

Taiwan Opp push to recall President

TAIPEI, Oct. 31. — Taiwan's main Opposition party has collected enough petition signatures for a vote to recall the President, a lawmaker said today.

The Nationalist Party, which holds a legislative majority, is pushing to recall Mr Chen Shui-Bian to punish him for deciding last week to scuttle a partially built nuclear plant.

The political upheaval was taking a toll on the stock market which closed 2 per cent lower today. It was not immediately known if or when the recall petition would be formally submitted to the legislature. Some doubted that the Nationalists would dare to initiate a political shake-up that would likely hurt their party. — AP

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Kimchi and Curry

The Koreans in India's Policy Matrix

By C UDAY BHASKAR

THE recent visit by US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright to North Korea has been overshadowed by events as disparate as the violence in Palestine to reports about match-fixing in cricket. But the Pyongyang palaver has a certain historicity and strategic import to it that could lead to a rearrangement in the major powers matrix in East Asia, and the relevance of these developments for India warrants scrutiny.

The Albright visit marks the first such high-level contact between the US and North Korea since the Korean War (1950-53) and could, perhaps, pave the way for a visit by US President Bill Clinton to the Hermit Kingdom before he lays down office. This would be a major punctuation in US foreign policy but the nettlesome issue that remains to be resolved is that of WMD — weapons of mass destruction — particularly long-range ballistic missiles of North Korean provenance.

North Korea's WMD aspirations and intent have had a profound impact on the global strategic weapon discourse — particularly in Asia. Even as Mr Bill Clinton was entering the White House in 1993, Pyongyang's nuclear programme was deemed suspect though it was a non-nuclear weapon state under the NPT. Subsequently, North Korea threatened to withdraw from the treaty for security reasons, implying thereby that it would develop nuclear weapons, causing dismay among the US and its allies. This remains unique in the annals of the NPT and a complicated round of negotiations with promises of power reactors and oil supplies allowed Pyongyang to suspend its withdrawal and be shepherd back into the fold in 1994.

However, the North Korean missile programme remains a source of anxiety. On April 6, 1998 Pakistan test-fired a Ghauri missile which is believed to be a North Korean Nodong missile. This was followed by India's nuclear tests on May 11 and one may infer that this was the final catalyst for the Indian WMD initiative. Later, on August 31, 1998 North Korea tested a three-stage Taepodong missile over Japan and this, in turn, led to the frenzied debate about theatre missile and national missile defences — TMDs and NMDs — that are likely to receive a \$60 billion funding if Mr George Bush wins the November 7 election.

The US is determined to fetter

the Pyongyang missile programme and restrain their export to aspirants including Pakistan, Libya and Iraq and a complex carrot-stick policy is being evolved. Negotiations in Kuala Lumpur at the time of writing may yet lead to a breakthrough and these deliberations have considerable significance for the Indian security establishment. Pakistan's links with the North Korean WMD programme go back to the early 1970s and the Zulfiqar Bhutto days and this was consolidated in the 1991-93 phase when many Pakistani scientists and technicians visited Pyongyang.

Currently, Islamabad's WMD capability is shrouded in predictable secrecy and yet it is imperative for India and Pakistan to arrive at a consensual level of mutuality to stabilise their nascent WMD capabilities. Any form of transparency is welcome and North Korea (along with China) holds the key to a bet-

ter comprehension of the Pakistani WMD profile. At the macro level, this has been a dizzying year for Korea-related developments. In June there was a historic summit between the two Koreas as a result of South Korean President Kim Dae Jung's 'sunshine' policy, which led to a Nobel Peace Prize. Unification is a long way off but the possibility of a rapprochement between the two Koreas is tantalising. This exigency will lead to a significant re-alignment of the current military stand-off in the peninsula. The US now has 37,000 troops stationed there with formidable back-up capability and the rationale for this force projection may well disappear.

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But the US military presence is not Korea-specific and has deep im-

plications for the other East Asian states. Till recently it was averred that the region is akin to a bottle with four scorpions warily eyeing each other — China, Japan, North and South Korea respectively — with the US military as the presence that contained the latent suspicion and aggression deeply embedded in centuries of oppression. Korea-related developments have elicited intense interest among the other major powers and both China and Russia have already established contact with Pyongyang. The European Union is following suit.

For India, both North and South Korea have deep relevance. India's recent links with the region go back to the Korean war when Delhi was a valuable conduit for the US and Indian medical troops assisted the UN command. It may be recalled that the 60 para field ambulance under Lt-Col A G Rangaraj rendered yeoman service and is perhaps the only Indian Army unit to have received a special mention in the UK House of Commons and a US Army meritorious citation for lives saved.

Today, South Korea is an important player in the region but is associated with cars and consumer goods in the Indian consciousness that is more aware of China and Japan. Economically Seoul is on the path of resurgence after the East Asian economic crisis and has a GDP (\$426 billion in 1998) that is comparable to India but with a population of just 47 million. The GDP growth rate is close to 10 per cent and the South Korean won is the only currency to have appreciated against the US dollar in recent months. With forex reserves of \$91 billion, Seoul is a major investor and few may be aware that as of 1999 approvals, South Korea has overtaken the US as the largest FDI source for India.

Thus, the Korean relevance for India spans the bandwidth from political, economic and military issues but can be nurtured only by the societal component. Seoul is becoming an IT destination for the Indian professional but there are many complementarities that need to be nurtured from automobiles to shipbuilding. The Koreans on both sides of the Yalu River are a doughty people — and the challenge for India is to engage them in their own right. Encouraging half a million Indians in a one billion mass to learn the Korean language could be termed a preliminary 'strategic' initiative.

IN BRIEF

- North Korea's WMD aspirations have had a profound effect on global strategic weapon discourse
- The US aims to fetter Pyongyang's missile programme through a carrot and stick policy
- Though South Korea is an important player in East Asia, India associates it more with cars and consumer goods
- India must engage both Koreas at all levels

597 New technology to tighten control?

IN October, the Hong Kong government decided the people should have new identity cards — smart, with multiple functions. The project would cost more than \$ 38 million and would take seven years to implement.

The proposal to introduce a smart ID card was discussed in the Legislative Council in March, June and early November. There was no public consultation although the scheme would have profound implications.

The smart ID card could lead to invasion of privacy, theft of personal data or even political surveillance. The question that must be asked is "what does the government intend to do with so much sensitive data conveniently stored in one card?"

Many countries do not have ID cards, since it is regarded as a form of control. At present, only Finland and Malaysia have started issuing multi-application government smart cards. To underline the control objective, the issuance of ID cards in Hong Kong has always been the responsibility of the immigration department, which operates under the supervision of the Security Bureau.

For many decades, the British colonial authorities had conditioned the Hong Kong people into accepting ID cards as a means of detecting illegal immigrants and overstayers.

The police use ID card checks as a pretext for stopping and searching millions of people every year.

Now it seems the Special Administrative Region government wants to tighten such control by using new technology. A smart ID card would conveniently carry all kinds of sensitive personal data. This may enable government departments to have direct access to the personal data of citizens. Surely this must be disturbing to people who do not want to live in a police state.

But it seems the administration of Tung Chee-Hwa is determined to push this through. The tactic is to keep it low key and try to rush it through the Legislative Council with minimum fuss. In July, when parties were busy preparing for the September elections, the government set up a steering committee to study the multi-application smart ID card. The committee concen-

Hong Kong's decision to introduce 'smart' ID cards for its citizens could lead to invasion of privacy, theft of personal data or even political surveillance, says EMILY LAU, who intends moving a debate motion in the Legco

trated on the convenience and benefits the smart ID card could bring. It also looked at how the service could be provided in a cost-effective manner and the importance of maintaining flexibility to cater for development in technology and future requirements.

In October, the secretary for security, Regina Ip, spearheaded the campaign to promote the smart ID card. Mrs Ip said the smart card is preferable to the current ID card because it can employ sophisticated techniques to protect the data and prevent fraudulent alteration. It has multiple functions because it can be used as a driving license and a library card.

It can also be used to facilitate change of address, electronic voting and provide access to health records in emergencies.

We're also told that it can be used to promote e-commerce by providing capacity to store digital certificates. A digital certificate is an electronic identity card issued by the certification authority to facilitate electronic transactions.

If digital certificates can be stored in smart ID cards, so the argument goes, it would provide the incentive for more people to use the digital certificates, and that in turn would drive e-commerce development.

We're also told the smart ID card can enhance Hong Kong's financial infrastructure. It can be used for issuing e-money and for electronic payment if an e-purse is installed in the card.

It is evident the government mainly concentrated on the convenience and technological advancement of a smart ID card. Public concern about invasion of privacy, identity theft and misuse of personal data were not seriously canvassed. Responding to these concerns, Security Bureau officials said the card-holders would have a choice on the type of information they want to put on the smart card. This is a step in the right direction, but we must proceed cautiously.

On the most sensitive question

of privacy, one would have thought that the privacy commissioner for personal data would be consulted and his views incorporated into the paper sent to the Legislative Council. Also, that was not the case. Legislators were told the immigration department has been maintaining a dialogue with the privacy commissioner to see how issues of privacy could be properly addressed.

For eliciting the people's views, the Security Panel of the Legislative Council will hold a special meeting on 11 November on the subject. I urge the people and organisations which have strong views on the subject to present them. We will also invite the privacy commissioner to attend the special meeting.

In December, I intend moving a motion debate in the Legislative Council on the desirability of having a smart ID card. This will give members a chance to concentrate on the subject and air their views.

Besides looking at the privacy problem and the question of possible political surveillance, we must be satisfied that the exercise would not include a new assessment of the right of abode for the ID card-holders. In other words, it must be made clear that people who are permanent residents enjoying the right of abode at present will not have that right taken away because of the screening they have to go through when applying for the new ID cards.

The government should set up a simple procedure for anyone wishing to view all the data stored on his or her smart card. The card-holder should be able to have access to a record of the occasions on which access was made to the data on the smart card and by whom.

For Hong Kong to adopt a smart ID card is no small matter. It is surprising that the Chief Executive, Mr Tung, did not see fit to include it in his recent policy address. What kind of personal data does the government wish to collect

from the people in this seven-year exercise? Why should all these data be made available on one card?

If modern technology cannot prevent theft and other forms of abuse, why should Hong Kong take this risk? Will people be forced to divulge sensitive information about their nationality when they apply for the

new ID card? Will people who have the right of abode now lose that right? I hope we will have a lively debate before we take a final decision on this most important subject.

(The author is a member of the Legislative Council, Hong Kong, who contributes occasionally to The Statesman)

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Optimism amid challenges

By K. K. Katyal

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SEOUL: Oh, to be in Korea at the present juncture when history is in the making there. A symposium on "Changes in inter-Korean relations" took me to Seoul for a week-long visit that provided an opportunity for gathering first-hand information on the momentous but daunting task, undertaken by the governments of the two Koreas as part of the efforts for peaceful reunification. This was the objective set out by their heads, the South Korean President, Mr. Kim Dae-jung, and the North Korean Chairman of the National Defence Commission, Mr. Kim Jong-il, at their summit on June 15 in the North Korean capital, Pyongyang, the first face-to-face meeting of its type, since the two parts separated in 1948 and fought a bloody war.

The opportunity was also useful in evaluating the progress of the steps initiated so far to implement the agreements reached by the top leaders — and the events since then. If the summit was unique in the Korean, nay even the global context, so was the effort, currently put in by the two sides to consolidate its gains in reversing the tide of conflicts and tensions and in committing themselves to the path of reconciliation and peace.

Think of the antagonism of the past five decades, of the dividing line of the peninsula, perhaps the most heavily armed in the world, the conflicts and skirmishes, the shrillness of the propaganda — think of all this and the significance of the latest developments would be clear. Even though the summit did not produce a precise formula for reunification, the affirmation of the political will to achieve this objective was noteworthy. There were several positive features but the challenges ahead are not to be minimised and it would be premature to talk of a short time-frame for unifying the two states.

For some strange reason, the popular perceptions outside the East Asian region tended to be off the mark, because of the tendency to oversimplify the issues involved. The Korean move was seen as the second stage of a process, guided as it were by an unseen global force, which had united the two Germans in the first instance. In India, some sections went farther and talked of this trend catching on in the sub-continent — "If Germans could unite yesterday, Koreans today, could not India and Pakistan not get together tomorrow?" This was a faulty, dangerous analogy.

Though based on a distorted assessment of global developments it would be seen in Pakistan as evidence of the "craftiness" of Indi-

ans in not reconciling themselves to the partition.

Korea is not Germany — for obvious reasons. The two Germans did not fight a war, but the Korean peninsula had been the scene of armed conflicts. In the first case, the system in one part, East Germany, collapsed, producing acute disenchantment among the people, generating a craving for unity. The events leading to the collapse of the Soviet Union deprived East Germany of the major external prop. In the peninsula, the regime in the North is well-entrenched and the political system intact, though economic problems are acute (and, perhaps a major compulsion for the Communist ruler to give up the isolationist policies of the past).

There is no evidence of the people turning against the ruling set-up there: even in the South, despite the overwhelming welcome extended to the summit and the peace process represented by it, a sizeable section, though in

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minority, counsels caution, expresses misgivings about the real intentions of the regime in the North and advocates a step-by-step approach.

The handshake of the two Kims was hailed as a historic ice-breaking development but that, so say some commentators in the South, is no guarantee for the success of their mission. What happened to the first dramatic handshake — in 1993 between the Palestinian leader, Mr. Yasser Arafat, and the Israeli Prime Minister of the day, Mr. Rabin? Or the warm gestures of the rival leaders in Ireland? And here in the sub-continent, some may draw attention of the historic handshake, even a half hug, in February last year — at Lahore by the Prime Ministers of India and Pakistan, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee and Mr. Nawaz Sharif.

As against these factors there are several positive indicators, because of which an optimistic assessment is in order. The Korean summit was not the result of an external prodding or a third party role. It was an indigenous, bilateral process. The very first clause of the summit declaration makes this clear — "The South and the North have agreed to resolve the question of reunification independently and through the joint efforts of the Korean people, who are the masters of the country." This contrasts sharply with the historical background of the two Koreas, which came into being as the result of power-sharing

among the Allies after the second world war, and the external influences which prevented the Korean people from playing an autonomous role subsequently.

The summit was followed by contacts at the ministerial and working levels which meant that the agreements of the heads were no empty rhetorical flourishes but were meant to be followed by concrete measures to achieve the goal, envisaged in the declaration. Notable among these were the meetings of the two defence ministers, talks on economic cooperation and the reunion, though limited, of divided families. At the defence talks, it was agreed to ease military tensions and establish permanent, solid peace on the Korean peninsula and to hold discussions to provide military support for the inter-Korean railway and road projects.

The problems posed by the demilitarised zone, the symbol of the shrillness of military-level confrontationist spirit in the past, were to be addressed. However, there was no finality about the South's suggestion for various military-related confidence-building measures, like the establishment of a hotline, prior notification of military drills and troop movements and the despatch of observers to each other's military exercises. The economic-level contacts prepared the ground for agreements for protection of investment and avoidance of double taxation. The representatives of some top enterprises from the South are already in the North to study the chances of investment.

The warmth in the inter-Korean relations was best reflected by the reunion of 200 members (100 from each side) in Seoul and Pyongyang and the goodwill created by the burst of emotions. This process was intended to be continued, though a recent case — of sharp reaction by the North to the remarks on the situation in their country by the head of the Red Cross in the South — could lead to a slow-down.

The challenges to be tackled relate to differences on priorities by the two sides. As seen by the South, the North is not keen on early steps on defence-related issues (because it would like to retain its military leverage) and instead, prefer conciliation at the political level and economic help to bale it out of its current problems. The use of various epithets to describe the present engagement — positive, dramatic, historic, ice-breaking — is perfectly in order. Equally important are the difficulties, some of which have already surfaced. Not to take a balanced view will be highly unrealistic

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Realpolitik behind peace initiatives

By K.K. Katyal

SEOUL: The peace moves in the Korean peninsula has triggered a flurry of diplomatic activity in East Asia, with some significant firsts, unthinkable even a few weeks ago. For instance, who would have bet on a visit by the U.S. Secretary of State to North Korea, regarded a political untouchable till recently? Who would have expected China extending a welcome, limited though, to the active U.S. engagement in the region?

Not long ago, North Korea had insisted on withdrawal of American troops from the South as a condition precedent for inter-Korean talks. Now it has not raised the issue during its dialogue with the U.S.

Ostensibly, all this was meant to be in the interest of peace and stability in the region, but actually, it was a case of *realpolitik* with each country seeking to ensure that the change in the power balance, unavoidable in the event of the two Koreas moving towards reconciliation and, eventually, to a unified State, does not work to its detriment.

This is the real story behind the separate talks of the U.S. and Japan with the North as also China's precautionary moves. Suddenly the presence of U.S. troops in the South was viewed with understanding, obviously because of fear of unpredictable impact of their withdrawal on the existing equations.

Yes, the most important development after the Korean summit was the U.S. dialogue with the North. It was around the middle of last month that North Korea sent a special envoy — the First Chairman of the National Defence Commission, Vice Marshal Cho Myong-rok — to Washington for talks on a wide range of subjects, not excluding the missile issue, of special interest to the U.S.. According to the joint communique, issued at the end of his trip, "they reviewed in depth the new opportunities that have opened up for improving the full range of relations between the United States of America and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea".

Albright trip

The two sides had "decided to take steps to fundamentally improve their bilateral relations in the interest of enhancing peace and security in the Asia-Pacific region".

It was this visit that prepared the ground for the Pyongyang visit of the U.S. Secretary of State, Ms. Madeline Albright, to convey the views of Mr. Clinton "directly to Chairman Kim Jong-il and to prepare for the possible visit" of the U.S. President.

Though hurriedly arranged, the Albright trip took the U.S.- North Korea dialogue a step further. An immediate positive result — officials of the two sides grappled with the

intractable missile issue at their meetings in Kuala Lumpur.

The outcome of this exercise, it was clear, would determine Mr. Clinton's decision to visit North Korea. Because of the inconclusive nature of the talks, the question of the presidential trip remained open.

The U.S. contacts with North Korea could not but have generated keen interest and, in some cases, produced sharp reactions. Officially, the South welcomed this development, saying it was in line with the course suggested by it all these years.

