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***China and Vietnam  
agree to maintain  
peace along borders***

BEIJING: China and Vietnam have agreed to maintain peace along their land and maritime borders and not to let unresolved border disputes to hinder deepening of bilateral ties, a joint statement said here on Sunday.

"All disputes should be promptly handled through consultation with a calm and constructive attitude and the normal developments of bilateral ties shall not be affected by such disputes," the statement, released at the end of Beijing leg of the visit of general secretary of the Communist Party of Vietnam Nong Ducmanh, said.

"The two sides will actively promote and accelerate the survey and determination of the boundary and the erection of tablets on land borders and make the China-Vietnam border a peaceful and friendly boundary with long-standing stability. At the same time, neither should take actions that could complicate or aggravate disputes, nor resort to the use of force or the threat of using force," the statement said. (PTI)

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# Facing up to the past

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**A** TRIBUNAL to prosecute former Khmer Rouge leaders responsible for the deaths of an estimated 1.7 million Cambodians between 1975 and 1979 is now in sight. After years of negotiation and prevarication, King Norodom Sihanouk signed a law on August 10 which allows for the formation of a mixed Cambodian and international tribunal.

The passage of the law itself followed a draft memorandum of understanding (MoU) reached between the United Nations and the Cambodian Government. After being passed by the National Assembly and the Senate on January 2 and January 15 this year, the country's Constitution Council sent the Bill back since it proposed the death penalty banned by the Cambodian Constitution. The law has since passed all those hurdles again.

Twenty-five years after the Khmer Rouge's "killing fields" began, there is hope that Cambodians will come to know what happened from "Year Zero" (1975) till 1979, when Vietnamese forces liberated Cambodians from the clutches of Pol Pot and his cohorts.

Now, the law will be examined by the United Nations, and negotiations for signing a formal MoU are expected to begin next month. "The formation of the

*The law to set up a tribunal to try Khmer Rouge leaders is a step in the right direction...*

*The truth must be told to thousands of Cambodians whose families were massacred, says Amit Baruah.*

tribunal now hinges on the UN and the Cambodian Government. They should go by the interests of the Cambodian public," Mr. Youk Chhang of the Documentation Centre of Cambodia (D-Cam), told *The Hindu* by telephone from Phnom Penh.

According to Mr. Chhang, there were "minor", not "major" problems in the formation of the tribunal, which he expected to be up and running by next year. Asked what the people of Cambodia wanted, he said: "It's not important to see the (former Khmer Rouge) leaders being put in jail. It's important for Cambodians to know what happened (between 1975 and 1979)."

"Brother No: 1", as Pol Pot was known, died a peaceful

death in April 1998. Ieng Sary, his Foreign Minister, was granted amnesty by the Hun Sen Government in 1996, "Brothers" Nuon Chea and Khieu Samphan surrendered in late 1998 while another leader, Ke Pauk, defected to the Government side.

Earlier this month, Khieu Samphan, Prime Minister under Pol Pot, claimed that the "deaths" were kept secret from him. About those who lost their relatives in the genocide, Khieu Samphan wrote in an open letter: "I beg your pardon. My mistake was because I was so dumb I was not close to the real situation."

The denial sounds hollow and is a sign that Khmer Rouge leaders have now begun to believe that they could actually be prosecuted for their role in the genocide that devastated Cambodia.

One of the issues that has dogged the formation of the tribunal is the amnesty granted to Ieng Sary — it is still not clear whether this amnesty will remain "valid" after the promulgation of the new law. Cambodian analysts have argued that China has put enormous pressure to safeguard Ieng Sary, believed to be very close to the Chinese leadership.

In a recent article, Dr. Susan E. Cook, director of the Cambodian Genocide Programme at the American Yale University, claimed that Phnom Penh had

no intention of focussing on the alleged culpability of international actors in the genocide. "The Chinese Government, like that of the United States, has reason to worry about the information that might be revealed in a full hearing about the Cambodian genocide. China was the largest financial supporter of the Khmer Rouge, both while they were in power and after they regrouped on the Thai border in 1979.

