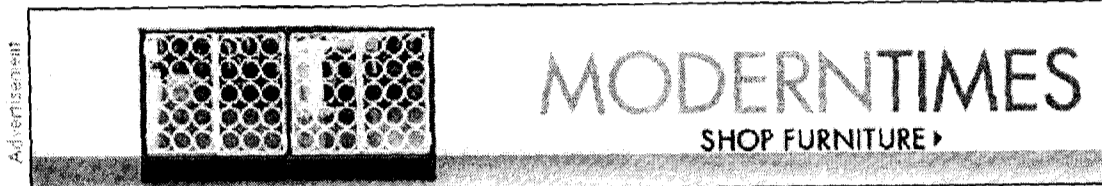


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Asian Leaders Establish New Group

By Edward Cody
Washington Post Foreign Service
Thursday, December 15, 2005; Page A25

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia, Dec. 14 -- Asian leaders agreed Wednesday to create a new, loosely united regional grouping, including India and Australia, to work together on combating Asia's economic, security and political problems.

The 16-nation association, which will hold annual summit conferences, significantly widened the circle of cooperation among countries represented by the 10-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and a sister group, ASEAN Plus Three -- China, Japan and South Korea.

The formation of the new group, decided at the first East Asian Summit, marked an attempt to respond to a conviction among Asian leaders that their region requires a stronger independent voice in world affairs and a new forum without the leading role the United States has played since World War II.

"We have established the East Asia Summit as a forum for dialogue on broad strategic, political and economic issues of common interest and concern with the aim of promoting peace, stability and economic prosperity in East Asia," a communique said.

"This is something that is accepted by us all," added Malaysia's prime minister, Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, who hosted the summit in Kuala Lumpur in tandem with ASEAN's regular annual meetings.

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But by accepting Australia, New Zealand and India into the new group, the leaders left unanswered questions about what goals it would pursue, how unified it would try to become and how it would relate to the long-standing ASEAN and ASEAN Plus Three groupings. A team of senior Asian officials was assigned to weigh these issues and bring proposals to the next East Asia Summit, scheduled for a year from now in the Philippines, Abdullah said.

One question they will have to address is Russia's desire to participate, raised by President Vladimir Putin in an appearance as an observer here and an address to the gathered Asian leaders. The United States, which participates in other Asian-Pacific groupings, was not invited to the inaugural summit and did not participate even as an observer.

U.S. diplomats earlier had expressed concern about being left out, pointing out long-standing U.S. interests in the region and the U.S. military's dominant role in Asian security. But as the group was broadened to include Australia, India and New Zealand, it became clear there was plenty of weight to balance off Chinese influence and, particularly through Australia, a ready channel for U.S. concerns.

Underlying the ambiguity about the new group's role and degrees of membership was concern over evolving power relationships as China becomes stronger and increasingly willing -- even eager -- to exercise regional leadership and Japan moves strategically closer to the United States.

China and Japan also have been divided by increasingly tense differences over Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi's regular visits to a shrine honoring Japan's war dead and rival claims to oil deposits and several small islands in the East China Sea. Those differences were evident in Kuala Lumpur, where Premier Wen Jiabao refused to sit down with Koizumi for a regular China-Japan-South Korea meeting.

Seeking to soften the atmosphere, Koizumi leaned over during a signing ceremony Wednesday to ask Wen to lend him a pen. When the Chinese premier smiled and handed it over, assembled diplomats applauded.

Aside from the politesse, however, Japan joined Indonesia and Singapore in leading the fight to include India, Australia and New Zealand in the new grouping, diplomats said.

As originally conceived by Malaysia and pushed by China, the new summit group was to include only the 10 ASEAN countries along with China, Japan and South Korea. That would have made it a

vessel for Chinese diplomatic leadership in a forum distinct from other groups -- such as the ASEAN Regional Forum or the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum -- that also include the United States.