But there was an element of nervousness — as was evident, for instance, from the observations of a senior professor of Yonsei University in Seoul in an informal talk with me: "People are confused over the U.S.

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moves. They are worried that Mr. Clinton might make a splash and give a dramatic twist to the contact by his appearance in Pyongyang. True, the U.S. has kept us informed, but the worry exists. We are not for mediation by the U.S. in Korean affairs. It is our ally, it has 37,000 troops here and we have a treaty of mutual defence, apart from the shared faith in democracy and sanctity of human rights."

Nuclear blackmail?

Opinion in the U.S., too, was divided, as shown by reservations voiced by one section, not an insignificant one. Here is a sample — a *New York Times* story. Posing a question as to why the U.S. had followed different lines in its dealings with Cuba, on the one hand, and North Korea, on the other, it said: "Cuba built roads, schools, a conventional army. North Korea built nuclear weapons and missiles that can soar across most or all of the Pacific and threaten the U.S. in coming years.

So Washington, after decades of isolating North Korea much as it isolated Cuba, has been forced by this variant of gunboat diplomacy to change its stance....nuclear blackmail, in short, pays, very well."

The critics, obviously had in mind reports that the North wanted to bargain its offer of a permanent freeze on missile development and exports in return for U.S. compensation — \$ one billion annually for the next three years and help to launch satellites. This, however, was not acceptable to Washington.

As for the North's talks with Japan, the South did not take a dim view, both officially and privately. Just when its 11th round started in Beijing last week, it was publicly hailed at the highest level in Seoul.

The talks did not succeed in bridging dif-

ferences on two points — the North's demand for compensation and an apology for Japan's colonial rule of the peninsula and Tokyo's call for explanation for the kidnapping of ten missing Japanese, believed by it to have been abducted by North Korean agents to work as spies.

The North would resist this demand because to do otherwise would mean confessing its role as a terrorist state. As for compensation, Japan is prepared to give huge amount as economic assistance — some \$ 5 billion as aid and \$ 4 billion as credit while the North may peg its demand at \$ 10 billion as aid. There the matter rests.

Meanwhile, Japan has decided to send 50,000 tonnes of rice to the North to help meet its food shortage. Tokyo, it was clear, would want the united Korea to be democratic and market economy-friendly — another way of saying that it be outside the Chinese orbit.

Chinese moves

China adopted a positive approach to the peace move in Korea, with its President, Mr. Jiang Zemin, losing no time in sending congratulatory letters to the leaders of the two Koreas, Mr. Kim Dae Jung, President of the South, and Mr. Kim Jong-il, head of the North, on the success of their summit.

The letters did not make any substantive point but did lay stress on the importance of reunification "peacefully and independently through discussions between the two sides", and reaffirmed its resolve to "make positive contributions, as before, to sustain the stability and peace on Korean peninsula".

China also welcomed the U.S. dialogue with North Korea, but, as noted by a prominent non-official commentator, "there are some signs of Sino-U.S. rivalry in regard to the peninsula". China would not like the U.S. spreading its influence in the North.

It was not hard to see the nuances of the Chinese stand — the U.S. dialogue with the North will be welcome to the extent that it was directed at persuading the latter to give up its missile development programme, but not if it were to mean increase in the U.S. influence there.

China was interested in the North's freeze on missiles so as not to provide an excuse to the U.S. to go ahead with its National Missile Defence, regarded a menace even by Washington's allies. That China despatched its Defence Minister to Pyongyang on the eve of the Albright visit did not go unnoticed.

Hectic and high-pitch, the current diplomatic manoeuvres are only a beginning of a process that may continue and undergo surprising twists.

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Ushering in a new era of reconciliation

By K. K. Katyal

SEOUL: Fascinating indeed — to watch the peace process in the Korean peninsula in action, translated on the ground and that too in and near the demilitarised zone, DMZ, the heavily fortified and as such highly dangerous. Here in a portion, infested by deadly mines, the words and sentiments of the inter-Korean summit and the declaration of the two heads are sought to be given a practical shape. This is the meaning of the operations, conducted with the help of heavy modern equipment, to de-mine the ground, at places rocky and undulating, at places covered with thick bushes and foliage, and flatten it to lay down a track, to restore the railway line that was disrupted in the late forties, along with the violent division of the peninsula. The reconnection work for what was once a major artery, Kyongui railway, is a visual manifestation of the warmth and conciliatory spirit of the peace process.

Last week, we a group of 15 journalists from the Asia-Pacific region, were taken to this site. At our first halt, a military checkpost 45 kms from Seoul, the briefing by senior South Korean army officers, was prefaced and punctuated with warnings: "Please follow us on the demarcated path. That is safe, has been cleared of mines. Any deviation will be dangerous. We do not want our honoured guest to return with mutilated legs, with broken limbs or worse." With the help of slides, we were given details of the de-mining operation with the use of heavy equipment and machines, some worked through remote control — the compressors, mine breakers, blast agents and what not. If at all it made any sense to our lay minds, it was that the operation was highly complex, that the area to be covered was vast, 280,000 sq. metres on the southern side of the DMZ and 150,000 sq. metres inside. The work in the second case will have to be executed in coordination with the North.

The second halt, close to the DMZ, was a portion of the de-mined area, the site for the

new rail link, on one side of which were exhibited odd assortments of machinery parts used in the de-mining work, broken pieces of the deadly stuff. After getting down from our bus, we reached this place — traversing a makeshift pathway perhaps put in "shape" for our use. The track was close to the mined area, at places along the barbed wire put up to demarcate the safe and the unsafe. A slip could have meant anything. Exciting but eerie.

Bid to expand economic horizon

The railway that is to be restored was first built in 1906 by the Japanese: in 1944, it became a two-line system and two years later, it was rendered out of use because of the developments that led to the division of the peninsula for the decades to come. If its disruption heralded a period of bitter confrontation, the planned reconnection promises amity and conciliation, elusive all these years. That, as

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was natural, was the sentiment, permeating the South Korean President, Mr. Kim Dae-jung's words at the ground-breaking ceremony on September 18 at a village near the DMZ — "The severed railroad has been a symbol of division and the cold war: it was a place of despair and a place of blocking reconciliation and development. Today's ground-breaking for the restoration will begin a new age of reconciliation, cooperation and prosperity. We are beginning the work for merging the divided country into one." Apart from symbolising a new happy phase, the railway line would help Korea move away from its present peripheral status to become a transportation hub of North East Asia. The restoration project will not only provide an opportunity for economic progress to spread across the entire peninsula but also expand its economic horizon to China, Russia and the European continent. Along with the railway, a four-lane

highway is also proposed. The connecting link will have a 12-km stretch each on the Southern and Northern sides of the dividing line. The South Korean officials were not clear about the progress of the work on the Northern side though they did find evidence like cutting of trees, sound of explosions, presumably for the de-mining work.

Our third halt was some 10 kms away, the Dora observation post, a modest-size complex where binoculars are installed for a grand view of the adjoining area on the Northern side — across the Military Dividing Line, which cuts through the peninsula along 155 kms along the 38th parallel. A relief map with models provided graphic details. That is the other side's guard post, with 40 soldiers, said a military official, pointing to the northern direction. And that, he added moving his stick slightly in the same direction, is the "propaganda village". We could see a row of loudspeakers that had been blaring forth round the clock "lies and slanders" for the consumption of Southern soldiers. Now music is relayed — another evidence of the post-summit mood. This observation post, like three others, is a tourist attraction.

The biggest complex, however, is located at Panmonjom, another 10 kms away, which had been the venue of meetings between the officials of the two sides. It literally belongs to two Koreas, one half to the North, the other half to the South. The main conference room, too, is spread across the territorial divide. The conference table is divided in the middle through the cable of the fixed microphones to denote the jurisdiction of each of the two parts.

The peace process has a high visibility at the rail reconnection site. Elsewhere in and along the DMZ, the situation has not changed. Only when the post-summit processes are expanded, it will be possible to reduce the eyeball-to-eyeball confrontation of troops, armed with sophisticated offensive weapons. Hopefully that stage will be reached, sooner or later.

Inter-dependence holds the key

By K. K. Katyal

SEOUL: How will the settlement of the Korean issue affect the status of the American troops, now stationed in Seoul? Will their presence become superfluous in that eventuality? No, according to South Korea.

In an informal conversation the other day, its Minister in-charge of Policy Planning and International Organisations in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Choi Young-jin, provided this rationale for his government's stand: "There were two purposes for the stationing of U.S. troops — one, deterrence (against aggression on South Korea by the North), and the other, keeping balance in the region. After unification (of the two Koreas), the first part will disappear but the second will become more important". He referred to possible uncertainties in the region, with China growing, Russia re-consolidating and Japan changing. "To manage these uncertainties, the presence of U.S. troops will be necessary". But had not North Korea taken strong exception to their presence and, in the past, made their withdrawal a condition precedent for talks? "The North now understood the role of American troops" Mr. Choi said, drawing attention to the importance of the East Asian region and the need for convergence of four Powers in regard to its affairs. (China, being the fourth, along with the two Koreas and the U.S.). Obviously Mr. Choi felt encouraged to take this view because the North had not imposed any conditions for the summit and did not raise the question of troop withdrawal in its direct talks with the U.S.

The conversation mostly covered the inter-Korean dialogue and the prospects for the future, though he briefly touched upon bilateral ties between India and his country. The June 15 summit (between the South Korean President, Mr Kim Dae-jung, and the North Korean head, Mr Kim Jong-il), had drastically changed the situation — "prior to the summit, engage-

ment was the name of the game. Now its complexities have come to the surface". He compared it with marriage — "things become very difficult, very complex, when you enter the real life". But, he emphasised, there was no alternative to engagement as none of the other courses like containment or coercion could work. The engagement was based on the realisation that "we are in the globalised world, with strong inter-dependence".

Priority for durable peace

The North, in his view, had shown a "desire to come out of isolation and see inter-dependence as a key in the present-day world. Both of us are determined." He, however, did not want to underestimate the obstacles in the way of reconciliation (and subsequently of reunification). "It is not easy to overcome mistrust and tension of the last 50 years. There had been no meaningful talks during this peri-

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od, barring two occasions, in 1972 and 1991 (after the collapse of the Soviet Union). We hope we could now liquidate the legacy of distrust. What was needed was perseverance and courage". Conceptually, the first priority was to work for peaceful co-existence so that there were no conflicts or skirmishes, of the type of the naval incident last year and for establishing durable peace which could be done "through the mechanism of a peace treaty to replace the armistice agreement". There was the most heavily-guarded border, with one million troops stationed there, he said, pinning hopes on the meetings between the two defence ministers and the working level contacts, scheduled for the future.

The North was "very stable" politically, though it needed help for its economic problems. Was South Korea worried about contacts between the U.S. and the North? "No. On the

contrary, we encourage the North to have connections with the outside world. Isolation is dangerous. Contacts with the U.S. help overcome it. We welcome it." Similarly, he was at pains to explain that his government regarded contacts between the North and Japan a positive development because, through this process, the "cause of inter-dependence is served." He cited statistics to bring out the strength of his country's ties with Japan — \$40 billion trade, three million visitors going from one side to the other. "We feel comfortable with Japan. We are also linked with it through the U.S."

Mr. Choi traced the opening of the North to last year's U.N. General Assembly, when its discussions on the sidelines of the session helped it establish diplomatic relations with other countries. It was now poised to have ties with the U.K. and Germany and was keen to join the Asian Development Bank, having already become a part of the Asean Regional Forum (ARF).

As for bilateral relations, Mr. Choi referred to the shared interests of India and South Korea and to the occasions for joint functioning — particularly to the similarities of problems facing them, Jammu and Kashmir and North-South relations, and the common destiny to make most of globalisation. The two sides had worked closely in the ARF, he said, noting that while South Korea hosted its inter-session group meeting this year, India would do so next year. In the economic field, he cited the commonality of interest in knowledge-based economy and their strength in the software industry. He regarded India as "an anchor of stability in South Asia" as the largest working democracy. Economically, too, he saw it as a model for the region.

Was the South Korean President due to visit India early next year? A non-committal laughter was all that he provided by way of response.

(Concluded)

THE HINDU

11 NOV 2000

No headway in North Korean diplomacy

REUTERS
SEOUL, NOV 6

96-8
7/11

THE pace of diplomacy with the autocratic and unpredictable military regime in North Korea appears to be sputtering, with few real breakthroughs, behind the hopeful talk and pageantry.

The risk is that the orchestrated approach to North Korea by the United States, Japan and South Korea may flounder, leaving an arsenal of doomsday weapons in a country sinking deeper into economic ruin with potential for a catastrophic social implosion.

Bill Clinton will not be dropping by Pyongyang for a presidential visit to a country with whom the United States is still technically at war, and talks in Malaysia last week about North Korea's missile programme failed to deliver a deal.

Japan and North Korea are back to square one on normalising

ties. Talks in Beijing last week failed to resolve the tricky issue of 10 Japanese whom Tokyo insists were kidnapped two decades ago by North Korea, which denies any knowledge of them.

Now, North Korea is threaten-

ing a thaw between the erstwhile enemies since June's landmark North-South summit.

So, once again, the multi-front diplomatic battle appears to be on the horns of a perennial North Korea's dilemma: How to open up to

grammed to view its leaders as demigods and its would-be benefactors as imperialists with "sinister political aims". Indeed, a recent editorial in the official party mouthpiece, the Rodong Sinmun (Workers Daily), warned readers that outside aid was a toxin that could threaten the regime's survival.

"The imperialists' aid is a tool of aggression... a dangerous toxin which brings about poverty, famine and death, not prosperity," the newspaper said. North Korea has only one card to play, but it's an ace — the capability of launching long range missiles tipped with weapons of mass destruction that could threaten Japan and possibly even the West coast of the the United States.

US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright was witness to the power of North Korea's mercurial leader Kim Jong-il on her visit to Pyongyang two weeks ago

Failure of diplomacy in N Korea might leave N-arms in the hands of a country sinking deeper into economic ruin

ing to cancel a second round of reunions between families torn apart when the two Koreas went to war a half-century ago. It is angry because the South's Red Cross Chief made unflattering remarks about its capital Pyongyang.

August's emotional reunions in Pyongyang and Seoul among elderly Koreans divided by the world's most militarised border were one of the few concrete signs

of the world while maintaining a hermetically sealed society.

Now almost entirely dependent on international charities to feed its 22 million people, Pyongyang needs literally billions of dollars in aid and investment to revive a command economy shattered by the dissolution of the old communist block.

But that means exposing to foreign influences a population pro-

INDIAN EXPRESS

INDIAN EXPRESS

7 NOV 2000

China, Taiwan urged to resume talks

By Amit Baruah

SINGAPORE, OCT. 1. The former Singapore Prime Minister, Mr. Lee Kuan Yew, has called for the resumption of talks between China and Taiwan.

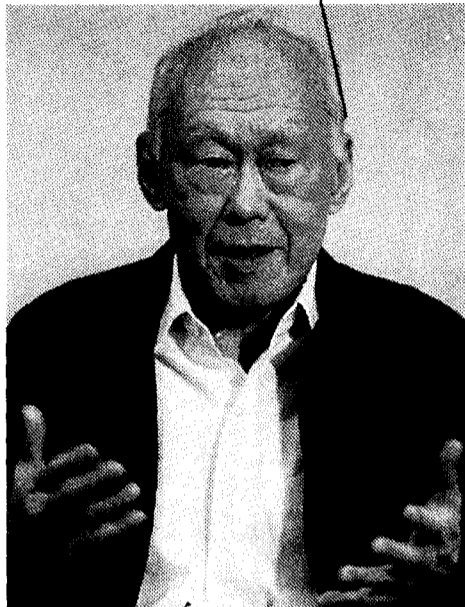
"It (the current stalemate) must be broken, the sooner the better," Mr. Lee, who was on a private visit to Taiwan recently, told *The Sunday (Straits) Times* in remarks published today. Asked whether Beijing and Taipei had an accurate reading of each other's thinking, Mr. Lee said: "There has been no face-to-face exchange. Therefore, they do not know each other's position and thinking."

According to Mr. Lee, the worst was to allow the position to drift and attitudes to harden. He said the majority of the Taiwanese did not want either independent or immediate reunification under a different political and social system, but preferred the status quo.

In a separate interview to *The China Times* in Taiwan, Mr. Lee said China's Taiwan policy was clear-cut — there was only "one China". "Any deviation from this is not acceptable. Taiwan's independence is not a viable option, unless China were to disintegrate," he was quoted as saying. "However, this does not mean that China wants immediate reunification... the Chinese people on both sides of the straits can lessen their problems by establishing easier relations over the years," he said.

"If there is to be a peaceful reunification, there has to be a gradual blurring, not an accentuation of the differences that at present divide and distinguish the two societies. Both need to work and narrow the social, economic and political gap," Mr. Lee maintained.

In his view, the sense of belonging to the Chinese nation was weaker in Taiwan than Hong Kong. "The mainland has the weight and girth to accept this and adopt an open and magnanimous approach to help this process of reconciliation. Reunification achieved by



Lee Kuan Yew

force will leave indelible scars. On the other hand, Taiwan's leaders have the responsibility not to move towards independence or deliberately widen the differences between the two societies," he stated.

Asked if he would play a "certain role" in relations between Taiwan and China, Mr. Lee replied: "No. I am not willing nor do I see myself playing any role in relations between Taiwan and China."

To a question what impact strained China-Taiwan relations would have on the region, Mr. Lee said: "If cross-strait relations actually flare up, the United States will be involved, at least in supplying arms to Taiwan, maybe in active armed intervention; definitely in economic sanctions. That will affect the whole of South Asia."

THE HINDU

- 2 OCT 2000

HO-16

North Korean leader meets Clinton

By Sridhar Krishnaswami

WASHINGTON, OCT. 11. In a historic session, the U.S. President, Mr. Bill Clinton, today met a senior military leader from North Korea, Gen. Jo Myong Rok. Senior administration officials said the U.S. had expressed concern to North Korea about a number of issues, including terrorism and missile proliferation.

It was for the first time in 50 years that senior leaders from the two countries met. During the 45-minute meeting at the White House, Mr. Clinton is said to have also brought up issues such as food aid and the return of the remains of Americans killed during the Korean war. Mr. Jo Myong Rok, who is not only a top military advisor to the country's leader, Mr. Kim Jong-Il, but is his personal envoy, came to the White House in military uniform. Prior to the meeting with the President, the General met the Secretary of State, Ms. Madeleine Albright, dressed in a business suit.

