

Japan signals shift from pacifist policy

Yomiuri Shimbun/ANN

TOKYO, Dec. 10. — In a shift away from its post-World War II pacifism, Japan's government overhauled its defence guidelines today, easing an arms exports ban and singling out North Korea and China as security threats.

The plan, approved in a morning Cabinet meeting,

also called for Japan to participate in international peacekeeping missions and underscored Tokyo's efforts to play a global security role that better matches its economic strength.

It also fit with Japan's decade-long effort to increase security cooperation with the USA. The pro-US government yesterday approved a one-

year extension of the military's humanitarian mission in Iraq.

The government today eased its longtime ban on arms exports to allow it to develop a missile defence programme with the USA.

The new guidelines also cited the threats posed by North Korean missiles, China's military buildup and terrorism.

Chief Cabinet secretary

Mr Hiroyuki Hosoda said the government would pursue missile defence with Washington because of the contribution this would make to the Japan-US security alliance and Japan's own national security concerns.

New security measures

Taking a cue from the USA, Japan will finger-

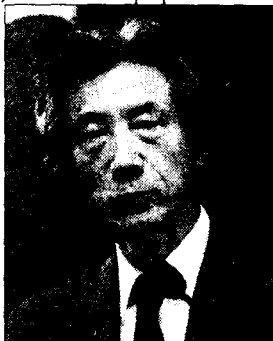
print all foreign visitors and put air marshals on Japanese carriers' international flights to prevent terror attacks, adds AFP.

The government's anti-terrorism task force today said foreign visitors would also be photographed on arrival and be required to present identity at hotels. The security measures will be implemented in stages by March 2007.

Cabinet nod to Koizumi for Iraq troops extension

The Yomiuri
Shimbun/ANN

TOKYO, Dec. 9.
— Japanese Prime
Minister Mr
Junichiro Koizumi
said today the gov-
ernment had
extended by one
year the deploy-
ment of Self-
Defence Forces



personnel in Iraq to continue assisting in the reconstruction of the war-torn country.

After the Cabinet approved the extension, Mr Koizumi held a press conference to tell that the SDF's continued support to the Iraqi people to create a stable, democratic state would serve Japan's best interests.

Mr Koizumi said the southern Iraqi city of Samawah, where about 570 Ground Self-Defence Force personnel have been stationed on a humanitarian and reconstruction mission, had been relatively safe since the first group of GSDF personnel arrived in February. "Samawah is not a combat zone at present, and will continue to be so," he said.

10 DEC 2004

THE STATESMAN

Koizumi unhappy with North over abductees fate

Associated Press

TOKYO, Nov. 15. — Japan's Prime Minister Mr Junichiro Koizumi said today he was not "satisfied" with the outcome of North Korea's investigation into the fate of several Japanese nationals abducted by the Communist country's spies decades ago. He said Tokyo has not ruled out the possibility of economic sanctions.

Japanese officials returned today from North Korea with what Pyongyang says are the remains of a Japanese woman kidnapped 26 years ago, according to media reports. They also carried the documents and possessions of seven other Japanese citizens abducted in the 1970s and 80s.

But Mr Koizumi indicated his displeas-

ure with the North's disclosures. "Japan isn't satisfied with the details of the talks. The government will need to further examine the details," he was quoted as saying by his spokesman, Mr Yu Kameoka. Lawmaker Keiji Furuya, who attended a briefing with the families of the victims, told reporters that the delegation brought back an urn said to contain the cremated remains of Megumi Yokota, who was 13 when she was kidnapped in 1977 on her way home from badminton practice.

They also had photos, records of traffic accidents and medical documents showing how seven other abductees died, public broadcaster NHK and Kyodo News agency quoted Furuya as saying. Tokyo would run DNA tests on the remains, Furuya said.

16 NOV 2004

THE STATESMAN

Japanese beheaded, but troops to stay on

Baghdad, Oct. 31 (Reuters): Japan today denounced the beheading of a Japanese hostage in Iraq after a day that saw the heaviest US casualties for six months and the bloodiest attack on a media organisation since the start of the war.

Nine US marines were killed yesterday and a bomb attack on an Arab television station claimed seven lives in Baghdad.

Japanese officials confirmed a body and head found in the Iraqi capital were those of Shosei Koda, 24, a backpacker thought to have taken a bus to Iraq from Jordan last week.

An Iraqi interior ministry spokesperson said the body, with its feet bound, had been wrapped in an American flag.

Television footage showed Koda's corpse in a white, blood-soaked shirt and his severed head with a thin beard.

"I once again feel anger at this cruel and inhuman act," said Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi, a close ally of US President George W. Bush.