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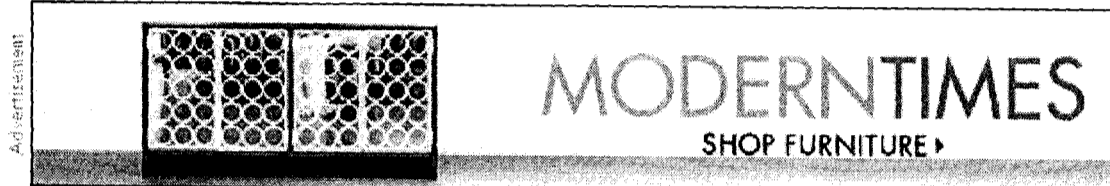
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East Asian Summit Marked by Discord

New Group's Role Remains Uncertain

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By Edward Cody
Washington Post Foreign Service
Wednesday, December 14, 2005; Page A24

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia, Dec. 14 -- Sixteen Asian leaders held a groundbreaking summit Wednesday designed to promote regional economic and security cooperation outside the traditional umbrella of U.S. military power and political leadership.

The first East Asian Summit embraced nations from Australia to Indonesia. In part because of the diversity, however, it began life with an uncertain future, Asian diplomats acknowledged. Although the leaders pledged to make it an annual get-together, regional disputes and wariness about China's emerging power made them cautious about what role the new group will play.

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The summit was originally designed to transform East Asia's diplomatic architecture, an Indonesian diplomat remarked, but ended up in "creative ambiguity" to mask discord about where it is headed.

As proposed by Malaysia and championed by China, the summit was conceived as a way for the 10 countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations to cooperate with China, Japan and South Korea -- but not the United States -- on security, social and economic problems. Many officials viewed it as a vehicle for Chinese leadership, making China the motor of an Asian bloc with a voice distinct from that of other Asia-Pacific groupings that

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include the United States.

A senior Chinese official said one goal was to begin a gradual realignment between Asian nations, particularly China, and the overwhelming military and political role played by the United States in Asia since World War II. While China has no desire to contest the strong U.S. presence in Asia, he said, the time has come to consider a greater role for Asia's own governments, and China in particular.

But over the last several months, chances that the East Asian Summit could result in a new, China-led community have dimmed drastically. As a result, Asian and other diplomats said, U.S. concerns about being frozen out of the process have dimmed as well; the Bush administration did not send observers to the inaugural session.

China's relations with Japan, meanwhile, have become increasingly tense, inflamed by Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi's repeated visits to a shrine honoring Japanese war dead and rival claims to petroleum deposits and islands in the East China Sea. Because of the disputes, Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao refused to hold a traditional three-way meeting planned for this week among China, Japan and South Korea.

With Asia's two main powers thus at loggerheads, it was difficult to celebrate a new regional cooperation forum, officials said. In addition, leaders gathered here stepped around their usual insistence on noninterference and warned Burma that it must make speedier progress on human rights and steps toward democracy.

In negotiations leading up to the summit, Japan, Singapore and Indonesia fought hard to broaden the membership to include Australia, New Zealand and India. While making the new group more representative of Asia's broad geographical sweep, the additions also diluted Chinese influence and gave greater voice to governments closely aligned with the United States.

"Through the Australians, and the Japanese, too, I suppose, the Americans get their message across, but not in a heavy-handed way," said Marty Natalegawa, spokesman for the Indonesian Foreign Ministry.

As a result, China's enthusiasm for the new grouping sank fast. After first working to keep out the United States, its diplomats more recently have suggested that anyone with interests in the Pacific -- Russia, perhaps, or even the United States -- could eventually take part, which would dilute the group further still.

"The whole process is open," said Cui Tiankai, who heads the Asian

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affairs department at the Chinese Foreign Ministry. "Now we have 16 countries, but next year we could have 17 or 18."

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Asian unity may remain a dream

Kuala Lumpur: Asia-Pacific leaders declared they took a step towards regional unity at a landmark 16-nation summit, but observers question what the forum can truly achieve for such a disparate group of nations.

The East Asian Summit, a new bloc that brings together Australia, China, India, Japan and a dozen other countries, may be too diverse and diffuse to find common ground or realise dreams of a giant free-trade zone, they say.

