CPI(M) I

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THE HINDU

5 DEC 2006

# Mori takes on board two ex-PMs

By F.J. Khergamvala *Sapam*

**TOKYO, DEC. 5.** In an effort to extend his political life as Prime Minister, Mr. Yoshiro Mori today got the former Prime Minister, Mr. Ryutaro Hashimoto to join his new Cabinet line-up. With the 81-year-old Mr. Kiichi Miyazawa, a Prime Minister twice, also retained in the Cabinet, Mr. Mori has included the top figures of all factions of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party, either in the Cabinet or as top officials in the party.

Mr. Mori himself, Mr. Hashimoto, Mr. Yohei Kono, the Foreign Minister, Mr. Masahiko Koumura, the former Foreign Minister and now Justice Minister, are de facto heads of factions. Mr. Shizuka Kamei, the joint head of another faction stays on as Chairman of the Policy Research Council, one of the LDP's three top officials. Mr. Miyazawa, who has long since handed over the formal leadership of his faction to Mr. Koichi Kato, who led the anti-Mo-

*HQ-16*  
*6/12*  
ri rebellion last month, has been rewarded for his loyalty to Mr. Mori. Likewise, guided by his inclination to reward loyalists rather than risk being bold by bringing in fresh minds, Mr. Mori appointed Mr. Makoto Koga as Secretary-General of the LDP, in place of Mr. Hiromu Nonaka who resigned last week. Mr. Koga, like Mr. Miyazawa belongs to the Kato faction but did not follow Mr. Kato's lead in trying to overthrow Mr. Mori.

The 15-member line-up, including Mr. Mori, has a sprinkling of inductions from the LDP's coalition partners, the New Komeito and the New Conservative Party. The Environment Minister, Ms. Yoriko Kawaguchi is an unelected and unaffiliated member of the Cabinet. The small size of the Cabinet reflects the scheduled reorganisation of the central Government, effective from January 6, next calendar year. The 23 ministries, including the Prime Minister's office are to be trimmed to 12 plus the Cabinet Office.

Mr. Hashimoto, 63, the Prime Minister from January 1996 to July 1998, will now be Administrative Reform Minister, a job that should tax his considerable experience and relative youth. It is interesting that Mr. Hashimoto accepted. Behind the scenes, even before the anti-Mori revolt failed, Mr. Hashimoto's faction was known to be clamouring for Mr. Mori's resignation to occur not too late after the failed attempt at ousting Mr. Mori. It is unclear at this stage if Mr. Hashimoto's inclusion in the Cabinet is part of some undisclosed deal. Is Mr. Hashimoto himself interested in a second shot at the job, before the Upper House elections to be held in summer next year? Mr. Hashimoto was forced to quit as leader of the LDP and Prime Minister in the summer of 1998 after the LDP suffered a humiliating setback the last time the country went to the polls to elect half of its Upper House. Thus, both the Prime Ministers inducted are those that the public has rejected.

THE HINDU

6 DEC 2000

# Mori inducts Hashimoto in new reshuffle

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Japan

DPA & REUTERS

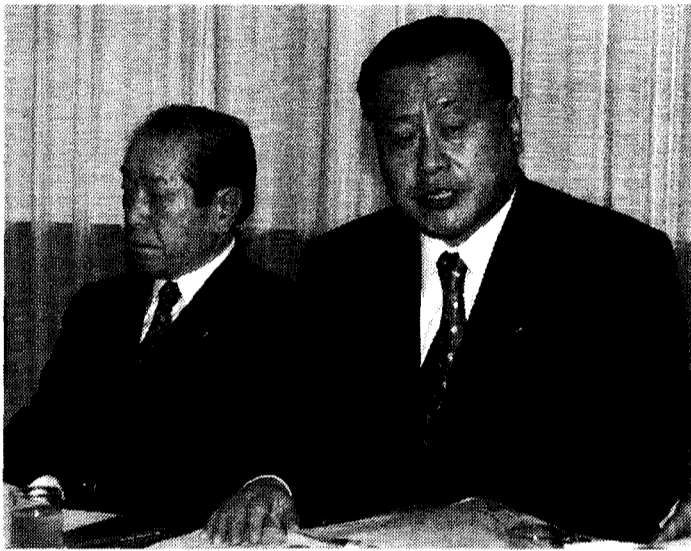
TOKYO, Dec. 5. — Japanese ministers resigned today to be replaced in the Cabinet reshuffle later in the day, government officials said.

The aim of the Cabinet reshuffle by the Prime Minister, Mr Yoshiro Mori, is to prepare for a major regrouping of government ministers and agencies slated for 6 January. The number of government entities will be cut to 13 from 23.

Mr Mori has inducted the former premier, Mr Ryutaro Hashimoto, into the new Cabinet. Mr Hashimoto will become minister in charge of administrative reform, a post that puts him in charge of implementing a sweeping reform of government ministries that takes effect from January.

The surprise move is intended to boost the embattled Prime Minister's chances of keeping his job at least until March, when the budget for the next fiscal year is expected to be enacted.

But analysts said it would be tough to erase doubts about Mr Mori's ability to lead at a critical time as the world's second-largest economy struggles to stay on a recovery track.



Mr Yoshiro Mori, right, at the executive meeting of Liberal Democratic Party in Tokyo on Tuesday. — AP/PTI

"It is not clear whether the new Cabinet can make the bold shift in direction towards fiscal and structural reforms needed to ease public doubts about the future," said Mr Toshiro Ihori, a professor in University of Tokyo.

Mr Hashimoto stepped down as Prime Minister two years ago after the Liberal Democratic Party suffered a mauling in an upper House election.

During his tenure, Mr Hashimoto raised taxes and tightened spending only to see the economy slip back into recession. He is the head of the biggest faction in the multi-group LDP.

Mr Mori hopes his new Cabinet will boost both his image and his chances of staying in power until an upper House election, set for July.

A prolonged Mori government

would disappoint many Japanese voters, who see him as an embarrassment, and investors in Japan's financial markets, who view him as incapable of implementing the sort of economic reforms needed to foster long-term growth and tackle a public debt, already the worst among advanced nations.

The grand old man of Japanese politics, Mr Kiichi Miyazawa (81), retained his finance portfolio, meaning the new cabinet has two former prime ministers.

The foreign minister, Mr Yohei Kono, — sometimes tipped as a possible successor to Mr Mori — also kept his post.

As expected, LDP coalition partners — the new Komeito Party and the new Conservative Party — each got one seat.

But Mr Mori suffered a blow earlier when the economic planning agency chief, Mr Taichi Sakaiya, told reporters he was sticking to his stated intention not to take a position in the new Cabinet.

Mr Sakaiya — an author and commentator — has been a powerful spokesman for the government's economic policies.

THE STATESMAN

THE STATESMAN

6 DEC 2000

# Chopping and changing

*Japan*  
*11/12* *10/12*

**J**APAN'S PRIME MINISTER, Mr. Yoshiro Mori, this week reshuffled his Cabinet. This was born of necessity in that a month later the entire Central Government is being reorganised, purportedly to make it lean, if not mean.

It is not the fact of the reshuffle but the logic of the "who's who" of it that has generated much comment. Mr. Mori, 62, has retained the former Prime Minister, Mr. Kiichi Miyazawa, 81, and also brought in Mr. Ryutaro Hashimoto, 63, who was Prime Minister until July 1998. Additionally, Mr. Masahiko Koumura, former Foreign Minister, and Mr. Yohei Kono, the present chief diplomat, are in too. Mr. Shizuka Kamei, a former policeman, is to be kept on as head of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party's Policy Research Council.

These persons, including Mr. Mori himself, are all heads of factions. The LDP is not a ideological monolith but is, as it has always been, a coalition of factions continuously engaged in trade-offs and perpetually jockeying for power. It was no different this time. The Hashimoto faction, which is the largest, demanded and got three seats. So too did the Eto-Kamei faction. The fact that Mr. Hashimoto himself chose to enter the Cabinet and not send somebody else from the faction is reason for speculation about the longevity of the Mori Government.

From January 6, the 22 existing Ministries and agencies will be consolidated into one Cabinet office, 10 Ministries, one agency and one commission. This means that the pie to be shared in the inter-factional grab is smaller. Other than the Prime Minister, there are now just 17 ministerial or agency seats. A fact that makes the pie even smaller is that the LDP rules at the Centre through a coalition with the New Komeito and the New Conservative Party. They too get two seats.

Each ministerial job has its own power and potential to dispense favours, collect funds and influence votes. Each faction also attempts to enhance its own strength, not just in terms of raw numbers but the portfolio it gets. In this week's reshuffle, the clear losers were Mr. Koichi Kato, head of the Kato faction and Mr. Taku Yamasaki. Mr. Kato, supported by Mr. Yamasaki, led the attempted rebellion against the Mori Government last month.



Mr. Yoshiro Mori with his new Cabinet... more of the same?

The Kato loyalists do not get any seats, either in the Council of Ministers or among the top three in the LDP's upper ranks. Instead, that part of the 45-strong Kato faction, mostly elders, which was loyal to Mr. Mori was rewarded. They include Mr. Miyazawa. Therefore, the LDP is trying to break up the Kato faction, a fact that was one of the causes of the anti-Mori rebellion. The LDP not only never changes, it does not even care to change its spots.

The inclusion of two former Prime Ministers and all other faction heads minus the Kato loyalists points clearly to Mr. Mori rewarding those who stood by him last month. That is obvious. What is not so evident is whether Mr. Mori has drawn a protective ring around himself, or whether he has been encircled by the party's bosses

*It is not so clear whether Mr. Mori has drawn a protective ring around himself or he has been encircled by the party bosses.*  
**F. J. KHERGAMVALA**  
*on the Cabinet reshuffle in Japan.*

who have positioned themselves to compete with each other, in case Mr. Mori stumbles again.

There have been commentaries that the Hashimoto faction has positioned itself to replace Mr. Mori. Lending weight to this speculation is the fact that the LDP's main power broker, Mr. Nonaka, who actually led the Mori Government defence against the Kato rebellion, resigned in the week before the reshuffle. He belongs to the Hashimoto faction and like the late Prime Minister, Noboru Takeshita, has positioned himself to pull the strings from behind.

He is also balanced, and crouched as if set to pounce, on both scenarios. He can show distance from a falling Prime Minister because officially he has no position now, either in Government or in the party. Thus, he is also unshackled. Yet, because every party donor knows where the power lies, all money passes through Mr. Nonaka. That money could be put to use for his faction.

It is also quite possible that Mr. Mori might feel safe that he has roped in people to support him with the unstated intention of putting handcuffs on anyone attempting an overthrow. Conversely, the faction leaders feel secure being in proximity to the locus of power, a position from where they can plot their moves. One way or the other, the denial of positions to the

young and fresh minds has occasioned criticism.

Mr. Mori might feel he has portrayed to the public an air of continuity and stability. But, the enormous public support for the Kato rebellion was eloquent comment that the public wants boldness and reform, not a party that has a leader whose vision extends only until next summer's elections to half the Upper House seats.

Even the *Yomiuri Shimbun*, the party's favourite organ, said, "there has never been another age when Cabinets were as superficial as they are now". The paper dubbed the Cabinet, "weighty yet shallow".

On the day of the reshuffle, Kyodo News published a poll showing Mr. Mori's approval rate at just 18.8 per cent, and the disapproval rate at 75 per cent.

The leader of an economy where the gross domestic product that has shown just a 0.2 per cent rise over the past three months needs much more than those ratings.

Other than the resignation of Mr. Nonaka, on the eve of announcing the impending change, Mr. Mori suffered another blow. His Economic Planning Agency chief, Mr. Taiichi Sakaiya, respected by the public for his honest disclosures about the economic health, refused Mr. Mori's offer to serve, in any capacity, in the new Government.

# Japan seeks balance in ties with U.S.

By F. J. Khergamvala <sup>18/12</sup> HD 16

**TOKYO, DEC. 17.** Japanese think-tanks, private and semi-official, as well as analysts have finally released assessments about U.S.-Japan relations that they had held back, awaiting the final outcome of who will get into the White House.

Higher expectations about Japan's role in the security alliance, and in U.N. peace-keeping, a reform of the Japanese economy which must achieve early revival to absorb shocks from a downturn in the U.S., greater predictability in U.S. conduct and an overall rehashing of priorities will feature prominently when both the countries begin discussing this important bilateral alliance. In the ultimate analysis, much will depend on the state of the U.S. economy.

Japanese media editorials are, expectedly, welcoming of the fact that it will be Mr. George W. Bush in the Oval Office. Lack of consistency and predictability by the Clinton Administration in its East Asia policy, "Japan bashing", and inadequate priority to ties with Japan are the common threads marking editorial comment.

A still classified Japanese Foreign Ministry report to be released later this month, complains that the Clinton Administration allowed complaints by individual U.S. companies to exert too much weight on the bilateral relationship, according to a lead story by the *Japan Times* which has seen the report. On the other hand, it is also a fact that the robustness of the U.S. economy has allowed the relationship to be relatively-tension free in strictly bilateral terms as the U.S.

did not exploit the vast trade surplus in favour of Japan to be a source of tension.

The venerable former U.S. Ambassador to Japan, Sen. Mike Mansfield, described the equation "as the most important bilateral relationship in the world, bar none." That remark was made at the height of the Cold War but pundits and politicians, especially in Japan which has yet to shed the Cold War assessment mentality in many parts of the world, continue to use that remark as a perpetual anchor for policy formulation on both sides.

The *Nihon Keizai Shimbun* warned that just because those who are likely to become Mr. Bush's top aides are supporters of U.S.-Japan alliance, it does not automatically lend itself to optimism. "That, however, does not mean the new U.S. Administration will prove to be an easy ally to get along with," said the *Nihon Keizai*. "A replay of the old friction may be in store," the paper editorialised, drawing attention to the 1980-1992 Reagan and George Bush Sr. years when the sluggish U.S. economy led to a chain of trade disputes.

Mr. Ronald Morse, a Tokyo-based academic of long standing, said in a commentary, "which political party is in power or who is president has proven quite inconsequential over time. When the U.S. economy is good, no matter what Japan does, it's not much of much concern to a Republican or a Democratic administration."

The Japanese media and public tend to adopt campaign statements at face value. Mr. Bush's frequent references to standing by "friends and allies", repeated during the

announcement of Gen. Colin Powell as Secretary of State, are welcomed here, but are the Japanese prepared to pay the price of that U.S. guarantee? That will be a subject of much debate in the immediate future and it is in this area that the equation widens to include the outlook towards China.

The strategic report released in October by Mr. Joseph Nye and Mr. Richard Armitage, two former Pentagon officials and opinion makers, seeks a restoration of "focus and coherence" in U.S. policy towards Japan. But, like all other reports on the subject, it demands of Japan full participation in peace-keeping missions and an expanded role in regional security affairs. Thus, Japan's knee-jerk welcome of the change in Washington carries a price.

The U.S. and Japan will have to put Mr. Bush's rhetoric behind and seek a balance in the U.S.-Sino-Japan triangle that will permit continuation of stability in East Asia that is so vital to regional economic growth and U.S. investments in the region. Fortunately, the Bush Administration seems likely to bring in experienced Asia hands who will help strengthen the bilateral alliance, yet balance it with the reality of a very big China as a critical player.

The Japanese Prime Minister, Mr. Yoshiro Mori, has already signalled his intention to visit Washington early to meet Mr. Bush. Stand-up comedy artists are already in free-flow about the intellectual quality of the exchange between the leaders of the most important bilateral relationship.

THE HINDU

18 DEC 2000

# As ratings fall, Mori may cancel Russia visit

By F.J. Khergamvala

**TOKYO, Nov. 1.** The Japanese Prime Minister, Mr. Yoshiro Mori feels his position is now threatened enough to almost certainly call off an official visit to Russia and is weighing attendance at a regional summit.

Citing unidentified official or ruling Liberal Democratic Party sources, almost all major dailies have said Mr. Mori will cancel a visit to Moscow that was expected to take place in December.

The official spokesman of the Foreign Ministry, almost seemed to confirm these reports in a dissembling way. "We never agreed that the visit would take place within the year," he said.

The Government position is that a decision will be made about a Mori visit only after the country's Foreign Minister, Mr. Yohei Kono returns from a trip to Russia.

The new Chief Cabinet Secretary, in his daily briefing also expressed doubts about Mr. Mori's attendance at the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum (APEC) leaders' meeting in Brunei from November 14, but he then retracted the comment.

Doubts about any progress with Russia on the territorial dispute over four islands to the north of Japan is the stated explanation for the likely cancellation of the Moscow trip but there is more to it than that.

The Russian President, Mr. Vladimir Putin was in Tokyo in early September. It had then become very clear to all, if not earlier, that there was no chance at all of any forward movement by the end of the year, either on Japan and Russia signing a peace treaty with or without a resolution of the dispute.

For appearances sake, so as to convey



**The Iranian President, Mr. Mohammad Khatami (left), with the Japanese Prime Minister, Mr. Yoshiro Mori, after their joint news conference at the latter's official residence in Tokyo on Wednesday. Iran formally agreed to grant Japanese oil developers the first shot at negotiating the rights to drill in Iran's largest oil field. — Reuters**

a sense of Japan not allowing Russia to shelve the dispute, Mr. Mori agreed to plan a visit to Russia later in the year.

Over the past fortnight, the Japanese Prime Minister has lived up to his image as a blundering embarrassment.

According to two major media outlets, his popularity has plunged to between 15 per cent and 17 per cent, because of a series of major gaffes and the conduct of his principal aide, who was forced to

resign last week, has not helped matters.

In the circumstances, it is reasonable to assume that foreign leaders too might be reluctant to meet a leader so weakened that he cannot afford to make concessions.

This political vulnerability is now being exploited by powerful opponents within the ruling party, like Mr. Koichi Kato, the principal challenger.

The highly popular Ms. Makiko Tanaka,

the daughter of the late Mr. Kakuei Tanaka of the Lockheed deal prominence, is also touted as a challenger.

Mr. Kato, who heads the LDP's second largest faction, said on Wednesday that the whole party was uncomfortable going into next summer's Upper House elections under Mr. Mori and he therefore intended to be more than just a by-stander.

The young Turks were the first to publicly denounce Mr. Mori for being undiplomatic in his account of his meeting with the British Prime Minister, Mr. Tony Blair in Seoul 10 days ago.

It then turned out that his chief aide, Mr. Hidenao Nakagawa, the Chief Cabinet Secretary, falsely pointed a finger at another party politician about statements made to North Koreans by a delegation led by Mr. Mori in 1997, concerning Japanese who were allegedly abducted by agents from Pyongyang.

"The enraged party colleague threatened 'to expose the liars.'" Mr. Mori's chief aide hastily backtracked but this only drew further attention to reports on an ongoing scandal involving that aide, Mr. Nakagawa. Mr. Nakagawa denied reports about some unsavoury contacts and a possible relationship with a female drug dealer.

But a T.V. station played a recording of a conversation, where the aide was warning the woman that she was under police investigation for drug dealing, a fact that Mr. Nakagawa learnt about in his official capacity. Mr. Nakagawa was forced to quit by the public but the fallout was inevitably on Mr. Mori's bad judgment and not enforced discipline.



14/11

## A political battle looms in Japan too

By F.J. Khergamvala

**TOKYO, NOV. 13.** The Japanese Prime Minister, Mr. Yoshiro Mori has just flown off to the Asia-Pacific summit in Brunei for what is certainly a welcome breather for him as he fights for his political survival as soon as he returns.

A week from now, it is likely that Mr. Mori will face a no-confidence motion in the Lower House, to be jointly sponsored by the four main Opposition parties. The only question is whether the principal challenger to Mr. Mori within the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) will abstain or support the no-confidence motion. Assuming that this challenger, Mr. Koichi Kato and his faction supports the Opposition move, Mr. Mori can take a long vacation and the LDP will almost certainly split up.

Japanese politics is not half as widely reported as the U.S.'s is, because in international impact terms, who emerges at the top matters as little to the rest of the world as much as it matters to an Indian who is appointed the Governor of a State. The Gore-Bush contest can hardly be matched even by writers of fiction. But, as political brawls go, Japanese fights are as bare-knuckled as they come, with unimaginable sums of money influencing the outcome. In an interesting intellectual parallel, in Japan too the battle is between two opposite poles. "Kato takes off gloves in power play," headlined the *Asahi Shimbun* on Saturday. Mr. Koichi Kato, 61, an LDP veteran, said over the weekend that "I just cannot pledge to vote to defeat the (Opposition's) no-confidence motion which seems to be supported by 75 per cent of the people, just because I belong to the LDP." Commentators say Mr. Ka-

to had realised that some other mainstream factions were trying to wean away his faction members to severely dilute his influence.

Mr. Koichi Kato is the effective head of the LDP's second largest faction, the Miyazawa faction, with 45 members. Sheer numerical weight therefore makes him a principal determinant of who sits as Prime Minister. The largest faction is the Hashimoto faction, with 60 seats. Formally, the LDP says it no longer has factions, but



Yoshiro Mori

in reality the party has always been and still is a coalition registered as a party. Conventionally, the leader of the largest party, mostly the LDP, also becomes the Prime Minister.