The North Korean military leader is said to have given the U.S. President a letter from Mr. Kim, the contents of which were not given out. But it is said to be a reply to a letter Mr. Clinton had sent through Mr. William Perry, the former Defence Secretary last year. The visit of the North Korean leader comes at a time when the Clinton administration has been taking slow but calculated steps aimed at breaking the diplomatic impasse between the two countries.

The United States and North Korea have said that steps were



The U.S. President, Mr. Bill Clinton, greets Mr. Jo Myong Rok, first vice-chairman of North Korea's National Defence Commission, at the White House on Tuesday. — AP

being taken for removing the latter from the list of nations sponsoring terrorism and the White House has maintained that the course being taken by Washington for easing tensions with North Korea was one of "continued engagement". Washington and Pyongyang have no formal diplomatic ties but have been talking of the possibility of opening liaison offices.

Clinton signs China bill

Mr. Clinton has signed into law a Bill that grants Permanent Normal Trade Relations (PNTR) to the

People's Republic of China. The signing into law of this legislation means that the 20-year annual ritual of extending the Most-Favoured Nation Status to China has effectively come to an end. The PNTR gives China the same low tariff treatment as other trading partners of the U.S.

"Today we take a major step toward China's entry into the WTO and the major step toward answering some of the central challenges of this new century," the President remarked. Mr. Clinton also stressed that the work was

not over by signing the piece of legislation; rather that Beijing must complete its WTO accession negotiations and live up to the agreements it has negotiated.

Even as Mr. Clinton was getting ready to sign the bill in the midst of a bipartisan group of law makers, many had been making the point that China was perhaps backtracking on some of the pledges and commitments made earlier. The concern was serious enough for the White House to send the Trade Representative, Ms. Charlene Barshefsky, to Beijing for talks with Chinese leaders including the Prime Minister, Mr. Zhu Rongji.

The White House is quite aware of the potential hurdles in the China legislation even after the President has put his signature. Before the legislation goes into effect, a President has to certify to Congress that China indeed joins the WTO on the terms which the U.S. negotiated. The feeling in some quarters, including from Geneva — as reported in the media — is that Beijing is now reluctant to sign on some of the politically sensitive concessions it had earlier agreed upon.

"We remain engaged with the Chinese about implementing PNTR. There are some very important issues we have to address... we will continue to talk about the importance of implementing this agreement in a way that actually makes it work, and so the Chinese government not only lives up to the spirit of the agreement, but to the letter of the agreement," said a White House spokesman on Tuesday.

THE HINDU

72 11 200

West improving ties with N Korea

KOREA HERALD
ASIA NEWS NETWORK

SEOUL, Oct. 21. — The third Asia-Europe Meeting here appears to have prompted some of the European countries to send overtures to North Korea to improve relations.

The diplomatic drive was started by Britain, which announced its decision on Thursday to set up formal ties with North Korea. Commenting on the announcement, South Korean foreign minister Mr Lee Jung-Binn said that London would soon embark on the normalisation process with Pyongyang.

Britain is the third Group of Seven nation to announce its intention to establish a full diplomatic relationship with the North. Italy became the first when it expressed the idea in January and Canada formally recognised North Korea six months later.

Germany also indicated it would follow suit, when Chancellor Mr Gerhard Schroeder

said in an interview that his government had basically decided to set up ties with Pyongyang even though the two sides had yet to work out the details.

As North Korea and Germany have representative offices in each other's capital, all they have to do is agree to dispatch ambassadors, officials here said.

Following the moves, the Netherlands also announced its plan to extend its diplomatic recognition to North Korea, Japan's NHK reported yesterday.

South Korean officials expect that other European Union nations like Ireland, Greece and Belgium will take similar action in the near future.

The unprecedented diplomatic initiatives toward North Korea, which used to be one of the most isolated states on the world, followed the historic inter-Korean summit in mid-June and the recent moves by USA to improve relations with

Pyongyang.

On Monday, the US Secretary of State, Mrs Madeleine Albright, is scheduled to visit Pyongyang, a crucial diplomatic event that could help end the five decades of Cold War confrontation between North Korea and USA.

In addition, Mrs Albright's visit may pave the way for President Mr Bill Clinton's eventual trip to the Stalinist state.

The momentum for Pyongyang's rapprochement with Western countries was created in September 1999 when North Korean foreign

minister Mr Paek Nam-Sun attended the 54th General Assembly of the United Nations.

While in New York, Mr Nam-Sun proposed meetings with his counterparts from European countries. Last month, he also sent official letters to nine EU members proposing diplomatic ties.

Among the 10 Asian members of Asem, seven countries of the Association of South-east Asian Nations and China have formal relations with North Korea. Japan has been holding normalisation talks with Pyongyang.



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THE STATESMAN

2 2 OCT 2000

Moral strength built on a life against odds

By F.J. Khergamvala ¹¹⁰⁻¹⁹

TOKYO, OCT. 13. A small but proud, achievement-oriented nation celebrated its evening in the sun as its President, Mr. Kim Dae-jung, was finally named in Oslo as the winner of the Nobel Prize for Peace, after being nominated 14 times.

The entire South Korean media had already geared itself to release the news about Mr. Kim winning the prize this year. Thus, when the announcement was made this evening, all TV stations put out their scripted features on the man who stood up against some of the most vile military dictatorships. Dailies and TV stations had already despatched reporters to the Norwegian capital in anticipation of the award, which is not entirely popular in Seoul, a capital with many opponents of Mr. Kim's peace overture.

In truth, the award for the 75-year-old Mr. Kim came after a huge diplomatic cum media campaign orchestrated from the Blue House in Seoul, which even offered selected Tokyo based Scandinavian journalists one on one interviews with Mr. Kim. Publicly, to ward off criticism, the President's Office maintained a low profile.

Yet, none of this detracts from the cause attached to the person. In a career of standing firm against oppression and demonstrating resolve, his adherence to the 'sunshine policy' with North Korea symbolises the steadfastness against heavy odds. Were it only that the 'sunshine policy' was to be the sole citatory reason



The South Korean President, Mr Kim Dae-jung (left), with his North Korean counterpart, Mr. Kim Jong Il at their summit in Pyongyang, in this June 2000 file photo.

for the award, most regional observers would have characterised it as premature and cited the current flare-up in the West Bank as evidence of the haste with which the Nobel Committee bestowed its grace on the former Israeli Prime Minister, Yitzak Rabin, the Israeli leader, Mr. Shimon Peres and the Palestinian leader, Mr. Yasser Arafat and, incidentally on a peace process crafted in the city that gives the Nobel Peace award.

The peace prize is not just about the two years of 'sunshine' engagement and tolerance for the conduct of a strange regime in North Korea, but for 40 years of public life during which he has been incarcerated, tortured, beaten, kidnapped from a hotel room, exiled, sentenced to death, all at the hands of his own country's regime. Yet, by the time Mr.

Kim came to power after four attempts at the presidency, he had managed to acquire such moral strength as to avoid being vindictive.

The man at the head of the military regime which decided to put him to death, Gen. Chun Doo-hwan, today lives in Korea a free man, disgraced by his own corruption and greed and not as the target of a President who refused to stoop to conquer.

Mr. Kim was born to a rich peasant family in December 1925 on an island near Mokpo in the south of a now divided peninsula. After some years of accountancy and editing a small paper, Mr. Kim was elected to the National Assembly in 1960. A year later, this Roman Catholic began his campaign against the Park Chung-hee military junta's bru-

tality which was then blessed by the U.S., a benefactor and Cold War ally.

Mr. Kim sought to win presidential elections on the opposition ticket in 1971, 1987 and 1992. That he was abducted from Hotel Grand Palace in 1973 by South Korean agents of Park was testimony to the political threat posed by Mr. Kim who got 45 per cent of the votes in 1971. Park eventually succumbed to his own methods when he was assassinated in 1979.

In 1982, shortly after martial law was lifted, Mr. Chun Doo-hwan's military regime sentenced him to death for inciting the pro-democracy Kwangju uprising earlier. Mr. Kim avoided the gallows because of the personal intervention of the former U.S. President, Mr. Ronald Reagan. The sentence was commuted to life term, he was later released on medical grounds and then was exiled in the U.S.

Finally, in December 1997 Mr. Kim tasted Presidential victory, albeit narrowly and instantly offered the North's leaders an olive branch, partly out of necessity as the South was then focused on economic reform and forced to get a \$60 billion IMF bailout package. He outlined the stick and carrot policy of standing firm on Pyongyang's provocations, yet stuck out a hand of engagement. The North Korean leader, Mr. Kim Jong Il, finally succumbed and both leaders had a historic summit, whose fruits are beginning to bear but are not yet ripe and could go sour.

110-19

10 OCT 2000

BREAKING A DIPLOMATIC BARRIER

THE PREDOMINANT 'SILENCE' of the political kind that pervaded the U.S.-North Korea equation of open and covert hostilities since the early 1950s has now been effectively broken as poignantly reckoned by the North Korean leader, Mr. Kim Jong Il. The latest visit to Pyongyang by the U.S. Secretary of State, Ms. Madeleine Albright, seems to have dismantled the communications barrier between the world's premier democracy and the perceived 'Stalinist' hold-over state of North Korea. In one sense, she has largely capitalised on the momentum generated by the visit to Washington by Mr. Kim's special emissary some time earlier. Yet, the no-nonsense rapport of the realpolitik kind that Ms. Albright and Mr. Kim have struck, as indicated by their cumulative parleys of over six hours in two separate sessions besides interactions on other occasions, holds out the possibility, if not also the hope, of a truly new security paradigm on the East Asian front. Both sides have wisely refrained from dropping even a hint of being complacent about their future bilateral ties in the context of the considerable publicity hype that has inevitably marked Ms. Albright's passage to Pyongyang, the first by a top American mandarin since the end of the Korean War in 1953. Not insignificantly, Ms. Albright has referred to an 'aside' to her by Mr. Kim during a ceremonial display of North Korean prowess in order to drive home the point that Pyongyang is now beginning to seriously address its enormously controversial ballistic missiles programme. Obviously, the symbolism in the new U.S.-North Korea interactions matters as much as the possibility of substance.

It is a question of utter diplomatic necessity in regard to security issues, as the outgoing Clinton administration argues, that Washington should have decided to engage Pyongyang in a dialogue without waiting for some concrete signs that may indeed help erase the latter's lowly status as a 'country of concern' (a euphe-

mism for a 'rogue state') in the U.S. calculus. It is evident from the comments made by Ms. Albright during her sojourn in Pyongyang that Washington's primary objective of this new engagement is to goad North Korea to move towards a roll-back or at least a freeze of its development of medium and long-range missiles. Such a move, if it materialises, can lead to a possible trade-off involving American aid to the poverty-stricken citizens of the presumed hermit state under Mr. Kim. Outwardly, the North Korean leader has allowed an impression to gain currency to the effect that he is willing to consider such a diplomatic bargain, if only he could put Pyongyang's house in order for a rapprochement, now being explored, with its southern neighbour under Mr. Kim Dae-Jung's "sunshine policy" of pan-Korean unity.

An obvious riddle is whether the northern Mr. Kim is merely seeking to pull his country out of its isolation on the international stage or actually trying to strike a bargain for a fair deal for Pyongyang, as discernible under his prism, during a possible Korean reunification process. Washington, which first indicated scepticism over Pyongyang's reported willingness to give up missile testing if it could receive external help to put satellites into Earth's orbit for peaceful purposes, is now beginning to test the northern Mr. Kim's resolve in this regard. While the various aspects of the current gameplans in East Asia have not yet come into full focus, it is quite possible that Washington needs to ascertain Mr. Kim's political will before deciding, one way or the other, whether the controversial U.S. national missile defence system must be built. China, Japan and Russia will be equally keen on watching the Washington-Pyongyang dialogue. Any new East Asia security structure should be of interest to India, too, given its suspicions about North Korea's collaboration with Pakistan and given New Delhi's desire to play a bigger role in world affairs.

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A WORTHY NOBEL

Kim Dae Jung was an automatic choice

NOT since Anwar Sadat got on a plane and flew to Israel to make peace with the Jewish nation, has there been a similar case of courage and heroism in pursuit of the principles of peace and goodwill to justify the award of the Nobel Peace prize. Kim Dae Jung has done more than anyone on the Korean peninsula to bring the divided nation together and it is right that he is not asked to share the prize with his counterpart in the North. The other Kim is in every way his father's son, dour, unimaginative, concerned only for his own power, which he proceeded to consolidate with the skill and ruthlessness on display as the father established his dictatorship and ran his country into the ground. Bankrupt and riddled with inefficiency and corruption North Korea had to be helped out of its basket case status by international humanitarian assistance. Increasing misery and exploitation as the weapons to keep the communist dictatorship in place were in evidence aplenty and this is the moment that Kim Dae Jung chose to make his bid for friendship with the North. But first he earned the confidence of the highly suspicious neighbour by a terribly expensive programme to replace the outmoded and dangerous nuclear power stations which also fed the nuclear weapons industry and instead feed the hungry population, and talked the Americans into financing most of it as an insurance against a trigger-happy regime. Then he made his move. That his visit to Pyongyang was hugely successful was evident on television screens with school children lining the streets with welcoming festoons and his nervously smiling counterpart waiting to welcome him.

Kim Dae Jung is different from President Clinton who worked at his Nobel with calculation and determination but in vain. Kim is a very genuine person, compassionate but none the less determined, deeply concerned for his people and ready to dedicate his life to the cause. Once he had to be rescued by American pressure from being thrown overboard alive and in chains because the regime wanted to get rid of him. Then came a long stint as a mass leader first of students and then of the people generally. Whatever he handled had the mark of his sincerity and fearlessness. Many a lesser man would have given up long ago but not Kim Dae Jung. He won his presidency on his own steam; he made no compromises with power groups offering support. In the event he was his own master and the people responded. No one else could have done what he did, journey to the North, in the teeth of some determined opposition in his own ranks. The skeptics lived to applaud as he returned in triumph from Pyongyang, with the initiative firmly in his hands.

It is not as though his work is done; this is only the beginning. But the foundations have been established and Kim is clear-headed enough to know the direction that must be taken for the future. Even in his worst days, Kim Dae Jung was a hero to his people. To unify his divided nation in peace and friendship remains the goal to which he has dedicated his life. As the world salutes the Nobel Prize winner, this newspaper joins in wishing him fulfilment in his task.

THE STATESMAN

15 OCT 2000

Summit softens Korea stand

Seoul, Oct. 19 (Reuters): European and Asian governments today toned down a call to counter the spread of weapons of mass destruction on the Korean peninsula as Britain joined a wave of countries moving to normalise ties with North Korea.

Officials preparing for a summit meeting of 25 European Union and Asian leaders removed a reference to weapons of mass destruction from the "Seoul Declaration for Peace on the Korean Peninsula" that is due to be adopted at the two-day Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) which starts tomorrow.

Diplomats said the wording — clearly aimed at North Korea — was toned down at the insistence of the Stalinist state's staunchest ally, China. "It's easier to remove weapons of mass destruction from communiques than it is to remove them from their bunkers," European Union external affairs commissioner Chris Patten said. "The important thing to do is to remove them from their bunkers."

Moves to bring isolated North Korea back into the international fold gathered pace as Britain said it planned to open diplomatic ties with North Korea for the first time since the creation of the communist state over 50 years ago.

THE TELEGRAPH

20 OCT 2000

North Korean leader Kim Jong Il and US Secretary of State Madeline Albright stand side by side at the Pae Kha Feyon guest house in Pyongyang on Monday. Photo: AP

Albright begins preliminary talks with N. Korean leader

Pyongyang, October 23 (AP) — BREAKING DOWN one of the last barriers of the cold war, US Secretary of State Madeline Albright today held ground-breaking talks with North Korean leader Kim Jong Il, whose father formed the Communist nation more than five decades ago.

Albright hopes to use her two-day visit to advance her goal of a tension-free northeast Asia for the first time in decades and to lay the groundwork for a visit by US President Bill Clinton, possibly as early as next month.

The meeting with Kim was the centerpiece of Albright's trip, the first by a US Secretary of State to North Korea.

"This is a new one from a historical point of view," Kim said of the visit. "I am really happy."

Shaking the North Korean leader's hand, Albright said, "I'm very glad to be here in your beautiful city." The pair met in the luxury guest house where Albright was staying. Asked if the United States was moving too quickly in the relationship with North Korea, Albright said, "I think it's very measured. We're not moving faster than it makes sense."

Albright, the most senior western official to visit Communist North Korea, was met on arrival by Vice Foreign Minister Kim Gye-Gwan and other officials.

Albright is expected to press the north over its missile and suspect

nuclear programmes that are a topic of major international concern. Terrorism is also expected to be discussed.

She is to have two meetings today with the number two in the North Korean regime, Vice Marshal Jo Myong-Rok. She is also expected to see Foreign Minister Paek Nam-Sun and nominal head of state Kim Yong-Nam.

Japan steps up diplomacy: Japan stepped up its diplomacy to hold back the US from exploring ties with North Korea. Japanese Foreign Minister Yohei Kono telephoned Albright, while she was enroute to Pyongyang, apprising her of Tokyo's concerns over the Stalinist state's emergence from isolation, media reported. (AFP)

Union Carbide forced to close down unit in Lanka

PK. Balachandran
Colombo, October 23

THE AMERICAN MNC, Union Carbide, which hit world headlines after the Bhopal gas tragedy in 1984, has now run into trouble in Sri Lanka too.

Its plant manufacturing emulsion paint resins and synthetic adhesives located in the Ekala Industrial Estate near Colombo, is closed down since October 16 because the people of the area are blaming it for the widespread incidence of respiratory problems, chest pain, stomach trouble and headache.

They could not stand the smell of Ethyl Acrylate, a toxin released by

the plant. Due to the negligence of a worker, the toxin had found its way into the waste treatment plant and the nauseating smell coming from it was carried far and wide by the wind, triggering panic. The local authorities ordered the closure and the local magistrate has asked for a full investigation.