He said Japan's 500 non-combat troops would stay in Iraq despite the killing.

Militants led by al Qaidally Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, America's top enemy in Iraq, had threatened on Tuesday to



Shosei Koda

behead Koda within 48 hours unless Japanese troops went home.

Iraqi police found the body in the restive Haifa street area of central Baghdad where insurgents are active. Four other Japanese — two diplomats and two journalists — have been killed in Iraq since the start of the US-led war.

US artillery shelled Iraq's rebel city of Falluja today and the military said an air strike the previous day had destroyed a mortar bunker used by insurgents.

A Reuters reporter said the shelling began at 0530 GMT. It

was not immediately clear what the gunners were targeting in the latest of near-daily bombardments of the city.

US marines have said they are getting set for a major offensive to drive guerrillas from their strongholds in Falluja and Ramadi, another Sunni city west of Baghdad.

The aim is to crush an estimated 2,000 guerrillas and foreign militants in Falluja to enable Iraq's interim government to hold national elections in January.

Interim Prime Minister Iyad Allawi met a group of Sunni clerics in a last-ditch appeal for a peaceful solution. The clerics, too frightened to be named publicly, said they would respond in a few days, a statement from Allawi's office said.

The military said the combat death toll suffered by marines in Anbar province west of Baghdad yesterday had risen to nine. Another nine marines were wounded in action.

Seven people were killed and 19 wounded by a car bomb outside the Baghdad office of Dubai-based Al Arabiya satellite television. It was the deadliest attack on the media since the US-led war to topple Saddam Hussein began in March, 2003.

0 1 NOV 2004

THE TELEGRAPH

Japan and the subcontinent

By P. S. Suryanarayana

FOR THE present, the realists in Japan's foreign policy establishment have prevailed over the idealists in shaping its attitude towards "nuclear" India. Tokyo's perception of India is as "a major country which plays an essential role for the peace, stability and prosperity of the Asian region and the international community as a whole."

In contrast, the specific issues of checking terrorism and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction have determined Japan's positive equation with Pakistan. The latest visit to Pakistan and India by the Japanese Foreign Minister, Yuriko Kawaguchi, is illustrative of these nuances, which she indeed outlined in her written answers to questions ahead of her tour.

Yutaka Kawashima, a seasoned Japanese diplomat-turned-policy analyst, recently underlined an India-specific trend in Tokyo as follows: "Particularly notable is the emergence of a new school of thought in Japan that stresses the importance to Japan of having better relations with India or Russia as a counter-force to China." The "strategy," in his view "is a product of the end of the Cold War, and it reflects the sense of uncertainty and anxiety among the Japanese about China's future course, given the country's sheer size and robust economic growth as well as the fact that a considerable portion of the fruit of that growth is allocated for defence."

This perspective came into focus,

as part of the debate on realpolitik versus the idealist approach in Japan, after the fallout of India's Pokhran II nuclear detonations of 1998 gradually dissipated. Ms. Kawaguchi, for her part, has now taken care to turn the spotlight on India's intrinsic worth as "a major power" rather than on its perceived potential as a counterforce to China for purposes of Japan's calculus.

The Japanese Foreign Minister's recent visit to India and Pakistan has led to some finetuning of policy positions.

for the existing permanent members).

The more critical aspects of the sub-text of the new Japan-India understanding, which now remain to be settled during further discussions, are just as significant as the basic accord on reciprocal support. These relate to the questions whether Japan (as also India) is inclined to work for the abolition of the "veto rights" of

longer asserting itself on the international economic stage, with notions of an imminent *Pax Nipponica* (Ezra F. Vogel's predictive phrase), the latest move to set up a joint study group to strengthen Japan-India economic relations is welcome.

At the conclusion of Ms. Kawaguchi's talks in Islamabad, including a discussion with the Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf, on August 11, Japan dramatically recognised "the vital and indispensable role that Pakistan plays as the frontline state against new threats such as terrorism and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction."

Prior to these discussions, Ms. Kawaguchi underlined that Japan "values" Islamabad's role in the fight against terrorism. Responding to the disclosures about A.Q. Khan's proliferation network and Islamabad's suspected role in North Korea's nuclear weapons programme in Japan's neighbourhood, she noted "Pakistan has denied its involvement in this matter." Japan would, nevertheless "urge Pakistan to address the non-proliferation issue even more rigorously" through the "provision of relevant information and prevention of recurrence of such incidents."

By embracing Pakistan, in the end, as a "frontline state" on non-proliferation issues, Japan has opted for a diplomatic engagement rather than estrangement. Whether or not this, too, is reflective of any ascendancy of the realists in Tokyo, the relevant views of the U.S., Japan's ally, can be seen as a factor at work.

the existing five permanent members and whether, in an alternative scenario, Tokyo and New Delhi will be prepared to back each other for their candidature as veto-empowered permanent members.