The one solitary exception is Mr. Yohei Kono, who is the Foreign Minister and who even as party chief, lost out in becoming Prime Minister to Mr. Ryutaro Hashimoto in early 1996. The intentions of Mr. Kato are not yet certain, though the widespread view is he has launched a frontal counter attack for leadership because the others were trying to

undermine his factional numbers. Mr. Kato has chosen this time to strike at a leader whose actions have earned him the sobriquet of a "serial blunderer." Mr. Mori's recent blunders have sent his opinion poll unfavourable ratings up to over 71 per cent.

It is also possible that this is just a serious attempt at altering the balance of power within the party before a cabinet reshuffle expected in December. At worst, by threatening to join the Opposition and break up the party before going in for a possible general election, Mr. Kato could be indulging in extreme brinkmanship.

Mr. Kato's bid for the throne is all about timing and numbers. He has 45 seats and has found himself a committed ally in his faithful colleague, Mr. Taku Yamasaki, who has 19 under his belt. Ranged against these two chiefs are practically all the other factional leaders, making Mr. Kato's possible bid for leadership practically a revolt. The heads of the Hashimoto (60 members), Mori (39), Eto-Kamei (36) and the smaller factions have announced their support to keep Mr. Mori in power.

The Lower House has 480 seats. The Opposition occupies 190 of them. Assuming that the Opposition and the LDP-led three party coalition (minus Messrs. Kato and Yamasaki and allies) vote along party or faction lines, then the entire battle would hinge on Kato-Yamasaki & Co. These rebels enjoy not just the 45 seats of Mr. Kato and 19 of Mr. Yamasaki, but nine each from among independents. There is still time for horse-trading and compromise, but Mr. Kato has reminded his party rivals of the swing vote he enjoys. And, unlike the litigious U.S., in Japan a political battle will be fought in the political arena, not the courts.

THE HINDU

NOV 2000

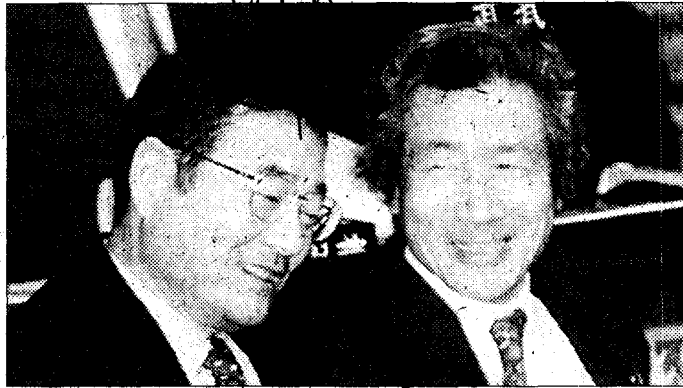
# No-trust move against Japan PM on Nov 20

REUTERS  
TOKYO, NOV 17

JAPANESE opposition parties will submit a no-confidence vote against Prime Minister Yoshiro Mori no later than November 20, a move that could lead to the ousting of the beleaguered premier and split his long-ruling party.

"We are not considering delaying it past the 20th and if anything happens to make us hurry up, we will," Naoto Kan, secretary-general of the main opposition Democrats told a news conference.

Reformist ruling party rival Koichi Kato said earlier he would vote in favour of the no-confidence motion and expected his supporters in his faction of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), the main



Japan's ruling Liberal Democratic Party lawmaker Koichi Kato (L) chats with Junithiro Koizumi, a senior lawmaker in Prime Minister Yoshiro Mori's faction, during the lower house plenary session in the Diet in Tokyo on Thursday - AFP

partner in Japan's ruling coalition, to follow suit. The Harvard-edu-

cated Kato, who escalated the struggle last week by saying he

might abstain from voting on the measure, has vowed to take control and wean Japan from the massive pork-barrel spending that has left it with the biggest public debt among advanced nations.

That means the outcome of the battle will have a direct impact on economic policies as Japan limps into recovery after a stagnant decade. The opposition lacks the numbers to pass the motion without help of the reformist Kato and his supporters. If a no-confidence measure passes, the PM must resign or call a snap election.

If Kato's 45 faction members and another 19 who back a close ally join the opposition to vote in favour of the no-confidence motion, it will pass the 480-member Lower House.

INDIAN EXPRESS

18 NOV 2000

# Pressure mounts on Mori to quit

By F. J. Khergamvala

**TOKYO, NOV. 19.** Who says the Japanese are slow and indecisive? Japan could have a new government before the votes are counted in Florida.

It is *deja vu* time in Japan on Monday as the Japanese lower House will vote on a joint Opposition no-confidence motion, the outcome of which might well lead to a big shake-up of the political system. A last-ditch effort is afoot to save the ruling party by dumping Mr. Yoshiro Mori and ward off the revolt.

If the no-confidence motion fails, the ruling Liberal Democratic Party stays in power, supported by two minor parties, including the New Komeito, which is backed by the Soka Gakkai. If the no-confidence motion passes, the Government of Mr Mori must resign, or dissolve the lower House within 10 days and call a general election.

Seven years ago, the inept LDP government of Mr. Kiichi Miyazawa was brought down almost identically. First, there was a revolt within the party, the government was brought down through a no-confidence motion, an election was called by Mr. Miyazawa and the LDP humbled by a coalition.

What has emboldened the main LDP rebel this time, Mr. Koichi Kato (61), is that now it is even more certain than seven years ago, that the LDP and the New Komeito will be roundly defeated in an election. It is on the widely held assumption of that certainty that Mr. Kato has demanded Mr. Mori step down, though Mr. Kato has by now apparently understood that at this time he himself will not be acceptable as Prime Minister.

Thus, on Monday, the Opposition, consisting of the Social Democratic Party, the Liberal Party, the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) and



Yoshiro Mori

the Japan Communist Party will submit a motion of no-confidence before the lower House Budget Committee votes on the yen 4.78-trillion supplementary budget.

The only way to stave off the motion is for Mr. Mori to step down or announce to the nation that he will bow out by a particular date to be followed by a party leadership election. Provided such assurances are acceptable to Mr. Kato and all his supporters, the ruling LDP might keep itself alive for the time being.

Mr. Mori's favourable public opinion ratings are consistently at an abysmal low of below 20 per cent in all polls, thus rendering him a lame-duck in any event. There is thus considerable internal party pressure for such a dump-Mori solution. That is why Mr. Mori's main supporter, the party's power broker and Secretary General, Mr. Hiromu Nonaka, sang an entirely different tune on Sunday than he did on Saturday. On Saturday, he wrote to Mr.

Kato and his ally, Mr. Taku Yamazaki, urging them to quit the LDP for publicly saying they would support the Opposition motion. This was intended as an indirect threat of dismissal to all the Mori opponents.

On Sunday, presumably under advice from the party's largest Hashimoto faction and the New Komeito, who dread the prospect of a general election, Mr. Nonaka, sitting in Hokkaido, said on Asahi TV that he would favour changing the rules so that the party's internal leadership election could be brought forward from September and Mr. Mori could quit, because the Prime Minister "is seriously accepting the fact that his support has declined."

Mr. Kato, sitting in the Asahi TV studio in Tokyo as part of a well-planned TV interviews blitz, responded that he would not back the no-confidence motion if there were guarantees to bring forward the party election and if there was a clear path (deadline) for Mr. Mori to step down. Mr. Kato is also under pressure from the Opposition, especially the DPJ, to continue the revolt by quitting the LDP and taking over as Prime Minister at the head of a coalition. There is no doubt that the rare unity among the 190-member Opposition is a main factor that encouraged Mr. Kato to programme his revolt at this moment.

The battle lines are drawn, the party and factional positions in the LDP are known, but not how they vote or whether they will abstain. The House has 480 seats. The no-confidence sponsors firmly have 190. Mr. Kato has 45 in his faction. Mr. Yamasaki has 19. There are 17 unaffiliated and young Turks opposed to Mr. Mori. The result depends on the numbers present, but from this bank of 81, if 50 can be made to back the no-confidence motion, then the Mori Government will crumble.

THE HINDU

NOV 20 2009

## Mori's departure may see end of party dominance

By Harvey Stockwin

HONG KONG: A vote of no-confidence in the Japanese Diet next Monday is likely to lead to the end of Yoshiro Mori's gaffe-prone Prime Ministership. However, this could set off a train of events leading to a long overdue transformation of the Japanese political scene, perhaps even ending the longtime dominance of the Liberal Democratic Party.

The censure motion is being moved by the four main opposition parties in the House of Representatives led by the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) and backed by the Communists, Socialists and Liberals. The four parties have a combined total of 190 seats out of the 480 in the lower house. Voting alone, their motion would merely be a vehicle of ritual protest.

A longtime critic of the Mori government, Mr Kato has hardened his denunciations in the last ten days, to the point where he now asserts that he will vote with the opposition on

Monday. Mr Kato is joined in this by another former top LDP office holder Taku Yamasaki who leads a smaller faction with 19 members.

This gives the Kato-Yamasaki factions a casting vote in the parliament. While not all their faction members are certain to vote for the motion, it is considered certain that enough will do so, or just abstain, to enable the vote of no confidence to certainly pass.

Shorn of the Kato-Yamasaki factional votes, the LDP has only 168 MPs, while the two smaller parties in coalition with Mr Mori give the government a combined total of 208. Even if 18 assorted independents vote with Mr Mori, it will still not be enough to end the Kato-led threat.

Nevertheless there is a lot of political brinkmanship in Tokyo tonight as the respective leaders try to seek a way out of the impasse. The LDP party bosses are threatening to call another general election if the Mori cabinet is defeated, hoping this will force wavering LDP MPs to back Mr Mori. The truth is that

the LDP simply could not risk another election this year given the extremely poor poll ratings of the Mori Cabinet. While Mr Kato and Mr Yamasaki deny forming another party, that is definitely an option for them if they are expelled from the LDP. Such a party might do extremely well in a fresh election.

Currently the Mr Mori's approval rating has already declined to a mere 17 percent. Amidst scandals, by-election losses, and continuing Prime Ministerial gaffes and incompetence, further declines seem inevitable.

Mr Kato's criticism of Mori has not been merely personal. A 61-year old Harvard graduate, Mr Kato has advocated a reformist vision for Japan and has criticised the way the government has tried to spend its way out of Japan's decade-long recession.

Amidst the mutual political brinkmanship, some LDP leaders are trying to avert what for them is the worst possible development: the breakup of the party that has dominated Japanese politics since its foundation in 1955.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

20 NOV 2000

# Mori to face no-trust vote

Tokyo, November 20

JAPAN TODAY braced for a no-confidence motion against embattled Prime Minister Yoshiro Mori as rebels from within his ruling party stepped up support for the opposition's bid to oust him.

Koichi Kato, a senior figure of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and leader of the rebels, said he would vote in favour of the motion when the Lower House began voting.

A close contest is expected, with voting strength of the two sides almost equal. Results are expected to be available around midnight local time.

Under the Constitution, if the motion passes, the premier has 10 days to choose to step down or dissolve Parliament and call a general election.

Mori, who has suffered a plunge in public support,

showed his readiness to fend off the rebels' threat. "It is not acceptable to allow political doldrums," Mori told the budget committee in Parliament today.

"I will respond boldly to the non-confidence motion," Mori said. "I want to reaffirm our trust, and then will actively tackle pending issues together with the ruling coalition."

LDP secretary-general Hiromu Nonaka, who has threatened to expel Kato and his ally Taku Yamasaki, voiced confidence over Mori surviving the motion.

Kato, who heads the second biggest LDP faction with 45 seats in the lower house, has so far won support from his ally Yamasaki, whose faction holds 19 seats. The ruling coalition - the LDP, New Komeito Party and the Conservative Party - holds 272 of the 480 seats in the Lower House while the Opposition camp jointly holds 190.

(AFP)



THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

21 NOV 2000

JAPAN  
HD-17

# Anti-Mori motion falls through

2/11

By F. J. Khergamvala

JAPAN

TOKYO, NOV. 20. An Opposition move to unseat the Government headed by the Prime Minister, Mr. Yoshiro Mori, through a no-confidence motion fizzled out for lack of support and ended in pandemonium in Parliament.

After considerable confusion about where he stood, the main challenger, Mr. Koichi Kato, from within Mr. Mori's ruling Liberal Democratic Party, came before the cameras at a hotel at nearly 10.30 p.m. (local time) and announced, "I tried my best to change the leadership, but as I had always maintained, my efforts would be directed from within the party. Unfortunately, the best laid plans cannot succeed if there is absence of numbers." With those words, Mr. Kato asked his backers to stay away from the vote on the no-confidence motion.

Mr. Kato's main supporter, Mr. Taku Yamasaki, too bowed before the absence of numerical support, rather than rush to do battle on unequal terms. These comments, conceding to the intimidation of the ranks by the big guns within the ruling party, were in sharp

contrast to Mr. Kato's confidence earlier in the day. "We will have an evening of decisive battle", said Mr Kato on Monday morning, as he mobilised his political forces to challenge Mr. Mori.

Throughout the day, back-room manipulators were preoccupied mustering the numbers and at the same time trying to work out a deal. It would not be surprising that the final deal includes that Mr. Mori must abdicate quite early, possibly immediately after the lower House adjourns on Dec. 1. For Mr. Mori, any deal to remove him would be an act of political euthanasia.

The Opposition required 50 seats from the Kato and Yamasaki allies to adopt the no-confidence motion. As the Kato and Yamasaki factions did their internal calculations, they were also negotiating deals on a compromise that would allow them not burn bridges with the parent party. Even as the debate on the Opposition motion was about to begin and Mr. Kato's emissary, a senior LDP figure, had hammered out a deal with the Mori backers, Mr. Kato told mediapersons that he and his supporters would abstain, not support the

motion to oust Mr. Mori.

An hour later, he reversed himself, saying he and Mr. Yamasaki would support the motion, but asked both faction members to abstain. A few minutes later, perhaps responding to a real time feedback on numbers, Mr. Kato and Mr. Yamasaki backtracked again, reverting to abstention. In the end, just before the beginning of the plenary session to debate the no-confidence motion, discretion was seen to be the enduring option.

All the number crunching done by analysts showed a very close contest on whether Mr. Mori and the LDP's mainstream factions could weather a no-confidence motion by the four Opposition parties, supported formally by elements from within the LDP. *Asahi TV* and *Mainichi* surveys showed a clear majority in favour of ousting Mr. Mori. The media seemed to view as the best compromise an outcome where Mr. Kato ought not to be the immediate replacement.

Irrespective of the result in favour of Mr. Mori, he is doomed. For him personally, and the LDP it is a Pyrrhic victory that again exposed everything negative about it.

THE HINDU

21 NOV 2000

H10-17  
22/11

# A 'revolting experience' for Japanese public

By F. J. Khergamvala

**TOKYO, NOV. 21.** Even as the lower House of Diet (Parliament) was convening to debate the Opposition's no-confidence motion and Mr. Koichi Kato, the principal challenger to Mr. Yoshiro Mori's political throne, showed reluctance to do battle, national TV station anchors were reporting that they were inundated with calls and e-mails egging on Mr. Kato to continue his rebellion.

In the end, Monday night's events turned out to be a truly revolting experience for the public, the market, the ruling Liberal Democratic Party and the Opposition. Mr. Kato, who proclaimed himself as standing against everything the LDP stands for, especially its back room non-transparent bargaining, eventually was discovered to be doing exactly that through a senior emissary of his faction.

The wee hours of Tuesday morning saw 237 members of the LDP and its two coalition partners defeat the motion of no-confidence jointly sponsored by the Opposition which too showed rare unity as all 190 turned up to vote out the Prime Minister. Fifty-two members abstained.

All dailies report a nation-wide sense of disbelief that the rebels could back off a vote that has popular support nearing 70 per cent. *The Japan Times* editorialised, it was a mere power struggle in the LDP. The only spectacle of the night turned out to be the widely telecast image of a pro-Mori camp politician throwing water from the podium on Opposition hecklers.

Mr. Kato, who should have had almost all 45 from his faction in the bag, in addition to his ally Mr. Taku Yamasaki who did deliver all his 19 members, had timed the rebellion perfectly but it was clearly an under-prepared adventure.

Mr. Kato decided that abstention, not opposing the no-confi-

dence motion, was the wiser course of action to preserve his faction and therefore, his own power in the intra-party balance. "We were lacking in thorough preparations and thorough strategy," he said, possibly concealing the full extent of any deals made.

In Mr. Kato's case, the numbers just didn't add up when they counted most or, this veteran and himself a practitioner of intra-party intimidation, found that his supporters fell victim to the threats of being denied funds for elections. In the end, we did not have confidence that we would win". His later claim that he chose the course of "honourable retreat" took off the mask of policy differences that he said was his primary motivation.

Mr. Mori, a bystander who does not fill the job description finally found his voice. "I'd like to continue administering state affairs steadily," he told mediapersons. Whether he will continue is not in doubt. He will not beyond March the latest, or December the earliest, if the LDP is to survive a summer upper House election.

The business daily *Nihon Keizai Shimbun*, echoing in words the numbers surveyed by organs across the spectrum, Asahi TV, Mainichi, Sankei Shimbun and the Yomiuri said, "Disgust with Mori's continued leadership is growing stronger ahead of next year's upper House elections, and the political instability will likely continue.

Mr. Hiromu Nonaka, the party's hatchet-man and Mori saviour in his morning after comment, refused to deny speculation about a Mori resignation. Asked if there was a connection between the outcome of the vote and the Prime Minister's future, Reuters quoted him as replying, "This is an issue totally unrelated to the no-confidence vote." In fact, he had the gumption to say that Mr. Mori should take this as a lesson.

THE HINDU

22 NOV 200

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11-16

# A revolt that wasn't

204600  
11-16

**M**OST OF the world perhaps agrees that the International Olympic Committee (IOC) has earned the reputation of being the most corrupt organisation of our times. Except the Japanese, who will argue that their ruling Liberal Democratic Party gets the gold medal. For the past three weeks it appeared there something was being done about it.

But soon the people, who had thought a reformist crusader had emerged, felt betrayed by the political establishment. Late on Monday evening, Mr. Koichi Kato, a prominent LDP figure, announced that his supporters could abstain from the no-confidence motion against the Prime Minister, Mr. Yoshiro Mori, but would not support it. He called it "an honourable retreat." The reformist had chickened out. What was paraded as an attempt to overthrow the Government

Why Mr. Mori was back in office on Tuesday morning was because his challengers within the LDP had backed off and, at a Lower House ballot taken on a no-confidence motion, the Opposition was left holding the bag of 190 votes, the sum of the seats held by the four Opposition parties, the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ), the Liberals, the Socialist Democratic Party and the Japan Communist Party. They were ditched by two LDP factions and some unaffiliated LDP members. The motion was voted down 237 to 190, with 52 abstentions, of which 41 were from within the LDP.

It is quite another matter that a chain of events has been set in motion in which Mr. Mori will be sacrificed, within weeks or by March at the latest. The LDP just cannot risk a Mori captaincy during the July 2000 elections to half the Upper House. The LDP's largest group, led by Mr. Ryutaro Hashimoto, is opposed to

**What was paraded as an attempt to overthrow the Mori Government to begin reform of a corrupt system was no more than an LDP power struggle, reports F. J. KHERGAMVALA.**

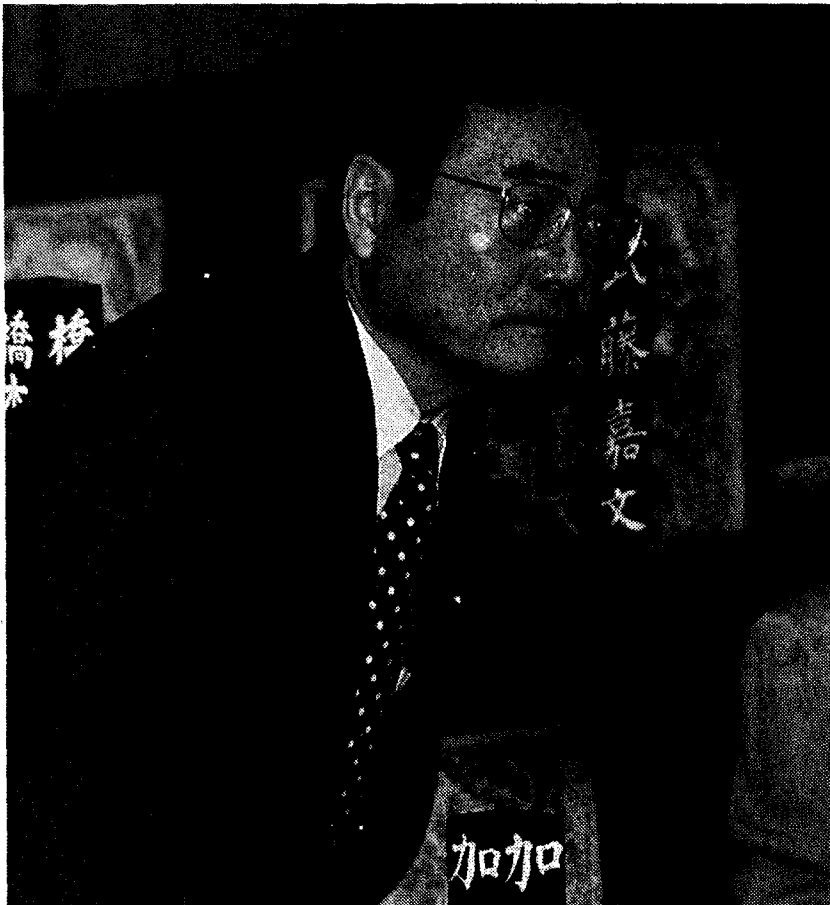
tion, an event too horrendous for any in the LDP to contemplate.