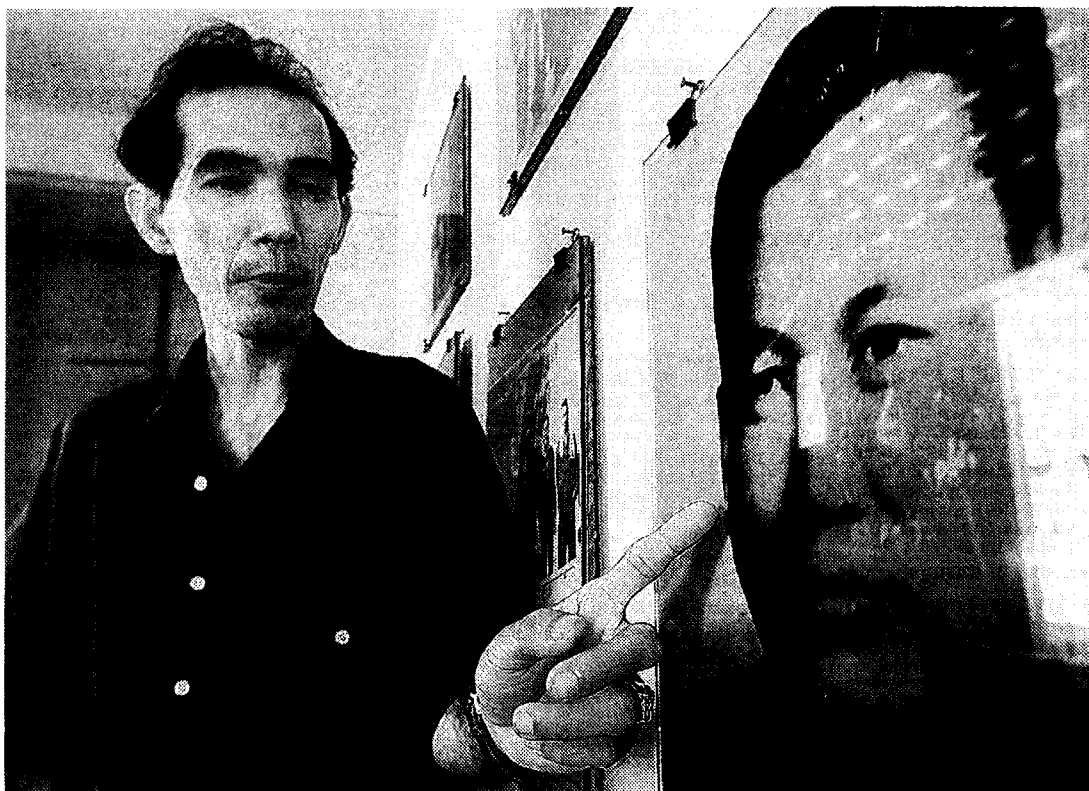
"China has steadfastly positioned itself against the idea of a genocide tribunal in Cambodia, and threatened to thwart its establishment by using its veto power in the U.N. Security Council. In addition, the Chinese political and economic presence in Cambodia has been steadily increasing...." Dr. Cook argued.

According to her, a credible genocide tribunal would not only address past injustices, but also strengthen the role of the Judiciary in present day Cambodia. "Convening a trial that will establish the truth about what occurred between 1975 and 1979, and hold accountable those who were responsible, will affect all Cambodians. Survivors of the genocide will know for the first time that their suffering has been acknowledged and taken seriously by the world. Younger Cambodians will gain a better understanding of the country's turbulent history. And by subjecting the events of the past to international rule of law, Cambodia's leaders will be publicly challenged to end the current culture of impunity," she added.

For its part, the Cambodian Government would like the trial to be limited to top former leaders of the Khmer Rouge. Former Khmer Rouge commanders, the Prime Minister, Mr. Hun Sen said, did not have anything to fear from the tribunal.