Besides being judgment calls, the answers to these simple posers, with profound implications for any new global order, will depend on the larger international debate on the overall reform of the Security Council as also the present U.N. system itself.

As seen from Tokyo's standpoint, the agreement to form a Japan-India working group on counter-terrorism and their readiness to cooperate on non-proliferation issues, including that relating to the "means of delivery of weapons of mass destruction," are logical corollaries to the new spirit of understanding. With Tokyo no

Of the three main points of agreement reached during her talks with the Indian leaders, particularly the External Affairs Minister, K. Narwar Singh, the most conspicuous is the one relating to the willingness of the two countries to support each other's candidature for the permanent membership of the United Nations Security Council.

Until almost the beginning of Ms. Kawaguchi's talks in New Delhi on August 12, this issue was not fully sorted out within the Japanese camp, enquiries indicate. The disarmament lobby and the pacifists in Tokyo's policy circles were then holding forth on the importance of the distinction between Japan's credentials for permanent membership as "a non-nuclear country" and India's status as a player possessing nuclear weapons (a factor that could have implications

Japanese nuclear plant mishap kills four

Agence France Presse

TOKYO, Aug. 9. — At least four workers were killed and seven severely burned today by a leak of non-radioactive steam at a nuclear plant in central Japan, in the latest blow

the country's troubled nuclear industry.

The nuclear power plant at Mihama, 350 km west of Tokyo, shut down automatically when an alarm sounded just before the accident and the plant's operators stressed there was no danger of a radiation leak.

The accident in Fukui prefecture happened in the turbine room of a pressurised water reactor at the plant, run by the Kansai Electric Power Company.

An official from Japan's Nuclear and Industrial Safety Agency said the leaked steam would not have con-

tained radiation as the turbines in the water reactors don't come into contact with the nuclear reactors.

The incident is likely to further undermine confidence in Japan's nuclear industry which has been shaken by a series of recent accidents and scandals.

THE STATESMAN

10 AUG 2004

Japanese troops to stay in Iraq

110-17 By P. S. Suryanarayana

SINGAPORE, JULY 12. The Japanese Prime Minister, Junichiro Koizumi, today refused to pull his country's troops from Iraq, despite the setback that his party suffered in the elections to the House of Councillors or the upper chamber of Parliament (Diet). He also indicated that he would stick to his agenda of structural economic reforms.

The Opposition demanded a withdrawal of the Self-Defence Forces (SDF) personnel, numbering several hundred, from Iraq.

Originally sent to Iraq to serve under the overall auspices of the U.S. forces there, the SDF units were recently mandated by the Koizumi administration to join a U.N.-authorised "multinational force" and remain under Japan's own command while continuing to perform "non-combat duties" of humanitarian relief activities.

The ruling coalition continues to command a majority in the chamber. It is on this basis that Mr. Koizumi rejected calls for his resignation.

Japan seeks 'unconditional' hostage release

By P. S. Suryanarayana

SINGAPORE, APRIL 10. Japan has outlined a diplomatic strategy of seeking the "unconditional (and) safe release" of three Japanese civilians being held hostage by a group in Iraq. This follows the 'information' that the hostage-takers, belonging to a group unofficially identified as "Saraya-al-Mujahideen," want Japan to withdraw its military personnel from Iraq if the three are to be set free.

The deadline set by the group is to run out a few hours before midnight on Sunday (Japan time).

With the Japanese Prime Minister, Junichiro Koizumi, having ruled out a troop pull-out, Tokyo today set up a special office at its embassy in Amman (Jordan) to deal with the crisis. Heading the office, the Japanese Senior Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs, Ichiro Aisawa, would contact the Governments of Jordan and the neighbouring countries, while contact was being maintained with the U.S., Tokyo's chief ally, at the highest political levels.

The hostage issue and the related question about Japan's military presence in Iraq, are likely to figure in the U.S. Vice-President, Dick Cheney's visit to Japan at this time on a previously-arranged schedule.

Asked about the possibility of Mr. Cheney exerting pressure on Tokyo to

stay firm on the U.S. side in Iraq, notwithstanding the growing popular demand by the Japanese people themselves for a troop pull-out, a top Japanese official said in Tokyo that there was "no reason" why this should be done at all. The units of the Japanese Self-Defence Forces (SDF), now in Iraq, were actually "engaged in humanitarian and reconstruction assistance for the people of Iraq". Reaffirming the 'non-combat' nature of the SDF's mission in Iraq, the spokesman said: "This is exactly what the terrorist group has been saying (that) Japan should be a friend of the Iraqi people."