This would also be sweet revenge for Mr. Mori joining hands with the late Prime Minister, Takeo Fukuda, to stab in the back the then Prime Minister, Mr. Masayoshi Ohira, to whom Mr. Kato was a close aide. When the LDP's main intimidator and hatchet-man, Mr. Hiro-mu Nonaka, who is secretary-general, threatened to expel Mr. Kato and Mr.

party, which in Japan's case is also the system. The timing of the Kato-led rebellion was perfect but its preparedness, much less so. Mr. Kato wanted to seize power before the January 6 reorganisation of the Central Government, when Ministries would be amalgamated or split up. He wanted to be in charge of this change.

Mr. Mori's public opinion ratings were at a nadir. Not a single media organ polled more than 18 per cent that supported him. All reported disapproval rates between 67 and 72 per cent. A series of personal gaffes by a Prime Minister who is totally inept at governance, but was placed in the chair by five elders including Mr. Nonaka, had contributed to this.

Mr. Kato went over the heads of the LDP factions and with a well-conceived media blitz, including six TV interviews on the day preceding the vote, got the



**Mr. Koichi Kato and Mr. Yoshiro Mori... fighting it out.**

to begin reform of a corrupt system was no more than an LDP power struggle which was given up even before swords were drawn.

Mr. Kato had raised the hopes of a great majority of the Japanese in the first week of this month when he confirmed news leaks that a big challenge was being mounted to Mr. Mori. The challenge would come from two fronts. The Opposition would jointly sponsor a no-confidence motion on the day of deliberations on the supplementary budget. It would ride piggy-back on a Kato-led revolt within the LDP.

Mr. Mori continuing beyond a face-saving interval.

Mr. Kato, who hatched the plan with his close colleague, Mr. Taku Yamasaki, had felt he could force the LDP mainstream factions to force a Mori ouster. He suggested that the Opposition motion would be supported by 64 members of the Kato and Yamasaki factions plus some more. It was not certain that Mr. Kato would succeed Mr. Mori, but, if the no-confidence motion worked, it was highly probable that at a Lower House vote would elect him. For, Mr. Mori would have had to resign or call an elec-

tion. Yamasaki from the LDP, Mr. Kato reminded him that in 1980, the party did not warn of any punishment to Mr. Fukuda and this same Mr. Mori for their treachery against the then party leadership.

Mr. Kato scoffed at the threats and said on the evening of the no-confidence vote, "I am 100 per cent certain of success," in the "decisive battle". This truly inspired the Japanese people who swamped TV network anchors with e-mail messages and phone calls asking them to tell Mr. Kato to do battle against Mr. Mori and the corrupt elders of the

public behind him in an inspiring performance. So, what went wrong?

Mr. Kato forgot to mobilise the numbers of his own faction, which was split by the elders who threatened Kato-backers they would be deprived of funds at election time. Despite all this, almost all calculations showed Mr. Kato's revolt losing by just four votes. In the end, he did not have the stomach to do battle and it was found he too was using an emissary to cut a deal, thus betraying the public which had believed that this was a principled challenge. A dishonourable retreat in a power struggle.



# Japan reopens Embassy in Iraq

By F.J. Khergamvala

TOKYO, NOV. 29. Japan has just reopened its Embassy in Baghdad on a functional basis to cope with the demand from business but it is also a certain sign of a step-by-step normalisation with Iraq.

Quite typical of almost all countries that are moving back to do business with Iraq, the official Japanese position is of "hoping" that the regime of Mr. Saddam Hussein will implement all United Nations Security Council resolutions. Japan tried exactly a year back to reopen its mission in the Iraqi capital but backed off under U.S. pressure. Japan is now among the few industrialised nations to reopen its Embassy in Baghdad.

Iraq now pumps out about 2.3 million barrels of oil daily into the market, or close to five per cent of the world's oil trade. Even though there are procedural obstacles by way of monthly price approvals by the U.N., there has been increasing travel by energy related businessmen to Iraq. Consequently, there has been pressure

for re-establishing Japanese Government services in Baghdad, notably consular services and protection in case of unanticipated incidents. For the past nine and a half years, Japanese diplomats travelled to Baghdad occasionally from Jordan to render such services. From this month, the office in Baghdad itself will be kept open for three weeks each month.

The Embassy will not grant visas to Iraqi nationals who wish to visit Japan. Japanese officials have clarified that the step is not meant to indicate a business-as-usual relationship with a country under U.N. sanctions. Actually, however, it will be "business" as usual because there is realisation that in the past year, companies from China, Russia, India, some European nations and Arab neighbours of Iraq have managed to bag contracts awarded partly on grounds that the governments of some of these countries stuck it out in Baghdad. Japanese business was a year earlier than their Government in foreseeing the de facto slackening of the sanctions

regime. For reasons as yet quite unclear, two months ago, the former head of the Japanese Defence Agency (the ex-Minister) said on a tour abroad that Japan must immediately lift its sanctions against Iraq.

Japan has not gone that far and as the chair of the Group of Eight (G-8) has preferred to allow its businesses to deal with Iraq and also provide humanitarian assistance as a government, without actually breaching the sanctions.

The resolve of going ahead this time over U.S. objections is tempered with meeting some of these objections. The specific declaration that the Embassy will not issue visas to Iraqi nationals suggests that it will be some time before Japan will permit senior Iraqi officials to visit Tokyo. The head of the Middle Eastern and African Bureau of the Japanese Foreign Ministry was in Baghdad recently to re-establish the terms for allowing the Embassy to function, but this visit is also expected to be the forerunner of higher level Japanese missions.

THE HINDU

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# Japan appeases N.Korea with aid

By F.J. Khergamvala

**TOKYO, OCT. 9.** Japan has made a hefty reparation-cum-down payment to the Kim Jong Il regime in North Korea by way of the sixth, and largest rice aid provision that far exceeds the request by the World Food Programme.

On Friday, Japan formally announced that it would grant 500,000 tonnes of rice to the North, in response to the WFP's request for 195,000. In doing so, the Japanese Prime Minister, Mr. Yoshiro Mori has retracted his word given to the families of over 10 Japanese suspected to have been abducted by the Kim Jong Il regime in the 1970s and 1980s. For years, Japan has shunned giving all but limited amounts of humanitarian aid to the North which would not budge from its position of denying knowledge about the abductions. Beginning in the mid 1970s, over ten, possibly a dozen Japanese have disappeared.

No definite proof is available except in one case that the North agents were responsible for kidnapping people living near the Japanese shoreline, but the entire public and the political establishment supported the tough line of successive Japanese governments. The general view is that the North Koreans abducted the Japanese to use them to train Pyongyang's agents in the use of Japanese language and culture.

Last month, the ruling parties and the Opposition parties seemed to have collapsed in a heap around the Mori Government's flip-flop, for one simple reason. The ruling LDP certainly and its other partners are desperately wooing the rice farming lobby in a year when a glut will greet the rice harvest, expected to be the heaviest in three years. In order not to allow this oversupply to depress prices and incomes for a politically important constituency, the Mori Government has bought the half a million tonnes by spending \$1 billion. The same amount of aid destined rice, had it been bought overseas as Japan normally does for aid uses, would have cost \$17.5 billion. Indeed, South Korea has donated Thai and Chinese rice to North Korea.

Thus, in one flip-flop, quite characteristic of the Mori Government, the ruling coalition has pleased the World Food Programme and South Korea's Mr. Kim Dae Jung who is desperate to prove to his doubting countrymen the success of the sunshine policy, and appeased North Korea as well as kowtowed to the domestic rice lobby. The *Mainichi* editorialised, "The rice aid is not so much as part of Japan's foreign policy as domestic agricultural policy."

The only ones angry are the relatives of those abducted and a

section of the principled media. Mr. Katsumi Sato, Director of the Modern Korea Institute in Tokyo, who accompanied the relatives to a meeting with the country's Foreign Minister, Mr. Yohei Kono, said they began beating the table after hearing the Government's explanation of its action. The purported political justification from Mr. Kono is that this payment of rice will help spur normalisation of ties with the North. He was unable to say why the world's second largest economy needs to spur normalisation with the world's most impoverished nation. Mr. Kono felt that this down-payment would encourage the Kim Jong Il regime to look at the abduction cases more seriously.

At the cost of being forced to quit, it would have been embarrassing for Mr. Kono to admit that some top coalition party members, including the king-maker, Mr. Hiromu Nonaka and Mr. Mori himself have either visited or communicated through back channels with the North and had quite some time back committed to helping the North, while singing a different tune at home, promising the relatives that there will be "no compromises." It is a sobering thought to the Japanese people that their Government chose to keep a commitment to a dictator but broke a commitment to its own people.

## 30 injured in Bangladesh group clash

**DHAKA, OCT. 9.** At least 30 people were injured during a clash over cutting an embankment to let out floodwaters in one of the worst flood-hit areas in south-western Bangladesh's Sathkhira district, police and media reports said today.

The leading Bengali daily *Jugantar*, quoting police and witnesses, said the injured included a local union parishad chairman, who led the group to cut the mud embankment at Komarpur in Debhata upazilla in Sathkhira district yesterday.

"The two groups fired gunshots and exploded bombs during the five-hour long clash", said an eyewitness. This led to the injury of 30 people with either bullet wounds or splinter from crude bombs.

Witnesses said the clash broke out when one group led by the union parishad (local village council) chairman of Parulia attempted to cut Komarpur embankment to release floodwater amid protests by the another group of Sakhipur union.

Police rushed to the spot and brought the situation under control. Meanwhile, the flood situation in the district further deteriorated with fresh areas inundated as the water continued to roll down to the south. — PTI

INDU  
2001

# Young Turks in LDP ask Mori to quit after gaffe Japan

By F. J. Khergamvala

**TOKYO, Oct. 24.** The Japanese Prime Minister, Mr. Yoshiro Mori is not known to make mistakes. Just big blunders. The timing and the details of the latest blunder have prompted young Turks in the ruling Liberal Democratic Party to publicly demand Mr. Mori's scalp, with the media too bitterly critical of the leader.

What has set off the latest uproar is Mr. Mori's huge gaffe during a meeting with Britain's leader, Mr. Tony Blair in Seoul at the Asia Europe summit late last week. Mr. Mori briefed Mr. Blair about Japan's ongoing normalisation talks with North Korea, saying that the main stumbling block was Pyongyang's refusal to address the issue of over 10 cases of Japanese having been allegedly abducted by North Korean agents.

After the meeting, Japanese Foreign Ministry officials were authorised to tell the media that Mr. Mori informed Mr. Blair that during a visit to the North in 1997, a Japanese delegation, of which Mr. Mori himself was a member, told North Korean officials that to save face, the North could arrange for the abducted people to be found in Bangkok or Beijing. "For North Koreans, saving face is ve-

prospects at the summer's elections to part of the Upper House, if Mr. Mori survives a contest for the party leadership in December. Moreover, the timing of the blunder will make it



**The Japanese Prime Minister, Mr. Yoshiro Mori, at a Lower House plenary session at Parliament in Tokyo on Tuesday. — AP**

extremely difficult for Japan to move forward in its negotiations with the North when the next round takes place on October 30 in Beijing.

where they were. Thus, said Mr. Mori's critics, the victims might now be permanently silenced.

Mr. Mori's office and the Government's Chief Cabinet Secretary have desperately tried to put the controversy behind them by saying that the person in the 1997 delegation who made this proposal to North Korea was the deputy leader but merely gave his own personal suggestion and did not speak for the delegation as a whole. This set off another uproar. Mr. Masaaki Nakayama, a former Construction Minister and deputy leader of the errant delegation, immediately called on Mr. Mori to protest and told reporters on Tuesday, "I made the comments representing the entire delegation and will not forgive them (the P.M.'s office) for saying it was only my personal opinion." A private support group consisting of relatives of those abducted called the Mori gaffe an act of betrayal.

Mr. Mori's office has said it is no longer government policy to seek the abduction issue's resolution in this manner. However, this not being his first blunder, the episode has occasioned everybody to recall his official indiscretions. "Mr. Mori is said to have once tried to seek a family tour.

THE HINDU

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## PLAYING A CONSCIENCE-KEEPER

THE FINE GLOSS on the outcome of the latest visit to Pakistan by the Japanese Prime Minister, Mr. Yoshiro Mori, who is at present in India, is quite obvious indeed. Pakistan's Chief Executive, Gen. Pervez Musharraf, unhesitatingly conceded Japan's moral right, as a singular victim of the weapons of mass destruction, to play the world's conscience-keeper in regard to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation goals. More significantly, he pledged to uphold Pakistan's promised moratorium on nuclear arms testing as long as India would do likewise. According to some Japanese media reports, attributed to the officials accompanying Mr. Mori, Gen. Musharraf foresaw in this context the possibility of sustaining his country's freeze on future nuclear test-detonations until the day the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) might come into effect. All this did not, in Mr. Mori's view, measure up to what Japan wanted, namely a credible assurance that Pakistan would soon sign the CTBT without much ado. However, given the tangled web of passions involving Islamabad and New Delhi, Mr. Mori was somewhat sympathetic in agreeing to consider a partial easing of the flow of blocked Japanese funds, already in the pipeline, for the Kohat tunnel project in Pakistan. This would not negate Tokyo's economic "measures", a semantic nicety for sanctions, as applicable to its aid for new projects. In the event, Mr. Mori and Gen. Musharraf allowed the status quo to reign on the CTBT front, given the Pakistan leader's argument that he might only trigger "domestic instability" if he were to rush in where angels feared to tread.

An arguably important "gain" for Gen. Musharraf was Mr. Mori's inclination to consider discussing with the U.S. and others within the G-8 (group of seven major industrialised countries and Russia) whether the International Monetary Fund could take a more lenient view of Islamabad's financial requirements in the event

of credible signs of a forward movement by it on the CTBT front. In regard to Pakistan's domestic politics, Mr. Mori was keen that Gen. Musharraf should adhere to the time-frame set by its Judiciary for a restoration of democracy. It was in that overall context that Gen. Musharraf found much political space to pronounce himself on the crying economic needs of Pakistan and the unfair impact on it of Japan's economic embargo on certain categories of aid, including yen-denominated loans. The message about the economic costs, alleged to have been imposed on Pakistan by India's policies, was duly delivered. But Mr. Mori, clear in his mind that there could be no Japanese mediation over Kashmir, simply reminded the General of the G-8's hopes about a resumption of dialogue between India and Pakistan. This marked a departure from an adventurous Japanese attempt in 1998 to host an international conference in Tokyo on Kashmir. On the anti-terrorism front, the Mori-Musharraf discussions centred on Afghanistan, given also Tokyo's earlier initiative in trying to read the moves of the Taliban and the present Northern Alliance.

Mr. Mori's agenda in Bangladesh, which he visited before travelling to Pakistan, was more in line with post-imperial Japan's prime economic diplomacy. Dhaka's poverty-alleviation programmes would in some key sense be underpinned by Japan's aid. With Dhaka gradually setting its sights on a role in international affairs commensurate with its modest but critical success at home, Mr. Mori promised Sheikh Hasina that Japan would consider whether to invest in Bangladesh's natural gas sector in the light of a crucial seminar to be held in Tokyo. If this might reinforce Bangladesh's emerging status as a possible geopolitical destination of the economic kind, Dhaka is more interested for the present in external help for its infrastructure projects and Mr. Mori did not disappoint it.

# Japan makes tactical shift on Putin visit

By F. J. Khergamvala

TOKYO, SEPT. 2. Russia's President, Mr Vladimir Putin, arrives in Tokyo on Sunday secure in the knowledge that Japan cannot possibly expect political concessions from Moscow at this time, but if he expects Japan's aid to flow, he will have to agree to a postponement of, not ignore, a Japanese wish list to resolve the territorial issue between the two countries.

After the tragedy of the Russian submarine Kursk in the Barents Sea last month, the Government of Mr Yoshiro Mori made a tactical shift on the handling of the Putin visit. Despite portraying a strong public posture, Japan will not press Mr Putin for immediate concessions in the territorial dispute focussing on the four islands of Etorofu, Kunashiri, Shikotan and the Habomai cluster.

Russia is reluctant to agree to sign any document on the territorial issue. But Japan has decided to seek a formal extension of the rough deadline agreed to by both countries in Masnyarsk in November 1997. It remains to be seen if Japan has the clout to get both, Mr Putin's written agreement and some specific deadline.

According to the 1997 agreement, between Mr Ryutaro Hashimoto and Mr Boris Yeltsin, both had decided to "strive to reach a peace treaty by the end of 2000." Since then, Russia's misfortunes, the leadership transition and other factors have altered the picture. The present position is that Japan wants the peace treaty linked to some decision on the islands, whereas Russia is insistent that the islands is-

sue be delinked from the peace treaty.

By postponing the deadline for a solution, Mr Mori hopes to satisfy domestic opinion that he has kept the momentum going for claiming the islands and give Mr Putin some room for manoeuvre at home. At the same time, Japan would stay its ground and use the 1993 Hosokawa-Yeltsin Tokyo Declaration to emphasise that the territorial issue and the peace treaty cannot be delinked.

Russia disagrees with Japan's proposal to specify a time-frame and has suggested that both sides reach an "early solution." Japan's public stance is to insist on the old deadline of 2000, but the extended date might be 2004, when Mr Putin's term in office ends. Mr Mori might insist on an earlier date as he does not wish to convey to a vocal right wing that he is shelving what was the highest priority for the previous two Prime Ministers.

In another pragmatic move that dovetails Russia's needs and Japan's desire to develop closer ties with the Russian Navy and Air Force, if only to keep a closer watch on Sino-Russian military ties, the Mori Government is about to expand its assistance to Russia in the "undersea" depths. In 1993, Tokyo had pledged \$ 100 millions to help Russia, Ukraine, Kazakhstan and Byelorussia dismantle nuclear weapons. Such aid has been given. Last year, Japan worked on providing \$ 40 millions to help Russia dismantle about 50 aging and decommissioned SSN nuclear submarines deployed in the Far East.

Officials here have not ruled out taking a

bigger step. If Russia requests, Japan is prepared to consider how to render medical help on the Kursk tragedy. Russia's Defence Minister is due in Japan this autumn to reciprocate the Japanese Minister's visit last year. Japan will also help to complete a nuclear waste processing facility in the Russian Far East.

At least three joint statements incorporating 15 documents will be made during Mr Putin's short stay. Among them is a Russian commitment to support Japan's admission to the U.N. Security Council as a permanent member. The rest pertain to scientific, cultural exchanges, energy, issues of intellectual property and issues other than the political dispute on the islands. Mr Putin's focus, for obvious reasons is on Japanese economic assistance, especially for the neglected four islands.

Expressing disappointment at the current level of assistance, the Russian leader in replies to the *Nihon Keizai Shimbun's* questions clearly linked future political ties to Japanese aid. Mr Putin wants both countries to formally adopt an ongoing project to develop oil and natural gas fields in Sakhalin and a new one to lay a gas pipeline from Russia to Japan. He also hopes that Japan and Russia formally take aboard a project by Russian monopoly United Energy Systems to supply electric power from Sakhalin to Japan.

In Japan, only the more aggressive business houses are willing to invest in Russia in a climate that is neither politically ripe nor are investment conditions secure. The rest insist on riding piggyback on Japanese aid.

# Putin rejects Mori's call for island sovereignty

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

TOKYO, Sept. 4. — Russian President Mr Vladimir Putin today rejected a Japanese call for sovereignty over four disputed islands, officials said, dashing any hopes of a peace treaty this year. Mr Putin arrived here on Sunday on a three day visit.

The Japanese Prime Minister Mr Yoshiro Mori had proposed that Japan's borders be expanded to include the islands, known as the Southern Kurils in Russia and Northern Territories in Japan, they said.

"The Japanese idea is brave and well-considered but it does not correspond exactly with the Russian idea," Mr Putin told Mr Mori, according to a Japanese official.

The islands were occupied by erstwhile Soviet troops in the dying days of World War II, blocking the path to a peace treaty ever since. The two sides had agreed at a summit three years ago, to forge a peace treaty by the end of 2000 but progress has since been glacial because of the festering dispute.

Japanese rightist groups meanwhile drove through Tokyo's streets demanding the return of the islands.

The four islands, Kunashiri (Kupashir in Russian), Etorofu (Iturup in Russian) Shikotan and Habomai, are home to about 16,000 people, according to Russian statistics.

Based on the idea of the islands being incorporated within Japanese territory, "we would like to see a peace treaty that is very acceptable to both sides," Mr Mori said.

"Mr Putin remarked that this proposal contains a number of

new elements but it cannot be viewed as a basis for a mutually-acceptable compromise," said a member of the Russian delegation. "For his part, the Russian president laid out in detail the Russian proposals which will see a gradual movement towards a peace

agreement with a parallel improvement in bilateral ties."

The leaders noted progress in some areas, allowing Japanese residents to visit the islands, giving a fishing quota to Japan around the islands and allowing the islanders to visit Japan, the Russian official said.

Japan and the erstwhile Soviet Union had restored diplomatic ties with a joint statement which also ended the state of war between them in 1956.