The Managing Director of plant, Mr. Gamin Gunasekera, told The Hindustan Times that the release of the toxin was 'accidental' because the factory had stopped using the chemical more than three years ago. He said that he was not in a hurry to reopen the plant because he wanted the waste treatment plant to be completely cleansed of the toxin and a safe method of doing away with the waste found first. He had sought the advice of the Industrial Technology Institute in this matter. Sri Lankan environmentalists say that Union Carbide is not the only offender. Almost every one of the 11 factories in the industrial estate has been polluting the air and drinking water sources in Ekala. For the last five years, people here have been complaining of health problems triggered by such contamination. According to a study conducted here by Prof. Carlo Fonseca of Kelaniya University's Medical Faculty, in twenty years the people of Ekala would be suffering from mental illness, kidney failure and skin diseases.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

24 OCT 2000

U.S. to open liaison office?

40-18
29/10

By F.J. Khergamvala

TOKYO, OCT. 23. The U.S. Secretary of State, Ms. Madeleine Albright today added the North Korean leader, Mr. Kim Jong Il to her picture gallery when she became the first U.S. Cabinet official ever to meet the highest figure of the most closed nation in the world.

The visiting U.S. chief diplomat, accompanied by three aides, met Mr. Kim Jong Il for well over three hours. Their talks spilled over into a dinner hosted by the North's leader, an event that by itself signals the North's desire to accord Ms. Albright special treatment. Ms. Albright is in Pyongyang on a two-day visit planned in a hurry after Mr. Kim Jong Il sent a special envoy to Washington DC on October 9. She then goes to Seoul to brief South Korean and Japanese officials on the outcome of her mission. It is from the Seoul halt that more about her stay in the North might emerge. A decision to open a U.S. liaison office in Pyongyang is on the cards.

Ms. Albright's visit is intended to clear many obstacles before she advises that Mr. Bill Clinton break new ground in becoming the first U.S. President to set foot on North Korean soil. A continued moratorium on missile tests and a curb on exports of missiles technology and parts are areas where the U.S. wants credible assurances only from the top in Pyongyang, before both sides can put agreements down on paper. The high Clinton administration official arrived early in the North



The North Korean leader, Mr. Kim Jong-Il (left), shakes hands with the U.S. Secretary of State, Mrs. Madeleine Albright, at the Paekhawon guest house complex in Pyongyang on Monday. — Reuters

Korean capital at the head of a party of 14 and was received by the Vice-Foreign Minister, Mr. Kim Gye-gwan. On a day of crowded engagements, Ms. Albright visited a kindergarten where the World Food Programme distributes food aid. She held talks with her counterpart, Mr. Paek Nam-sun and had two meetings with Vice-Marshal Jo Myung-rok, the third ranking leader in the North who was also Mr. Kim Jong Il's special envoy to Mr. Clinton earlier in the month.

In the South Korean media, Ms. Albright shares some limelight with the news that Pyongyang was

playing host to a senior Chinese figure too at the same time. The Chinese Defence Minister, Mr. Chi Haotian met the North's Armed Forces Minister, Vice-Marshal Kim Il-chol. The stated reason for the visit is to observe the 50th anniversary of China's intervention on North Korea's side in the Korean War. But, as the *Dong A Ilbo* daily pointed out, the anniversary falls on November 25, more than a month away. The two Defence Ministers issued a statement reiterating the strong bonds between the two armed forces. There is also concern expressed in the South that Mr. Kim Jong Il

could be using the fast moving developments with the U.S. as a lever to delay progress on ties with the South.

In return for curbing missile exports and giving other concessions, North Korea is likely to do what it does skillfully. Obtain assurances for economic aid, preferably food aid and a meaningful bonus, of getting off the U.S. State Department list of countries that sponsor terrorism.

This step would enable the U.S. to vote at the World Bank in support of programmes to aid the North. The U.S. is also the highest donor of food aid to the North, having sent over a million tonnes.

Ms. Albright is also likely to have followed up on an offer said to have been made by Mr. Kim Jong Il to the Russian President, Mr. Vladimir Putin last summer about linking North Korea's voluntary cessation of missile launches to a third party agreeing to launch the North's satellites. The burden of doing the North's launches will obviously be taken on by some other country.

Reuters news agency quoted the World Food Programme country director as saying that the North could have another bad year because of the poor harvest due to typhoons and shortage of fertilizers. Consequently, North Korea could be quite demanding about the terms under which it would agree to abandon its missiles programme.

Canadian PM calls snap poll

By Sridhar Krishnaswami

WASHINGTON, OCT. 23. In what is seen as a calculated political move — but a risky one as well — the Canadian Prime Minister, Mr. Jean Chretien, has called parliamentary elections on November 27, hoping to capitalise on the budget surplus and the recent passing of Pierre Trudeau, one of the country's popular Liberal leaders. "The election campaign begins officially at this moment", Mr. Chretien said in Ottawa on Sunday after asking the Governor-General to dissolve Parliament.

Mr. Chretien, just three and a half years into his second term, is hoping to make it on the basis of not only the good performance of the economy but also his Liberal Party's strong showing in polls. But what is being pointed out is that Canadian voters have a tendency to "punish" leaders who call early elections.

Mr. Chretien's party has 161 seats in the 301-member House of Commons; and the biggest challenge is going to come from the recently-formed conservative Canadian Alliance. The Liberals, given their current standing in the polls, are expected to come out as the largest single party, but the question is whether Mr. Chretien will be able to form a government on his own or be forced into a coalition.

Russia to deorbit Mir station

By Vladimir Radyuhin

MOSCOW, OCT. 23. Cash-strapped Russia has abandoned efforts to keep its Soviet-era space station Mir in orbit, announcing plans to dump it in the ocean early next year.

The Russian Deputy Prime Minister, Mr. Ilya Klebanov, said on Monday that Mir would be terminated in late February 2001, the Interfax news agency reported.

"We are getting ready for the operation and the Government has already received all the necessary papers," Mr. Klebanov said, adding that a formal decision to deorbit the station would be taken shortly.

Mir's fate has been sealed by financial problems. The Government shed responsibility for financing the station in January 1999 as all budget resources were used for the construction of the 16-nation International Space Station. But Mir's operator, the Energia Space Corporation, has financed it this year through an Amsterdam-based joint venture, MirCorp, and a pool of foreign private investors.

The Russian President, Mr. Vladimir Putin, also came out in support of Mir, telling space officials in March that he would like to see the station continue its flight.

MirCorp planned to turn Mir into the world's first commercially-funded manned space project and open it to rich tourists. It has already found an American businessman willing to pay \$ 20 millions for a flight aboard Mir and has vowed to raise some \$ 117 millions through an initial public offering next year, but senior Energia officials admit that it may be too late.

"We are running against time", said Mr. Yury Semyonov, Energia president. "To keep Mir in orbit we will have to launch towards the station several spacecraft built for the International Space Station. Only the Government can take this decision."

With Russia already behind schedule in building the International Space Station, the Government apparently could not afford to divert any more resources for the Mir station. The Russian Space Agency has been under strong pressure from the U.S. to sink Mir.

Launched for an initial period of three years, Mir has been in orbit for 14 years and Russian space experts insist it is still strong enough to serve for up to five years more. The ageing spacecraft will be taken out of orbit and allowed to burn up in the Earth's atmosphere, the remainder falling into a remote area of the Pacific.

Bridge too far



The process of national reconciliation between North and South Korea will take time and at the moment it is difficult to give an exact time frame.

KAVI CHONGKITTAVORN explores the pros and cons of inter-Korean relations

NORTH Korean leader Kim Jong-Il was upset that former South Korean President Kim Young-Sam failed to send any word of condolence when his father, Kim Il-Sung, died in 1994.

"After that, relations with North Korea were very bad for many years. Kim Jong-il was very upset," said Jae Kyu Park, who has an intimate knowledge of North Korea, and Kim Jong-Il.

He has to. As unification minister, it is his job to understand everything related to North Korea. He has a full-time staff of 500 to help him.

"Kim Jong-Il is a knowledgeable man. He knows a lot about the West," said Mr Park, who has held talks both personally and in groups for nine hours with Kim Jong-Il. Mr Park played an important role in preparing for the inter-Korean talks.

Contrary to the general negative impressions reported worldwide about the North Korean leader, Mr Park said Mr Kim was not crazy or irrational.

"He is willing to listen. If you can point out the virtues of a case, he will change his mind," Mr Park said. Some Intelligence reports about Kim Jong-Il have been off the mark, Mr Park said. He credited Hwang Jang-Yap, the highest North Korean official to defect to the South five years ago, with providing him with invaluable insights into Kim Jong-Il's mind.

Mr Hwang was a minister of education and father of the *juche* ("self-reliance") idea.

For at least two years before his father died, Kim Jong-Il was already in charge of North Korea. "He has been studying and practising to take over from his father for 22 years," said Mr Park.

The soft-spoken minister also said that towards the end of the inter-Korean summit in July, Kim Jong-Il was reluctant to sign the South-North Joint Declaration.

But South Korean President Kim Dae-Jung told him that it was important that he put his personal approval to the joint agreement to celebrate 21st-century relations.

Mr Park quoted Kim Dae-Jung as telling Mr Kim: "Many agreements have been signed but never implemented, so both of us need to make a new start."

Kim Jong-Il decided to sign the document as chairman of the National Defence Commission.

At a separate meeting with Kim Jong-Il, Kim Dae-Jung praised the North Korean leader for being sincere in moving reconciliation forward, saying Kim Jong-Il had told him that North Korea did not want to see another war on the Korean peninsula and that his country wanted to improve relations with the West.

"He said North Korea was no longer a paradise," said Kim Dae-Jung, referring to the North Korean leader's admission of current reality.



THE ICE IS THAWING: South Korean news magazines show composite photographs of President Bill Clinton with North Korean leader Kim Jong-Il at a bookstore in Seoul on Sunday. Left: South Korean President Kim Dae-Jung, who is ready to make a new start. — AP/PTI.

After the inter-Korean summit, Kim Dae-Jung called the US and Japanese leaders to say that North Korea truly wanted to improve ties with them. Pyongyang, he added, wanted to ensure its security and to create at the same time an external environment conducive to national development. For at least four years, North Korea has been plagued by famine and food shortages.

Both leaders agree that the process of national reconciliation will take time and at the moment it is difficult to give an exact time frame.

"It will at least take 20 years and at the most 40," the President told a group of Asian and European journalists. Mr Park predicted that reunification of the two Koreas would be realised in 30 years.

Mr Park said South Korea had to bridge a wide gap between the economies and living conditions of the two countries. When East Germany and West Germany united a decade ago, the economic differential was about four to one. But in the case of the two Koreas, the differential is a steep 30 to 1, judging from the gross national product figures. South Korea has a per capita GNP of \$10,000 a year against \$300 for North Korea.

Reunification is not possible through absorption in the immediate future.

"South Korea does not have the money and resources," Mr Park said. To make the government understand

the problems of reunification, Mr Park recounted how his ministry had despatched 20 officials to Germany to study the gamut of reunification on a daily basis.

"In Germany, reunification took place before transformation," said Mr Park, "but in Korea transformation has to come first."

When East and West Germany united, 80 per cent of the East Germans knew about the real situation in West Germany, but in North Korea, apart from senior leaders, Kim Jong-il in particular, the general public has no knowledge of the real situation in South Korea.

Mr Park said after the summit, both sides implemented what they agreed to in Pyongyang. At least 100 families separated by the Korean War have met.

"We hope to increase the number and establish regular contacts that will lead to the setting up of a centre so that families from both sides can meet regularly," Mr Park said, adding that at least 10 million families were disrupted by the war.

He said that separated families were desperate to get together and that they were top priority. "You don't want to see them rushing across the border to reunite with their families by themselves, do you?" asked Mr Park, smiling.

— The Nation/Asia News Network

THE STATESMAN

24 OCT 2000

Kimchi Diplomacy

The US initiative of sending secretary of state Madeleine Albright to meet the North Korean supremo Kim Jong Il and try and end Pyongyang's international isolation deserves two and a half cheers. The visit was facilitated when the new Nobel laureate for peace, South Korean president Kim Dae Jung, visited North Korea earlier this year to hold the first ever summit between the two Koreas. Unlike his father, Kim Il Sung, the current North Korean leader, Kim Jong Il has understood the imperative need for his country to break out of its policy of self-imposed seclusion. In its efforts to build a Euro-Asian balance of power — with its own self-perceived ability to externally manipulate that balance — Washington seems to have decided to help to reduce tensions in North East Asia. South Korea has already said that it has no intention of forcing a merger with North Korea in the near future. North Korea, as the last communist bastion, realises that it has to change its obsolete *Juche* system and increasingly integrate with the global economy. Afflicted by years of food shortages, the north seems to be willing to move towards a detente with the West. Pyongyang's earlier patrons, Russia and China, have themselves embraced the market economy. For the departing US president, a detente with North Korea would be a last-minute feather in his cap. A thaw between the US and North Korea — till recently deemed by Washington to be a 'rogue state', and latterly termed a 'state of concern' — should encourage Pyongyang to follow international norms of behaviour and stop the supply of missiles to other states, particularly Pakistan. In this context, the current developments are of great security interest to India.

Pyongyang has justified its sale of missiles to Pakistan and other states on the grounds that the sanctions imposed by the US and its allies have constrained North Korea to earn its foreign exchange through such sales. It is likely that North Korea will extract a price for stopping its missile proliferation. In 1994 the North Koreans forced the US to provide them with a modern nuclear reactor financed by other countries and an assured supply of fuel, in exchange for shutting down their proliferation-prone Soviet design nuclear reactor. Pakistan is similarly holding the international community to ransom: if it is not financially bailed out, it might sell its nuclear weapon technology. The irony is that while such states are able to arm-twist the US, democratic and internationally well-behaved India continues to be subjected to sanctions by Washington. There is no reason why President Clinton, who is willing to go the extra mile for North Korea should not do as much for India, whom he has hailed as a partner. Indeed, the US Congress has already passed a resolution to end sanctions. While New Delhi welcomes the US initiative vis-a-vis Pyongyang, in order to earn a full three cheers Washington should follow its own logic and lift sanctions against India.

Teaching Trouble

No matter in which nook or cranny of India you find yourself, the chances are that the Bengali out on his summer holiday with family in tow, has already been there, done that. But if Calcutta University has its way, those days of roaming free with the family as far as the LTC could take them, may soon be over. A proposal has been put to the chancellor, West Bengal Governor Viren J Shah, that the 45-day summer break of the university be scrapped from next year. All because the University Grants Commission has decreed that there must be at least 180 teaching days in an academic year. The stipulation seems unexceptionable but the trouble is that the teachers' leave in a year adds up to 180 days anyway. Besides the usual 45-day summer vacation, they get 35 days for Durga Puja, 35 days 'statutory' leave and other sundries adding up to 180 days. Add to that at least 20-odd days lost thanks to bandhs and strikes, and that leaves barely 165 days of teaching in an average year, or 13 days a month. That makes for a pretty cushy college life — for the teachers, that is. For the students, so far it has meant unfinished syllabi and no examination results before August-end, giving them hardly any time to apply abroad, let alone outside West Bengal, for post-graduate courses. Now there's a prospect of further delays, as Calcutta University also wants to use those 45 days in May and June for examinations, instead of the current April-May time-frame. That would really put paid not only to vacations in cooler climes during the blistering months, but also any hope of examination results before the Puja holidays in September-October. The idea of swotting while sweating isn't that hot either, but who's listening? The CPM-dominated West Bengal College and University Teachers Association, in fact, feels the "students will definitely benefit" from the extra classes. Why has it not occurred to the CU authorities to find out how the other universities in India manage to pack in more than 180 working days without ruining the summer holidays? The solution could be another look at the 35-day Puja break. A week off for the actual celebrations would give the obviously conscientious teaching community a precious 28 days more to impart knowledge. This would be a great way, perhaps, to welcome Saraswati who comes along with Durga for those crucial days of devotion and revelry. That would certainly take the heat off the summer holidays too.

Koreas fail to agree on military talks

SEOUL, AUG. 31. Ministerial talks between North and South Korea adjourned today without an agreement on South Korea's demand for top-level military meetings to help ease tensions in one of the world's most dangerous flashpoints.

"The release of a joint statement (on the ministerial talks) is being delayed as the two sides failed to see eye to eye on key is-

sues such as a military hotline and top-level military talks," said a pool report from South Korean reporters in Pyongyang.

It was unclear whether the ministerial talks, in their second and last scheduled day, would resume.

The South Korean Unification Minister, Mr. Park Jae-kyu, proposed the military meetings and hotline at the start of the talks today.

But the two sides did agree in principle to hold two more reunions this year for families separated in the 1950-53 Korean war.

The timeframe for the reunions will be discussed in early September in a meeting of Red Cross officials from the two countries.

Earlier this month, 100 elderly people from each of the Koreas met family members they hadn't seen in a half-century at reunions.

A senior South Korean Red Cross official said last week a second round of reunions could take place during the Chusok thanksgiving holidays on September 11-13.

The two sides also agreed to hold a working level meeting next month to set up a legal framework for economic projects, including treaties on double taxation and investment guarantees. — Reuters

REDEFINING A FEUD

John Barin

A 'SETTLED' PRESCRIPTION for the resolution of a festering China-Taiwan question is that the two must be brought together politically at some point in time. In fact, despite a masterly ambiguity about the real and artificial nuances of this solution, the U.S. too has, in recent years, acknowledged the basic validity of a much-banded formula, in a sense an ultimate future vision, of 'One China'. Yet, it has been a critical aspect of an increasingly wealthy Taiwan's 'foreign policy' to try and confound Beijing by reinventing the concept of 'One China' with some regularity. It has, therefore, come as no surprise that the President of Taiwan, Mr. Chen Shui-bian, has now actually redefined his territory's old feud with China. Admittedly, Mr. Chen has not been as strident as his critics had expected him to be when he assumed office with a reputation for being abrasively in favour of 'Taiwanese independence'. His latest pronouncement is that Taipei will not proceed from 'a pre-determined stance'. But, in his considered view, the Taiwanese 'cannot have a pre-determined conclusion' either in regard to the question of their eventual unification with China, a communist state in some transition as seen from Taipei. He is also reported to have taken the line that 'any option is a possibility' if it is acceptable to the democratic Taiwanese in an exercise of their 'free will'.