The SDF personnel, he maintained, "are exercising that concept on the ground, helping Iraqi people by purifying water or reconstructing public buildings such as schools and hospitals and so forth."

The Japanese ground forces, numbering about 550, were at present in an area that could still be classified as a "non-combat zone" in Iraq, the official said, pointing out that the SDF personnel had not been put at risk.

Some time ago, two Japanese diplomats, on a humanitarian mission in Iraq, had been killed by suspected anti-U.S. activists.

As for the possibility of the SDF units joining any effort to rescue the three civilian hostages on this occasion, the Ja-



Japanese demonstrators demanding the withdrawal of the country's troops from Iraq to pave the way for the release of three nationals kidnapped in Iraq, is blocked by police officers near the official residence of the Prime Minister, Junichiro Koizumi, in Tokyo on Saturday. — AP

panese official said: "The law which established the Self-Defence Forces specifically mentions (that) one of the missions is to assist (in) the rescue work (relating to) Japanese in trouble abroad. By following that Article, the Self-Defence Forces may be able to conduct the necessary operation to fulfil the mission of rescue." He, however, clarified that he was "not in a position to any sort of interpretation" of the specific law concerning the Special Measures on Humanitarian and Reconstruction Assistance in Iraq.

Koizumi firm despite threat

Japan Apr 3 10/4

Tokyo, April 9 (Reuters): Facing his toughest political test, Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi told an anguished Japan today he had no plans to pull troops from Iraq despite a threat by kidnapers there to kill three Japanese civilians.

Tearful families of the three pleaded for the government to withdraw Japan's non-combat troops from the southern Iraqi city of Samawa, where they have been helping to rebuild the area.

Thousands of protesters gathered in a Tokyo park, waving rainbow-coloured peace flags and holding placards reading: "Government: Don't murder the three people. Pull out the troops."

Some analysts said mishandling of the crisis could bring down the government, a

prospect that worried financial markets. "I don't think they can be saved if the government does not consider pulling the troops out. There are only two days left," Kyodo news agency quoted the mother of 18-year-old hostage Noriaki Imai as telling a news conference.

Koizumi, however, said he was not considering withdrawing troops from Samawa, where 550 Japanese soldiers are stationed. "We should not give in to these despicable threats from terrorists," he said.

He added the government was working to confirm the facts



Relatives of three Japanese nationals kidnapped in Iraq wait to meet foreign minister Yoriko Kawaguchi in Tokyo. (AFP)

and that if the kidnappings were confirmed, the hostages' safety was the top priority.

Japanese were stunned when a previously unknown group released a video late yesterday showing what it said were three hostages, blindfolded and with a gun to their heads. The group vowed to "burn them alive" if Japanese troops did not leave Iraq within three days.

The mission is Japan's riskiest military operation since World War Two and a major shift away from the purely defensive military stance Tokyo adopted after its defeat in the war.

Japan, a nation held hostage

Tearful families wait and pray

Agencies
Tokyo, April 9

HEARTSICK FAMILIES of three Japanese kidnapped in Iraq gathered in Tokyo on Friday to beg the government to do whatever it takes to bring them safely home, including withdrawing troops from Iraq.

The kidnapers, from a previously unknown Iraqi group, have vowed to burn the hostages alive if the roughly 550 Japanese troops based in southern Iraq do not leave within three days.

Looking pale and tense, relatives of the three met Foreign Minister Yoriko Kawaguchi.

One young man held Buddhist rosary beads tightly. Others latched handkerchiefs.

"I can't bear the thought that my child might be burned alive,"



Naoko Imai, mother of Noriaki Imai, one of three Japanese hostages, during a meeting with Foreign Minister Yoriko Kawaguchi in Tokyo on Friday.

Koriyama's mother, Kimiko, said. "I believe that mothers in Iraq know best how it feels to lose one's child in war. I hope the Iraqi people too will hear our plea."

Video footage showed the hostages with knives at their throats, although this was not aired in Japan. Takato could be heard screaming as she covered her face. Imai's father, Takashi, told the same news conference that they had called on Kawaguchi to consider withdrawing the troops. "But the foreign minister only said she would pass this on, which was a great pity."

The families also said they wanted to meet with Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi to make their appeal directly. Asked in Parliament if he would meet them, though, Koizumi said: "At the moment, the foreign ministry is handling this." For the families it was an anxious day.

"We shouldn't have let him go," Naoko Imai was quoted by the *Asahi Shimbun* daily as saying of her son.