"It's difficult to see what more they have to talk about in the East Asian Summit," said Malcolm Cook from the Sydney-based Lowy Institute for International Affairs.

He said the forum, which held its first-ever meeting on Wednesday, would not emerge as a significant rival to the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) gathering of 21 Pacific Rim nations.

"Strong supporters of APEC would have given a sigh of relief that the East Asia Summit doesn't look like it's going to be a front-line, primary organisation," he said.

"I'm sure they were hoping it would be given the primary nod as the most important East Asian body but of course it was given a secondary supporting role," he said. Leaders agreed to cooperate on a range of issues, including bird flu and security, facing the region in the 21st century, but their joint statement offered lit-

tle in the way of specifics.

The meeting, which came on the heels of the annual Association of Southeast Asian Nations summit, also saw bickering between Japan and China over their wartime past, and disagreement over the inclusion of non-Asian nations like Australia.

Stephen Leong from Malaysia's Institute of Strategic and International Studies said a lack of common ideals could hamper efforts to forge a true community of nations.

"Building a community involves

ing. Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao insisted that 13 countries—the 10-nation ASEAN bloc plus China, Japan and South Korea—would guide the future of Asian integration.

"The East Asia Summit should respect the desires of East Asian countries, and should be led by East Asian countries," Wen said.

The other three—Australia, India and New Zealand—were controversially included as a counterweight to Beijing's influence in the forum, where the US was not represented.

Australian Premier John Howard testily dismissed the issue, saying his country was not a second-class participant at the forum it fought hard to join.

"We should never see ourselves as being exclusively part of one part of the world," he said. "I find this search for a unanimously accepted definition of who we are is a load of nonsense."

Despite the uncertainty, however, many countries feel they cannot afford to stay away from Asia's newest grouping, which also invited Russia as a guest and which Moscow would like to join as a full-fledged member.

Yet a push by China and Malaysia to have Russia accepted as the 17th member of the bloc would further dilute the institution and make it a "less effective working group", said Cook. . Reuters



Asian leaders agreed to cooperate on a range of issues, including bird flu and security, facing the region in the 21st century, but their joint statement offered little in the way of specifics

common identity and historical experience. Australia and New Zealand are not only not 'out' geographically but also have different values," he said.

Divisions over their presence were openly discussed at the gather-

10 DEC 2005

THE HINDU

China, again

What furrowed Indian brows most at Kuala Lumpur? Our big northern neighbour, of course

PRIME MINISTER Manmohan Singh's four-day sojourn in Kuala Lumpur has brought India's twin Asian challenges into sharp focus: trade liberalisation and China's emerging primacy in the region. The very fact that India has been invited to the first East Asian Summit (EAS) amidst Asia's growing expectations of a deeper partnership with Delhi is good news. But the bad news is that India does not yet have its Asian act together. Unless India's economic and security policy makers wake up to address challenges on these fronts quickly, India could find itself increasingly marginalised in the rapidly evolving Asian dynamic.

Economic integration in Asia has begun to acquire momentum as the 10-nation Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) brings down tariff barriers within the organisation and accelerates the negotiations on free trade arrangements with both China and Japan. That India has been out of sync with the trend came out into the open, if only inadvertently, when Commerce Minister Kamal Nath presented a list of no less than 1,414 items to be exempted from free trade with ASEAN. While India says it wants to implement a FTA with the ASEAN by 2007, its seriousness about the project is in grave

doubt. Indian industry and its cohorts in the commerce ministry insist that domestic economic reforms must take place before free trade with ASEAN can be effected. Promising to make amends, Manmohan Singh insisted that Indian industry should get ready for competition and can no longer hide behind a protective wall. The quicker he gets the commerce ministry to ensure that Indian industry falls in line, the better it would be.

Whichever way one assesses the first EAS, there is no getting around the reality of growing Chinese political clout in Asia. At the last month's South Asia Summit in Dhaka, China leveraged its close ties with Pakistan, Bangladesh and Nepal to muscle in as an observer against Delhi's wishes. At the EAS, China succeeded in keeping the US out and preventing India, Australia and New Zealand from playing a central part in driving Asian economic integration. Thanks to Beijing, EAS will remain a talking ship while the ASEAN, along with China, Japan and South Korea, will guide economic community building in Asia. As China acquires a veto over future economic and political arrangements in Asia, an Indian national security debate on the implications of a rising China is long overdue.