The core proposition in Mr. Chen's policy — the unacceptability of a 'pre-determined conclusion' — can only help toss the very formula of 'One China' into a new Taiwanese melting pot of ideas. It may, of course, be argued on his behalf that his objection to any sense of a pre-ordained finality in regard to the outcome of an advocated process of dialogue with China pertains mainly to the means of uniting Beijing and Taipei at some unclear date in the future. However, he has already man-

aged, transparently as a matter of deliberate policy, to raise a new controversy over a highly emotive issue with larger geopolitical overtones for the entire world not just the Asia-Pacific region. At the same time, Mr. Chen has also sought to mollify, if not really woo, the Chinese regime under Mr. Jiang Zemin and Mr. Zhu Rongji by hinting that Taiwan may not press for a non-negotiable solution. Mr. Chen's assurance about the absence of a pre-conceived Taiwanese 'stand' is obviously his way of indicating a climb-down from a pro-independence platform which was widely seen as his electoral plank despite some campaign-time spin-doctoring of this prime issue.

Two factors, which go beyond the inherent niceties of the China-Taiwan standoff, are of greater concern to the larger international community. First, Taiwan despite being a democracy cannot simply be allowed to play a big brother in relation to China given the cardinal reality that it is a long time since Beijing was admitted to the United Nations and allotted a contentious permanent seat in the Security Council. This aspect of realpolitik is significant due to the debate in Taiwan on whether the territory should join China only when the latter too can be acknowledged to have turned a democracy. The second and no less important consideration, at least in the reckoning of several key countries other than China, is that any engineered twist to the China-Taiwan dispute may only ignite new tensions between them. A worrisome aspect in this context is the possibility of Taiwan being associated, in some way or other, with Washington's plans for a theatre missile defence system in East Asia. China's refusal to renounce force as an option to absorb Taiwan in certain stated circumstances needs to be evaluated in this overall context.

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THE HINDU

2000

Taiwan for closer ties with China

AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE

TAIPEI, Sept 16. — Taiwan's President Chen Shui-bian today said his government would like to open a direct transportation link with China and urged Beijing to engage in talks with Taipei for normalisation of trade and political relations.

"I think the time has arrived for a direct transportation link .. We are willing to open it by the year-end," Mr Chen said.

He said a direct transportation link would be part of a normalisation of business ties between the two sides which could also facilitate a normalisation in Taiwan-China relations.

"Normalisation of cross-strait ties has to start with normalisation of bilateral commercial ties," he said, adding the government would consider relaxing economic restrictions towards China if national security was assured.

The decades-old ban on the three direct links — transportation, commerce and post — has been in place since 1949 after Taiwan and China split at the end of a bitter civil war.

MR CHEN SHUI-BIAN

Mr Chen's remarks came after Taiwan's mainland policy architect, the Mainland Affairs Council, on Wednesday completed a plan of a possible trial of direct links between its offshore islands and the mainland before the year-end.

Under the plan, the offshore islands of Kinmen and Matsu would be allowed to make direct trade and transport exchanges with the Chinese province of Fujian in a trial scheme known as the "three mini links".

Koreas on road to Berlin Wall

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Seoul, Sept. 17 (Reuters): South Korean President Kim Dae-Jung on Monday launches work on a railway and highway through the Cold War's last frontier, a project he hopes will be akin to the fall of the Berlin Wall more than a decade ago.

President Kim has described the restoration of the 20 km road and railway through the world's most militarised border as an "iron silk road" that will link the Far East to Europe through China and Russia. (The two Koreas will hold the first talks between their defence ministers on September 25-26).

Thousands of soldiers from both communist North and capitalist South will put aside their weapons to help with the work — mostly digging up landmines in the oxymorically named demilitarised zone.

The South Korean government has earmarked 54.7 billion won to restore its 12 km portion of the railway, blown up in the early days of the 1950-53 Korean War. North Korea is responsible for the repairing the other 8 km of severed track and for upgrading the line to Sinuiju on its border with China.

Seoul has allocated another 100 million won to build a four-lane highway on its side of the border parallel to the railroad.

The land links may be the most concrete evidence so far of the rapid thaw between the two Koreas, who remain in a state of war because their conflict a half-century ago ended in an armed truce that has not been replaced by a peace accord.

In the three months since President Kim held an unprecedented summit with North Korean leader

Kim Jong-il in Pyongyang, the two Koreas have been engaged in a whirlwind of events that may signal a breakthrough in their half-century cold war stalemate.

Kim Dae-jung deliberately chose Berlin to deliver a landmark speech in March on Korean reconciliation, comparing it to Germany's reunification, which set the stage for the summit in Pyongyang.

Kim Jong-il's top adviser, party secretary Kim Yong-Sun was in South Korea last week to set the stage for the enigmatic North Korean leader's return summit in Seoul early next year.

Top level defence talks are set for September 25-26 in South Korea's island of Cheju, the first such bilateral meeting.

Two rounds of cabinet-level meetings have yielded a slew of agreements, including at least two

more reunions of families torn asunder during the traumatic events of the Korean War.

Top South Korean conglomerate Hyundai is set to build a huge industrial complex in North Korea's southwestern Kaesong, an ancient royal capital that Pyongyang will also open up to tourists from the south.

Conservative hardliners in South Korea, led by former President Kim Young-Sam, worry things are going too fast. They see the restored railway as a kind of Trojan Horse that will make it all the easier for an unregenerate North to invade again.

They were outraged when South Korea repatriated 63 North Korean spies without reciprocal action from Pyongyang on the estimated 800 Korean war prisoners and kidnap victims believed to be held in the North.

S Korea's border railway razes another wall

AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE
IMJINGAK (SOUTH KOREA), SEPT 18

SOUTH Korea's President Kim Dae-Jung on Monday inaugurated work on a rail link through the heavily fortified border with North Korea, declaring it would mark "the end of Cold War hostility and confrontation."

The President said the rebuilding of the main Seoul-Pyongyang line would be a new landmark in the peace process set underway by his historic summit with the North's Supreme leader Kim Jong-Il in June. Kim Dae-Jung pressed a button and fireworks went off along the Imjingak bridge, a symbol of the Cold War between capitalist South and communist North Korea as it is one of the main entrances into the De-Militarized Zone (DMZ).

A fake steam locomotive — carrying a banner "The iron horse wishes to run again" — ran about 100 metres on the tracks and stopped just before the bridge as hundreds of government leaders, diplomats and representatives of families divided by the 1950-53 Korean War clapped. No North Korean of-

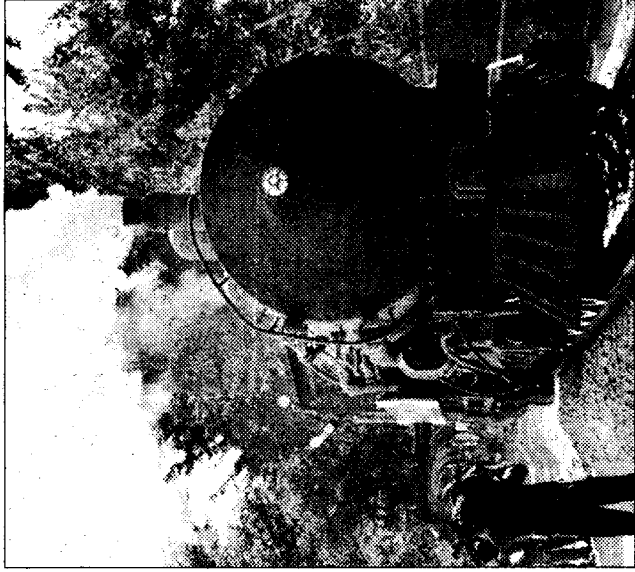
ficials were present and South Korea's Opposition leader boycotted the event.

But Kim said in a speech: "We are beginning the work of merging the divided country into one." When the two Kims met in Pyongyang in June, they vowed to work to end the long decades of enmity since the 1950-53 Korean War. "Today's groundbreaking for the restoration of the railroad will begin a new age of reconciliation, cooperation and prosperity," the President added. "The restoration project will send a message to the world that the Cold War has ended and peace set in. It will be a milestone, marking the end of Cold-War hostility and confrontation." South Korea is to rebuild a 12 kilometre stretch of track between Musan, just north of Seoul, and Changdan in the middle of the DMZ, the world's most intensely fortified frontier. The line links Seoul with Pyongyang and beyond that leads to the North Korean border with China.

Kim Dae-Jung hopes it will eventually become an "iron silk road" when it is linked to the Trans-Siberian railway. It aims to have its side ready by next September at a cost of about 54.7 billion won. South Korean sol-

diers will soon remove Cold War reinforced concrete walls, electrified wire, anti-tank barriers and clear tens of thousands of mines for the construction. The North has also pledged to rebuild a 12km stretch on its side of the border.

Kim Jong-Il has reportedly said he will throw tens of thousands of soldiers into the work. But no details have been given on when construction will start on the North's side. "There have been no agreements yet on whether the two Koreas will establish a joint railway station at the military demarcation line and how to operate the re-connected railway," said a transport ministry official. Defence ministers from the two sides are to discuss the railway project when they meet for the first time on the South Korean resort island of Cheju on September 25-26.



A fake steam locomotive runs about 100 metres on the tracks during the inauguration of the rail link in Imjingak on Monday — AFP

North Korea proposes ✓ diplomatic ties with EU

REUTERS

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SEOUL, Sept. 21. — North Korea today said it has proposed opening diplomatic relations with member nations of the European Union, as the Asian country moves to end its long Cold War isolation.

The official Korean Central News Agency said the North Korean foreign minister, Mr Paek Nam-Sun, had recently sent a letter officially proposing ties to the foreign ministers of Belgium, UK, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, the Netherlands, Spain and the external relations commissioner of the European Commission.

The letters proposed to “expand and develop these relations in political, economic, cultural and all other fields in keeping with new changes taking place in their relationship at the historic turn of the century”, the agency reported in a dispatch monitored in Seoul.

“The establishment and development of the relations between (North Korea) and those countries will give an affirmative effect on finally liquidating the leftover of the Cold War,” KCNA said.

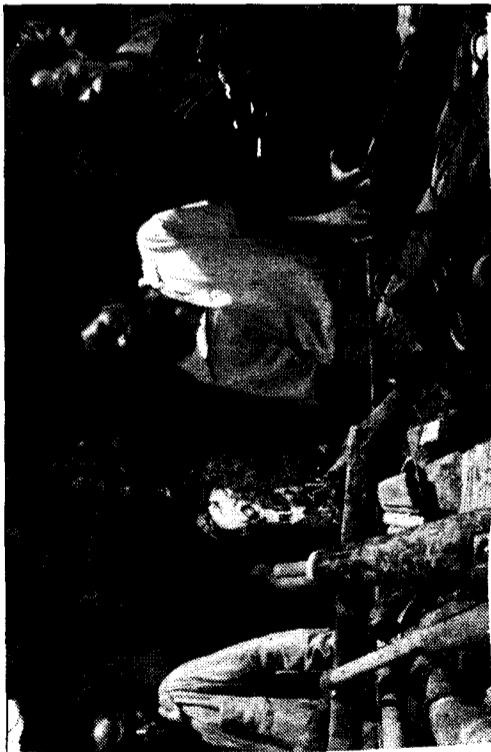
The European Commission said in July that North Korea had asked to establish diplomatic relations with EU, but the EU had yet to take a position on the request.

THE STATESMAN

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ASIA

Japan, S Korea to cooperate over N Korea



DEUTSCHE PRESSE-AGENTUR

erate working-level talks on
concluding an investment

THE STATESMAN

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24 SEP 2000

The Kims and the Koreans

EARLY NEXT week the Defence Ministers of the two Koreas are to meet on the South Korean island of Cheju to follow up on an important event that took place earlier this past week. When the South's Mr. Cho Seong-tae literally gets to grips with the North's Mr. Kim Il Chol, they could have a very limited agenda, but it is one that could accelerate the present thawing of relations between the two countries.

On Monday, the South Korean President, Mr. Kim Dae Jung, symbolically waved the green flag at the village of Imjingak to revive a long suspended rail-cum-road link between the two Koreas through the demilitarised zone. The two leaders, Mr. Kim Dae Jung and Mr. Kim Jong Il of the North, had decided at their summit in June to reopen this link. "On this day we start reconnecting our divided fatherland," said the South's Mr. Kim. For pragmatists, though, all talk of the rail and road link leading to reunification is quite premature.

It is almost 50 years since the 24-km rail connection was destroyed just as the Korean War was breaking out. The whole area was then mined. The Defence Ministers are expected to discuss how the mine clearing will take place. It is unlikely that the thaw has reached a stage where a joint operation will take place because that entails sharing of minefield charts, including types of mines laid and other details not normally disclosed to an adversary. But, eventually the mine clearing will be similar to peeling off a layer of an onion.

There are nonetheless two major aspects to this rail and road plan, which has a maximum estimated cost of \$150 millions, on the South Korean side. When the rail connection is revived, it will join a network that leads to Sinuiju beyond which lies the Chinese border and the rail link to China and the Asian land mass. Therefore, first the South's huge industrial export machine will get access to the Asian-Russia-Euro land mass and its markets without having to continue to ship its goods by sea. This could well make South Korean goods highly competitive, once other bottlenecks such as gauge standardisation and transit costs are resolved. Korean goods can reach European markets directly through the Trans-Siberian railway. Likewise, European goods could reach the Koreans by land.

Of greater immediate import is the detail that the so-called "Iron-Silk" rail and road link connects the South to the town of Kaesung in the North. Kaesung is where Hyundai is building a billion dollar

industrial complex, not just for itself. It is to be used by over 70 South Korean textile companies too. The completion of the link and the industrial complex will give both sides the mutual benefit and vested interest to continue with economic integration.

The two Koreas have arranged reunions among a tiny fraction of families separated by the war in the early 1950s. They promise to arrange more such meetings. They have let Hyundai arrange periodic pilgrimages to Mt Kumgang in the North for Koreans from all over the globe. All these represent a limited contact between the two peoples. The rail and four-lane

Sceptics say Mr. Kim Jong Il is exploiting Mr. Kim Dae Jung's ambition to go down in history as the man who put the Korean peninsula back together. F. J. KHERGAMVALA on the reunification moves.

road link is the beginning to the first meaningful inter-Korean interaction.

Yet, there is need for caution. Notably, when the South's leader opened the potentially important artery, no North Korean official was sent to attend. It was indeed a South Korean event, but could Mr. Kim Jong Il be playing it both ways, as many observers suspect? There has been no announcement of plans on the rebuilding of the 12-km railway line that was destroyed on the North's side. Very little is known about what really took place at the inter-Korean summit; about whether the North said that it would permit its people to travel to the South and back.

The more wary among keen Korea watchers feel that it is "advantage Jong Il". He is getting investments in tens if not hundreds of millions from the South Korean *chaebols*, his opening to the South has created a larger opening with the influential and politically powerful wealthy western world, but in all this hasn't he ensured what he wants most, notably the survival and sustenance of the decadent political system under a repressive regime? Pyongyang's Foreign Minister has just written to nine European nations and the

European Union, seeking formal ties. There has been no domestic political reform at all and Mr. Kim Jong Il rides high internationally only on the basis of the summit and some symbolic moves.

The two Korea teams marched together as one at the Opening Ceremony of the Sydney Olympic Games. Mr. Kim Dae Jung is expecting to receive Mr. Kim Jong Il's deputy, Mr. Kim Yong-nam later in the year. After that, Mr. Kim Jong Il will travel to the South for the return summit.

These developments are symbolically encouraging, especially to Mr. Kim Dae Jung for whom they represent the success of his "Sunshine Policy". His worst critics say that he is angling for the Nobel Peace Prize, either before or after he quits office in 2003. They add that Mr. Kim Jong Il is exploiting Mr. Kim Dae Jung's ambition to go down in history as the man who put the peninsula back together.

Quite little is said these days about the strong domestic opposition within the South, voiced through the Grand National Party. The GNP has boycotted Parliament since September 1 and it is therefore impossible for the Government to adopt legislation for inter-Korean projects and food assistance.

There are also those who feel that the clock cannot be set back. So far, it appears that on this clock, only one hand is moving.



The contingents of North and South Korea marched together at the Sydney Olympics opening ceremony... a pointer to the future?

Koreas' defence chiefs meet begins

Cheju, South Korea, September 25

THE DEFENCE Ministers of South and North Korea today pledged to work toward reconciliation at their first meeting following five decades of hostility across the world's most heavily fortified border, South Korean officials said.

The meeting between South Korean Defence Minister Cho Sung-Tae and Kim Il Chul, Minister of the People's Army of North Korea, marked one of the most significant steps toward rapprochement on the divided Korean peninsula since a June summit of the leaders of both Koreas.

Cho and Kim "shared a basic understanding" during their one-and-a-half-hour talk that their militaries should support the agreements of the summit, in which the two Koreas agreed to seek eventual reunification, said Brig Gen Yoon Il-Young, spokesman for Seoul's Defence Ministry.

South Korean officials, however, doubted whether sweeping measures that will ease tension across the Korean peninsula could be achieved in this first meeting. North Korea wants the talks agenda limited to military cooperation



South Korean Defence Minister Chpo Sung-tae, right, shows the way for Vice Marshal Kim Il Chol, Minister for North Korea's People's Army to the room for the talks on Monday. Photo: AP

to clear landmines along a railway track and a four-lane road being built through the inter-Korean border.

The two have agreed to reconnect the severed railway between Seoul and the North Korean city of

Shinuiju, near the border with China, and to build a road between Seoul and the North's southern city of Kaesong.

South Korea wants a military hotline and other confidence-building measures, including the

notification of military drills and sending observers to each other's military training exercises.

The fact that the two chiefs were discussing cooperation was seen as a great stride towards peace on the peninsula. Their border is guarded by nearly two million battle-ready troops on both sides, barbed wire, minefields, and artillery and missiles that can reach each other's capitals. The Pentagon still regards the North's 1.1 million military - which is believed to have chemical and biological weapons and is developing long-range missiles - as one of the greatest security threats in Northeast Asia. Washington keeps 37,000 US soldiers in South Korea as a deterrent against the North.

The talks are the first between the Defence Chiefs from the two sides since the division of the Korean peninsula in 1945 and the 1950-53 Korean war. It will also push for routine Defence Ministers' talks. The communist North Korea and the capitalist South Korea are still technically at war as they have yet to sign a peace treaty to replace the armistice signed at the end of the Korean war.