## SAILORS' BODIES

MOSCOW, Sept. 4. — Russia will begin to recover the bodies of the 118 crew members of its doomed *Kursk* submarine by the end of the month, Deputy Prime Minister, Mr Ilya Klebanov, said today on RTR TV.

The operation would be carried out by teams of three divers, each made up of two Russians and one Norwegian. — AFP

THE STATESMAN

25 SEP 2001

# Territorial row blocks Japan, Russia treaty

Tokyo, Sept. 5 (Reuters): Japan and Russia agreed today they would keep talking to resolve a territorial row blocking a peace treaty between them formally ending World War II, but chances of meeting a year-end deadline looked dimmer than ever.

Japanese Prime Minister Yoshiro Mori told a news conference that the agreement had been reached after talks today with Russian President Vladimir Putin, the final formal chat between the two leaders before Putin ends a three-day visit.

The dispute over four tiny Russian-held islands that Japan wants back are the sole obstacle to a treaty. Soviet troops seized the islands, located off Japan's main northern island of Hokkaido, at the end of the war in 1945.

The islands' economic value is limited and their strategic importance debatable. But Russia fears a nationalist backlash if it returns the islands. Japan wants them back as a matter of national pride.

Russia's RIA news agency had already quoted a member of the Russian delegation as saying last night that Moscow would no



These dog-shaped-robots, called "Poo-Chi", were presented to Vladimir Putin by Yoshiro Mori in Tokyo on Monday. (AFP)

longer heed a deadline agreed previously between the two countries to clinch the elusive peace treaty by the end of 2000.

Earlier on Monday, Putin had rejected a 1998 Japanese proposal to shift the border north of the disputed islands — a move which would effectively recognise Japanese sovereignty.

Foreign minister Igor Ivanov,

said Russia would back Japan's bid for a permanent seat on the UN Security Council.

## Putin's judo moves

Japan's beefy Prime Minister could not wrestle a peace treaty out of President Vladimir Putin, but the Russian leader proved a pushover for schoolgirl Natsumi Gomi. For the second time in less than two months, Putin donned his judo gear and ventured onto the mat to floor a Japanese male protagonist several times using a variety of moves.

The youthful Putin, who has a black belt in the sport, then accepted a bouquet of flowers from tiny 10-year-old Natsumi and, to her surprise, invited her onto the mat as well. The girl, a mere green belt, finally overcame her embarrassment and threw Putin over her shoulder to applause from an audience which included Mori, a former rugby player.

Putin, a former KGB spy, also took to the judo mat in a widely televised match during the July summit of the Group of Eight nations on Japan's southern island of Okinawa.

THE TELEGRAPH

6 SEP 2001

# Japan to go ahead with missile plans

By F.J. Khergamvala

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40-16  
TOKYO, SEPT. 6. Irrespective of the Clinton administration's intentions on building a missile defence system, Japan is not going to interrupt its own "research" on the Theatre Missile Defence (TMD) system. The Defence Agency's requirement specific to this research for fiscal 2001 is set at \$34 million plus.

At the Millennium Summit in New York, the Chinese President, Mr. Jiang Zemin is expected to lead the global chorus against the U.S. plans to build an anti-missile defence. Japan is the only country other than the U.S. that is going ahead with a form of wider missile defence. It will be intriguing to see how its Prime Minister, Mr. Yoshiro Mori balances Japan's support for the U.S. with Tokyo's intention of gaining support for a permanent seat at the United Nations Security Council by wooing nations opposed to the anti missile defence.

In December 1999, the U.N. General Assembly voted 80-4 in favour of a non-binding resolution to strengthen the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty (ABM) and asked the parties to the ABM Treaty "to refrain from the deployment of anti-missile systems for the defence of the territory of their country and not to provide a base for such a defence." The resolution also urged the non-transfer to other States or extra-territorial deployment of anti-ballistic missile systems or its components.

Japan was one of the 68 member-nations that abstained. It is likely that Japan will again keep the same international posture but in reality it has decided to go ahead with a long-term plan to develop the Theatre Missile Defence, which Japan prefers to label as BMD, or Ballistic Missile Defence. The TMD is both independent of, yet morally, strategically and legally linked to the ABM Treaty and the Clinton Administration's recent announcement to leave to the next U.S. President the decision to build a National Missile Defence.

Mr. Bill Clinton's decision does not close the door on the TMD, or the Navy Theatre Wide Defence (NTWD) system for Japan. After much dithering for years, Japan undertook to partner the U.S. in the TMD within a month of North Korea's three-stage Taepodong missile launch on August 31, 1998. Japan had long agonised about how to ready a defensive deterrent against China. Pyongyang's action provided Japan the perfect public relations pretext to do that. Therefore, irrespective of Japan's diplomatic posture, the plans for a TMD have been made, on the realistic assumption that China too will increase its nuclear missile capability, irrespective of what the U.S. decides. For diplomatic reasons Japan emphasises that this is still a research programme, with a flexible deadline of fiscal 2003-2004, with the tentative estimates set at between \$150 million and \$220 million for a

five-year period. The official explanation includes making a distinction between the missiles to be targeted for destruction by the U.S.' NMD and the joint U.S.-Japan TMD.

The U.S. has asked Japan to do research into light weight materials, because primarily Japan and the U.S. have decided that the U.S. made Aegis class platforms will carry the Light weight Exo-Atmospheric Projectile. Therefore, the TMD as planned for Japan will provide a sea based defence that should provide a cover not only for Japan but also for the minimum 100,000 U.S. troops based in the Far East.

The 1972 ABM Treaty cannot possibly obstruct the U.S. from getting a shield for its own forces, but it can ask some serious questions of Japan's commitment to non-proliferation and disarmament. First, it definitely violates the ABM provisions and the purpose of the ABM, to limit the defence capabilities of both the then superpowers so that neither is tempted to launch a first strike.

Much of Japan's anxiety would be relieved should Mr. George Bush come to the Oval Office and is able to carry through his campaign pledges. The Republican Presidential contender has promised "effective missile defences to protect all 50 States and our friends and allies." If the friends and allies include Taiwan, in addition to Japan, then Mr. Jiang will have much more to say beyond his Millennium Summit speech.

THE HINDU

7 SEP 1999



# Japan naval officer charged with espionage

REUTERS

5r5 JAP 9/9  
TOKYO, Sept. 8. — A Japanese naval officer, suspected of passing military secrets to a Russian embassy employee, was arrested today in what could be the country's biggest spy scandal in 20 years.

The incident comes just a few days after the Russian President, Mr Vladimir Putin's visit failed to resolve a territorial row that is keeping the two countries from signing a peace treaty.

Mr Shigehiro Hagsaki (38), Lieutenant Commander in the maritime self-defence force, is currently posted at a defence research institute. He served on destroyers and submarines before being posted to the institute, where he worked as an expert on

Russia. Fluent in Russian, he also worked in a documentation division which deals with foreign defence.

Russia reacted angrily to the incident. "It is an extremely unfriendly and provocative move," a Russian official said. He reportedly said Moscow may issue a protest to Tokyo through diplomatic channels.

The Japanese government too is taking the incident seriously, but the potential diplomatic impact would depend on the kind of documents handed over.

Chief government spokesman, Mr Hidenao Nakagawa said: "This incident took place in an area where high security must be maintained...it could lower people's trust in national security...once we have the details, we will have to consider

what we are going to tell the Russians about this issue."

Kyodo news agency identified the Russian as a naval officer, Captain Victor Bogatenkov. He is a military attache and member of a Russian intelligence group. Claiming diplomatic immunity, he refused to go to a local police station for interrogation.

Mr Hagsaki was arrested shortly after being wined and dined by Capt Bogatenkov at a Tokyo restaurant, Japanese media reports said. Mr Hagsaki reportedly also received money for handing over the classified documents. The two met around 10 times since September 1999 till last month.

"All we know now is that he met a person we believe was from the Russian embassy several times," a police spokesperson said.

THE STATESMAN

9 SEP 2000

# 10-20 Japan, Russia to go Dutch

IT IS not too often that Tokyo people see a Russian Federation flag fluttering on lamp-posts in central government offices. But a common sight are scores of loud speaker-fitted ugly buses and trucks belonging to the radical right-wing, which frequently protests against the Russians.

The trucks and buses were out in strength earlier this week to 'greet' the Russian President, Mr. Vladimir Putin. But, if there was one thing that he and his host, Mr. Yoshiro Mori, agreed on, it was that despite the absence of a peace treaty, Japan and Russia had come a long way and the radical right was out of sync with reality.

As Mr. Putin said at a news conference, "Efforts in the 50 years (before 1997) resulted in achieving nothing, zero. In the past couple of years, we saw considerable progress." Mr. Mori concurred, "Vladimir's visit has served to establish a cornerstone for development of the relations between the two nations in the future."

Within hours of Mr. Putin leaving Japan, the government and the media in Japan began buzzing about a new direction that the Russian President might have hinted at to resolve the long-standing territorial dispute. Before he came, there were several false starts. But, like false starts in a 100 metres dash are eventually followed by a valid one, much hope now rests on the new Putin formula.

The defence relationship between Japan and Russia is growing, driven by a wariness of China. But these days there is a limit to how far a relationship will grow unless economic complementarity is exploited. The huge potential of complementarity between Russian raw fossil fuels and Japan's hungry industry remains to be tapped.

Japan is only the third largest investor in Russia. Bilateral trade dropped to just over \$4 billion in 1999. Japanese business is extremely chary of doing business in Russia, not just because of poor investment conditions but also because of an incomplete political relationship.

Yet, the words from Mr. Putin and Mr. Mori were not mere platitudes. Russia will support Japan in its bid to become a permanent member of the U.N. Security Council. Until Mr. Ryutaro Hashimoto went to meet Mr. Boris Yeltsin, then Russian President, in 1997 in Krasnoyarsk, the relationship was one of benign neglect. Mr.



A toast for better ties: The Russian President, Mr. Vladimir Putin, and the Japanese Prime Minister, Mr. Yoshiro Mori, at a banquet in Tokyo.

*Despite the absence of a peace treaty, Russia and Japan have come a long way.*

**F.J. KHERGAMVALA**  
*on a possible step-by-step solution to the Kuriles dispute.*

Hashimoto, replacing Japan's all or nothing stance with a give and take policy, set the tone for a long process of retrieving the lost land (four islands) in perhaps 20 years, based on land for money. To Russia the islands are the southern Kuriles and to Japan they are the Northern Territories, consisting of the islands of Shikotan, the Habomai cluster, Kunashiri and Etorofu. In 1855, towards the end of the Tokugawa Shogunate, Japan and Russia signed a treaty of friendship, drawing a border between the northernmost of the four islands, Etorofu, and Russia's Urup island. So then, what's the problem? As Japan was surrendering in September 1945, the Soviets grabbed all four islands. In 1956, during the establishment of diplomatic relations, Japan and Russia signed the Moscow Declaration. It calls for Russia returning Habomai and Shikotan when the peace treaty is signed. The

fate of the other two islands was not mentioned.

There was a long Cold War, during which the U.S. kept Okinawa as an insurance against Japan and Russia doing a deal



On a peace mission, in judo gear... Mr. Putin bows before entering the Kodokan judo hall in Tokyo.

on the four islands. A subservient Japan played along and provoked Russia into withdrawing the Moscow 1956 offer.

As Japan's stature rose and it became a big power, in 1993 it got a weakened Russia to again formally acknowledge the existence of a territorial dispute. But the relationship stood still until Mr. Hashimoto visited Russia.

He then suggested the 'land for money' solution. Japan would invest in infrastructure in the Russian Far-East and could buy natural gas at cheaper prices, and improve Russia's ports, harbours and various facilities on the disputed islands. In return, Mr. Yeltsin agreed to sign a document saying both leaders would "do their best in order to conclude a peace treaty by 2000."

The 1956 Moscow Declaration already linked the peace treaty to a resolution of the territorial dispute. A few months after Mr. Hashimoto got Mr. Yeltsin to agree to the ambitious target, the Russian leader visited Japan.

At the fishing resort of Kawana in April 1998, Mr. Hashimoto proposed that Japan and Russia draw the line as they did in 1855, to the north of the four islands, but said Russia could continue to actually control the disputed islands for, say, another 20 years.

This indirect language of diplomacy suggested to most of Japan that 2000 was the deadline for a peace treaty, based on Russia acknowledging the Japanese jurisdiction over the islands.

Discerning observers knew this was impossible, but it took the Kursk submarine tragedy last month for the Japanese to realise that Mr. Putin could not afford to even whisper the term "transfer of territory."

However, for the first time a Russian leader mentioned the Moscow Declaration, which spoke about a two by two split. Mr. Putin has forced Japan to reconsider what it accepted in 1956.

Every political leader wants to go down in history having achieved some gain. Mr. Mori's official position is that Mr. Putin's proposal "at this stage" will not be practical unless Russia addresses the issue of the other two islands, but the proposal has not been rejected.

Clearly, by year-end Japan will look more seriously at this potentially step by step solution, even in the face of domestic opposition.

# Mori on a difficult mission

By P. S. Suryanarayana

TOKYO, AUG. 17. The Japanese Prime Minister, Mr. Yoshiro Mori, has staked his foreign policy reputation on what his critics and supporters alike tend to see as a diplomatically difficult mission to South Asia, scheduled to begin on August 19.

Given that the seasoned mandarins in Tokyo are aware of South Asia's potential as a diplomatic minefield for a man with a relatively low political profile still at home, Mr. Mori's initiative has already acquired several dimensions. In prime focus are the possibility of Japan gaining recognition as a development-friendly power within the G-7 industrialised forum, in view of a preponderance of the poor in the Indian subcontinent, and the chance of promoting Tokyo's own economic agenda by tapping India's burgeoning information technology sector. But the timing of the visit is explained by the Japanese officials in a historical context.

The notion of Tokyo's own sphere of economic influence came into reckoning during the preceding Obuchi regime, especially in South East Asia, in the light of Japan's measured aid to crisis-hit countries there and the assessment that its economy was continuing to tick with considerable precision despite a slide as reflected in the financial indices.

Now, Mr. Mori is transparently trying to step

out of the Obuchi shadow by seeking to befriend South Asia and perhaps also extend the frontiers of Japan's sphere of economic influence. The Japanese officials obviously keep their fingers crossed over the likely outcome of any such venture of open or tacit proportions. But their tactical move is to package Mr. Mori's plans in a historical setting by downplaying, to the extent possible, the enduring differences between India and Japan over the former's nuclear security ambitions.

For post-imperial Japan, it is pointed out, the decade of the 1950s was one of warm relations with India, especially in the context of a perception that Nehru and his other leaders displayed a certain degree of sympathetic understanding of Tokyo's challenges in the aftermath of its poignant hour of "embracing defeat" (a catch-phrase popularised by a book on that event). However, over time, as India intensified its experiments in "socialism" and Japan began its post-World War II economic takeoff of the capitalist kind, their bilateral ties lost considerable momentum. Thereafter, it was only when New Delhi began liberalising its economic policies in the early 1990s that Japan found it compelling to turn its attention to India once again.

This new phase of a calibrated economic cooperation ran aground when India conducted its nuclear tests in May 1998. Tracing this sequence, officials argue that although India

has not yet signed the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, Tokyo's ties with New Delhi could once again look up on the basis of an expectation that the latter's preference for a moratorium on conducting further weaponising-tests could be honoured. However, Japan's bottom-line in regard to its frequent insistence that India sign the CTBT has now been kept sufficiently vague ahead of Mr. Mori's visit, so as to give him some elbow room during his talks with India.

Should Japan want to increase its aid for ongoing projects even while continuing to withhold assistance for new enterprises (a move of partial goodwill unlikely to find favour with New Delhi as of now), at least 17 existing infrastructure units in India and two in Pakistan will benefit, estimates indicate.

It is possible that India can say 'no' to Tokyo in this respect (in a deeply nuanced diplomatic variant of the famous line by Ishihara Shin-taro about "The Japan that can say 'no' in regard to the U.S.") and insist that Mr. Mori lift the current economic sanctions on New Delhi for the sake of a full re-normalisation of bilateral ties. A view among foreign diplomats in Tokyo is that Japan's experience in divisive democratic politics at home may be useful as a reckoner as it tries to assess the difficulties encountered by the Indian Government in evolving a pan-party consensus on signing the CTBT.

1 8 AUG 2000

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## Resumption of aid to Pakistan linked to CTBT, says Japan

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

**ISLAMABAD, AUG. 19.** The two-day visit of the Japanese Prime Minister, Mr. Yoshiro Mori, beginning tomorrow promises to be no more than a 'goodwill' visit with both Pakistan and Japan showing no signs of flexibility on the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT). While Pakistan wants Japan to lift the economic sanctions imposed on it in the wake of nuclear tests in May 1998, Japan has linked the issue to the signing of the treaty.

The Japanese Prime Minister is also expected to impress upon Pakistan's Chief Executive, Gen. Pervez Musharraf, the need to reduce tensions with India. Gen. Musharraf is bound to reiterate the Pakistani position that while it is prepared for a dialogue to settle all outstanding issues including Kashmir, it is India that is not responding to the offer.

On the eve of the visit, Japan has sent out clear signals that it can consider resumption of non-humanitarian aid to Pakistan only if the latter is willing to sign the CTBT. Gen. Musharraf, on his part, has made it amply clear that Pakistan is in no position at this juncture to

sign it. Though Pakistan has not pinned high hopes on the visit, the military Government has enough reasons to be pleased with the tour of Mr. Mori. After the U.S. President, Mr. Bill Clinton, and the Indonesian President, Mr. Abdur Rehman Wahid the Japanese Prime Minister will be the third Head of State to visit Pakistan after the military takeover in October last year.

Faced with serious resource crunch and mounting external debt, Pakistan is hoping against hope that Japan would lift the economic sanctions and resume normal economic relations. The sanctions have undoubtedly hurt the economy and the Musharraf Government has been pleading for early resumption of normal economic ties. According to estimates, Japan provided Pakistan with \$491 million in loans and grants and was its largest trading partner till 1998. The annual trade between the two countries is estimated at \$1 billion.

In an interview to the Japanese news agency, Koyodo, Gen. Musharraf has said that he would urge the Japanese Prime Minister not to press Pakistan to subscribe to the CTBT at this

juncture. He would try to impress upon the visiting leader that signing the treaty could lead to internal disturbances and destabilisation. "Give us some time so that we can stabilise. Making a hasty decision to sign the CTBT would be counter-productive and against our national interest," he said. On whether he would assure Mr. Mori of Pakistan's commitment to maintain the moratorium on nuclear testing, Gen. Musharraf said, "even if we sign the CTBT, we will have to put the condition into it that India also will not test."

The Japanese Ambassador to Pakistan, Mr. Sadaaki Numata, has ruled out the possibility of even partial lifting of sanctions unless Pakistan is prepared to become a signatory. "It would be very difficult to persuade our public opinion that we can start normal economic relations as if nothing had happened."

During his visit, Mr. Mori would call on the Pakistan President, Mr. Rafiq Tarar, and Gen. Musharraf and exchange views on a wide range of issues. According to Radio Pakistan, bilateral relations, Kashmir, terrorism and Afghanistan are expected to be discussed.

2000 AUG 20

20 AUG 2000

# CTBT figures high on Mori's Pak. agenda

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, AUG. 20. The Japanese Prime Minister, Mr. Yoshiro Mori, arrived here today on a two-day visit during which he would hold talks with the Chief Executive, Gen. Pervez Musharraf, on the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) and the tension with India on the Kashmir issue.

He was received at the airport by the Foreign Minister, Mr. Abdul Sattar, and senior officials. It was a red-carpet welcome for the visiting dignitary, who arrived from Bangladesh amid tight security. Pakistani girls in traditional dresses showered flowers on the dignitary.

Mr. Mori will meet the Pakistan President, Mr. Rafiq Tarar, tomorrow morning and hold discussions with Gen. Musharraf over lunch. It promises to be no more than a "goodwill" visit as there is no convergence of views between Pakistan and Japan on all major items on the agenda.

He has come to plead with his hosts to sign the CTBT and take steps to ease the tension in the region by holding a dialogue with India. Gen. Musharraf has made it known that his country will not sign the CTBT at this juncture. While Pakistan wants Japan to lift the sanctions imposed after the May 1998 nuclear tests, Japan has

linked it to the signing of the CTBT.

On relations with India, Gen. Musharraf is expected to reiterate the position that while Pakistan was prepared for a dialogue to settle all outstanding issues, including Kashmir, the latter was not responding to the offer.

Faced with a serious resource crunch and mounting external debt, Pakistan is hoping against hope that Japan will lift the sanc-

tions and resume economic relations. The sanctions have hurt the Pakistan economy and the Musharraf Government has been pleading for early resumption of normal economic ties.

According to estimates, until 1998, Japan provided Pakistan with \$ 491 millions in loans and grants and was its largest trading partner. The annual trade between the two countries is estimated at \$ 1 billion.

THE HINDU

21 AUG 2000

# Mori hopes to see progress on CTBT

By P. S. Suryanarayana

**TOKYO, AUG. 21.** The Japanese Prime Minister, Mr. Yoshiro Mori, has hinted that the question of lifting his country's economic sanctions on India will not be judged exclusively by its forward movement towards accession to the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT).