"Charges will be only brought against the 10 or more who were most responsible during the DK (Pol Pot) regime. It is not necessary for you to go back to the jungle and protect your people," he said recently.

There is little doubt that the new law to set up the tribunal is a step in the right direction. It is to be hoped that both the Cambodian Government and the U.N. now quickly move to shape the courts to try those who were responsible for the genocide. The truth must be told to the hundreds of thousands whose families were massacred at the orders of the Khmer Rouge. That is the minimum they deserve.



An employee of the genocide museum in Phnom Penh points to a portrait of Pol Pot... exorcising past evil.

# Musharraf revives Hanoi ties

By Amit Baruah

**SINGAPORE, MAY 5.** Four months after the Indian Prime Minister, Mr. A.B. Vajpayee, visited Vietnam, the Pakistani Chief Executive, Gen. Pervez Musharraf, hastened to Hanoi for a three-day visit which ended today.

Reports, which quoted Pakistani officials in Hanoi, said that Islamabad "did not want to be left behind" in what is seen as an increasingly important country.

Interestingly, Pakistan only opened its mission in Hanoi in October last year and a visit from the military ruler followed soon after. Gen. Musharraf is the first-ever Pakistani leader to visit Vietnam since the two countries established diplomatic relations in 1972. There is little doubt that apart from pressing its own agenda, Pakistan wants to impress upon Vietnam that it, too, is a diplomatic player from South Asia.

The two countries, which agreed to set up a joint commis-

sion, will also take steps to increase their current level of trade from \$15 millions to \$100 millions. As expected, Gen. Musharraf pushed Pakistan's case for becoming a full dialogue partner in ASEAN as well as a participant in the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF).

Vietnam, along with Laos and Cambodia, has effectively ended Pakistan's effort to enter the ARF during the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting in Bangkok last year.

So, the General must have been keen to present Pakistan's case to Vietnam directly, which is also the current Chairman of the ASEAN Standing Committee.

India, which enjoys good relations with Vietnam, had lobbied its friends in ASEAN to ensure that Pakistan does not get past the ARF door. Islamabad's bid to enter ARF had received a setback when the United States called for a moratorium on new members in Bangkok last year.

Addressing a press conference

in Hanoi today, Gen. Musharraf announced that the two countries would begin regular diplomatic consultations to coordinate their policies towards international organisations to "defend the interests of developing countries".

Gen. Musharraf, who held talks with the Vietnamese Prime Minister, Mr. Phan Van Khai, did not meet with the new Communist Party of Vietnam General Secretary, Mr. Nong Duc Manh.

"No, we were not disappointed," Gen. Musharraf said about the lack of such a meeting.

"This was our first contact and it was supposed to be at the Government level...I'm sure (in the future) meeting at the general secretary level will also take place," Pakistan's Army chief added. An official Vietnamese statement quoted the Vietnamese Prime Minister, Mr. Phan Van Khai, as saying that Gen. Musharraf's visit would be an important landmark in bilateral relations between the two countries.

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## U.S., Vietnam to jointly study effect of Agent Orange

**HANOI (VIETNAM), JULY 4.** Vietnamese and U.S. officials agreed on Tuesday to cooperate in studying the damage caused by Agent Orange, a powerful chemical defoliant used by America in the war against its former foe.

During a meeting in Hanoi this week, American and Vietnamese scientists agreed to set up a pilot study to screen soil and sediment for dioxin, the toxic component of Agent Orange, according to a statement released by the U.S. embassy on Tuesday.

Both sides also agreed to hold the first joint Vietnam-U.S. scientific conference on Agent Orange, tentatively scheduled for April 2002 in Vietnam.

It marks the first ever bilateral research projects between the two sides on Agent Orange.

The agreements were reached during the second round of bilateral talks over joint research on the toxin.

The two Governments failed to agree on a framework for joint research at an initial meeting in Singapore last fall.