(Agencies)

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

26 SEP 2000

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Korean Ministers vow to work for reconciliation

CHEJU (S. KOREA), SEPT. 25. The Defence Ministers of South and North Korea who met today for the first time ever, pledged to work toward reconciliation.

The meeting between the South Korean Defence Minister, Mr. Cho Sung-Tae, and Mr. Kim Il Chul, Minister of the People's Army of North Korea, marked one of the most significant steps toward rapprochement on the divided Korean peninsula since a June summit of the leaders of both Koreas. Mr. Cho and Mr. Kim "shared a basic understanding" during their one-and-a-half-hour talk that their militaries should support the agreements of the summit, in which the two Koreas agreed to seek eventual reunification, said Brig. Gen. Yoon Il-young, spokesman for Seoul's Defence Ministry. *HO-16*

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Both sides agreed "in principle" to support efforts to make the summit accord reached in the North Korean capital Pyongyang a reality. But South Korean officials had said even before the Cheju meeting began that the North Koreans had expressed their intent to limit the talks to military aspects of the planned reconstruction of a trans-Korea railway as well as a road. — DPA

THE HINDU

THE HINDU

26 SEP 2000

Defence chiefs to meet again

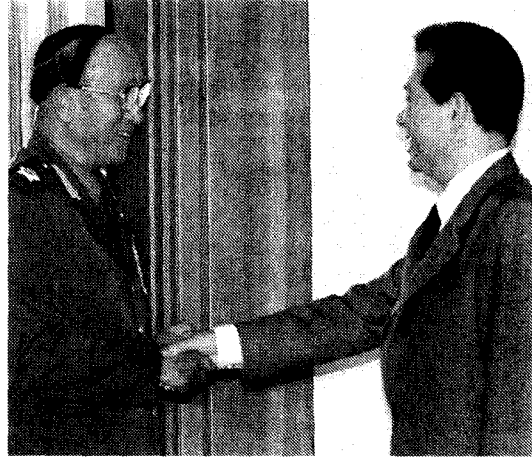
By F.J. Khergamvala

TOKYO, SEPT. 26. The Defence Ministers of the two Koreas found that there was sufficient agreed substance to issue a joint statement about their first-ever just ended talks on the South Korean island of Cheju.

The host, Gen. Cho Sung-tae and the visiting North Korean People's Armed Forces Minister, Gen. Kim Il Chol agreed to meet again in mid-November, this time in the North. Before that, defence officials and operational level commanders will meet in early October. Leaving aside the platitudes about "cooperation and durable peace" contained in the joint statement, the document spells out the immediate priority of the two defence forces as to "allow people, vehicles and facilities to come into the demilitarised zone of each side" so as to enable and "start projects of laying railways and a road linking the North and the South and guarantee their security."

This was the first-ever meeting of the Defence Ministers of the two Koreas. The task referred to in the statement concerns the 24 km rail-cum-road link between the two Koreas that was destroyed during the outbreak of the Korean War 50 years back. At their summit in Pyongyang in mid-June, the South Korean President, Mr. Kim Dae Jung and the North's leader, Mr. Kim Jong Il had agreed that this transport link should be reopened.

On September 18, South Korea inaugurated its part of the rebuilding of the link. The rail link, which joins a network in the North, running up to the Chinese border with North Korea would open out new markets for South Korean goods. However, for that to happen, the two sides must make that part of the demilitarised zone where the link traverses, completely free of danger for construction crews, vehicles and machinery. More specifically, this entails mine clearing, removing other obstacles like barbed



The South Korean President, Mr. Kim Dae-jung (right), with the North Korean Defence Minister, Mr. Kim Il Chol, in Seoul on Tuesday. — AP

wire fences, trip wires and handing over to the construction authorities a newly mapped terrain. This task was allotted to the two armed forces. It remains to be seen if the thaw between the two Koreas reaches a level where both armed forces could remove prepared demolitions at bridges and culverts.

The Defence Ministers' statement agreed on "opening the military demarcation line and demilitarised zone along the road linking the North and the South, on the basis of the armistice agreement." This would appear to imply that for the two sides' officials, surveyors and engineers to do their job without hindrance, the local commanders at Panmunjom along the 38th Parallel may be empowered to issue cross-over and return permits rather than this being centrally controlled.

THE HINDU

27 SEP 2000

Dual citizenship for NRIs being considered

LONDON: Dual citizenship, a long-standing demand of non-resident Indians (NRIs) and people of Indian origin world over, is under the consideration of a newly set up high-level committee on Indian diaspora.

Speaking to reporters, chairman of the committee L.N. Singhvi said, "Dual citizenship issue has been referred to us." He added that the five-member committee would submit its recommendations on the issue in six to nine months and the government had assured the panel that it would take prompt action. (PTI)

Defence ministers agree to work for peace in Korean peninsula

SOUTH KOREA: Defence ministers from South and North Korea on Tuesday ended their first-ever talks, vowing to work for peace, but substantive military issues failed to be broached, officials said. 27/9

"Both sides agreed that easing military tension and building a lasting and durable peace on the peninsula is essential," a joint statement said.

But several issues proposed by South Korea ahead of the talks, including the establishment of a military hotline, joint notification of troop movements and the granting of observation rights for major military exercises were not discussed.

"The south had proposed those topics at the outset but the northern side refused to discuss such issues this time," said a spokesman for South Korea's min-

istry of national defence. During the two-day meeting on the resort island of Cheju, South Korean defence minister Cho Seong-Tae and the North's Kim Il-Chol agreed to work towards a durable peace for the divided Korean peninsula and for their next meeting to be held in November in North Korea.

As expected, the talks focused on a plan to build a rail and road link across the heavily fortified demilitarised zone (DMZ) that has separated the two countries since the 1950-53 Korean war was ended in an armed truce. Agreement was reached to allow construction personnel and equipment to move within the DMZ and to hold a working-level meeting in early October to discuss co-operation on such issues as the removal of landmines. (Reuters)

US, S. Korea begin talks to revise military treaty

Seoul, Aug 2: The US and South Korea on Wednesday began talks on revising a military treaty that Seoul says is discriminatory.

The talks, the first since 1996, are aimed at updating a treaty that governs the status of US troops stationed in South Korea. The negotiations are taking place amid a rising tide of anti-American sentiment and at a time when North and South Korea have taken historic steps toward rapprochement. A score of protesters scuffled with the police outside the ministry of foreign affairs, brandishing anti-American signs, at the start of the talks. No arrests were made. Mr Freder-

ick Smith, deputy assistant secretary of state for Asia-Pacific Affairs, is heading the US side, while South Korea's delegation is led by Mr Song Min-soon, director-general of the foreign ministry's north American department. South Korean President Kim Dae-jung, usually an unabashed supporter of Washington, has called the 1966 treaty, known as the Status of Forces Agreement discriminatory, compared with a similar accord governing US troops in Japan. At a Tuesday cabinet meeting, he called for a quick revision of the treaty to "prevent anti-American sentiment from developing in Korea," presidential spokesperson

Park Joon-young quoted him as saying. The American troop presence was vital for peace and security on the Korean peninsula and in Northeast Asia, Kim said. "Despite the disappearance of communist states in eastern Europe, Nato was not disbanded in Europe," the President said.

At issue is how much legal jurisdiction South Korea should have over the 37,000 American troops in South Korea. The current agreement allows US service personnel accused of crimes to remain in American custody until their trials in South Korean courts end. South Korean critics say that Japan has almost full cus-

tody of US military personnel accused of crimes. Korean delegates were also seeking to include environmental regulations and working conditions for Koreans who work for the US military in the revised treaty. The environmental issue gathered momentum after US military authorities acknowledged dumping 76 litres of formaldehyde earlier this year into the Han River, the major source of drinking water for Seoul's 11 million people.

US-led United Nations Forces fought Chinese-backed North Korea in the 1950-53 Korean War. The conflict ended in an armed truce, leaving the two Koreas technically still at war. (Reuters)

THE ASIAN AGE

3 AUG 2000

3 AUG 2000

ON hindsight, one feels Taiwanese leader Lee Teng-hui's intention in pushing for the Wang-Koo meeting in April 1993 was a well-designed tactic to mislead Beijing into a belief that he was for reunification. The increasing pro-independence tendency in Taiwan was not something that he was willing to see but something he was not able to stop.

Such tactics worked well at least in making Beijing hesitate in putting its weight behind Hao Paocun in his power struggle with Mr Lee for the Kuomintang leadership in 1993. But when Mr Lee tried to use the prospect of the second round of Wang-Koo meeting in July 1995 to make Beijing acquiesce to his push for his "pragmatic diplomacy," such as his US trip or his potential trips to other countries, and Taiwan's bid for UN membership, Beijing was not willing to pay such a high price. Taiwan's independence is never anything Beijing will agree to exchange.

Despite the nagging suspicions over Mr Lee, Beijing did not wish to acknowledge that

In deference to a new foe

Concluding his analysis, SHENG LIJUN traces events that led to a deterioration in relations between China and Taiwan

Mr Lee was totally for Taiwan's independence. China thought he would accept reunification even when developments are 1993 indicated otherwise.

By August 1993, with Beijing standing idle, the so-called "mainstreamers" under Mr Lee tipped the balance of power in the KMT. They ousted most of the KMT leaders who advocated reunification. Still, Beijing saw Mr Lee as someone it could negotiate with on reunification.

This point was confirmed by the chairman of the Relations Across the Taiwan Strait (Arats), Wang Daohan, in October 1996.

He said China did not expect cross-strait relations to proceed smoothly always. But during the first Wang-Koo

meeting in 1993, when he was chief Chinese negotiator, he only expected the threat to reunification would be international — from the USA or Japan.

But from 1994, Mr Lee began to worry Beijing. Firmly in control of the KMT, Mr Lee seemed to care less about Beijing's reaction. Incidents that followed shocked Beijing into reconsidering Mr Lee's stand on reunification.

His "pragmatic" diplomacy, such as the bid for UN membership, had gained momentum, coupled with his "vacation" visits to the Philippines, Indonesia, Thailand and many African and Latin American countries in 1994, and to the United Arab Emirates and Jordan in 1995. Mr Lee became more outspoken about his views on Taiwan's independence and more unconstrained in

1994 and his speech to his alma mater Cornell University in the USA, in 1995.

Mr Lee, in a conversation with Shiba, expressed his determination to lead Taiwan away from mainland China, showed his preference for Japanese culture and his unwillingness to see a strong and united China ("a Chinese empire"). Many in Beijing felt they had been duped by a sweet-talking Mr Lee. But

1994 and his speech to his alma mater Cornell University in the USA, in 1995. Mr Lee, in a conversation with Shiba, expressed his determination to lead Taiwan away from mainland China, showed his preference for Japanese culture and his unwillingness to see a strong and united China ("a Chinese empire"). Many in Beijing felt they had been duped by a sweet-talking Mr Lee. But

this did not result in a fundamental policy change towards him. One reason being that some leaders in Beijing doubted that Mr Lee had the determination and capability to push for Taiwan's independence. Others thought the drift towards independence was likely to be slow and manageable. So there was no need to take drastic actions.

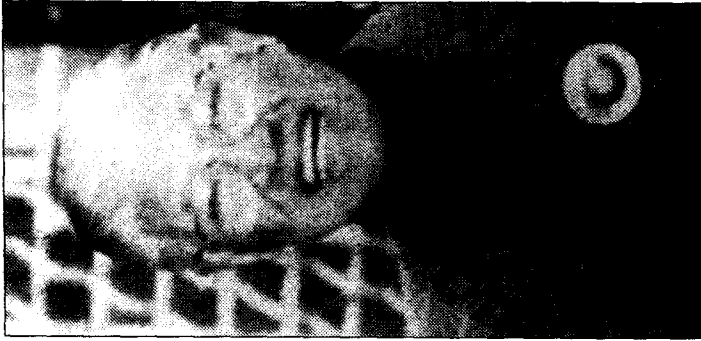
Second, some were unwilling to admit their perceptions about Mr Lee were wrong, either because of the political repercussions or because it meant a denial of the work they had done.

Yet others believed that what Mr Lee's statements were influenced by the political and social situation in Taiwan and that he wanted to survive politically.

The People's Liberation Army and think-tanks warned in 1994 that Mr Lee and Washington would soon strengthen ties. But the Chinese foreign ministry thought this was unlikely. Chinese President Jiang Zemin went ahead with the eight-point proposal on 30 January 1995, calling for a termination of hostilities across the strait and the first meeting of leaders of both sides.

The proposal had been prepared at the first Wang-Koo meeting in April 1993. It was completed in November 1993 but was not announced because most of the KMT leaders who wanted reunification were out of power. Relations were strained after the Qiantao Lake incident and Mr Lee's interview with the Japanese writer. So Mr Jiang's announcement was meant to improve cross-strait relations. He probably believed that

1994 and his speech to his alma mater Cornell University in the USA, in 1995. Mr Lee, in a conversation with Shiba, expressed his determination to lead Taiwan away from mainland China, showed his preference for Japanese culture and his unwillingness to see a strong and united China ("a Chinese empire"). Many in Beijing felt they had been duped by a sweet-talking Mr Lee. But



Former Taiwanese President Lee Teng-hui: Bashed Beijing's hopes on reunification, after keeping it on tenterhooks for many years. — AP/PTI.

even if the proposal failed to produce optimum results, it would check Taiwan's drift towards independence. But Mr Lee's six-point response in April 1995 essentially sidetracked the eight-point proposal. At first, Beijing suspected Washington of trying to scuttle efforts at improving cross-strait relations by granting Mr Lee the visa for his US tour.

So prior to Mr Lee's speech at Cornell, Beijing merely reacted to the US move. The die was cast after Mr Lee's speech. All major Chinese newspapers criticised Mr Lee. Beijing clearly saw the threat from President Lee, who was ideologically and emotionally committed to Taiwan's independence and ready to "challenge the impossible." In Beijing's view, Mr Lee's stand helped "international forces" to contain China.

It was decided at the central meeting at Beidaihe in July 1995 that China would hold military exercises from July 1995 to March 1996 near Taiwan. China also suspended the Wang-Koo meeting.

(The author is a scholar at the Institute of South-east Asian Studies, Singapore)

— The Straits Times/Asia News Network



Chinese President Jiang Zemin, whose eight-point proposal was countered by a six-point response from Taiwan. — AP/PTI.

1994 and his speech to his alma mater Cornell University in the USA, in 1995.

Mr Lee, in a conversation with Shiba, expressed his determination to lead Taiwan away from mainland China, showed his preference for Japanese culture and his unwillingness to see a strong and united China ("a Chinese empire"). Many in Beijing felt they had been duped by a sweet-talking Mr Lee. But

The sun shines on the Koreans

HD-17 29/10

THE U.S. Secretary of State, Ms. Madeleine Albright, has just ended a hurriedly-planned two-day trip to Pyongyang, the principal short term purpose of which was to assess if the time is ripe for Mr. Bill Clinton to visit the world's most closed state. This short term goal is contingent on the long term goal of getting the North Korean regime of Mr. Kim Jong Il to harness its missile development and export programme, as well as address several other concerns about its previous conduct. Early reports after Ms. Albright's trip speculate on two possible dates for the U.S. President's visit.

Mr. Clinton is scheduled to attend the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum (APEC) leaders' meeting in Brunei. Kyodo,

Yonhap and ITAR-Tass news agencies have cited officials to report that Mr. Clinton would go to North Korea before the Brunei meeting. Ms. Albright talked with the North's leader for a total of six hours and did suggest later that Mr. Kim Jong Il was amenable to addressing several missile and security related concerns raised with him.

"Important progress" had been made, she said. "But much work remains to be done," Ms. Albright said with regard to tying up technical details in certain areas before they could be worked into a formal agreement.

She said that while watching a mass acrobatic tableau in Seoul, when a giant screen showed the launch of Pyongyang's 1998 launch of the Taepodong-1 missile bearing the satellite, Mr. Kim "immediately turned to me and quipped that this was the first satellite launch and it would be the last".

It is now Mr. Clinton's judgment call whether he should take the step of going to Pyongyang, clearing the North's name as a state sponsor of terrorism, sign a verifiable, missile related agreement and find the resources and the sources to compensate the North Korean regime.

Even before he plans his visit, Mr. Clinton will need to be assured on many counts that he will bring back results.

It is difficult to ignore the 'legacy' factor in Mr. Clinton's rush to reciprocate. Ms. Albright tried to allay fears at home and in South Korea and Japan about the U.S. running ahead of events. The trick is for the U.S. to use just the right amount of its muscle and stature to prevent the North from dividing its adversaries.

For the North, a Clinton visit in itself would be a huge endorsement for the Kim Jong Il regime and the present system. Any military concessions or economic opening

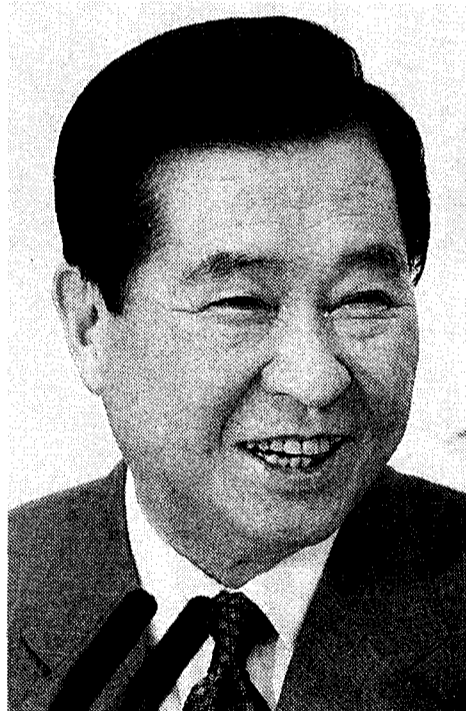


The U.S. Secretary of State, Ms. Madeleine Albright, with the North Korean leader, Mr. Kim Jong Il. (Below) the South Korean President, Mr. Kim Dae-jung... winds of change.

Congress, so it is better to do a deal now, provided it can retain a big loophole in any deal.

It was the North that sent a top level special envoy seeking the Albright, then Clinton, visit to Pyongyang.