Due weightage will be assigned to other aspects such as the importance of mutual ties, though Mr. Mori will certainly "hope to see progress" on the CTBT front itself "during" his three-day "visit" to New Delhi from tomorrow.

Addressing this issue with a broad sweep of his diplomatic brush, Mr. Mori said: "Regarding the economic measures taken by Japan, we will continue to carefully watch progress made regarding nuclear non-proliferation, including the signing of the CTBT, and take into account comprehensively various factors, including our bilateral relations."

The catch-phrases of much diplomatic meaning pertain to the indications on two counts: (1) a "comprehensive" assessment of the prevailing "economic measures," a Japanese euphemism for the sanctions imposed in the context of India's nuclear testing in 1998 and (2) the accent on "bilateral relations" as one of the "various factors" for easing or lifting the embargo on aid for absolutely

new projects. Mr. Mori's written responses to questions from a select group of journalists were made available to this newspaper today.

Significantly, the Japanese leader did not completely rule out a signature on the CTBT as at



least one litmus test of India's distinctive non-proliferation agenda. Overall, by talking of Japan's intention to monitor the "progress" that might be "made regarding nuclear non-proliferation" in its totality, Mr. Mori obviously kept the door open for a Japanese evaluation of any future nuances, if at all, in India's opposition to the highly discriminatory Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), which was recently described as

"a no-go area" by the External Affairs Minister, Mr. Jaswant Singh.

Mr. Mori did not, in this context, openly endorse the definitive view of top Japanese officials that it was now unrealistic to expect India to accede to the NPT in the short-run or even on a medium-term basis.

Mr. Mori prefaced his guarded response to the sanctions question: "Japan shares with both India and Pakistan the goal of achieving a world without nuclear weapons... I hope that it will be understood that the economic measures taken by Japan at the time of the nuclear tests by both countries reflect the feelings of Japan as the only nation in the world to have ever experienced the devastation of nuclear weapons and its strong hope for nuclear non-proliferation and the abolition of nuclear weapons."

Seeking to redefine Japan's possible new ties with India on the basis of shared "basic values and objectives such as democracy and free market economy," Mr. Mori said he was keen on "expanding our dialogue and cooperative relations across a broad spectrum." The Japanese Government and private sector would work together to promote economic ties with India and other South Asian countries "through the conclusion of an investment promotion and protection treaty." India's present status as "an

advanced nation in the IT (information technology) sector" would be suitably tapped.

Underscoring the "strategic importance" of the Indian Subcontinent in the 21st century as the prime reason for his current visit, Mr. Mori said Japan "hopes" to see the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) stage a "full recovery" at "an early date". Tokyo "intends" doing what it could to "promote confidence among the nations" of South Asia.

Expressing a "strong hope" that India and Pakistan "will make positive efforts to reopen dialogue" in the "the spirit of Lahore," he, however, said "Japan does not intend acting as a mediator" on Kashmir.

Measuring up as a statesman of the G-8 (group of seven major industrialised countries and Russia), but without addressing the issue of American military "footprint" in Japan, Mr. Mori said Tokyo would "play an active role in realising a further development of the world economy" as also "global peace."

According to him, "Japan and India continue to cooperate to realise a reform of the (U.N.) Security Council at an early date." But he did not spell out Tokyo's stand on India's aspiration, much like Japan's, to become a permanent member of the Council.

THE HINDU

22 AUG 2000

# Japan wants dialogue restarted: Pak.

2/1/8 By B. Muralidhar Reddy *Japan*

ISLAMABAD, AUG. 21 The Japanese Prime Minister, Mr. Yoshiro Mori, currently on a tour of South Asia, would call on India to resume the process of dialogue with Pakistan to resolve all outstanding issues between the two countries, the Pakistan Foreign Office spokesperson said here today.

Briefing reporters on the meetings of Mr. Mori with the Pakistan Chief Executive, Gen. Pervez Musharraf, and the President, Mr. Rafiq Tarar, the spokesperson said Mr. Mori referred to the recent declaration of the G-8 summit in Kyushu-Okinawa urging India and Pakistan to resume dialogue and hoped that they would respond to the call.

In his reply, Gen. Pervez reiterated the willingness of Pakistan for a dialogue to settle all differences, including the Kashmir dispute, and complained to Mr. Mori that the process was stalled due to India's "negative attitude".

Speaking at a luncheon hosted by Gen. Musharraf in his honour, Mr. Mori said, "I earnestly hope Pakistan and India will strive to ensure peace and stability in South Asia, and indeed, the entire world."

Immediately after the luncheon, preceded by two rounds of talks on a wide range of issues including the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) and economic sanctions, Mr. Mori left for India on a three-day visit.

Asked if Japan was willing to mediate between India and Pakistan, the Foreign Office spokesperson said though the issue did not figure in the discussions, Pakistan is willing to accept all modalities for resolutions of differences under Article 32 of the United Nations Charter and that included mediation. "Any

important member who can make a contribution is welcome. But for any mediation to succeed, acceptance of all parties involved has to be there," the spokesperson said.

However, a senior Japanese official made it clear that his country has no intention of mediating. "We want easing of tensions and resumption of dialogue in the spirit of the Lahore Declaration."

In the course of the meeting, the Japanese Prime Minister expressed concern over "terrorism" and it was explained by both sides that the subject figured in the context of Afghanistan. Gen. Musharraf concurred with Mr. Mori and said Pakistan was opposed to any kind of terrorism.

## Pak. plea rejected

He came, he saw, he conquered the hearts of Pakistanis and yet failed to carry forward his agenda. This sums up the two-day visit of Mr. Mori, here.

A polite but firm plea by Mr. Mori to the Pakistan Chief Executive, General Pervez Musharraf, to join the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty was met with an equally polite and firm negative response. In turn, the latter's passionate request on the need for Japan lifting the economic sanctions imposed in the wake of the May 1998 nuclear tests was rejected outright, though in diplomatic language.

Mr. Mori said that resumption of full economic ties was linked to the CTBT. At the same time, he stressed how much Japan valued its friendship with Pakistan and desired to "enhance and deepen" the bilateral relations.

Though both sides stuck to their guns on the main items on the agenda, Mr. Mori's visit has

left a "feel-good factor" in Islamabad. This was evident from the fact that Gen. Musharraf, breaking protocol, drove to the airport to see off the visiting Prime Minister.

The military government is clearly pleased at the appreciation shown by the visiting dignitary to various initiatives taken in the social and economic spheres since the overthrow of the Nawaz Sharif Government in October 1999.

According to a Foreign Ministry spokesman, Mr. Mori appreciated Gen. Musharraf's "vision" for his country. Both sides described the discussions as "friendly and extensive" covering a whole range of international and regional issues.

The only concrete promise Pakistan extracted from Mr. Mori was that Japan would consider extending help in rescheduling its loans to international agencies. The Japanese side was at pains to stress that it was only a promise and no commitment.

For Pakistan, however, it is a valuable promise. With an external debt of \$ 38 billions and the debt servicing due to commence at the end of the year, it is on the lookout for a bailout package. Gen. Musharraf frankly told Mr. Mori that Pakistan was faced with a precarious situation and would count on Japan for help as and when the need arose.

At the end of the two rounds, the Japanese side suggested that the Foreign Minister of Pakistan, Mr. Abdul Sattar, visit Tokyo to continue the dialogue. Japan's bid for a permanent seat in the United Nations Security Council could be discussed during Mr. Sattar's visit, which may come at the end of this year.

THE HINDU

2 AUG 2000

# From here to ITernity, says Japanese PM

## Mori sets the pace for renewal of Indo-Japanese bilateral ties

**The Times of India News Service**  
BANGALORE: Japanese Prime Minister Yoshiro Mori on Tuesday set the pace for the renewal and reinforcement of Indo-Japanese bilateral ties by mooted the setting up of a "Japan-India IT Promotion and Cooperation Initiative," besides announcing a series of programmes aimed at exchange of human resources talent and visits of high-profile economic missions to India during the year.

With silicon city Bangalore being his first stop in India after flying in from Islamabad on Monday night, Mr Mori commenced his tight schedule with breezy visits to Infosys and Wipro. This was followed by a 20-minute sterling address to captains of industry and trade in a hotel with the theme being IT "which he described as the key to prosperity in the 21st century".

Buoyed by Mr Mori's enthusiasm and interest in IT, Wipro Chief Azim Premji said his software company hoped to double its Japanese business every year, while software powerhouse Infosys Technologies chairman N.R. Narayanamurthy described Japan as the "jewel of Asia".

At the sprawling campus of Infosys, the Japanese premier took time off to tee (golf).

Chief minister S.M. Krishna who laced his speech with Japanese words, including *arigato* (thank you), virtually presented a wishlist for Karnataka. He suggested an "IT combinat" in Bangalore to boost India's software exports to Japan which is four per cent compared to 64 per cent for the US.

Mr Mori, who took over as Japan's PM in April this year, said one of the central pillars of his

administration had been promotion of the IT revolution with the establishment of an IT Strategy Council. "As a concrete action, Japan has drawn up a comprehensive assistance package to extend US \$15 billion over the next five years to signal the leadership that Japan intends to show in the promotion of IT use among developing countries with particular emphasis on Asia," he said.

Stating that the Japan-India IT initiative is to boost current cooperation between the two countries which at present is low profile, Mr Mori said he would be making this

proposal during his meeting with Prime Minister Vajpayee. The first pillar of this initiative will be promotion of economic exchanges in the private sector.

Subsequently, an economic mission led by the Keidanren President, Japan Federation of Economic Organisations, and chairman of the Japan-India Business Cooperation Committee will visit India in October. This will be followed by a delegation comprising Japanese small and medium scale enterprises to IT companies in January.

Mr Mori said promotion bodies for software companies from both countries would sign a memorandum of understanding on mutual cooperation on Thursday. Besides, the "India IT" symposium is slated to be held in Tokyo in October.

The other measures for IT promotion include training programmes for 3,000 Indian engineers in the Japanese language and its business practices during the next three years, issue of multiple-entry visas for short stays in Japan for business purposes and a Japan-India summit to be attended by IT leaders and the ministers in charge of IT.

### IT'S HAPPENING

Mori wants Indo-Japanese joint IT ventures

Karnataka CM moots 'IT combinat' plan

'India IT' symposium slated to be held in Tokyo in October

THE TIMES OF INDIA

23 AUG 2000



# Japan mending ties with N. Korea

By F.J. Khergamvala

**TOKYO, AUG. 25.** The Japanese Foreign Minister, Mr. Yohei Kono said soft yen loans assistance to North Korea is one of the practical options that his Government had offered to an official delegation from Pyongyang to compensate for the 35-year colonial occupation of the Korean peninsula.

It is far too premature for either Tokyo or Pyongyang to make estimates about the amount of "reparations" but it now seems that any final settlement will take on the complexion of Japan's settlement with China, rather than the flat loans and grants payments made to South Korea 35 years ago, when Japan normalised relations. Japan had then agreed on \$300 million in grants and \$200 million in soft loans to the South.

The indication about this form of compensation came towards the end of the 10th round of normalisation talks held in two Japanese cities between high-level officials of Japan and North Korea. As expected there was no major breakthrough, but an extensive exchange of views on the demands by both sides that

should now be narrowed in a back channel dialogue before the next round. In fact, there are two fairly reliable indicators that both countries are moving towards a process of normalisation, however long drawn out and however fragile owing to the fact that it is linked to factors other than demands being made of each other bilaterally. They include the talks between the two Koreas and also the North Korea-U.S. relationship.

First, before concluding this round, Japan and the North have already agreed to hold the next round in October, in an undecided third country. Next, perhaps equally important, is that they issued a reasonably candid joint statement. Employing the standard term "frank discussions" to admit differences, the joint statement specifically acknowledged, under an umbrella term the need for "liquidation of the past." This phrase masks the Japanese demand that North Korea make a clear explanation about some 10 Japanese that Tokyo says were abducted by agents of the North in the 1970s and 1980s.

It also cloaks divergent positions on North

Korea's demand for a Japanese apology for the colonial period and consequent compensation, further compensation for cultural assets taken away by the Japanese military as well as Pyongyang's call for Japan to grant legal status to North Koreans resident in Japan.

Eventually, much will hinge on the compensation package. North Korean officials had earlier called on Japan to make a "bold offer," thus suggesting that a replay of a specific grants cum loans package as done in the South Korean case in 1965 may not be acceptable to North Korean pride.

Other than narrow their difference through discreet contacts before the October talks, the Governments of both countries, especially Japan has much work to do in the realm of public diplomacy to get its people to agree to a compensation package. The right wing elements are not in any particular hurry to normalise relations with the North. In fact, they even expect the North-South Korean talks to crumble at some stage.

THE HINDU

26 AUG 2001

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JAPAN / SIGN OF ASSERTIVENESS

# Tokyo links aid to Beijing with 'behaviour'

By F.J. Khergamvala

**TOKYO, AUG. 27.** The Japanese Foreign Minister, Mr. Yohei Kono, travels to Beijing on Monday to convey bad tidings about aid on the eve of an important visit to Tokyo by the Chinese Premier, Mr Zhu Rongji.

Mr. Kono's main purpose is to tie up some loose ends about the agenda for Mr. Zhu's visit to Japan in October, but in a sign of increasing assertiveness on foreign policy matters by Japanese politicians, Mr. Kono has been asked to tell Chinese leaders that the ruling Liberal Democratic Party has not approved the Government's proposal to give Beijing yen 17.2 billions (\$161 millions) in loans. This is a punitive step.

The amount was designated for a Beijing railway project and an airport terminal expansion project in Xian. The LDP will reconsider the matter after Mr. Kono returns from China, though there are some members of the younger guard, including Mr. Kono's son, who prefer deferring the issue until Mr. Zhu gets to Tokyo.

The stated and ostensible reason for this punitive measure is that Chinese civilian and navy vessels have made 17 intrusions into Japan's exclusive economic zone this year. China does not subscribe to the Japanese exclusive economic zone as most countries have yet to formally demarcate maritime lines.

One particular mission by the Chinese navy might have been the last straw. Taking advantage of Japan allowing free passage through these international waters, a Chinese icebreaker-cum-intelligence gathering vessel actually circumnavigated the main Japanese island of Honshu. Japan concludes that the Chinese have been brazenly mapping the seabed for submarine operations.

China's response to the LDP's move has been to reiterate its position that economic cooperation is "mutually beneficial" and should not be linked to "unrelated factors or distorted by unnecessary factors", in the words of the Chinese Foreign Minister, Mr. Tang Jiaxuan, who was faced with a similar controversy during his visit to Tokyo last May.

The loans being withheld from China are part of a package pledged by Japan to some

East Asian nations during the financial crisis that broke in 1997. There is, however, sufficient cause to believe that the maritime incursions are not the only reason for this show of strength by Japan.

The Japanese establishment has been reviewing aid to China since at least a year. Many young parliamentarians of the LDP and academics questioned why Japan should continue to bestow largesse on one of the world's fastest growing economies whose military expenditure continued to rise at well over 10 per cent annually for the past 12 years and which did not feel the need to be transparent either about military spending or on how the Japanese aid was being spent. That such aid was being given during Japan's own recession attracted more adherents to those already opposed to helping China.

Japan has given to China loans cumulatively worth 2.2 trillions yen (until fiscal year 1998), grants of 111.28 billion yen and provided technical cooperation valued at 108.95 billion yen. Mr. Tang, during his visit, argued that China's official military budget was only \$14.6 billions and compared it to Japan's expenditure of over \$45 billions, but nobody believes that China's annual military spending is less than \$75 billions.

The Mori Government could also be trying to use aid as a lever to prompt Beijing to award the \$16 billion Beijing to Shanghai bullet train turnkey contract to a Japanese consortium. German and French companies are also vying for the project that will include far more than the initial contract. Supply and maintenance of sophisticated rolling stock will give Japanese transport equipment manufacturers and companies a lucrative ingress in China.

Japan-China relations are full of ups and downs. It is premature to conclude from this current withholding of loans that Japan is changing course. It continues to be greatly sensitive to China's persistent reminders about the past and the real purpose of Japanese aid, which Chinese officialdom sees as compensation for atrocities and occupation during the last War and the years leading up to it.

THE HINDU

28 AUG 2000

# Dhaka visit: Mori had 'hidden agenda'

10-17-98

By Haroon Habib

**DHAKA, Aug. 30.** The Japanese Prime Minister, Mr. Yoshiro Mori's visit to Bangladesh last week as part of his South Asian tour has opened a new chapter in Dhaka-Tokyo relationship. Analysts feel that the visit, by a Japanese Prime Minister after 10 years, would strengthen bilateral relations.

Mr. Mori visited Dhaka during the first leg of his South Asian tour. Besides the exchange of letters under which Japan would give more than 16 billion yen (about \$ 151 millions) to finance five projects in Bangladesh, the visit had a "hidden agenda", said commentators.

The Bangladesh Foreign Secretary, Mr. Shafi Sami, said the visit should not be seen only in the context of economic benefit, but rather in a broader perspective of deepening bilateral, political, economic and cultural ties. "It was a landmark visit," he said adding that it had reflected Japan's recognition of Bangladesh's political importance. He also said the visit brought about a "qualitative change" in the bilateral relations.

Mr. Sami, however, said there was no "hidden agenda". He said the visit was significant because Japan was the largest bilateral development partner of Bangladesh. Moreover, both countries hold similar views on issues like stability of



**The Japanese Prime Minister, Mr. Yoshiro Mori (left), chats with the Bangladesh Prime Minister, Sheikh Hasina Wajed, in Dhaka before his departure at the end of a recent two-day visit.**

South Asia, nuclear non-proliferation and global peace.

One objective of the visit that came up prominently was Japan's intention to play a more pro-active role in the U.N. as the second-biggest economic power after the

regional and international issues, particularly nuclear tensions, non-proliferation, revitalisation of SAARC and reforms and expansion of the U.N. Security Council with more representation from the developed and developing countries.

It was understood that Japan feels Bangladesh would support its candidature for the permanent membership of the UNSC. A Japanese spokesman told newsmen that his impression was that Bangladesh took a favourable position about Japan. Mr. Sami, however, merely said the two Prime Ministers had exchanged views on the expansion. He would not confirm a Japanese spokesman, Mr. Yamazaki's remarks that Bangladesh had reiterated the support it had extended during Sheikh Hasina's visit to Tokyo in 1997.

To enhance investment, Japan will support a seminar to be sponsored by the Board of Investment (BoI) on investment in natural gas to be held in Tokyo in November. Besides, to strengthen people-to-people contacts, the Japanese side expressed willingness to increase scholarships for students, scholars and officials from Bangladesh. Japan would invite 5,000 youths from South Asia over the next five years, and Bangladesh is included in the exchange programme.

The two countries would celebrate the 30th anniversary of diplomatic ties in 2002.

U.S. Besides strengthening economic relations with South Asia, Japan needs solid support from the region to become a permanent member of the Security Council.

The Bangladesh Prime Minister, Sheikh Hasina, and Mr. Mori exchanged views on

RECEIVED

31 AUG 2000

# Mori dissolves Lower House

Japan  
5-7  
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REUTERS

TOKYO, June 2. — In a bid to revitalise Japan's economy, Prime Minister Yoshiro Mori today dissolved the Lower House to clear the way for 25 June election that many pundits expect his ruling bloc to win despite his slumping popularity.

Mr Mori, who could lose his job if the ruling bloc fares badly, has made the task tougher since he sparked a furore by calling Japan a "divine nation with the emperor at its core", remarks that revived memories of wartime ideology.

Analysts say the three-way ruling bloc is likely to hang onto its majority in the Lower House in the coming election but a defeat cannot be ruled out completely.

Liberal Democratic Party leaders have said winning 269 seats out of the 480 would give them an "absolute stable majority" while 254 would be enough to keep parliamentary business running smoothly.

Voter turnout and the choices of the hefty chunk of Japanese voters who lack any party affiliation will play a key role in the outcome, since a high turnout can spell trouble for the LDP's grass-roots political machine.

Mr Mori and his pro-business LDP has promised to put economic recovery first and tackle



Mr Yoshiro Mori

the huge public debt later, stressing that Japan needs veteran lawmakers at the helm to make sure the economy pulls out of its worst recession in 50 years.

"The economy is showing some signs of recovery but is still far from a complete recovery and we need to take solid steps to ensure stable growth," Mr Mori told reporters.

In its platform issued today, the party — while backing up Mr Mori's explanation of his controversial comments — lamented the decline of patriotism and traditional values.

"Our country is one in which many religions have flourished, including a belief that Gods reside in the mountains, rivers, grass and trees and that there is something which supersedes human recognition, and we have had a flourishing spiritu-

al culture respected worldwide..." the manifesto preface said, adding, "But now the hearts of the Japanese people are weary and good Japanese tradition and culture has weakened."

The main Opposition Democratic Party hopes to lure voters upset by Mr Mori's emotive remarks. But it faces a tough battle to persuade sceptics that it has the right stuff to run an economy which has just started to recover.

Mr Mori's comments have more than halved public support ratings for his Cabinet from the 40 per cent seen when he first took over in early April.

Only 12.5 per cent of voters surveyed in a poll published on Monday were happy with Mr Mori. Just over half of those surveyed, though, said they still wanted to see an LDP-led coalition in charge.