10 DEC 2005

INDIAN EXPRESS

East Asia = ASEAN+3+1+2+? But the EAS and EAC are not the same thing. C. RAJA MOHAN offers a primer

Asia's alphabet soup and numerical croutons

RESEARCH AND REFERENCE OFFICER
DEPARTMENT OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS
JAGADAVPUB U

EAS was none other than the United States. A bitter Washington thinks this is the handiwork of China and Malaysia and worries about growing Chinese clout in Asia.

EAS versus the EAC

The most contentious issue at the EAS was about who leads the creation of the East Asian Community. Some in the ASEAN, along with China, wanted the Asean+3 to be the main vehicle of regional integration and limit the EAS role to a mere discussion forum. China, naturally, did not like the idea of a larger EAS superseding the centrality of Asean+3.

Others in Asean preferred to have India playing an important role along with Australia and New Zealand to prevent a potential Chinese dominance over the EAC and the loss of Asean's own identity.

The compromises

The one thing Asean has always been good at is fudging issues and let the process overtake substance. That precisely is what the final declaration appears to have done. The EAS and its supporters, including India, have been propitiated with the decision on annual summits. There were some initial hints that the EAS summit would be a one-off event or could only take place once in two years. The EAS declaration also recognises Asean as the "driving force" behind the new process. The EAS sees itself as a forum "for dialogue on broad strategic, political and economic issues of common interest and concern with the aim of promoting peace, stability and economic prosperity in East Asia".

China has the last laugh

China appears to have had its way on the basic issue — who leads Asian economic integration? The EAS declaration does not refer to the objective of building the East Asian Community. In contrast, the Asean+3 summit declaration on Monday said, "We will continue to hold the Asean Plus Three Summit annually to... guide and provide political momentum to East Asian community building under the Asean Plus Three cooperation." In other words the main business of trade and economic integration would be carried under the ambit of Asean+3, while the EAS 16 talk the big conceptual stuff. Like all victories, however, China's diplomatic triumph at Kuala Lumpur might have its unintended consequences.

FOR Asia these are the best of times and the worst of times. Asia never had it so good in the last two centuries as rapid economic growth makes it the world's new centre of gravity. Along with prosperity have come fear and mutual distrust. Concerns about the rise of China, differences over the role of the United States, open Sino-Japanese rivalry and a hidden Sino-Indian one have cast a shadow over the first East Asia Summit that concluded Wednesday. A joint declaration issued at the end of the summit only masks the deeper divisions within Asia. Here is a brief guide to the abbreviations, numbers and the politics of the first East Asia Summit (EAS).

What is East Asia?