Seldom do so many factors converge in support of an international initiative as with the South Korean President, Mr. Kim Dae-jung's "sunshine policy" of engagement with the North. After all, the U.S.' attitude towards the North is the result of a policy review done by Dr. William Perry, who in turn made the sunshine approach the core of his recommendations.



In June, the two Kims met in Pyongyang. That meeting heralded a thaw which was one factor in Mr. Kim Dae-jung getting the Nobel Peace prize. Last week, just before Ms. Albright's arrival in the North, Mr. Kim Dae-jung hosted the Asia-Europe summit. He used his position as the host and conference chair, the Nobel and the inter-Korean summit in June to get the Asia-Europe meeting to issue a separate Seoul Declaration supportive of his policies. A few European nations announced they were looking closely at establishing formal ties with the North.

Thus, Ms. Albright's visit came in the midst of and imparted a fresh momentum to the international tide in favour of bringing North Korea in from the cold, but under certain strict conditions. Ms. Albright almost spelt out them out. The priority items are those that are the common demands of the U.S., Japan and South Korea. Notably, "restrain missile development and testing".

Next, curb export of missile technology and parts to Iran, Pakistan, Libya and Syria. Ms. Albright said that tied into these discussions was "Chairman Kim's idea of exchanging North Korea's restraint in missiles for launches of North Korean civilian-use satellites" by another party.

This does not clarify if the North would be coaxed or coerced into a curb on present generation missiles or will not be permitted to develop variants.

The question of removing the North from the U.S. State Department's list of state sponsors of terrorism will form part of a bargain. Doing so will entitle the U.S. to vote in favour of loan applications by the North at multilateral institutions. No announcement was made about the two countries exchanging liaison offices.

Considering the complexity of the issues here, hasty accords could mean incomplete agreements full of loopholes.

Seldom do so many factors converge in support of an international initiative as with the South Korean President's 'sunshine policy' of engagement with the North, reports F. J. KHERGAMVALA.

that even smacks of a challenge to the system will be non-negotiable to Pyongyang.

On balance, North Korea perhaps fears that the U.S. might well have a Republican in the White House with a majority in

THE HINDU

29 AUG 2000

Upsurge of emotions at family reunions

SEOUL, AUG. 15. One hundred North Koreans embraced and wept with Southern relatives whom they had not seen for half a century, in an outpouring of joy and distress televised live on Tuesday in South Korea.

The elderly North Koreans, who arrived from Pyongyang, capital of the reclusive, Stalinist North, were ushered into a giant hall at a Seoul convention centre where relatives were waiting. Cries and moans filled the room.

"Mother, be calm. Your son is here," a 68-year-old man told his 95-year-old mother, who was so overcome with emotion that a nurse rushed to her side to take her blood pressure.

"Father, father," 52-year-old Mr. Cho Kyong-jae cried, kneeling in front of 78-year-old Mr. Cho Yong Gwan from North Korea. "Oh, my son. I'm sorry. You've grown up nicely," said the elder Mr. Cho, a state-decorated scientist in the North who was drafted into the Communist army during the 1950-53 Korean War. His wife died 34 years ago, Mr. Cho's son told him.

Another distraught man repeatedly bowed to his father, who was wheelchair-bound and too weak to respond. Men and women clutched each other, weeping and wailing. Some stood in silence, apparently stunned.

The reunions offered a window on the pain of separation suffered by millions of Koreans on both sides of a sealed, militarised border that is the legacy of decades of hostility. Family reunions are one of the most emotional issues that have defined the long-running stand-off between the two Koreas, which were once devoted to each other's downfall but have made great strides toward reconciliation in recent months.

The North Korean visitors had arrived in Seoul on a Russian-made passenger jet of Air Koryo, North Korea's national airline, after a 50-minute flight from Pyon-

gyang to Seoul's Kimp'o airport. The plane then picked up 100 South Koreans and ferried them to similarly emotional reunions in the North.

"I hope these reunions will not stop as a one-time event and will continue so that the day will come when dispersed family members in the two sides can go and come freely," the South Korean delegation chief, Mr. Chang Chung-shik, said on arrival in Pyongyang.

Many of the North Koreans visiting Seoul were men in dark suits wearing pins with the image of their revered late leader, Kim-Il Sung. Arriving in Seoul, the head of the North Korean delegation, Mr. Yoo Mi Young (78), said more reunions would follow those held this week.

The 100 North Korean relatives were accompanied by 31 officials and 20 journalists. At the reunions, one North Korean paid tribute to Kim-Il Sung's son and successor, Kim Jong-Il, who commands a personality cult in his totalitarian state.

"I live happily in the North under the good care of great General Kim Jong-Il. The main cause of this tragedy is national division. We must join hands to unify the fatherland," declared Mr. Chung Chang Mo (68), a painter who met his sister and other relatives. The South Koreans listened in silence.

A tearful Shin Jae-soon, 89, told her 66-year-old son from North Korea that she always prayed for him at Buddhist temples.

"Thank you, mother. You sacrificed too much," replied Mr. Cho Ju Kyung, a professor at Kim Il Sung University in Pyongyang. "My heart is filled with millions of emotions." Rapprochement between the Communist North and the democratic South accelerated after their leaders held a summit in June and pledged to work toward eventual reunification. — AP

THE HINDU

16 AUG 2000

2/21/8

TRAGEDY OF A DIVIDED COUNTRY

Asia

THE MOVING SCENES at Seoul and Pyongyang witnessed during the arrivals of the members of the long-separated families scattered in the two divided Koreas for nearly half a century should bring about more than just a one-time reunion. Had it not been for the Second World War, Korea would have remained united instead of being torn apart with its people being hurled away from their near and dear ones on either side of the 38th Parallel with little hope of their coming together again. With elderly parents well past eighty having no idea for over fifty years of what had happened to their sons and daughters who are now in their sixties, there is no reason why such a tragic state of affairs should continue. The optimism aroused recently in the two Koreas after the meeting of the leaders of the divided country should bring about the much longed for reunification for ending an agony inflicted on their people.

Korea has had a very raw deal starting with the Japanese occupation of it before the Second World War. Hopes of its getting liberated at the end of the war brought about by the U.S. nuclear bombing of Japan in 1945 faded fast when the Soviet Union moved in quickly to occupy its northern half while the U.S. acted just as promptly to occupy South Korea. While a Communist regime took over in the northern half of the island, the U.S.-backed Syngman Rhee imposed his dictatorship on South Korea. Prospects of the two Koreas settling down to their own ways of life turned out to be a mirage in 1950 with the overrunning of the southern borders by the North Korean troops. The U.S. immediately plunged into action by seeking U.N. approval for its intervention to end the invasion. It turned out to be a war of attrition mainly because of Washington's refusal to halt its U.N.-backed troops at the 38th Parallel and their advancing right up to River Yalu. This provoked China's intervention and the war

dragged on till an armistice was signed by the U.S. and the Soviet Union on behalf of the two Koreas in July 1953. India played a major role in the Neutral Nations' Repatriation Commission entrusted with the return of the prisoners of war. HO.12

While the Korean War ended nearly half a century ago, the agony of the Koreans living in their divided country remains. The same kind of tragedy which the divided families of the two Germanys had to endure for nearly half a century after the Second World War ended happily with the collapse of the Communist regime of the German Democratic Republic nearly a decade ago. The televised scenes of East Germans in an euphoric rush towards their West German families and friends after the historic bringing down of the Berlin Wall will stay fresh in the minds of those who had seen them. If Germany could become re-united only after the collapse of the Communist regime in the GDR, there need not be such a pre-condition for the reunification of the still divided Koreas. History has not taken the same course in Asia as it did in Eastern Europe but there is no reason why it should come in the way of the reunification of the two Koreas. The eclipse of Communism in the erstwhile Soviet Union ended the rift in Europe into its Western and Eastern halves. But China and North Korea still remain Communist. The headlong rush of European and U.S. multinationals for investments in China which is becoming a big economic presence is fast blurring its differences from the free market countries. If their economies which were long supposed to belong to two different systems no longer divide them, there could be nothing to divide their people. While the political reunification of the two Koreas may take time, their Governments should have no objection to the free movement and migration of the Koreans from either side of the 38th Parallel.

YIN HIBU

21 AUG 2000

6

Japan, N. Korea seek to normalise ties

By F. J. Khergamvala

TOKYO, AUG. 20. A North Korean delegation arrives in Tokyo to resume normalisation talks with Japan. This will be the 11th round of such talks, but the first since the North-South summitry set out to stabilise their own relationship.

Pyongyang now has a better appreciation of the enormous costs involved in creating the infrastructure to attract foreign investment to develop its economy. Consequently, Japan, as the only country that has the money to provide the two Koreas, has a much better idea of how much muscle it can politically deploy to exact its terms on the peninsula. The North-South railway, whose restoration will cost at least \$ 50 millions, is an example.

Like previous rounds, no major breakthrough is expected but Japan will be quite satisfied if it ends with a scheduling of the next round. The Yoshiro Mori Government's immediate purpose is to keep the ball in play, while resisting Pyongyang's demands. It is even attempting to have a joint statement after this round.

Over the past week, Japan and North Korea were jockeying for advantage by reiterating old demands that are on the table. Japan wants to know more about what it says are at least 10 Japanese "abducted" by North Korean agents in the 1970's and 1980's. North Korea describes these demands as unreasonable. Japan also wants greater transparency on the North's missile programme. This is an issue where the North prefers to bargain only with the U.S., and with political uncertainty in Washington, the Kim Jong Il regime is in no hurry to be transparent.

The North Korean leader, Mr Kim Jong Il, has been firm in demanding reparations from Japan for the 36-year-old colonial regime. As the talks in Japan draw close, Pyongyang has been even more vocal on this score. "I will never establish friendly ties with Japan at the sacrifice of our pride," he said.

The Mori Government does not want to address this issue at this stage. Every analyst expects that reparations will be paid in some form. The North will have to decide between two approaches. The South Koreans got direct reparations when they normalised ties with Japan over 30 years ago.

Alternatively, the Chinese format could be employed by Pyongyang. This entails forsaking "reparations" but demanding extremely heavy amounts of soft yen loans as a form of compensation in perpetuity. In any case, until Japan has a fuller idea of how its own industry can benefit from tied aid, it considers talk about reparations as premature.

Nonetheless, not willing to appear hostile as well as to create a receptive public opinion at home, in April the Japanese lifted all sanctions imposed in August 1998 after the Taepodong missile test. Less than a fortnight ago, a Japanese Government mission returned from the North to certify that wide-ranging inspection had shown that 80,000 tonnes of rice shipped to the North so far had been distributed to all sections of the people, not just the military. Quite soon, Japan hopes to allow the return of some Japanese spouses of Koreans in Pyongyang.

Last month, in a breakthrough in Bangkok, the Japanese Foreign Minister, Mr Yohei Kono, met his counterpart, Mr Paek Nam-sun. The two are trying to arrange a meeting for Mr Mori with a high-level North Korean. Japan is also looking favourably on the North's suggestion to grant legitimate citizenship to North Koreans in Japan.

Japan, which has been kept out of security-related developments on the peninsula, such as the "four-way" talks, now feels comfortable that with North Korea talking to everybody, Japanese money power can be a useful tool to employ to influence the future of the peninsula. It, therefore, caved in to pressure from the entire region in accepting Pyongyang's admission to the Asean Regional Forum.

In fact, resisting Pyongyang's diplomatic offensive would have isolated Japan. Japan has steadfastly refused to accept North Korea's admission to the Asian Development Bank, even as an observer.

Pyongyang applied in 1997 to join the ADB, but the U.S. and Japan have denied it entry. Not only is Japan the predominant player at the ADB, but keeping Pyongyang away from tapping the resources of the ADB also means forcing North Korea's dependence on bilateral sources of assistance, which Japan is best equipped to provide.

THE HINDU

21 AUG 2000

Taiwan leaves reunion gate open

REUTERS

TAIPEI, Aug. 28. — Taiwan President Chen Shui-bian of the pro-independence ruling party today held out an olive branch to arch-rival Beijing leaving open the possibility of eventual reunion with China.

Analysts saw Mr Chen's statement as an attempt to accommodate Beijing, which has threatened to attack if Taiwan declared statehood. But the President risks alienating his most ardent supporters who demand nothing short of statehood.

Mr Chen, who returned last week from his first overseas visit, said he was not prejudiced on the explosive issue of whether the island should reunify with its giant communist neighbour.

"We don't have a predetermined stance, but we also cannot have a predetermined conclusion," Mr Chen said, referring to whether Taiwan should reunify with or declare independence from China.

"Any option is a possibility, but it must respect the free will and the final choice and decision of Taiwan's 23 million people," he told a news conference.

Tensions between Taiwan and



President Chen Shui-bian

China have eased somewhat since Mr Chen, from the pro-independence Democratic Progressive Party, swept to power in presidential elections in March, ending more than five decades of nationalist rule.

Mr Chen, who took office in May in the island's first ever democratic transfer of power, has offered China soothing words.

But ties reflect an uneasy stalemate because he has refused to bow to Beijing's demand that he unequivocally embrace its cherished One China principle.

Beijing considers Taiwan a breakaway province and has also threatened invasion if the

island dragged its feet on reunion.

Mr Chen said Taiwan is a democracy and needs to build a broadly based consensus on whether to reunify with China, the world's most populous nation with 1.3 billion people.

"No country, government, political party or individual can presumptuously help Taiwan's 23 million people make a unilateral decision," he said.

But, the President sidestepped the thorny issue of whether he would assume the chairmanship of the National Unification Council, the previous administration's top advisory body on reunification.

The nationalists espouse reunification with a democratic China and set up the council in 1990.

To skirt controversy surrounding the council, Mr Chen set up a 25-member "supra-party" task force earlier this month to create a consensus on how to deal with China.

Malaysia offer: Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad has said that his country is willing to play a positive role in the resumption of China-Taiwan talks and offered Kuala Lumpur as a venue.

THE STATESMAN

29 AUG 2000

TAIWAN IS NOT CHINA

M/S But try telling China that! *S/S*

RELATIONS between Taiwan and China are still stuck in the One China groove, which former President Lee Teng-hui accepted in 1992 on the understanding that neither would try to interpret it unilaterally. The recent summit between the two Korean Presidents was seen by some, including President Chen Shui-bian, to provide a model on how talks on Sino-Taiwanese reunification could proceed. But the model doesn't hold across the Taiwan Strait, except for the superficial resemblance between two communist countries trying to come to an arrangement with an estranged capitalist "brother", or vice versa. The nature of hostility between Taiwan and China is no longer ideological, although the political system is certainly a central issue. It must be emphasised that the issue now is simply one of nationhood: is there or is there not a single Chinese nation on the mainland and in Taiwan? The answer in Taiwan would probably be no, but even Chen, elected on a pro-independence ticket, would not be willing to go that far in public, because the rules of the game are written in such a way that the man making the first move loses. A unilateral declaration would probably bring about the suspension of the Taiwan Relations Act, which guarantees US protection in case of a Chinese attack, but does not support a bid for independence — Clinton has already said no to two Chinas. Taiwan would have to fight the Chinese on its own.

So Chen is more or less in the same position as his predecessor Lee. In other words, he is asking for parity of status in any dialogue and a way to avoid accepting Beijing's sovereignty. Zhu Rongji, the Chinese prime minister, said that Chen could be offered the number two position in his government in case reunification came through, but that hardly addresses the wider problem of how much say Beijing can have in matters pertaining to the island. Again, if one asked the Taiwanese, they would say none. Chen's idea of a confederation, in which both sides — that is, Taiwan — retain effective and complete independence of action over their respective territories, while coordinating with each other in certain limited areas, was put forward in recognition of this local sentiment. That this is not a saleable proposition in Beijing is seen in the official reaction to the visit by Lee to Great Britain recently — cancellation of ministerial-level contacts, no official meetings and possible retaliation against British trade. For a country which is a major investor on the mainland and a significant player in global trade to be told that it cannot have independent contacts with the outside world is preposterous.

THE STATESMAN

31 AUG 2000

Everything has changed, yet nothing has changed

51-997
NOW that the novelty and euphoria of the remarkable Korean summit — the three days that shook Asia — have faded, the world is left scratching its head and wondering what it all adds up to. Has one of the world's most dangerous flashpoints suddenly been defused? Have the tectonic plates of the East Asian strategic equation begun to shift? The short answer is everything has changed, yet nothing has changed.

However symbolic, the first such summit in half a century was, indeed, a historic achievement, perhaps the beginning of a protracted end-game in Korea. It offered new hopes of peace and national reconciliation. To see the world's most mysterious political figure prove to be a not particularly unusual fellow, though one with an impressive sense of political theatre, certainly made fools of most Western analysts who for years have portrayed Kim Jong Il as either a bizarre wacko or a buffoon.

Not to mention all the bright lights at the highest reaches of the Clinton Administration who quietly argued his regime was about to collapse.

And for political courage and strength of character, South Korean President Kim Dae Jung has certainly earned his place in history — and a good shot at the Nobel Peace Prize.

Yet all the smiles, embraces and pledges notwithstanding, five decades of Cold War ice have hardly melted overnight. Nor has the "big question" been answered: is Kim Jong Il's radical shift one of style and tactics or is it strategic — is North Korea really changing?

The North Korean divisions, artillery and Scuds are still deployed near the Demilitarised Zone. It still has its chemical weapons. Pyongyang is still working on its third generation of ballistic missiles and, in all likelihood, a covert nuclear weapons programme. Nor are there new signs that Pyongyang is suddenly opening up or adopting radical economic reforms as China did two decades ago.

Indeed, all too familiar North Korean rhetoric and gamesmanship are still in evidence in the summit's aftermath. One day after the USA recycled its unimplemented decision

For all the smiles, embraces and pledges, the ice of five decades of Cold War between the two Koreas has hardly melted overnight, writes ROBERT A MANNING. Nor has the 'big question' been answered: is North Korea really changing?



The summit between the two Koreas is a historic achievement, perhaps the beginning of a protracted end-game in the peninsula

of last September to lift most sanctions, Pyongyang Radio rebroadcast a 1999 Kim Jong Il speech warning against "economic reforms and market openings that would certainly lead to our destruction". This was followed by another broadcast chastising the USA for its "hostility" and alleged war preparations.

The "same-old, same-old", contrasts sharply with the warm and fuzzy mood in both Seoul and Washington DC with Kim Jong Il's summit performance and the "join hands" summit declaration.