Democratic Party chief, Mr Yukio Hatoyama told reporters "the people need to choose between taking the path toward fiscal reform and listening to the LDP's sweet words."

Despite the difference in rhetoric, macro-economic policy would probably not shift dramatically no matter who wins.

That's because any government must cope with the conflicting demands of keeping the recovery on track and cutting the mammoth public debt.

THE STATESMAN

3 JUN 200

# Glowing tributes paid to former PM Obuchi

Tokyo, June 8

INDIA TODAY joined foreign dignitaries from 180 countries in paying tributes to former Japanese Premier Keizo Obuchi here.

Defence Minister George Fernandes and US President Bill Clinton were among several heads of state who attended Obuchi's state funeral along with 6,000 mourners.

Immediately upon his arrival here yesterday, Fernandes met Foreign Minister Yohei Kono. He met his Japanese counterpart Tsutomu Kawara today and the two discussed security issues affecting their countries.

Prime Minister Yoshiro Mori is scheduled to meet Fernandes later today.

Meanwhile, US President Clinton today paid glowing tributes to Obuchi, who died last month following a stroke, as a man who "touched hearts around the world". "Prime Minister Obuchi touched hearts around the world in simple human ways," Clinton said, adding "he represented to the whole world the Japanese virtues of honour and loyalty,

vision and determination, love for and commitment to ordinary people. Our world is a better place thanks to the life that he lived and the work he did."

During his eight-hour visit to Japan, Clinton also met Japanese Premier and South Korean President Kim Dae Jung.

Mr Clinton's fleeting visit, which he told Japan Premier Yoshiro Mori was intended to show his respect for Mr Obuchi as well as the importance of the US-Japan alliance, was well-timed to give Mori's slumping image a boost.

But the US President poured a dash of cold water on the Prime Minister's diplomatic parade, reminding him that two testy disputes over telecommunications and Tokyo's financial support for US military bases in Japan still need to be solved.

The half-hour chat with Mr Clinton was the centre-piece of a spate of chats between Mr Mori, whose popularity is in tatters ahead of a June 25 election, and world leaders attending a memorial service for the late Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi. (Agencies)

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

9 JUN 2000

# Mori's views give ruling LDP the jitters

By Harvey Stockwin  
The Times of India News Service

HONG KONG: Japanese Prime Minister Yoshiro Mori, not content with stirring up a hornet's nest of a political controversy, has now stirred up another by once again reminding the Japanese of a concept straight out of their imperialist past.

While his colleagues in the ruling Liberal Democratic Party try to defend Mr Mori's "slips of the tongue", they seem to be having a tough time doing so as the nation enters a general election campaign with a Prime Minister whose mindset appears to belong to the beginning of the 20th century rather than the end of it.

Mr Mori first made a blunder by saying, "I want the Japanese people to fully understand that theirs is a divine nation, with the emperor at its centre." Having taken a plunge back towards the imperial ideology which drove Japan to try and conquer Asia in the 1930s and 1940s, last Saturday night Mr Mori took another. While lecturing at Nara, Mr Mori focussed his attack on the Japan Communist Party (JCP), saying, "It will not change its principles. It does not recognise the imperial system. The JCP calls for dissolving the Self-Defence Forces (Japan's military) and does not approve of the U.S.-Japanese security arrangement."

Had he stopped right there all might have been well. The JCP is effectively the only left-wing party still flourishing. The JCP has recently been making limited electoral gains. But having said that, Mr Mori asked his audience, "How can we possibly secure Japan's 'kokutai' and ensure public safety with a party such as the JCP?"

'Kokutai' is a word not commonly used these days, partly because it is redolent with memories of the past. Conventionally, it can be translated as "national polity", or even as "nationalist essence".

But it goes deeper than that. As a news agency defined it: before and during World War II, 'kokutai' was a term commonly used to refer to what was seen as the Japanese poli-

ty, the most important elements of which were rule by an unbroken imperial line, and the concept of the state as a family in which the relationship between the emperor and his subjects was likened to one between a father and his children."

Mr Mori hardly improved matters by saying on Sunday that the 'kokutai' reference was a slip of the tongue, and then denying that it was such a slip on Monday. He said he was referring to today's national polity, not that of the past. But as numerous fierce editorials in the Japanese press reminded the Prime Minister, that assertion will not be washed away easily.

As Japan prepares for a general election for its 480-member House of Representatives, the opinion poll ratings for Prime Minister Mori have already been plummeting downwards for one very basic reason: Mr Mori had given the Japanese a clear reminder that he himself had not yet fully awakened from the nightmare which Japan created for itself in the first half of the 20th century. Now he has given them another.

"Prime Minister Mori seems to be unable to shut his mouth," wrote the *Asahi Shimbun*, adding that the Prime Minister's beliefs rather than an undisciplined tongue may be at the heart of the problem. *Mainichi Shimbun* reported that concern was spreading in the LDP about the impact of Mr Mori's remarks on the election, while the largest daily, *Yomiuri Shimbun* said some LDP leaders wanted to gag the Prime Minister or at least make sure he is more careful in what he says.

Meanwhile, it will be of concern to the Japanese foreign ministry that Mr Mori's initial slip of the tongue has already prompted an editorial in the Washington Post urging American policy-makers to sit up and pay attention. "The remarks (by Mori) show the power of nationalist feeling in Japan. Despite the Prime Minister's strenuous efforts at damage control, they show that his nationalism includes nostalgia for the mystical chauvinism that drove Japan's expansionist drive into Asia and ultimately its war with the United States," wrote the paper.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

- 9 JUN 2000

# Bitter victory for Japan ruling coalition



A young mother casts her vote in Tokyo. (AFP)

FROM LINDA SIEG

Tokyo, June 25 (Reuters): Japanese voters handed the ruling coalition a victory in a general election on Sunday, but it was unclear whether the performance was good enough to let the Prime minister keep his job.

Public broadcaster NHK said the three-way coalition led by Prime Minister Yoshiro Mori's Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) had surpassed the crucial 241-seat mark and won the 254 seats it needs to control committees in the 480-member chamber.

But the LDP, the biggest partner in the ruling bloc was still short of the 229-seat target it had set for itself.

The main Opposition Democrats looked set to boost their presence to between 120-140 seats, up from 95 when the previous 500-seat lower chamber was dissolved, broadcasters said.

The victory with a slimmed-down majority was likely to prompt the ruling camp to stick

to its policy of putting priority on growth ahead of fiscal reform as the world's second-biggest economy struggles out of recession.

It was still unclear, though, how long Mori, whose performance was a key issue in the election along with his ruling bloc's handling of the economy, could keep his job.

Takekazu Kanazaki, chief of the LDP's biggest coalition partner, the Buddhist-backed New Komeito, said he would back Mori as prime minister as long as the coalition had majority.

"Of course, Mr Mori is also president of the LDP and so it depends on the LDP's judgment, but winning a majority is the issue and if the coalition gets a majority, we want to keep supporting him," Kanazaki said.

And LDP Secretary-General Hiromu Nonaka, the man most responsible for Mori taking the post after his predecessor suffered a stroke in April, said the premier had his backing.

Mori dodged the question of

whether he would step down if his party's performance was poor. "I would have to make a judgment after solemnly seeing the election outcome."

Mori and his partners promised stability and continued priority on growth, while the fragmented opposition attacked the free-spending, pork-barrel policies that have left Japan with the heaviest public debt among advanced nations.

Mori's own popularity was at rock-bottom after his comments that conjured up the wartime ideology used to justify Japan's aggression in Asia and raised doubts about whether he is intellectually up to leading the huge, high-tech economy.

Democratic Party policy chief Naoto Kan, pointing to his party's projected gains, said the results were "a de facto vote of no-confidence" for Mori's government.

"The outcome is a major step forward for the Democratic Party," Kan added.

Both of the LDP's coalition

partners, the Liberal Democratic Party and the smaller New Conservative Party, were headed for sharp reductions.

A hefty chunk of uncommitted and undecided voters had raised the prospect of an upset at the polls, but in the end the LDP's well-oiled machine and voters' persistent concerns about the economic future brought victory for the ruling camp.

Among candidates who benefited from that machine was Yuko Obuchi, daughter of late Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi who suffered a fatal stroke in April. The 26-year-old political novice was swept to a landslide victory in her father's seat on what would have been her father's 63rd birthday.

"I would summarise the result as grudging acceptance of the coalition," said Takashi Inoguchi, political science professor at the University of Tokyo. "The Opposition party did not offer a credible policy package and their leadership potential was not regarded as very large."

ING PARTY BADLY MAULED

# iges to retain power



The Japanese Prime Minister, Mr. Yoshiro Mori, scratches his head as the Lower House general elections ballot counting continues through the midnight at the party headquarters in Tokyo early on Monday. — AP

Foreign Minister and other people in direct charge of the summit," he said. The Ministers of Trade and of Agriculture lost their seats in the election and were almost certain to be replaced.

A clear sign of some progress came in the number of women getting elected — 35 seats, the most since 1946. Women have had a hard time getting their voice

heard in this male-dominated society. Before the election, women had 23 seats in the powerful lower House. The election also marked another point that any Opposition party sharing power with LDP has to pay a price which can be unaffordable. It is for the first time that Komeito suffered election losses as heavily as it did on Sunday. — PTI, Reuters

JAPAN ELECTIONS / RUL

# Mori coalition mana

TOKYO, JUNE 26. The Japanese Prime Minister, Mr. Yoshiro Mori's long-ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) was badly mauled in Sunday's parliamentary election, losing as many as 38 lower House seats but remained in power with an unpopular coalition.

The ruling coalition — all its constituents — also lost heavily, dropping 72 seats from the pre-poll total of 336 in the old House of 500. The new lower House elected on Sunday has 480 seats.

The big gainer in this election is the Democratic Party of Japan, improving its strength from 95 to 127, a net gain of 32 seats.

The Social Democratic Party, once the main Opposition group, won 16, gaining an extra two, while the Liberal Party also gained two by winning 18.

The LDP-Komeito-New Conservative Party coalition, with a total of 264 in a House of 480, has a majority that gives itself the command of all parliamentary committees.

It can, therefore, enact any law requiring simple majority but cannot amend the Constitution which needs two-thirds majority.

LDP leaders today decided to retain Mr. Mori as Prime Minister. Later, the coalition parties did the

same. None wanted to change Japan's Prime Minister just four weeks before a G-8 Summit he is going to chair.

Mr. Mori then decided to convene the new House on July 4 to conduct the process of electing the new Premier as is required under law.

Mr. Mori is among the most unpopular of Japan's post-War leaders, coming under fire for a string of gaffes in his three months in office, including calling Japan a "divine nation," evoking painful memories of the wartime Emperor-worship.

He said today the absolute majority won by his coalition indicated the public's vote for confidence for his Government. The results of the poll mean "that we won much support," Mr. Mori said.

He also said he wanted to retain the Finance Minister, Mr. Kiichi Miyazawa, and the Foreign Minister, Mr. Yohei Kono, in his new Government line-up. All Ministers dealing with the G-8 summit, beginning July 21, would be kept in the fresh Cabinet, he said. "Bearing in mind the summit schedule, of course, I think it will be desirable to make a line-up with consideration given to continuity over the Finance Minister,

THE HINDU

27 JUN 2000



# 10-16 On first trip, Mori gets some success

By F.J. Khergamvala *Japan*

TOKYO, MAY 2. The new Japanese Prime Minister, Mr. Yoshiro Mori is on a whistle-stop tour of a few European and Group of Eight nations, whose leaders will be his guest at the summit in Okinawa in late July. He has scored limited success in Russia, the only destination where there was some serious bilateral business.

The Japanese leader's "I am Yoshiro Mori" journey is for what the Japanese call "nemawashi" or root-building. It is a necessary element of any serious business to come and is used to break the ice and get to know the interlocutor. With Russia, the first stop on the journey, other than meeting Moscow's newly elected head, Mr. Mori had to restore on track a solution to a long-standing dispute that has hindered full normalisation.

This is Golden Week in Japan with a cluster of holidays clubbed together to provide more than a week of time off. Traditionally, some important members of the Japanese Cabinet take this time to do foreign policy business. Mr Mori's own trip ends with the essential pilgrimage to Washington DC on Friday, before he returns home to the cares of domestic politics, which will be marginally impacted by how he performs abroad.

Mr. Mori is soon expected to call a general election, possibly to coincide with the birthday of his ailing predecessor, Mr. Keizo Obuchi, on June 25. His success in St. Petersburg in getting the Russian President-elect, Mr. Vladimir Putin to agree to visit Japan in August is a breakthrough. Mr. Putin pointedly noted that Russia was the first stop on the new Japanese Prime Minister's itinerary and



The Japanese Prime Minister, Mr. Yoshiro Mori, waves to officials as he leaves Tokyo for a nine-day trip to the Group of Eight countries last week. — AP

this possibly had its symbolic reward.

Mr. Mori's primary purpose of giving his halt in Russia such priority was to cultivate and make an investment in the young Russian leader. Japan hopes that at some stage this will lead to a bold decision by Mr. Putin on the territorial dispute regarding the southern Kuriles, or, as the Japanese call them, the Northern Territories, a group of four islands to the North of Hokkaido. Japan had invested a great deal in Mr. Boris Yeltsin personally but found that neither his health nor authority lived up to

Tokyo's expectations.

Russia and Japan have diplomatic ties since 1956 but do not yet have a peace treaty ending their theoretical state of hostility. Through a series of working summits outside the respective capitals, the two sides had fleshed out a loose agreement to sign a peace treaty by the end of the current calendar year. The former Japanese Prime Minister, Mr. Ryutaro Hashimoto's visit to Mr. Yeltsin in Krasnoyarsk in 1997 acknowledged the need to resolve the dispute and arrive to reach a peace treaty by the end of this year.

A few months later, in April 1998, Mr. Yeltsin came to the fishing resort of Kawana in Japan. Mr. Hashimoto made a proposal whose substance has not been acknowledged officially, but is known to have been based on a "decide now, do later" principle. Mr. Hashimoto apparently promised huge Japanese investments if Russia could first concede that the ownership of the disputed islands will be with Japan but a time-table for actual transfer of authority would be decided later. Mr. Obuchi too pursued that proposal. Japan does not join the Western chorus against Moscow on Chechnya, which Tokyo considers is an internal matter for Russia.

Mr. Mori still wishes to continue down that road but he must convince the Russian leader that the peace treaty must include some concessions on the *de jure* ownership of the Northern Territories, which consists of four island groups. Russia agrees to the peace treaty being signed by the end of this year, but does not see the need to include the resolution of the territorial dispute as a precondition.

Initially, Mr. Putin turned down Mr. Mori's invitation to visit Japan officially in July after the Okinawa summit. Russia suggested a November visit, but Japan wanted to have the peace treaty done by December this year. Mr. Putin compromised by agreeing to make the trip in late August. This would be the first time in seven years for a Russian President to visit Japan officially, since Mr. Yeltsin came in 1993. This symbolism is a step towards furthering Japanese interests and might go down better with voters than the usual photo-opportunity with the U.S. President.

AP PHOTO

3 MAY 2000

# Japan divided over amending Constitution

By F. J. Khergamvala HD-16

**TOKYO, MAY 7.** Every year on May 3, Constitution Day, Japan examines if public opinion has moved towards amending parts of the U.S.-drafted Constitution. At the end of the century, it seems, like much else in this society, the preference is for quiet pragmatism, so long as the statute book does not show it.

Most debate about Japan's Constitution swirls round Article 9. Article 9 is why the Japanese like to call this a "peace" or a war-renouncing Constitution. The debate about this Article typifies the absence of both, a national consensus to change it and, therefore, support for acquiescence for measures that flout Article 9. Some scholars and analysts prefer amending many other parts of the Constitution too. Compared to previous attempts at collective introspection, this year saw far more attention paid to the issue of revision. A Con-

stitutional Research Panel of the Lower House was packed and met for hours, before a packed public gallery too. Two of the original draftees, Ms Beate Sirota Gordon and Mr. Richard Poole, spoke to the panel. Their views too reflected a house divided on the issue of changing the 47-year-old document, or sticking with it. For the most part, the sticky issue is Article 9.

The Article says that the Japanese people "forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or the use of force as a means of settling international disputes." It adds: "Land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained."

Japan annually spends over yen four trillion (about \$ 45 billions) on a military budget for the so-called "self-defence forces." And, it hosts 32,000 U.S. forces. Next to the U.S., this is known to be the largest defence budget for

any country. Nobody denies that Japan has "land, sea and air forces, or other war potential."

The nation's two largest mainstream papers reflect, as on other issues, the two poles, if one disregards the opinion held by the maverick and extreme right-wing Governor of Tokyo, Mr. Shintaro Ishihara. Mr. Ishihara does not have too many apparent takers of his view that Japan should do away with the Constitution lock, stock and barrel, because it was agreed to during U.S. occupation. Germany got rid of an Allied-drafted Constitution as soon as the Allied Forces left, but at least Germany was agreed on that.

The conservative *Yomiuri Shimbun*, in 1994, when it published a proposal for wide-ranging changes to the Constitution, was comfortable with the war-renouncing first part of Article 9, but suggested that the armed forces part be changed.

THE HINDU

6 MAY 2000

# Obuchi's death may lead to early poll

By F. J. Khergamvala

TOKYO, MAY 14. The ailing former Japanese Prime Minister, Mr. Keizo Obuchi, died late this afternoon at a hospital in Tokyo, of a stroke suffered on April 1, when he effectively ceased to be Prime Minister.

After a respectable pause, the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) is now expected to announce a general election for June 25, which is Mr. Obuchi's birthday.

The condition of Mr. Obuchi, 62, who has been in a coma for six weeks, deteriorated late on Saturday night. Mr. Obuchi's elder brother and some high-level party officials came in from out of Tokyo to visit Mr Obuchi.

Mr. Yoshiro Mori, who took over as Prime Minister, was in Okinawa to inspect the upcoming G-8 Summit facilities when news broke about Mr. Obuchi's death.

Almost every analyst has linked the timing of the general election, and the ruling LDP's prospects to the sympathy vote, so much so that the expected date, June 25 was chosen primarily to extract such sympathy.

Mr. Minoru Morita, a well-known commentator, predicted within a fortnight of Mr. Obuchi's hospitalisation that the LDP is likely to select that specific date for the election.

The ruling LDP is the dominant party in a three-party coalition that also consists of the New Conservative Party, a splinter group from the Liberals, and the Sokka Gakkai backed New Komeito. The LDP's alliance with the New Komeito has been heavily criticised, especially among traditional LDP supporters as a marriage of convenience.

Whether Mr. Obuchi's passing will attract back those whom he alienated by this action remains to be seen. Mr. Mori, who will lead the party into the election, was the main architect of the ruling party's arrangement with the New Komeito.

Mr. Obuchi took over the reins of the party



Mr. Keizo Obuchi waving to well-wishers after attending the annual air review of Japan's Air Self-Defence Forces at the Hyakuri Air Base, near Tokyo, in this Oct. 31, 1999 picture.

and became the country's 54th Prime Minister, at the end of July 1998, after the humiliating loss of the LDP in the elections to a part of the upper House forced the resignation of Mr. Ryutaro Hashimoto.

With almost nothing in his favour except the strength of numbers enjoyed by his faction within the party, Mr. Obuchi had nowhere to go but up. First, he set about consolidating his position within the party.

Next, he succeeded in almost decimating the Opposition parties.

The Obuchi style, characterised by a self-deprecating sense of humour, candour, as well as political resolve soon altered his public image. Over a period of time he quite literally may have worked himself to his death.

Mr. Obuchi died just a little over two months away from his foreign policy signature event, the G-8 Summit in Okinawa. It was Mr. Obuchi who selected Okinawa as the venue, for a variety of reasons.

Overall, the public had come to trust and believe in their leader because of his actions, and not merely because of the traditional deference to authority.

Therefore, on the domestic front too, the upcoming elections would have been a fine reward at the apex of a political life that began when he was elected to the lower House at the age of 26, after campaigning as a college student on a bicycle. He belonged to Gumma province, as did former Prime Ministers, Mr. Takeo Fukuda and Mr. Yasuhiro Nakasone.

A side effect of Mr. Obuchi's death may be some more serious questioning of the circumstances that led to his hospitalisation and passing the baton temporarily to his chief aide, Mr. Mikio Aoki. Many in Japan cast doubts on the facts presented as leading to Mr. Mori's assumption of power. The *Asahi Shimbun* has cast further doubts, through a front-paged story in its Saturday evening editions that said it was impossible that Mr. Obuchi could have actually asked Mr. Aoki to take over the office temporarily.

The paper said Mr. Aoki's explanation of how Mr. Obuchi asked him to mind the store may be inaccurate, because well before the time Mr. Aoki claimed to have heard such implicit instructions, the Prime Minister found it difficult to hold meaningful conversations and that it would have been "a miracle" for Mr. Obuchi to convey such advice.

THE HINDU

15 MAY 2000

# OBUCHI DIES AFTER WEEKS IN COMA

## Former PM, 62, got Japan's stagnant economy back on its feet

public for almost a day as LDP stalwarts worked out back-room deals to pass the reins of power.

Obuchi's popularity had been falling for months, although the economy has shown signs of emerging from its worst recession in half a century.

An opinion poll just before his stroke showed 60 per cent of the respondents were unhappy with the ruling group's heavy-handed ways.