Citizens to be evacuated

Japan has decided to organise an airlift to evacuate Japanese civilians in Iraq to Kuwait following the kidnapping of three Japanese nationals, a news report said today. "Excluding some 550 Self-Defence Force (military) personnel and foreign ministry officials, some 70 journalists, non-government organisation workers and other civilians are in Iraq, and they can apply to be evacuated," the *Yomiuri Shimbun* said. The government would send a C130 transport plane to Iraq to carry out the evacuation, which would be conducted within days, the paper said, without citing sources. Jiji Press agency also reported that the government was considering sending in a C-130 to pick up Japanese nationals.



A demonstrator protests in front of Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi's official residence in Tokyo on Friday.

Foes unite in search for 'nowhere men'

Agencies
Jerusalem, April 9

THE PALESTINIAN Authority and Israel pitched in separately using their influence to try and get the two Israeli Arabs kidnapped by Iraqi insurgents released, as the episode has brought to light the complex reality surrounding the occupants of East Jerusalem.

Palestinian President Yasser Arafat personally intervened to seek the release of the two hostages. "President Arafat has contacted our brothers in Iraq and other international bodies and friends today to help in releasing the two kidnapped Palesti-

Asian war allies stand by America

WASHINGTON'S ASIAN allies said they will keep their troops in Iraq despite the violence and kidnappings. Hours after Tokyo refused to pull out troops, Seoul said the brief abduction of seven South Korean missionaries will not de-

ter it from sending 3,600 troops to Iraq as planned. But it imposed a "virtual ban" on civilian travel to the country. Australia refused to "cut and run" and the Philippines, too, vowed to stay put.

AP, Tokyo

tinians, Nabil George Razouk and Ahmed Yassin Tikati," a statement said.

An Israeli official told *Ha'aretz* that the US is handling the case of the two Arab residents of East

Jerusalem, both reportedly Christians. The statement came hours after Army Radio quoted a defence source as saying that Israel would not negotiate for the return of the two as they had

travelled to Iraq on their own, in contravention of the law.

On Thursday, Israeli Minister Gideon Ezra had said Israel will use diplomatic means to get the two Arabs released, rebuffing suggestions that they are "Mossad agents". Both the abducted men were residents of East Jerusalem but neither was an Israeli citizen, Ezra said.

The episode has underlined the dual identity of Palestinians from East Jerusalem. They are issued Israeli identity cards and are eligible for Israeli citizenship, though few apply for it. But the TV channel that revealed the kidnapping claimed at least one of the hostages is an Israeli citizen.

For them, the trauma has only just begun

Agence-France-Presse
Paris, April 9

THE TRAUMA experienced by three Japanese hostages captured by gunmen in Iraq is only just beginning and the psychological scars when — and if — they are freed will stay with them for months, experts said here on Friday.

"The hostages are probably experiencing intense anxiety and periods of shock and despair which can only destabilise them," said psychiatrist Maurice Ferreri. "Chronic depression begins to affect the hostage and he has nightmares, experiences extreme fatigue, with memory and judgement impairments," said Ferreri, head of psychiatry at a leading Paris hospital and a founder of the major psycho-traumas unit there.

"This first phase is especially dangerous as the kidnapper, determined to assert his power, is himself in a considerable state of emotional tension," said Jean-Rene Galle-Tesson, senior consultant with the French Air Force psychology clinic.

Louis Croq, a psychiatrist specialising in treating former hostages, said that kidnap victims' lives are turned upside-down from the moment they are captured. "Brutally wrenched away from their normal routines, the hostages wonder why all this should be happening to them, and they search in vain for a logical reason for their detention," he said. "For no reason, just for the fun of it, the kidnapers impose highly destabilising conditions: they will restrict food deliveries and limit their washing time. They will threaten them, carry out mock executions, (and) constantly change their place of captivity."

According to Ferreri, once the hostages have been freed they find themselves handicapped on an emotional, intellectual and professional level and as regards relations with their family.

479-16
1094

Japanese troops will stay in Iraq: Koizumi

By P. S. Suryanarayana

SINGAPORE, APRIL 9. Amid a surge in popular protest over Japan's military involvement in Iraq, the Prime Minister, Junichiro Koizumi, today indicated that his country's troops would not be withdrawn in a hurry. His move to stay firm on the side of the U.S. follows reports that a group has taken three Japanese civilians hostage in Iraq and offered to release them only if Tokyo would pull out the units of its Self Defence Forces (SDF).

The SDF units are on a non-combat mission of reconstruction activities. Many citizens protested against the deployment under U.S. auspices and not under a United Nations mandate.

Mr. Koizumi told reporters in Tokyo today, "We need first to confirm the facts" on the hostages.