This week, leading the American delegation was Mr. Christopher Portier, head of the toxicology programme at the U.S. National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences, a Government body.

He was accompanied by officials from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention.



**This file photo dated March 22, 2000, shows Le Thi Nhon (right), 24, and her sister, Le Thi Hoa, 15, both victims of Agent Orange used during the Vietnam War, at their home in Dong Ha, in the province of Quang Tri. They were born of parents affected by the chemical before 1975. — AFP**

Mr. Nguyen Ngoc Sinh, general director of the National Environmental Agency in Hanoi, led the Vietnamese group, which in-

cluded scientists from the National Centre for Natural Science and Technology.

During the Vietnam War, U.S.

military forces sprayed an estimated 42 million litres of defoliants, mainly Agent Orange, to destroy jungle cover for Communist troops.

That remains a particularly sensitive issue for Vietnam, which estimates that there are about 1 million victims of Agent Orange nationwide, including veterans who were directly doused, civilians who live in affected areas, and their descendants.

Vietnamese health officials contend that Agent Orange is responsible for birth defects, high rates of cancer and a wide range of other ailments. The United States, however, maintains that there is no direct link between dioxin and these illnesses.

Officially, Vietnam has never directly demanded wartime compensation, but it has repeatedly suggested that the U.S. has a moral responsibility to help deal with the consequences of war — and Agent Orange in particular.

A recent study by American researchers showed that dioxin levels in the bloodstream of some Vietnamese remain "alarmingly high" more than three decades after the U.S. military stopped spraying Agent Orange.

Blood samples of residents who lived near a former U.S. military air base showed dioxin levels were 135 times higher than Vietnamese who had not been exposed to Agent Orange. — AP

# A new helmsman takes over

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**Mr. Nong Duc Manh, new general secretary of Vietnam's communist party, with his predecessor, Mr. Le Kha Phieu (right).**

COMMUNIST PARTIES may have been squeezed out or battered into submission the world over, but some continue to survive and even thrive. The Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV), which recently held its Ninth National Party Congress in Hanoi, is a case in point. At a time when the forces of globalisation and free trade are on the rampage, the CPV Congress, with all the red flags, may seem an anachronism to many. But not in Vietnam where the Communist Party, with all the country's problems, remains firmly entrenched.

The four-day Congress saw the exit of Mr. Le Kha Phieu as party supremo. In his place, Mr. Nong Duc Manh, National Assembly Chairman, was elected general secretary, without question the most important job in Vietnam. It would appear that the ethnic unrest last month in the country's Central Highlands sealed Mr. Phieu's fate. Earlier, in January, in the run-up to the Congress, it appeared that Mr. Phieu was on his way out, but he bounced back.

Vietnam-watchers, however, are of the opinion that Mr. Phieu could not hang on to the job on account of the serious unrest in the Central Highlands. The former General Secretary had already drawn the ire of three powerful advisors — Mr. Do Muoi, Mr. Le Duc Anh and Mr. Vo Van Kiet — who had circulated a letter about Mr. Phieu's performance to Central Committee members. They had suggested that all those over 70 should not hold office.

While the debate that went on in party forums was intense, the final changeover itself was smooth. "The Congress took note of important contributions made by

Comrade Le Kha Phieu during his term of office to further enhancing the leadership of the party central committee and the politbureau to ensuring national stability and development, expanding external relations, and raising the country's status in the region and the world as a whole," Mr. Manh said in a tribute to his predecessor.

The change in leadership also shows the consistency of post-Ho Chi Minh politics in Vietnam. While party leaders have been powerful since the death of Ho, none has been able to dominate the party and the country. Leaders have come and gone — a change in leadership is not seen as unnatural in Vietnam.