Obuchi was born on June 25, 1937, in mountainous Gunma Prefecture, known in Japan as a place where "the winds and the women are strong," he fought his way to the top against formidable local rivals, such as former Prime Ministers Takeo Fukuda and Yasuhiro Nakasone. At 26 he became the youngest person to win election to Parliament.

He joked that he turned to politics only after failing to get into a noted school of foreign languages, where he had applied to study Mongolian. An avid traveller, Obuchi visited 37 countries in his student days.

In Washington, he stayed in a YMCA for \$2 a night and met then US attorney-general Robert F. Kennedy. He met his wife Chizuko when he was a university student. They had three children and recent reports have said one daughter might take up his baton and stand for his seat in the next general election.

Obuchi took the top job in July, 1998 because he was a protégé of powerful former Prime Minister Noboru Takeshita, the reputed kingmaker in the Liberal Democratic Party.

A quiet achiever as foreign minister before he won the leadership, he replaced Ryutaro Hashimoto following their conservative party's severe setback in Senate elections.

In his final days in power, the former Prime Minister was raring to host world leaders in late July at a Group of Eight summit in the southern island of Okinawa.

That honour will now go to Mr Mori, who was reportedly picked by a handful of his party cronies in a secret hotel meeting while Obuchi lay in hospital. The old school dies hard. (Reuters, AFP)

Obuchi, a party machine politician who proved to be a surprisingly effective leader, died on Sunday of a stroke triggered in part by a gruelling work schedule.

Obuchi, 62, was felled by a coma-inducing stroke on April 2 after about 20 months in office. Doctors said on Sunday that he died of complications from the stroke.

He will be best known for getting Japan's stagnant economy back on its feet after its worst recession in over 50 years.

"The economy has been in a very serious condition and Obuchi's hard work brought brighter prospects," said Mr Yoshiro Mori, who replaced Obuchi as Prime Minister.

Obuchi, a man of awkward charm and soft-spoken ways, was initially dismissed by political observers as a party hack who had all the flair of "cold pizza, utterly lacking in charisma" and "without a bold idea in his head."

Despite question marks over his ability to do the job — Obuchi had heart problems and required a pacemaker — he confounded his critics. Voters liked their affable, bespectacled leader and his non-abrasive style.

Obuchi's main talent was his ability to forge consensus among the factions in his ruling Liberal Democratic Party, an ability he hid behind his image of amiable country bumpkin.

Aside from the economy, he put through several measures dear to conservatives, including making official the national anthem and flag.

But the honeymoon came to an end late last year with a controversial decision to include a Buddhist-backed party in the government, a series of police scandals and allegations of insider trading involving a close aide.

On April 1, Liberal Party chief Ichiro Ozawa decided to bolt the coalition.

The defection of the mercurial Ozawa dealt a crushing blow. Within hours of meeting Mr Ozawa, Obuchi was in hospital in a coma.

The government kept news of Obuchi's illness from the



FAREWELL: Former Japanese Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi waves to well-wishers after attending the annual air review at Hyakuri Air Base near Tokyo in this October 31, 1999 file photograph. (AP)

# Japan looks for truth behind Obuchi death

Tokyo, May 16 (AP): Mourners at former Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi's private funeral today were left with memories about his relentless effort to rescue the Japanese economy — and an even bigger question about the truth behind his death.

Ever since Obuchi collapsed from a stroke on April 2, the Japanese public had been in the dark about his health, except for a few remarks by government spokesman Mikio Aoki.

Obuchi's doctors at Juntendo Hospital in Tokyo did not hold a news conference until after he died Sunday. He was 62.

Many Japanese have expressed deep suspicions about how their government had kept Obuchi's sickness shrouded in secrecy.

Hiroshi Kume, a popular TV commentator, said earlier this week that he found it difficult to believe anything the government said about Obuchi's death.

Many echoed this sentiment. "He could have been dead all this time and they wouldn't tell us," cab driver Hisako Ogiwara said. Unlike their counterparts in other industrialised nations, Japanese politicians are not obligated to disclose details of their health. Even bedridden politicians have held office for months.

Public doubts intensified this week when Obuchi's doctors contested Aoki's account of how the ailing Obuchi had entrusted him with his duties, asking about a volcano in northern Japan that required evacuation.

Saying he was acting on Obuchi's orders, Aoki took over the post temporarily until Yoshiro Mori was elected to the post by Parliament. The doctors said they were surprised by Aoki's comments because Obuchi at that time was not capable of making long statements.

Aoki defended himself, saying he merely paraphrased what Obuchi said. "You just have to believe me," he said.

But Opposition legislator Banri Kaieda, among the dignitaries at the funeral, said his Democratic Party will continue to pursue the apparent discrepancies in Aoki's statements.

"The Prime Minister's office must disclose the facts to the public. No wonder people are comparing Japan to the Kremlin," Kaieda said. Junichiro Saito, 72, an Obuchi supporter, said the former Prime Minister could have probably used better medical attention. Japanese Prime Ministers do not have their own team of doctors.

At the funeral, Aoki wanted to place white carnations before Obuchi's coffin, which laid under a large photograph of the respected former leader.

THE TELEGRAPH

17 MAY 2000

# Japanese Prime Minister sparks constitutional uproar 1975

By Harvey Stockwin  
The Times of India News Service

TOKYO: Japanese Prime Minister Yoshiro Mori has stirred up a hornet's nest at home and abroad by reviving memories of Japanese Imperial concepts which were supposed to have been eliminated by the post-Second World War democratic constitution.

With several Japanese newspapers casting editorial doubt on Mori's fitness to be prime minister, and with opposition parties vowing to sustain the controversy by calling for Mori's resignation, the furor already appears likely to upset the ruling Liberal Democratic Party's game plan in the run up to the general election, expected to be called early in June.

Essentially, Mori's comments have revived memories of the era when, under Japan's Meiji constitution, a state-sponsored version of Japan's Shinto religion elevated the Emperor to divine status, thereby providing the ideology for Japanese militarism and its efforts to conquer Asia.

On Monday, Mori spoke to the Shinto Seiji Renmei, a political group (of which Mori is a founder member) composed of members of the Diet, which is linked to the broader Association of Shinto Shrines. His remarks have been variously translated. According to one version Mori said, "The state of Japan is a country of God centred on the Emperor, and we have been working to make that known firmly to people".

Another less literal translation

has Mori saying "I want the Japanese people to fully understand that theirs is a divine nation, with the emperor at its centre".

The wider context of Mori's remarks has not been reported but his comments come just after he has spoken several times in favour of the prewar imperial rescript on education, which provided the basis for Japan's imperial ideology to be taught in all schools.

In the wake of Japan's 1945 defeat, the then Emperor Hirohito renounced his divinity, and in the 1947 constitution, the people were made sovereign, while religion and politics were formally separated, with the aim of completely ending state sponsorship of Shintoism.

Not the least of the problems Mori has created for himself is a weakening of the the ruling coalition between the LDP and the New Komeito party. Komeito is backed by the Sokka Gokkai Buddhist religion — whose members were persecuted when state Shintoism held official sway.

Several LDP ministers in Mori's own cabinet distanced themselves from Mori's comment. "God is not in my portfolio" finance minister and former prime minister Kiichi Miyazawa pointedly commented.

The main concern was that Mori was in effect being unconstitutional. As the leading daily *Asahi Shimbun* editorially commented, "The fact that the prime minister, elected by the Diet on the principle that sovereignty

resides with the people, has made a statement that negates that fundamental principle is a very serious matter".

"Before World War Two the Emperor was associated with the deities," the editorial continued "and was regarded as the divine leader of the people. That precept paved the way for the military to have its way, making victims of many Japanese. It also rained disaster upon many other people in Asian nations."

Tuesday, in the upper House of Councillors, Mori apologised for the impact of his remarks but refused to retract them. Further rows in the House of Representatives are to be expected as opposition parties threaten a vote of no-confidence.

Mori hardly put the controversy to rest by telling reporters that he was merely reflecting upon "Japan's eternal traditional culture". The controversy comes as the LDP was widely expected to dissolve the House of Representatives at the beginning of June, and call the general election on June 25, which also happens to be the birthday of the late Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi, who died last Sunday as a result of a stroke.

For some, this election date was already too blatant a move by the LDP, as it obviously sought to take electoral advantage of an expected sympathy vote for Obuchi. Mori's comments, and the controversy it has already aroused, now threaten to further negate this calculation.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

18 MAY 2000

# New Japanese PM faces no-trust vote

AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE  
TOKYO, MAY 23

JAPANESE Prime Minister Yoshiro Mori's government crashed in the popularity polls on Tuesday as it faced a motion of no-confidence ahead of general elections.

Mori's government, barely seven weeks old, slumped in two popularity polls, each blaming a gaffe by the new leader who described Japan as a divine nation with the emperor at the centre.

Four key Opposition parties agreed to move a no-confidence motion in the government, gearing up for elections which Mori is widely expected to call for June 25. The main Opposition Democratic Party of Japan, along with the Communist Party of Japan, the Liberal Party and the Social Democratic Party, were infuriated by

Mori's comment.

"The main reason for the motion is his 'divine nation' remark," said a Democratic Party of Japan official, who declined to be named. At a party celebrating the 30th anniversary of the founding of a lawmakers' group supporting Shintoism on April 15, the Prime minister declared: "Japan is God's country, centred on the emperor."

Shinto became the national religion in the 19th century and elevated the emperor to the status of a living god in whose name Japan took the road of aggression in Asia.

The 62-year-old Prime Minister later apologized for causing "misunderstanding", but the Opposition bloc insists he step down. The government's public approval rating dived to a mere 20 percent in May from 40 percent in April in one weekend telephone survey of

## Obuchi's daughter to contest elections

■ THE grieving 26-year-old daughter of former Japanese prime minister Keizo Obuchi announced on Tuesday she will run for his seat in parliament. "When his body returned to our house and I saw his face once again I decided to succeed him and become a politician," said Yuki Obuchi, the youngest of his two daughters. "My goal is to be like my father," she told a news conference. — AFP

1,021 people published by the daily *Mainichi Shimbun*. The disapproval rate jumped from 24 percent to a staggering 54 percent, said the newspaper, adding that the figure "gives us an impression of the end of the administration".

Of all respondents, 71 percent disapproved of the ruling coalition, formed by Mori's dominant Liberal Democratic Party with the Buddhist-backed Komeito party and Conservative Party. Another weekend survey by the *Yomiuri*

*Shimbun*, showed the approval rate for the Mori government plunging to 27.9 percent in May from 41.9 percent in April.

"Declining public support for the Mori cabinet is likely to influence the results of the House of Representatives election scheduled for June 25," said the survey. "We take the results seriously," said Liberal Democratic Party secretary general Hiromu Nonaka. "We want to strengthen our three-way coalition to gain people's trust," he added.

INDIAN EXPRESS

24 MAY 2000

HD-16

# Fujimori claims victory in poll

Japan

By Sridhar Krishnaswami

WASHINGTON, MAY 29. Peru and its President, Mr. Alberto Fujimori, appear to be heading for deep trouble. Unfazed by the pullout of the Opposition candidate, Mr. Alejandro Toledo, in the run-off election, Mr. Fujimori went through with the event, claiming in the end that he has won the election in spite of the fact that nearly one third of the eligible votes were not cast or had been discounted.

According to one estimate, Mr. Fujimori has claimed victory getting 50.8 per cent of the vote; and with his name still on the ballot despite his withdrawal, Mr. Toledo received some 17 per cent of the vote. The run-off became necessary as in the first round in April Mr. Fujimori got 49.9 per cent of the vote, an event even then dismissed as a major fraud by the Opposition.

"Here you have a soccer game in which one of the teams is the owner of the field, writes the rules of the game, chooses the referee, decides when the game starts and ends and decides which news media will broadcast it. You know ahead of time who is going to win", said Mr. Toledo who pulled out some 10 days ago alleging massive irregularities in the process.

The run-off election came under pressure from international observers and nations and not just in the Latin American neighbourhood. Prior to the scheduled vote there were criticism from such countries as the United States, Britain, Canada and France. The President, Mr. Bill Clinton, pointedly called for



postponement of the final vote and warning that Lima's relations with Washington "inevitably will be affected" if there is fraud.

"Free, fair and open elections are the foundation of a democratic society. Without them our relationship with Peru inevitably will be affected", Mr. Clinton said prior to the Sunday vote. The Organisation of American States is expected to come down heavily on Lima at their meeting in Canada this week with some suggesting that sanctions could be imposed on it. It remains to be seen as to the kind of measures that the Clinton administration will be inclined to take, the one complicating factor being the positive cooperation between

the two nations on the narcotics front.

Fighting for his third term which itself has been constitutionally manoeuvred, Mr. Fujimori and the election officials were determined to go through with Sunday's voting in spite of the international pressure. Brushing aside the overseas criticism and the pullout of international observers, the defiant Mr. Fujimori argued, "the absence of observer missions doesn't take away from the validity" of the election.

Reports from Peru speak of large crowds assembling in the main centres protesting the outcome and throwing their weight behind Mr. Toledo. The Peruvian military is said to be keeping a close watch on the demonstrations using all tactics at their disposal to ensure that the situation did not get out of hand. Mr. Toledo, on the other hand, is calling for a peaceful mobilisation of the people of Peru, but at least one impression is that this is not going to come about easily given the track record of Mr. Fujimori in the last 10 years of his rule.

One view is that Mr. Fujimori and Mr. Toledo were running neck to neck in the runoff election; but that a clear majority of those polled in a survey said that they did not agree with Mr. Toledo's decision to pullout of the race. In the final days, the Peruvian President was leading his opponent by at least eight percentage points. But the persistent allegation has been that Mr. Fujimori, aside from using strongarm tactics, was leaning heavily on the military intelligence service to deliver the goods, a charge denied by the Government.

THE HINDU

30 MAY 2000



Ruling party stalwart to replace stricken Obuchi

# Japan Cabinet resigns en masse

Tokyo, April 4 (AP): Japan's Cabinet rushed to resolve the country's leadership crisis today, resigning en masse and setting in motion the selection of a ruling party stalwart to replace ailing Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi.

Yoshiro Mori, secretary-general of the Liberal Democrats, was expected to be named premier tomorrow, and a new Cabinet — with Obuchi as the only change — could also be installed.

Government ministers vowed to move quickly and avoid a political vacuum in the aftermath of Obuchi's collapse. The 62-year-old Premier suffered a stroke on Sunday and lapsed into a coma.

"It is regrettable that the leader of the government fell ill in such difficult times both at home and abroad," the ministers said in a statement after an emergency meeting. "We are determined to do our best."

With Obuchi's LDP firmly in control of Parliament, the changes were not expected to bring any major shift in direction in political or economic policies.

Mori, 62, the second-highest official in the LDP, has a reputation as a conservative, and analysts said he would come under considerable pressure to continue Obuchi's initiatives.

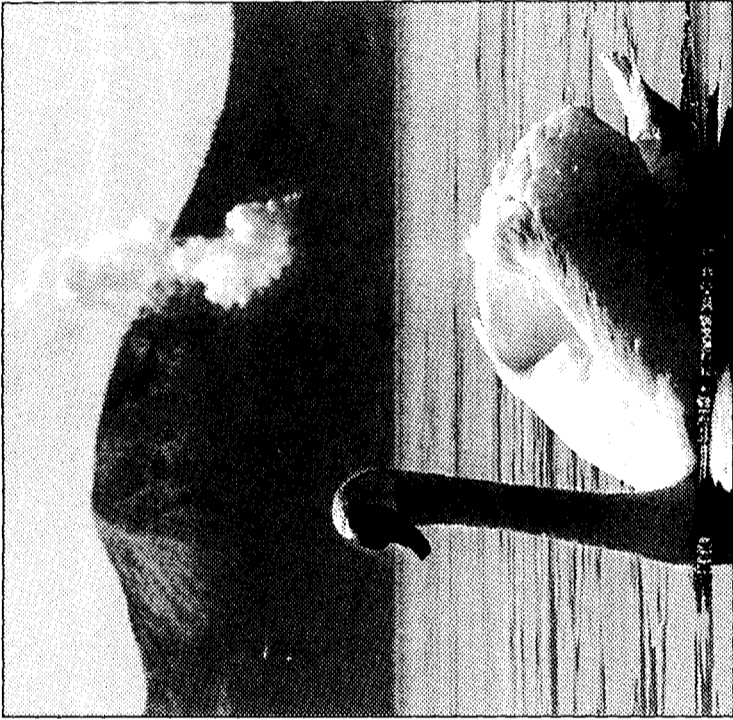
After two days of keeping a tight lid on information about Obuchi's condition or the possibility of replacing him, the government started the public search for a successor.

Obuchi, reportedly joined in a Tokyo hospital by his wife, Chizuko, his brother, and their three children, was under intensive care, kept alive on a respirator. Officials said he would not be able to resume his duties.

Political events were expected to move quickly. The Cabinet resignations were needed to begin the formal process of replacing Obuchi. With that out of the way, a ruling Liberal Democratic Party official said, LDP members in Parliament were to vote tomorrow morning on a party president to replace Obuchi.

The LDP president would then be put up for the approval of Parliament as Prime Minister early in the afternoon, and was assured of getting it because of the LDP's majority.

Party members said the natural choice would be Mori, a former journalist and veteran politician with a solid power base. Mori has refused to comment on the prospect of becoming Japan's next leader. But he said he supports the decision to fill the vacuum left by



A swan on Lake Toya-ko with Mount Usu in the background. (AFP)

Obuchi's collapse.

"We should not allow any delay in our national policy," Mori said. "Thinking of Prime Minister Obuchi, it's a very

painful decision. But we shouldn't be carried away with emotion."

Japan's media also called for quick action to ease the succession crisis. "The Prime Minister

holds the final responsibility for our nation's politics," said an editorial in the *Yomiuri*. "If he cannot perform his duties, the effect on domestic politics and international affairs is serious."

The government continued its tight hold over information about Obuchi today. Acting Prime Minister Mikio Aoki went to the hospital and later only said that there was no change in Obuchi's condition. He denied reports that Obuchi was brain dead.

The leadership crisis came as a volcanic eruption in northern Japan has 13,000 people in emergency shelters. Concerns were also being raised about the LDP's ruling alliance.

Just before Obuchi's stroke, the smaller of two parties with the LDP in a ruling coalition announced it was splitting off. The loss does not seriously threaten the Liberal Democrats' power, but could make it more difficult for them to pass legislation.

Though unable to block it, Opposition MPs were to resist the appointment of a stopgap Prime Minister from the ruling coalition ranks. They were also expected to demand an early election, raising the possibility of a Lower-House vote before July's G-8 summit, which Japan is to host.

# Mori elected PM in Japan

Japan  
5/9

ASSOCIATED PRESS

TOKYO, April 5. — Mr Yoshiro Mori was installed as president of Japan's ruling party and later elected as the country's Prime Minister today, ending a political crisis that began when Mr Keizo Obuchi collapsed with a stroke that has left him in a coma. Mr Mori was sworn in by Emperor Akihito this evening.

Mr Mori, a former trade minister, won solid majorities in both Houses of parliament following his instalment earlier in Liberal Democratic Party.

In a press conference yesterday, acting Prime Minister Mikio Aoki announced the Cabinet had resigned en masse because it was clear the 62-year-old Mr Obuchi would not be able to resume his duties.

That paved the way for Mr Mori to assume the country's top post. Mr Mori needed 245 votes for a majority in the lower House, and received 335. A total of 488 votes were cast. In the upper House, Mr Mori won 137 of 244 votes.

The changeover was not expected to significantly effect Japan's national policies — Mr Mori vowed to stick with the economic and political reform initiatives advocated by Mr Obuchi. His new Cabinet was the same as the old, with only the top spot changed.

He is not known for being strong on international affairs — a point on which he will soon be put to the test.

One of the new Prime Minister's first tasks will be a meeting in Russia with that country's President-elect later this month. Tokyo's relations



A file photograph of Mr Yoshiro Mori helping Mr Keizo Obuchi to sign documents to form the coalition government in October 1999. — AP/PTI

with Moscow are complex. Because of territorial dispute, they have yet to sign a peace treaty formally ending their World War II hostilities.

Another major test for Mr Mori will come in July, when Japan is scheduled to host this year's G-8 summit of industrialised nations.

President Bill Clinton would be among the leaders attending that summit, and America's heavy military presence in Japan is expected to become an

issue.

**China congratulates PM:** China has congratulated Mr Yoshiro Mori on his appointment as Japan's new Prime Minister, the official Xinhua news agency said today in Beijing, adds Reuters.

Ties between the two countries have long been fraught with tension, with China still bitter over atrocities committed during Japan's occupation of parts of the giant country during 1937-45.

THE STATESMAN

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APR 6 2000

Yoshiro Mori vows to stick with economic and political reforms

# Party insider sworn in Obuchi heir

**Tokyo, April 5 (AP)**—Ruling party insider Yoshiro Mori was sworn in tonight as Japan's new Prime Minister, resolving a leadership crisis that erupted when his predecessor suffered a stroke. He pledged to prod the country's troubled economy into recovery.

Mori, 62, a burly former rugby player, took office with a promise to keep up the policies of Keizo Obuchi, who mounted a massive public spending campaign to jar Japan out of recession.