Asked whether the SDF units might be withdrawn from the southern Iraqi city of Samawah to resolve the issue, Mr. Koizumi said: "No. There is not". He was quoted as underlining that "we will not bow to any

despicable threat by terrorists." Mr. Koizumi's strategy of siding with Washington is in tune with his recent comments in commemoration of the 150th anniversary of the Japan-U.S. Treaty of Peace and Amity.

Maintaining that "some difficult times" in their relationship, especially during the Second World War, had been 'overcome', Mr. Koizumi described the current state of bilateral friendship as solid.

He cited the important role that the two were now playing in "the reconstruction of Afghanistan and Iraq".

In a message on the occasion, the U.S. President, George W. Bush, said: "Today, America has no closer ally than Japan".

The South Korean Foreign Minister, Ban Ki-moon, said in Seoul today "there will be no change in South Korea's plan to send about 3,600 (additional) troops to Iraq". This followed reports of some South Korean missionaries being kidnapped and released in Iraq. A spokesman, Yoon Tae-young, urged citizens not to travel to Iraq.



Protesters holding a placard reading "Government: Don't murder the three people. Pull out the troops," take out a march in Tokyo on Friday demanding the withdrawal of Japanese troops from Iraq. — Reuters

Koizumi to defy court on shrine

TOKYO, April 7, ^{5:30} — Japanese Prime Minister Mr Junichiro Koizumi today vowed to continue his controversial visits to a war shrine, despite a court ruling which has declared the pilgrimages unconstitutional.

A defiant Mr Koizumi dismissed the distinction between official and personal shrine visits, and said he would go to Yasukuni again. "I don't know why it violates the Constitution. I go there as Prime Minister and as an individual," Mr Koizumi told reporters.

^{8:14} "I'm both a ^{Japan} public and private person. I will continue my visits there."

The Prime Minister's trips to Yasukuni, a shrine in downtown Tokyo, have long angered China, South Korea and other Asian countries because of its association with Japan's wartime exploits. But the ruling — dealing with single visit in 2001 — was the first to find them in violation of Japan's Constitution.

The government has claimed Koizumi visited Yasukuni as a private citizen and thus didn't

infringe on the separation between religion and state. He has made four trips to the shrine since assuming office three years ago.

But Mr Kiyonaga Kamegawa, Chief Justice of the Fukuoka District Court, ruled he made the visits in his official capacity as Prime Minister, violating the division between religion and state.

Court officials refused to confirm details of the ruling, saying only that the plaintiffs' demand for compensation was denied. — AFP & AP

THE STATESMAN

8 APR 2004

8 APR 2004

Japanese PM terms Constitution as 'illogical pacifist'

The Times, London

TOKYO, March 25. — Japanese Prime Minister Mr Junichiro Koizumi has acknowledged that the country's euphemistically named Self-Defence Forces are an army, and supported moves to revise the country's "illogical" pacifist Constitution.

In remarks which risk upsetting the country's Asian neighbours and will provoke debate within Japan, Mr Koizumi pre-

dicted that there was likely to be a push over the next year to amend the 48-year-old Constitution.

"Under the Japanese Constitution we are not allowed to call the Self-Defence Forces (SDF) an army, but to the eyes of anyone outside the country, they are an army," he told *The Times*, *London* in an exclusive interview yesterday. "In fact, several points in the Constitution are not quite logical in the light of commonsense."

The question of the title



of Japan's Armed Forces goes to the heart of the debate about Japan's wartime history, its future role

Japan's commitment of troops to Iraq has been a risky strategy for Mr Koizumi, but the stakes were raised with the Madrid explosions, suspcited of being reprisals for Spain's contribution to the invasion and occupation of Iraq

in the international community, and the current deployment of its troops in Iraq. The Constitution was

imposed by the occupying US forces in 1946 with the intention of containing forever the militarism that reigned unchecked across Asia up to and during the Second World War.

Article Nine explicitly renounces both the right to go to war and to maintain "land, sea and air forces". As the Cold War gathered momentum, however, the US government gave its blessing to establishment of a military force half a century ago this year.

Since then the SDF has

developed into one of the largest and best-funded military organisations. By insisting on the euphemistic "self-defence" label, successive governments have maintained the fiction that they are operating within the Constitution.

Members of the 550-strong troop of SDF ground troops based in southwest Iraq, for example, are allowed to open fire only in strict self-defence. If a friendly group of coalition soldiers came under attack within

their sight, they would be barred by their ground rules from firing back in their defence.

Many Japanese regard the Constitution as a unique and precious embodiment of pacifist principles. Mr Koizumi's Liberal Democratic Party is working on proposals for constitutional amendments, but he acknowledged in yesterday's interview that passing them would be a struggle and that they were no substitute for practical action in Iraq.