Available information suggests that the new general secretary will adopt a consensus-driven style of leadership, something which he displayed in the National Assembly as well. A soft approach towards ticklish internal issues and an intensification in the battle against corruption is also expected. A nine-member Inspection (Control) Board, headed by Mr. Le Hong Anh, a politbureau member, has been set up. It is intended as an instrument to combat sources of

*The task before Vietnam is to set its house in order and go in for economic modernisation, writes Amit Baruah. Is the communist party under a new chief up to the task?*

corruption. Talk to entrepreneurs and ordinary people in the country and they will tell you how serious the problem is.

In yet another change, both the politbureau and the central committee have a definitely younger look. With seven politbureau members having been replaced, it has a younger look as does the Central Committee.

A reading of the political report presented to the congress makes it clear that the party is aware of the problems and pitfalls in the drive for economic opening up and modernisation. "It should be underlined that corruption and degradation in political integrity, ethics and lifestyle of not a small segment of party officials and members are hindering the implementation of party guidelines, decisions and policies, causing resentment among the population and eroding their trust.... ours remains an economically underdeveloped country where the people's living standards are still low, where international competition is becoming increasingly fierce; if we do not rapidly surge ahead, we will lag even further behind economically," the political report said.

Scathing criticism? There's more. Another sample: "The living standards of the population, especially farmers, have been too low in certain localities.... the rich-poor polarisation has augmented rapidly among the various regions, between urban and rural areas, and among different sectors of the population.... complaining and petitioning by the people in many localities have dragged on and become complicated, but not yet timely responded to by the authorities at various levels..."

For the moment, the Party and the Government remain focussed on the task of economic transformation and "proactive" integration into the "international and regional economies". In the period 2001-2005, a target of 7.5 per cent annual GDP growth has been fixed. Increasingly, the country's foreign policy, too, has been geared to expanding economic opportunities.

"Our task in the field of foreign relations consists of the continued preservation of a peaceful environment and creation of favourable international conditions for accelerated socio-economic development, national industrialisation and modernisation...." the political report added.

There is little doubt that a country like Vietnam with excellent literacy levels and improving living standards can emerge as a major economic powerhouse if it can manage its economy well. Vietnam, however, will do things in its own way and at its own pace. As demonstrated more than once, the country can deal with any kind of adversity. The challenge before Vietnam is to set its house in order and go in for economic modernisation programmes which will benefit the largest number of its citizens. Is the communist party up to the task?

# Reform-leaning centrist to head Vietnam party

*Nong Duc Manh denies that he is Ho Chi Minh son*

BY DOMINIC WHITING

**Hanoi, April 22:** Nong Duc Manh, the man named on Sunday to lead Vietnam for the next five years, is seen by analysts as a pragmatic centrist with leanings towards reform, a stance well suited to move the country into the 21st century. A former forestry engineer, he was widely rumoured to be the illegitimate son of late revolutionary hero Ho Chi Minh, but he appeared to deny the rumours at a press conference following his appointment on Sunday.

Born to an ethnic Tay family on September 11, 1940, Mr Manh will be the first person from a minority background ever to serve as general-secretary of the ruling Communist Party, Vietnam's most powerful position.

The party chose to make the announcement on the anniversary of the birth of Russia's revolutionary leader Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, who died in January 1924. Mr Manh is also the first secretary-general with a university degree, from the Leningrad Institute of Forest Technology in the former Soviet Union, and the first to take no direct part in Vietnam's long and bitter wars for independence. As a pragmatic centrist with reformist leanings, analysts say Mr Manh is well-positioned to encourage progress without alienating the ruling Communist Party's old-guard. Aged 61 by the Vietnamese counting method, or 60 by the

Western calendar, Mr Manh has served since 1992 as National Assembly chairman. He was number four in the outgoing 18-member politburo.

His appointment means that Vietnam for the first time has three university educated leaders in Mr Manh, Prime Minister Phan Van Khai and President Tran Duc Luong. Mr Manh's elevation will inevitably be seen in part as an attempt by the party to portray a more sensitive attitude to Vietnam's 54 minority groups after recent ethnic protests in the Central Highlands, the worst to hit the country in years.