The election stabilised the Japanese government after days of speculation over Obuchi's condition and fears a prolonged crisis could paralyse policy. Obuchi, 62, lapsed into a coma on Sunday and was on life-support at a Tokyo hospital.

"I will follow Prime Minister Obuchi's path," Mori said at his first news conference as Premier. "That is why I reappointed all the Cabinet ministers to their posts."

A former trade minister, Mori won solid majorities in votes today in both houses of Parliament following his installment earlier in the day as president of

the ruling Liberal Democratic Party. He and his Cabinet were later sworn in by Emperor Akihito at the Imperial Palace.

Mori's premiership was immediately hit with speculation that he would move to set up a general election possibly in June, before Japan hosts the G-8 summit of industrialised nations and Russia in July. Elections have to be held in October at the latest, and the opposition has been pushing for months to move the vote up.

Mori emerged as the most viable replacement for Obuchi as soon as it became clear the Prime Minister's condition was grave. As LDP secretary-general, Mori was the party's second-in-command after Obuchi and has a solid power base.

A former journalist for a right-of-centre newspaper, Mori is considered a conservative with considerable political savvy. But he is outspoken and has a tainted past—he was one of many politicians linked to an influence-peddling scandal in the late 1980s.

Mori also faced some scepticism that he was not up to the job.



Mori: In the hot seat

He has never served as finance or foreign minister, two traditional stepping stones to the premiership, and some wondered if his term would survive a general election.

"Nobody thinks he's the real leader," said Jiro Yamaguchi, a political analyst at Hokkaido University. "He has no major accomplishments as a key Cabinet member. What he did was only to stay close to power, most lately as

Obuchi's right-hand man."

Mori moved quickly to make his highest priority clear: continue Obuchi's efforts to bring Japan's economy out of its decade-long slump. Thanks to a tremendous public spending spree, the economy has shown signs of improvement, but unemployment is stubbornly high and growth has been weak.

He also vowed to stick with the economic and political reform initiatives advocated by Obuchi, which have included opening the economy to foreign investment. To make the point, he kept Obuchi's Cabinet intact, with only the top spot changed.

The election capped a string of tumultuous days in Japanese politics.

In a tearful news conference yesterday, acting Prime Minister Mikio Aoki announced the Cabinet had resigned because it was clear Obuchi would not be able to resume his duties. That paved the way for a vote on a new leader.

There were signs of a slight improvement in Obuchi's condition today, said an aide to Tamisuke

Watanuki, one of Obuchi's closest allies. The aide said movement had been detected in Obuchi's hand.

But Aoki said hospital officials reported no change. Obuchi remained in intensive care, joined by his wife, Chizuko, his three children and his brother.

The election of Mori today was met with a calm reaction on the street and in financial markets.

The dollar rose slightly against the yen, and stock prices slipped today, but traders said the political situation was not much of a factor because most analysts believed economic policy would not change.

Economists expected Mori, like Obuchi, to try to get the economy rolling again before trying to tackle the enormous deficit left behind by the recent spending campaign.

"I think it's basically more of the same," said Peter Morgan, economist at HSBC Securities (Japan) Ltd. "The basic implication is that they their first priority is to engineer a self-sustaining recovery."

HD-16

# A rising star fades

Japan

**L**IKE MOST top Japanese politicians, Mr. Yoshiro Mori no longer rents his tailcoat or, as the Japanese call it, "the penguin suit". Required for all ceremonial occasions at the Imperial Palace, most politicians buy their own penguin suits once they know they have reached Cabinet status, roughly 20 years after being elected.

Mr. Mori, 62, who took over as Japan's Prime Minister on Wednesday, scarcely expected three days before that he would need to wear the tailcoat. But there he was, at a palace investiture, taking over a job from his friend and schoolmate Mr. Keizo Obuchi, whom fate so cruelly claimed at a time when most observers believe he was close to the zenith of his power.

Almost exactly a year ago, Mr. Obuchi said in a speech at a Tokyo hotel "I was unpopular even before I became Prime Minister. People said I might last three days but seven months have already passed. I lasted three days, then three months, so maybe I can last three more years."

Three eruptions took place in Japan last week. The volcanic activity on Mt. Usu, the failed blackmail attempt by Mr. Obuchi's main political ally, Mr. Ichiro Ozawa, and ultimately, the sudden and debilitating illness of Mr. Obuchi himself. Of the three, only the latter event was a complete surprise.

Mt. Usu was never a dormant volcano and has been erupting with a degree of predictability. Mr. Ozawa, likewise, has also been trying to ask too much from the ruling coalition and this time went too far in that for the second time in a year and a half he has split his party. But, one could have never expected that Mr. Obuchi would descend rapidly into the abyss.

Yet, in some ways the three events are related. The volcanic eruption brought out the finest in Mr. Obuchi. Unlike his predecessors, Mr. Obuchi was unwilling to leave things to chance, and subordinates. He personally saw to it that evacuation efforts were in place from three towns in the vicinity of Mt. Usu. He personally took charge of the control centre at the Prime Minister's official residence.

According to the former

**Three eruptions took place in Japan last week. The volcanic activity on Mt. Usu, the failed blackmail attempt by Mr. Keizo Obuchi's main political ally, Mr. Ichiro Ozawa, and ultimately, the sudden and debilitating illness of Mr. Obuchi himself.**  
**F. J. KHERGAMVALA reports.**

Prime Minister, Mr. Morihiro Hosokawa, it was perhaps one of Mr. Obuchi's failings, if one could describe it that way, that he wanted to see every matter of detail tied up. Micromanagement, some might call it, but given Japan's history of being unable to cope with unexpected events, Mr. Obuchi, just months away from a general election, could not take the chance of seeing a repetition of the handling of the Kobe earthquake or the Tokaimura nuclear incident last year.

When Mr. Obuchi took over as an unelected Prime Minister at the end of July 1998 in the

wake of a humiliating debacle for the Ryutaro Hashimoto-led ruling Liberal Democratic Party in elections to a part of the Upper House, he barely expected to be there more than a few months. Quietly and shrewdly he set about consolidating, first his own position then his party's. He bought a deal with the conservative opposition Liberal Party of Mr. Ozawa. That bargain not only gave the LDP-led coalition control over the Upper House to adopt legislation, but also decimated the opposition.

Quite often Mr. Ozawa tried to test Mr. Obuchi but each

time the latter came out the clever man. The final test for Mr. Ozawa's brinkmanship came last Saturday when Mr. Obuchi came before the cameras to tell the public in a disguised language that the Japanese understand that he had refused to succumb to another Ozawa blackmail.

By that time, Mt. Usu had erupted and for the first time there was not a single casualty, primarily because of Mr. Obuchi's "super-vision". The economy had begun recovering and showing results by way of increased consumption. It was clear that a different Obuchi was in charge of a Japan different from the one handed to him 20 months back.

He was a large part of that difference. No longer the "cold pizza" as he was called, Mr. Obuchi showed intense dedication and resolve, marked by a telling weakness of being unable to convincingly project his thoughts and achievements. He was, as the Chinese like to say, "deeds, not words".

Over a period of time, this, compared to his predecessors, "Mr. non-charisma" got the trust of the people. So much so, that he was poised to be properly elected as Prime Minister in his own right, after the upcoming Group of Eight nations (G-8) in Okinawa in July which was to be his *piece de resistance* on the international stage.

Mr. Obuchi's personal "connect" as they say was his forte and compensated for his ignorance about international matters or a failure to articulate policy. He was the first top Japanese politician unashamed to come out of a movie with tears in his eyes. These qualities endeared him to the public to the extent that they shaped the unusual speed and uncharacteristic panache with which the LDP had to move in the next few days to avoid the wrath of a public getting accustomed to decisiveness.

Striving to record these achievements had taken a heavy toll on the self-effacing, cinema-loving man who 36 years ago was vigorous enough to campaign on a bicycle for a lower house seat.

Within 12 hours of his meeting Mr. Ozawa, the Prime Minister was moved to hospital, in a private vehicle, which is an altogether different story. That journey recorded the political demise of Mr. Obuchi.



**Japan's new Prime Minister, Mr. Yoshiro Mori, helps his predecessor, Mr. Keizo Obuchi, sign some papers in this October, 1999, file photo.**

# Mori vows to pursue economic reforms

<sup>Japan</sup>  
**TOKYO, APRIL 7.** The Japanese Prime Minister, Mr. Yoshiro Mori, today made his policy debut with a speech long on slogans, short on content and unlikely to stem speculation of an early poll to let voters give their verdict on the new leader.

Pledging in Parliament to win trust at home and abroad, Mr. Mori also vowed once again to pursue his predecessor's policies and carry out painful structural reforms of the economy. "We must not hesitate on reforms for the new era," said Mr. Mori, a party veteran who many experts doubt is the man to speed the transformation of Japan's stagnant "old economy" into a vibrant "new economy" driven by bold high-tech risk-takers.

The speech provided no clues on the timing of an election for Parliament's powerful lower House, which must be held by October. Analysts have said public opinion polls could hold the key to whether the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) decides to risk an early judgment from voters who have been losing

<sup>HO-77</sup>  
patience with the ruling coalition plagued by scandals. A survey published today — the first since Mr. Mori took office after his predecessor, Mr. Keizo Obuchi, suffered a stroke — showed support for the LDP jumping a full 10 points to 39 per cent.

<sup>SA</sup>  
The survey by the conservative *Yomiuri Shimbun* newspaper also showed that some 49 per cent of the respondents hoped Mr. Mori would be an effective leader. About 45 per cent said they had no such expectations. But more than half of those polled said they wanted Mr. Mori to wait to call an election, either until after a group of eight (G-8) Summit which Japan is hosting in July or until lower House lawmakers' terms expire in October, the paper said.

Opposition parties and media are urging an early election and some LDP members are said to hope to play on voters' sympathy for Mr. Obuchi, who is in a coma, in an early election, a move that some say could backfire.

The three-way coalition linking the LDP, the

Buddhist-backed New Komeito and the tiny Conservative Party has proved unpopular with voters, many of whom were wary of its huge majority in Parliament.

The survey showed more than half the respondents opposed the ruling camp's latest incarnation. A rugby-playing political veteran known for his fancy footwork in squabbles within the party, Mr. Mori must tackle a hefty agenda including Japan's fragile economy, a rumbling volcano and a gruelling diplomatic schedule including a meeting late this month with the Russian President-elect, Mr. Vladimir Putin. In a speech sprinkled with slogans such as "a nation of dreams and security" and "a beautiful nation of people with generous hearts", Mr. Mori pledged to carry out policies inherited from Mr. Obuchi. Among those measures are reform of a scandal-tainted police force and a post-War education system which, Mr. Mori said, gives insufficient respect to Japanese culture, tradition and ethics. — AFP, Reuters

THE HINDU

2 APR 2000

# Japan moves closer to normal ties with N. Korea

By F.J. Khergamvala

**TOKYO, APRIL 27.** Last year at this time, Japan and North Korea were talking about each other. Today, they are again talking to each other in what now appears to be a long-drawn process that will lead to some reparations by Japan.

Later this week, Japan will resume charter flights to North Korea, as it became known that Pyongyang is working on deporting Japanese Red Army hijackers. The resumption of flights represents the lifting of all sanctions imposed after North Korea lobbed a missile over Japan in August 1998. The normalisation of Japan-North Korea ties is not dependent on the fate of the hijackers or on some Japanese reportedly abducted by North Korea, or even on Ms. Tenko Hikita, a Japanese magician who went to the North Korean capital for an arts festival. Eventually, it is regional geopolitics that will determine the time and the price of normalisation.

North Korea has no choice but to deport four of the original nine hijackers who diverted a Tokyo-Fukuoka plane in 1970, to Seoul, released the passengers and then continued on to Pyongyang. As a face-saving measure, Pyongyang might fly the four to a third country destination. Of the nine, three have since died, one arrested in Japan after escaping here and one nabbed in Thailand. North Korea

says it shelters the four hijackers as "political exiles."

Pyongyang is berating the U.S. for linking the deportation to the U.S. lifting sanctions against the North. It said the U.S. interest in the matter is a direct interference in a Japan-North Korea bilateral matter. That, in a nutshell explains the North's strategy of normalisation of ties. It is carefully juggling many balls, by holding talks with the U.S., with Japan and now, in June there will be the North-South summitry. The North will play one against the other to obtain the best terms. Doubtless, there will be the prime reason of Pyongyang's isolationist methods. Though Japan-North ties are not as high profile as the North-South summitry, in simple cases there no other interlocutor is as valuable to it as Japan.

Japan and North Korea have already resumed substantive discussions early this month. They are still publicly talking past each other, with North Korea seeking a formal apology from the highest elected leader in Japan, which in turn says it cannot move towards full normalisation without the North addressing the abduction of Japanese.

Pyongyang said this week that in addition to the apology, the compensation package, as yet unspecified, must take into account the colonial rule from 1910 to 1945. With characteristic blink-

manship, Pyongyang's public bombast added that if Japan is not forthcoming "there is a growing opinion in North Korea that there is no need to have talks with it." The North also wants the Japanese Diet to adopt a resolution expressing an apology. Any compensation or reparation package by Japan will probably come in disguised forms such as yen loans assistance for environment programmes. South Korea got reparations from Japan over 30 years back for being a victim of Japanese colonialism. The North has added the Korean War to its list of Japanese wrong-doings.

The world's most hidden nation-state has now begun coming out of its self-imposed isolation. Even under difficult circumstances, the North has used its armed strength to some negotiating advantage.

It usually adept diplomatic calculations might lead it to believe that even a mighty economic power like Japan could be made to bend, because Japan is clearly not going to deal itself out of the region-wide normalisation attempt with the North. With Japan now becoming increasingly assertive abroad, it must manoeuvre itself into a position of advantage with the North, if its policy is still to keep the North and the South separate. During the Cold War, it used to be said that a unified Korea is a dagger pointed at Japan's heart.

## Japan, Russia renew search for peace pact

**TOKYO, FEB. 11.** Russia and Japan agreed today to take a cool-headed approach to their search for a peace treaty, dogged since World War II by a territorial row, the Russian Foreign Minister, Mr. Igor Ivanov, said. "We have reached a common understanding that we will discuss this matter in a strictly calm manner to seek a solution," Mr. Ivanov told a news conference after meeting the Japanese Foreign Minister, Mr. Yohei Kono.

Mr. Ivanov's visit is the first high-level Russian mis-

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sion here since the former President, Mr. Boris Yeltsin, resigned on December 31 and was succeeded by Mr. Vladimir Putin. Progress in talks between Japan and Russia on signing a peace treaty has been glacial, though the two sides set up diplomatic relations and ended a technical state of war in 1956.

A formal peace treaty was never signed because of a row over the ownership of four tiny islands occupied by troops from the former Soviet Union in the closing days of World War II. — AFP

THE HINDU

12 FEB 2000

# Bangkok Declaration to focus on solidarity

By P. S. Suryanarayana

**BANGKOK, FEB. 17.** The Secretary General of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), Mr. Rubens Ricupero, said here tonight that "coherence, solidarity and hope" would form the centrepiece of the Bangkok Declaration that was being finalised for adoption by Saturday. The Declaration, to be adopted at the conclusion of the UNCTAD's ongoing tenth session, was being given finishing touches under the chairmanship of the host — Thailand's Foreign Minister, Dr. Surin Pitsuwan.

Elaborating the anticipated central theme of the Declaration, Mr. Ricupero said the proposition of "solidarity" was being so addressed as to "give globalisation a sense of interdependence" between and among the developed States, on the one hand, and the developing countries, on the other. It was, in the final analysis, a matter of "politics" whether to "give globalisation a sense of mutuality of interests."

"The basic idea," according to him,

was that cooperation between the developed countries and the developing ones under the formula of "solidarity" should not be treated as "charity" from the rich to the poor. Globalisation itself "is not irreversible," as "nothing is irreversible except death," he quipped, and pointed out that there would be "sooner or later, a backlash" if "footloose capital" from the developed world were to be deployed in developing countries with "no sense of moral responsibility." If that were to happen, "then, we are in trouble," Mr. Ricupero added. The overall objective was to promote "solidarity" as the means to enable the "weaker, vulnerable" countries to "catch up" with the others.

The other central theme, focussed on "coherence," was a question of bringing about compatibility between "the external economic environment and the domestic policies" of each country, Mr. Ricupero explained. In a limited sense, this aspect of "coherence" would reinforce the objective of Western nations to bring about "coherence" among the various interna-

tional institutions such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organisation. Some countries, including India, have objected to the Western concept of institutional "coherence" on the ground that this could lead to the imposition of "cross-conditionalties" by them on the developing countries.

On the third salient feature of the prospective Bangkok Declaration, Mr. Ricupero said the expression of "hope" about the future in relation to trade and development issues would be rooted in "practical" realities and "not utopian" notions. The objective was to create credible conditions for this, he noted.

The word among the delegates was that a sense of "hope" was needed in Bangkok given the failure of the recent Seattle conference. At another level, the draft Bangkok Declaration, as originally prepared by the UNCTAD Secretariat in Geneva, had been circulated only after major powers such as the U.S. had expressed no insurmountable reservations.

THE HINDU  
18 FEB 2000



# Japan curbs are an irritant to ties, says Fernandes

UNITED NEWS OF INDIA  
TOKYO, JAN 13

DEFENCE Minister George Fernandes has said the sanctions imposed by Japan on India had been seen as a punitive measure and were an irritant to bilateral relations which had tremendous scope for improvement.

"One point made was that it was for Japan to decide about the grants and loans and whether they should be extended to India. Whatever their decision on the matter is okay by us," Fernandes said after a meeting with former Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto, the man who imposed the sanctions after the Pokhran nuclear tests in 1998.

Fernandes denied he had pleaded for yen loans and grants as reported in the press here.

Besides Hashimoto, who is now senior foreign policy adviser to Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi, Fernandes today also met leader

of the opposition Yukio Hatoyama of the Democratic Party of Japan and discussed the objectives of establishing security ties with Japan at a much larger level.

He said Japan's condition that India should sign the CTBT before sanctions are lifted figured in the discussion. In fact the sanctions issue was raised on Wednesday by the Japanese side. They were told that efforts were on to reach a consensus on CTBT.

"But there is so much that binds us that we should not allow one single issue to cloud the relationship or come in the way of what Japan and India need to do," Fernandes told newsmen.

Fernandes said the people he had met during the last three days here — officials, religious leaders, parliamentarians and academicians — had understood India's security concerns and its position.

"I have reasons to be satisfied with my visit and establishing a relationship in areas of defence mat-

ters," Fernandes said.

Fernandes is the first defence minister from either country to make a visit. His trip to Japan has resulted in the first-ever strategic security dialogue between the two countries.

The defence minister said Hashimoto was keen that bilateral relations improve between India and Japan. The senior Japanese leader is visiting India again in the second half of February.

Hatoyama, the leader of the opposition, said he would be sending a delegation of his party leader to India to understand New Delhi's various concerns, particularly on the security front. This would go a long way in an understanding being built up about India in Japanese political circles, Fernandes said. The defence minister flew by helicopter to the Fuchu air defence command headquarters near Tokyo where he was briefed on the structure and capability of Japan's air force.

INDIAN EXPRESS

14 JAN 2000

## Obuchi seeks to normalise ties with North Korea *Japan*

By Elaine Lies

TOKYO: Japanese Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi said on Friday he will work towards normalising his country's diplomatic ties with North Korea, the world's last remaining Stalinist state.

Japan, unnerved by North Korea's launch of a missile in August 1998 that flew over Japanese territory, hopes engagement with the secretive Pyongyang regime can help defuse the threat of future launches. At the same time, analysts say North Korea's gradually improving relations with the United States and South Korea risk isolating Japan if it does not make progress toward normalising ties.

In a policy speech to the lower house of Parliament on Friday, Mr Obuchi said, "In close cooperation with the Republic of Korea and the United States, I shall further advance the dialogue that began to develop last year."

Mr Obuchi gave no details on possible steps, but former Japanese Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama said last week that bilateral talks on normalising relations could resume next month.

Japan and North Korea held a first round of preparatory talks in Beijing last month, and Red Cross officials from the two countries reached a breakthrough agreement on food aid and other humanitarian issues.

In the talks, Japan Red Cross delegates promised to press their gov-

ernment to resume food aid to famine-hit North Korea, suspended after the 1998 missile launch. Tokyo has made it clear that a resumption of aid depends on progress in normalising ties.

In return, North Korean Red Cross officials promised to urge Pyongyang to cooperate in an investigation of missing Japanese, some of whom Tokyo believes were abducted by North Korea.

Prime Minister Obuchi told Parliament he was willing to discuss all humanitarian and security issues that affected normalising relations.

"I shall strive to ensure that both sides can adopt a positive stance towards each other," he said.

Mr Obuchi also vowed to work for an improvement in often fractious relations with China, which remain haunted by lingering resentment of Japan's actions in China before and during the Second World War.

Friction has risen recently over a meeting held this past weekend by Japanese ultra-rightists, who insist the Nanjing massacre never happened. As many as 300,000 civilians were believed to have died at the hands of invading Japanese troops during the 1937-38 occupation of the central Chinese city.

On Wednesday, Chinese foreign minister Tang Jiaxuan summoned the Japanese ambassador to express "strong indignation" over the rightists' meeting in Osaka. *(Reuters)*

THE TIMES OF INDIA

29 JAN 2000