A DEMAGOGUE PUNISHED

217
A TRAUMATIC CHAPTER in Japan's recent history was closed on Friday when cult leader Shoko Asahara was convicted and sentenced to death for masterminding 13 crimes committed by his followers that together caused 27 deaths. Among the offences he was found guilty of instigating were the Sarin nerve gas attacks on three Tokyo subway lines in 1995. While Asahara has filed an appeal, the prospects of a reprieve are not bright since he will be up against a penal system that apparently does not provide much succour to convicted felons trying to get verdicts and sentences overturned. Nor can the cult leader hope for any support from outside the courts since those who still remain with the Aum Shinrikyo cult, which has since reformed and re-labelled itself as Aleph, have accused him of twisting their minds. They maintain that their chieftain indoctrinated them to believe that the killing of innocents elevated the victim as well as the perpetrator. Japan has enacted legislative measures and adopted strict surveillance mechanisms to curb organisations that promote grotesque beliefs of this sort. The Japanese establishment appears to have learnt the lesson that all societies must be on guard against false prophets within the fold and not worry only about the flaws of other civilisations. A cult such as the Aum Shinrikyo, which supposedly drew inspiration from Hindu and Buddhist scriptures, offers proof that demagogues anywhere can manipulate religious sentiment to so mould the minds of the gullible or the alienated that they commit the most atrocious acts.

The Aum Shinrikyo experience demonstrates that it has now become relatively easy for all manner of groups to get their hands on deadly weapons. Asahara's followers stockpiled ingredients for chemical munitions, including nerve

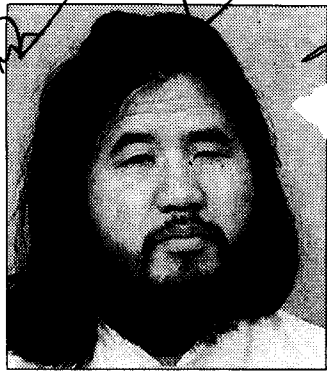
gas, in their commune. While some outstanding graduates of Japanese universities were among the devotees, it is not certain that they alone manufactured this arsenal since the cult also attracted adherents and funds from Russia and other countries. As developments elsewhere in the world have shown, the expertise needed to develop such weapons is readily available for hire. This makes it all the more imperative that governments step up their vigil and act in concert against shadowy networks that seem to grow more menacing by the day. However, it does not at all mean they can use the campaign against terrorism as a licence to make inroads into civil liberties. The Japanese Government was able to establish the culpability of Asahara and his followers by sticking to time-tested investigative techniques. Its success appears to indicate that national police forces are fully capable of overcoming terrorists by following standard methods of surveillance and intelligence-gathering.

The cult leader's trial dragged on for eight years and the appellate process is not expected to be completed at any time soon. Just as he did at the trial stage, Asahara will try to convince the appellate court that he lost control over his followers before they took to murderous crime. That might be a tall order since the trial court thoroughly examined this aspect of the case. Asahara's hopes of avoiding a premature death might well depend on whether Japan follows the example of most developed countries and abolishes capital punishment in the meantime. He did not display a trace of remorse either during his trial or as he was being sentenced. It will be difficult for anyone to argue in his defence that the death penalty should not be imposed since there is a chance that he might learn the error of his ways.

THE HINDU

2 MAR 2004

Japan nerve gas guru sentenced to hang



Shoko Asahara

Tokyo, Feb. 27 (Reuters): A former Japanese cult guru was sentenced to hang today for masterminding a sarin nerve gas attack on Tokyo subway trains in 1995 that killed 12, sickened thousands and shattered Japan's myth of public safety.

Shoko Asahara, 48, who led the Aum Shinri Kyo (Supreme Truth Sect), was found guilty at Tokyo District Court of 13 charges including responsibility for the subway attack and a series of other crimes that killed another 15 people.

"His crimes did not stop at the murder of specific individuals but expanded into indiscriminate acts of terrorism," said Judge Shoji Ogawa. "I sentence the defendant to death," Ogawa said after Asahara stood to hear the verdict that concluded the eight-year trial. Eight guards had to help him rise at the judge's order to stand. The gassing, with its images of bodies lying across platforms and soldiers in gas masks sealing off Tokyo subway stations, stunned the Japanese public, accustomed to crime-free streets.

Aum's arsenal including tin, first developed by the

Nazis, raised concern worldwide about the ease with which biological and chemical weapons of mass destruction could be made. "These actions plunged Japan and the world into deep fear," the judge said, calling the crimes "merciless, vicious and brutal".

About 5,500 people were injured, some permanently, when members of the doomsday cult released sarin in Tokyo rush-hour trains on March 20, 1995.