The full scope of Pyongyang's game-plan will only be revealed over time. But, clearly, he has embarked on an uncharacteristically subtle game of

multi-pronged diplomacy designed to prop up his regime and failing economy.

Moving the centre of gravity of Korean diplomacy from a US-North Korea framework to a North-South Korea framework is more likely to produce benefits for Pyongyang. It may also increase leverage with the USA as the North expands ties around the world or at least insulate Pyongyang from pressure if a less accommodating administration takes office after November's US presidential elections.

Above all, this new diplomacy reflects a not-so-hidden agenda on both sides. For all the references to unification, a mutual goal of any new

detente is (for the foreseeable future) precisely the opposite: achieve reconciliation to reinforce both Korean states, each reconciled to the other.

Reviving its economy is the key to North Korea's medium- to long-term viability. Behind President Kim Dae Jung's talk of peaceful coexistence is the fear of a North Korean collapse the South can ill afford.

In short, Kim Jong Il wants his regime to survive and the South wants to avoid the many costs of absorbing the North and buy time for a gradual "softlanding". Mr Kim's new "outward" strategy may create an environment allowing him to pursue, step by step, limited economic reforms essential to maintaining sta-

bility.

One important indicator of any serious economic opening will be the success of negotiations with Hyundai to build a huge industrial park at Haeju, near the western port of Nampo. If realised, the project would employ 40,000 North Koreans and require Pyongyang to cede control to Hyundai — as well as expose its workers to contact with the South.

But no deal has been signed. In fact, one troubling consequence of the summit is an unwarranted sense of relief in South Korea. Recent polls suggest 90 per cent of South Koreans now have a positive image of North Korea and 53 per cent thought conflict was a remote possibility.

Just why do they think Pyongyang has 600,000 troops and 11,000 artillery tubes within 60 miles of the Demilitarised Zone? The danger is that such giddiness may let down the guard of the Korean public and allow Kim Jong Il to exploit the situation.

Washington and Seoul face some tough defence decisions. In the light of the new situation, do they cancel the *Team Spirit* and *Foal Eagle* military exercises? And what about South Korea's military modernisation efforts? Should its missile development and weapons acquisition be put on hold? Still more troubling is loose talk about the future of the US-ROK Alliance and US military presence in Korea.

These questions underscore the urgency of testing Kim Jong Il's intentions. If he is serious about reducing tensions and increasing cooperation, it requires more than nice words at a summit. More even than allowing divided families to reunite — though that is an important measure of sincerity as well. It requires reducing the military threat.

Kim Dae Jung has suggested major

economic projects in the North: railways, roads, communications networks and energy grids. Moving North Korean forces back from the Demilitarised Zone — or, better yet, mutual conventional force reductions — should be the price of major assistance.

For South Koreans, this is perhaps more threatening than missiles and nuclear warheads, and no less important. Moreover, if the words of the Joint Declaration signed on 15 June about building trust are serious, conventional force reductions would be a dramatic indicator of intentions.

It would be unwise to proceed with largescale economic (at least for the foreseeable future) aid and investment in the North without such reciprocity. But such progress on the core issue of North-South reconciliation would open up the prospect of resolving the missile and nuclear warhead questions which are the symptoms of the problem, while North-South division is the root cause. Only then would it be time to rethink the US military presence in Korea.

Not necessarily to withdraw, but to restructure. At the end of the day, resolving the Korea question, like East Asia's other flashpoint, the China-Taiwan issue, will redraw the Asia-Pacific geopolitical landscape with profound challenges to the future of the US military presence in the region.

But don't hold your breath. It's likely to happen slowly, like watching grass grow.

— *The Straits Times/Asia News Network.*

(The author, a US state department policy adviser 1989-93, is Senior Fellow and director of Asian Studies at the Council on Foreign Relations.)

Russia may keep US fleet out of Taiwan Strait

THE STRAITS TIMES
ASIA NEWS NETWORK

TAIPEI, July 10. — Russia will deploy its Pacific fleet to keep the US Seventh Fleet out of the Taiwan Strait should worsening cross-strait ties lead to US military intervention, Taiwanese reports said.

President Vladimir Putin issued special instructions for the military to be prepared for this line of action in the event that China-Taiwan tension deteriorated to a point where the US decided to intervene militarily.

When that happens, Russia's Pacific fleet will also step in to keep the US military force out of the region, Taiwan's media quoted a Central News Agency report as having said.

In 1996, when China test-fired missiles and staged naval war games near Taiwan, the USA deployed parts of the US Seventh Fleet in the Taiwan Strait.

THE STATESMAN

THE first formal meeting of the foreign ministers of 13 East Asian countries will be responsible for implementing the "Joint Statement on East Asia Cooperation," issued by east Asian leaders at their third meeting in Manila last November.

Slowly but steadily, East Asia has been coming together. Exports from South-east Asian nations to North-east Asia, for example, increased by a remarkable 30 per cent in 1997 and accounted for 24 per cent of Asean's total exports that year. North-east Asia's share of Asean exports surpassed that of the USA, at 20 per cent, and of the European Union, at 15 per cent.

This trend was interrupted by the financial crisis, but with the economic recovery of East Asia, it promises to resume with renewed vigour. A large proportion of this bustling East Asian trade is carried out between units of conglomerates in different parts of the region. Trade within the region is, therefore, closely linked with intra-regional investment.

As a proportion of the total East Asian trade, intra-regional trade has risen from

33 per cent in 1980 to 40 per cent in 1990 and to about 50 per cent in 1998.

The synergies of trade and investment intensify, as each group of East Asian countries moves up the development ladder — first, Japan and South Korea, then, at different paces, the first six Asean members and China, and finally Asean's newer members.

Historically, investments from more developed countries and their markets have nourished the growth of less developed countries and helped pull them up the ladder. The process involves not only markets and capital but also services, technology transfer and the development of human skills. Unless something happens to break it up, the continuation of this process can hold great potential for further economic integration in East Asia.

Until recently, the region's economic convergence had been driven by the trade and investment decisions and impulses

of

No regional fortress

The region is opening up to the world. The USA and Europe remain leading trading and economic partners of East Asian countries, each of which is a member of the WTO or is aspiring to become one, says RUDOLFO SEVERINO

corporations. For the most part, it received little conscious guidance or support from governments outside the economic sphere. But in the past few years, governments have taken deliberate steps to nurture East Asia's convergence.

A recognition of the geographical and emerging economic realities has made Asean's talks with China, Japan and South Korea among the most active of its 10 dialogue partners.

As part of talks, efforts have intensified to promote cultural exchanges between Asean and each of the North-east Asian countries. Beyond the Asean dialogue system, an East Asian forum is developing among the 13 countries of the region.

Since 1997, leaders of China, Japan and the two Koreas have met Asean leaders at summits both as a group and individually. Seven of the 10 South-east Asian nations and the three North-east Asian countries make up the Asian contingent to the Asia-Europe Meeting. They

have had many opportunities to interact in this context. From this year, North Korea will participate in the Asean Regional Forum, which promotes political and security dialogue and cooperation in the region.

What has been called the Asean-plus-

three and Asean-plus-one summits, East Asian leaders have had a chance to discuss a wide range of issues pertaining to regional security, such as the South China Sea.

They have discussed the challenges of globalisation, the competitiveness of Asean in the global economy, the promise of information technology, and cooperation on social safety nets.

The finance ministers of the 13 countries met in Manila in April 1999 and in Chiang Mai in May; their deputies have been meeting with increasing frequency. In Chiang Mai, the ministers took an initiative to collectively monitor capital flows and set up a mechanism for making available to one another financial resources to deal with financial emergencies. They developed Asia's thinking on reforming the international financial architecture.

The trade and industry ministers of Asean and their North-east Asian counterparts also met in May, in Yangon, and identified nine sectors for promoting closer economic cooperation.

At South Korean President Kim Dae-jung's suggestion, an East Asian Vision Group of eminent intellectuals from the region is exploring ways to further consolidating East Asian cooperation. They are expected to submit their recommendations to East Asian leaders in November.

The force of logic is behind East Asia's integration — a region of at least 1.8 billion people or about one-third of the world's population.

The immutable reality of geography, leaved by history and culture, underpins the strengthening of bonds among East Asian countries. But East Asia is no regional fortress.

Each of the countries of the region is opening up to the world. The USA and Europe remain leading trading and economic partners of East Asian countries, each of which

THE STATESMAN

Taiwan vice-premier resigns

TAIPEI July 25. — Taiwan's vice premier today resigned over a botched rescue mission that has embarrassed the island's new government and prompted the popular premier to offer to also step down.

Yu Shyi-kun, who also heads a rescue operation task force in the cabinet, "has assumed all responsibility" for the government's failure to rescue four workers trapped in a weekend flash flood, said a government statement.

Tang Fei, Taiwan's number-three leader, told reporters he had accepted President Chen Shui-bian's request for him to stay on his job at least until "the political situation stabilizes."

Tang offered to resign yesterday.

Tang did not elaborate. Today's newspapers hinted Tang was referring to the continued bickering between his cabinet and members of the legislature.

Tang was using the weekend fiasco as an excuse to resign, the newspapers said.

Taiwan was riveted over the weekend by TV coverage of the four construction workers in their gray shirts and straw hats gripping each other tightly as they stood knee-deep in the rushing waters on Saturday.

Rescue workers tried in vain to throw them a rope and pull them out of the Pachang river in central Chiayi county, and helicopters arrived too late to help.

Two bodies have been found, and scuba divers today searched for the other two.

Tang said the national police chief, two defence ministry generals and 11 other officials would be either demoted or officially reprimanded for the rescue mission.

THE STATESMAN

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A meeting of the poles

THE SPARKS and fumes of North Korea's suspected ballistic missile programme have troubled Washington in its latest mood of determinism in regard to its 'creative' blueprint of space-oriented forays for a presumptively invincible military supremacy as the world's only superpower. For Pyongyang and its solitary helmsman, Mr. Kim Jong Il, there can at the same time be no question of an equal competition with the U.S., least of all in the rarefied sphere of outer space-oriented military defences.

However, an emerging but controversial truism in international geopolitics is that outer space will be mankind's new frontier. A new race for progress will occur among the countries which can master the science of exploring outer space. This is likened to the manner in which a competitive imperialism was spawned, not long ago, by the race among states that had mastered navigation of the high seas.

Even a faint suggestion about the applicability of such theories may seem esoteric in the context of an impoverished Pyongyang and an economic powerhouse like Washington, given also the

The historic handshake of the two Korean leaders last month was designed to ease the isolation of the northern part of their divided peninsula, writes P. S. SURYANARAYANA.

current efforts of the U.S. to contain North Korea as also Iran and Iraq, among others, classified as "rogue states" or "countries of concern". Nonetheless, there is little dispute in the current debates on international relations about North Korea's policy option of looking to outer space for enhancing its military prowess if not its economic survivability. The intensity of Pyongyang's mood on this score has been relayed to the outside world by the Russian President, Mr. Vladimir Putin, after his latest meeting with Mr. Kim. In this limited sense, the message conveyed to the international community by the South Korean President, Mr. Kim Dae Jung, after his momentous summit with his North Korean counterpart some time ago, was different.

The two Korean leaders, whose historic handshake last month had been designed to ease the

isolation of the northern part of their divided peninsula, were just beginning an unpredictable process of bilateral engagement, the eventual goal being unification. Understandably, therefore, Mr. Kim of the south, once pilloried in his own country for having dared to dream of an entente with Pyongyang, relayed a message that the two entities, regarded as the organic products of the Cold War mindset, could now begin to explore the prospects for a common destiny. Given the less-than-utopian goal, the South Korean leader was preoccupied with the big picture of ultimate possibilities in bilateral rapprochement.

The summit of the two Kims was aimed at creating a political environment conducive to a gradual drawing up of a road map for a pan-Korean political existence in a form not yet even dreamed of. However, it raised questions whether the southern Mr. Kim's

"sunshine policy" had illuminated the dark spots, of half-a-century of hostility, behind the bamboo curtain as the northern Mr. Kim opened it briefly to welcome his guest.

In contrast, what is in focus now is a military route map for North Korea as an exclusive entity with a future not reckoned to be near a quick end. Mr. Putin travelled to Pyongyang hardly a week ago after making common cause, in Beijing, with his Chinese counterpart, Mr. Jiang Zemin, in opposing the U.S. President, Mr. Bill Clinton's plans for a National Missile Defence shield to protect his country from supposedly wayward states such as North Korea besides terrorists. Both Russia and China agreed that Mr. Clinton's starry-eyed vision was an antithesis of the U.S.-Soviet Anti-Ballistic Missiles Treaty and that a political solution, not a dangerously militarist one, was needed to ensure global security.

It was in that context that Mr. Putin in Pyongyang quizzed Mr. Kim on the nature and scope of his own plans for long-range ballistic missiles as a security umbrella. Mr. Kim replied that he would cheerfully abandon his plans if North Korea could receive credible external assistance for the exploration of outer space for its own economic development. Without being dismissive of this argument, Mr. Putin not only made it public but also conveyed the message to the leaders of the major industrialised nations at the Group of Eight summit in Okinawa, Japan, shortly thereafter.

Predictably, Mr. Clinton and the U.S. Defence Secretary, Mr. William Cohen, expressed bewilderment over the offer, while Japan, the country most directly concerned over Pyongyang's suspected militarist programmes, remained unimpressed. Pyongyang had, prior to the summit of the two Kims, managed to convince the Association of South East Asian Nations about its credentials for joining the ASEAN Regional Forum — a half-way house between a serious debating society on security issues and an entity with a collective will.

At a different but related level, the U.S. itself has been 'engaging' Pyongyang in various ways to evaluate and snuff out its suspected potential for making weapons of mass destruction and transferring missile technology to countries such as Pakistan. Mr. Putin's own input of an 'engagement' with North Korea has, therefore, complicated, not clarified, the misty missile issue. North Korea has simply celebrated its new regional presence with a smart move for a global audience.

THE HINDU

30 JUL 2000

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Koreas near pact

SEOUL, JULY 30. Landmark talks today saw senior officials from the two Koreas come close to an agreement to reopen liaison offices in the truce village of Panmunjom, a move that would reduce tensions on the long-divided peninsula.

South Korea's Vice-Minister for Culture and Tourism, Mr. Kim Soon-kyu, told reporters at the close of the meeting that the two sides planned to announce a joint agreement tomorrow morning.

"We have decided to announce what we have agreed upon tomorrow morning after fine-tuning some practical points," he said.

"In the meeting, we realised our positions were not much different," he said without elaborating.

Mr. Kim said the 40-minute ses-

sion which ended at 7 p.m. had been "sincere, hopeful and productive." Earlier, Mr. Kim said the two sides were nearing a pact on reopening liaison offices at Panmunjom.

Panmunjom is the only crossing point along the heavily fortified demilitarised zone that sealed the division of the Korean peninsula after the 1950-53 Korean war ended in an armed truce.

North and South Korea first set up liaison offices in 1992 during a rare blossoming of goodwill after the Prime Ministers of the two sides signed a treaty that included a non-aggression agreement.

But Pyongyang abandoned its office as relations worsened once more after a North Korean submarine landed 26 agents on a South Korean beach. — Reuters

Koreas close to liaison deal

FROM JEAN YOON

Seoul, July 30 (Reuters): Landmark talks today saw senior officials from the two Koreas come close to an agreement to reopen liaison offices in the truce village of Panmunjom, a move that would reduce tensions on the long-divided peninsula.

South Korea's vice-minister for culture and tourism Kim Soon-kyu told reporters at the close of the meeting that the two sides plan to announce a joint agreement on Monday morning.

"We have decided to announce what we have agreed upon tomorrow morning after fine-tuning some practical points," he said. "In the meeting, we realised our positions were not much different," he said without elaborating.

Kim said the 40-minute session had been "sincere, hopeful and productive". Earlier, Kim said the two sides were nearing a pact on reopening liaison offices.

Panmunjom is the only crossing point along the heavily fortified Demilitarised Zone that sealed the division of the Korean peninsula after the 1950-53 Korean War ended in an armed truce.

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But Pyongyang abandoned its

office as relations worsened once more after a North Korean submarine landed 26 agents on a South Korean beach.

Kim said the two sides, in the first inter-governmental talks between them in Seoul for more than eight years, began a 90-minute morning session with speeches setting out possible guidelines to implement a communique agreed by their leaders in Pyongyang last month.

The South's team includes vice-ministers for finance and tourism and is led by unification minister Park Jae-kyu. Pyongyang's delegation is under senior Cabinet counsellor Jon Kum-jin.

Kim also said the two sides were nearing an agreement on jointly celebrating the August 15 Liberation Day, a day when both countries mark the liberation of Korea from Japanese occupation. That week also coincides with the August 15-19 planned reunions of North and South Korean families separated since the war

THE TELEGRAPH

31 JUL 2000

N Korea, Japan begin talks

ASSOCIATED PRESS

PYONGYANG (North Korea), April 4. — Officials from North Korea and Japan today expressed confidence that they will be able to bridge differences in their first talks in eight years on establishing diplomatic relations.

Mr Kojiro Takano, Japan's chief negotiator and Mr Jong Thae-Kwa, his North Korean counterpart, exchanged remarks at a banquet held at the foreign ministry guest house about 18 miles north of Pyongyang.

"We must strive hard to build trust and work towards establishing diplomatic ties," said Mr Jong. "Nothing is impossible."

Mr Takano also expressed Japan's "eagerness" to build closer ties and lavished praise on his counterpart.

Tokyo hopes that engaging the North in negotiations on diplomatic ties will help draw the Stalinist state out of its isolation and boost sta-

bility in Asia. Pyongyang needs help from richer industrialized countries to feed its impoverished people and modernize decaying infrastructure. It is also demanding compensation and an apology for suffering caused by Japan during its 1910-1945 colonial rule over Korea.

Swift progress, however, is not to be expected soon. Mr Takano told the Japanese media days before the beginning of the negotiations that bridging differences will probably take a long time. A second round of negotiations is to be held in Tokyo and a third in Beijing or another country.

Mr Takano said the political turmoil in Japan caused by Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi's stroke would have no impact on the talks. Japan and North Korea agreed to reopen normalization talks after a December visit to the North by a Japanese delegation led by former Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama.

THE STATESMAN

APR 5 2000