But the outside world will be looking most keenly for evidence of Mr Manh's apparent reformist leanings and to see whether he will be willing and able to pursue a faster and more aggressive reform strategy than his conservative predecessor Le Kha Phieu, a military man nine years his senior, diplomats and other observers say.

Mr Manh was born in the northern province of Bac Can and rumours have long circulated that he is the illegitimate son of Ho Chi Minh, communist Vietnam's revered founder, who died in 1969. Mr Manh appeared to deny the rumours.

"I have parents. But unfortunately my parents died very early, when I was very young," he told reporters adding: "But let me repeat — in Vietnam, all Vietnamese are Uncle Ho's children." (Reuters)

THE ASIAN AGE

23 APR 2001

# Minority Tay leader to lead Vietnam's ruling party

BY DAVID THURBER

Hanoi, April 17: The new central committee of Vietnam's ruling Communist Party decided on Tuesday to replace the country's top leader, Conservative Party chief Le Kha Phieu, party officials said. Mr Phieu will be replaced by Nong Duc Manh, an ethnic Tay minority, they said. Mr Manh, a moderate, would be the first ethnic minority member to hold the top Communist Party position.

Mr Phieu is being forced to resign because of dissatisfaction over his leadership, the officials said. The 150 members of the new central committee who were elected on Monday also selected 11 members of the party's policy-guiding politburo, including four new members, the officials said.

The changes are to be rubber-stamped by a four-day national party Congress that begins on Thursday. The Congress, which meets every five years, also will approve a political report outlining social and economic policy over the next five years.

Mr Manh, 60, head of the law-making National Assembly, is a forestry engineer who has been rumoured to be an illegitimate son of the late revolutionary leader Ho Chi Minh. He is seen as a relatively weak leader who operates on the basis of consensus decision-making. (AP)

THE ASIAN AGE

18 APR 2001

## Vietnam Communist Party begins key meeting

Hanoi, April 6

VIETNAM'S RULING communist party begins a key meeting today to discuss policies to be presented to the National Party Congress, including possible top leadership changes.

The three-day meeting of the powerful 165-member party central committee will be followed by a closed-door pre-congress meeting at which all key decisions will be made for presentation to the congress, scheduled to start on April 19, a party official said.

Rumours had been rife that party general secretary Le Kha Phieu would lose his job at the congress, but he appeared to have gained support at a previous party plenum which ended on March 24.

Phieu has been unpopular because of his image as an ineffective conservative. But party members may be turning more toward conservatism because of the uncertainties of economic reforms and recent unrest by ethnic minorities in the country's central highlands.

The official said a final decision on the country's three top leadership posts - Party Chief, President and Prime Minister - might be delayed until the last minute before the congress.

President Tran Duc Luong, National Assembly Speaker Nong Duc Manh and Hanoi Party Chief Nguyen Phu Trong are candidates for party boss if Phieu resigns. Deputy Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung is tipped to replace Prime Minister Phan Van Khai if he resigns.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

- 7 APR 2001



# Vietnam supports Putin missile stand

Hanoi, March 1: Russian deputy prime minister Viktor Khristenko said on Thursday the issue of Vietnam's remaining \$1.7 billion debt to Moscow was "completely solved" and Moscow was looking at ways to use part of it to train Vietnamese students.

"The problem of Vietnamese debt to Russia is completely solved," Mr Khristenko said as Russian President Vladimir Putin was in talks with his Vietnamese counterpart Tran Duc Luong at the start of a two-day visit to Hanoi.

"We don't need further global talks. We're just considering the possibility of using part of Vietnamese payments for preparing to teach Vietnamese students and specialists in Russia."

Vietnam and Russia signed an agreement last September cutting Soviet-era debt by 85 percent and allowing for repayment of the rest over 23 years. Analysts do not expect the money to be repaid in hard currency but believe Russia will be seeking business and other concessions in return. (Reuters)

*Vietnam debt  
problem is <sup>AA-5</sup>  
solved: Russia <sup>3</sup>*

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