Asahara, handcuffed and clad in a black sweatsuit, his once-flowing black locks and beard now cut short and flecked with grey, muttered and smiled as he was led into the court. He had pleaded not guilty but never testified.

In a long statement, the judge said Asahara ordered the 1989 murder of anti-Aum lawyer Tsutsumi Sakamoto and his wife and child, and conspired in a 1994 sarin attack in central Japan that killed seven, as well as in the 1995 subway assault.

THE TELEGRAPH 28 FEB 2000

Japan eyes bilateral treaties to check WMDs

Yomiuri Shimbun/ANN

TOKYO, Jan. 7. — In a bid to stem the flow of weapons of mass destruction to countries such as North Korea, the Japanese government will sign bilateral agreements with Hong Kong and Singapore next month aimed at preventing indirect exports of products that can be converted into weapons, sources said today.

This will be Japan's first agreement with a country or region on exports passing

through a third country.

The government aims to strengthen the international framework to prevent the proliferation of WMDs by establishing independent cooperative export agreements with countries and regions, sources said.

Loopholes remain in the export regulations that exist among major industrialised countries such as the Wassenaar Arrangement on Export Controls for Conventional Arms and Dual-Use Goods and Technologies — because they don't

include developing countries.

The bilateral agreements will include a plan to set up liaison offices in Japan, Hong Kong and Singapore and monitor suspicious exports. Japan also will exchange with Hong Kong and Singapore information regarding arms manufacturers and other makers of products that are convertible into weapons.

If it is confirmed that such products eventually will be shipped to countries such as North Korea, Japan will ask Hong Kong or Singapore to

prevent the export.

Major industrialised countries, including the United States and European nations, which have their own domestic export regulations, exchange information on WMD exports under the Wassenaar Arrangement. In Asia, however, only Japan and South Korea are members of the arrangement. The Japanese government, therefore, decided to sign agreements with Hong Kong and Singapore, which recently compiled legislation governing export controls.

3 JAN 2004

THE STATESMAN

8 JAN 2004

Koizumi's shrine visit riles China, S Korea

Deployment of troops abroad since World War II.

Mr Koizumi's annual visits to Tokyo's Yasukuni Shrine, often criticized as a tribute to Japan's militaristic past, outrage countries in Asia that Japan invaded and brutally occupied last century. China reacted almost immediately by summoning the Japanese acting charge d'affaires, warning him that ties could be hurt over the visit.

This year's visit comes at a particularly touchy time as Japan embarks on a mission to send military personnel to assist humanitarian efforts in the US-led reconstruction of Iraq, it largest of troops abroad since World War II.

The visit also tests Japan's relations with other countries, including China and South Korea, amid a diplomatic drive to prod North Korea to end an impasse and give up its nuclear programs.

Dressed in the long robe and pleated trousers of a traditional,

formal Japanese costume, Mr Koizumi climbed the steps of Yasukuni shrine led by a white-robed Shinto priest. Mr Koizumi, who is known for hawkish views and his support of policy to bolster Japan's military, said he had decided on the visit to pray for peace.

"I went with various feelings, including wishes for Japan's peace and prosperity," Mr Koizumi told reporters. "Japan does not rest solely upon the efforts of people living now ... Japan stands upon the sacrifices of others in the past."

Yasukuni shrine honors about 2.5 million Japanese war dead, including executed criminals such as war-era Prime Minister Hideki Tojo. It was Mr Koizumi's fourth visit there since he became Prime Minister in April 2001, and his first since January last year.

Mr Koizumi "ignores opposition from the Chinese people and Asian people and obstinately in-

sists on visiting the Yasukuni Shrine," the state-run Xinhua News Agency said. His visit "further harms the political basis for friendly Sino-Japanese relations," it said. Chinese vice foreign minister Mr Wang Yi later summoned Japan's charge d'affaires to Beijing, Chikahito Harada, to voice "strong indignation" over the visit, Xinhua said.

South Korea also expressed regret. "We cannot but feel enraged and concerned that our people's feeling have once again been hurt again," the foreign ministry said in a statement.

The surprise visit on New Year's Day was widely viewed as an appeal to conservative sentiment at a time when Mr Koizumi finds himself before a public deeply divided about the military dispatch to Iraq, and battered by criticism that he is rashly placing Japanese lives at risk.



Japanese Prime Minister Mr Junichiro Koizumi (2nd L) follows a Shinto priest (2nd R) to make a surprise visit to the Yasukuni shrine in Tokyo on Thursday. — AFP

Associated Press

oring Japan's war dead Thursday — a decision that brought a swift rebuke from China and South Korea and could provoke an outcry over Tokyo's largest planned de-