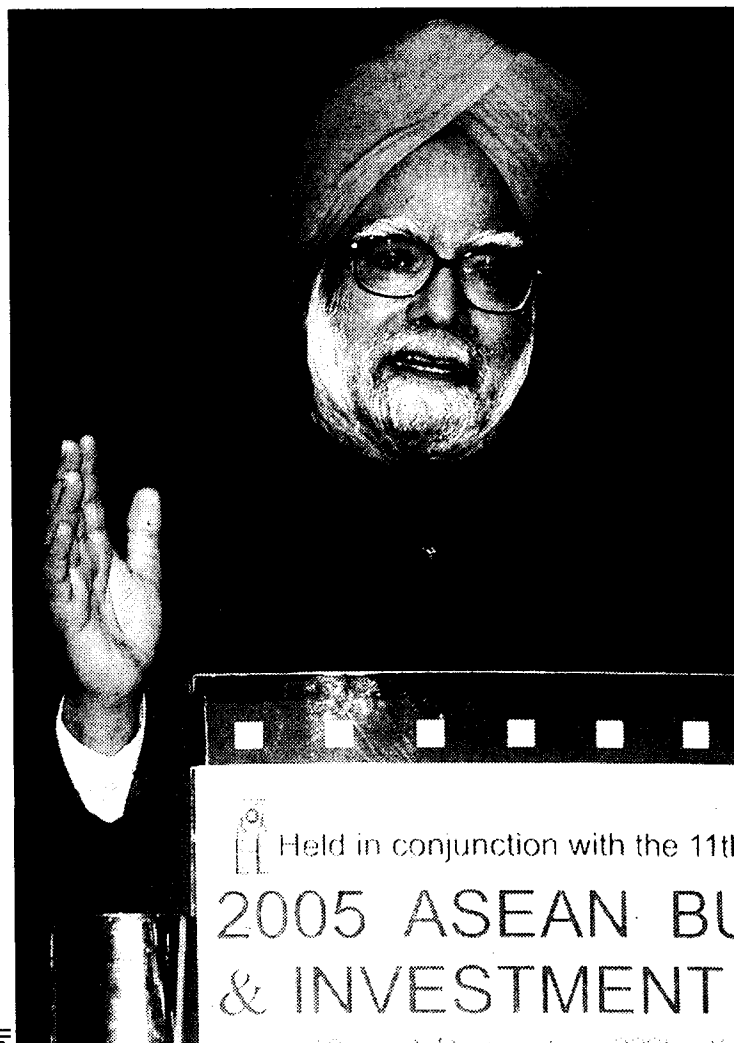
That starts us off on a tricky note. No one is even trying to define the geographic scope of East Asia. If anyone did, Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh would not have been at the first East Asia Summit.

Traditionally East Asia meant North East Asia involving China, Japan, Korean Peninsula and the Russian Far East. But the first East Asia Summit, led interestingly by South East Asia, brings together the most dynamic economies in the region to discuss acceleration of economic integration and discuss the elements of a security order in Asia. That India was generally seen as part of South Asia did not really matter since India was now growing at a fast clip.

Whose Idea was the East Asia Summit?

Malaysia's President Mahathir Mohammad first suggested an East Asia Economic Organisation in 1991 as a gathering of "Asians without the Caucasians". Strong opposition from the US averted the proposal, but could not bury it.

The idea was revived collectively by the Association of South East



Asian Nations (Asean), which has ten members. Originally involving five nations, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Singapore, the Philippines, Asean was set up in 1967 as a loose anti-Communist alliance amidst the threat of Maoist revolution that swept South East Asia in the 1960s. Brunei joined in 1984.

After the Cold War the three communist states in Indo-China — Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia — as well as Myanmar joined in to complete the Asean ten. Over the last decade, Asean has emerged as the fulcrum of regional integration, both among the

South East Asian countries and drawing in others like Japan, South Korea, China and India. The EAS is the mother of all Asean initiatives trying to bring almost everybody — almost — who mattered in the region on one platform.

ASEAN+3+1

From 1997, following the Asian economic crisis, Asean leaders started regular meetings with those of China, Japan and South Korea to discuss free trade and regional security issues. Each year, the annual

Asean gatherings are followed by a summit-level meeting with the three East Asian countries. After ASEAN+3 came ASEAN+1. From 2002, Asean started having a separate Asean+1 summit meeting with India. Three plus one did not necessarily equal four — thanks to the resistance in some quarters to convert Asean+3 into Asean+4. The two forums continue to meet separately, back to back.

EAS is equal to Asean+3+1+2

A total of 16 Asian leaders took part in the first EAS — the Asean ten, plus three East Asian ones from China, Japan and South Korea, plus one from India, and plus two from Australia and New Zealand. New Delhi had some anxious diplomatic moments earlier this year, when it was not sure India was being invited. It was reported that China was not too excited about India's presence; and Malaysia was reluctant. Japan, Indonesia, and Singapore actively supported Indian participation and also wanted Australia and New Zealand in. More, for them, was merrier.

Who is out?

Although it is at the heart of East Asia's troubles, there were good reasons not to invite North Korea. Don't ask why. Russia was both in and out. Moscow had a good geographic claim to be part of the EAS. The absence of substantive relations with Asean was the official reason to keep them out. But not entirely. President Vladimir Putin who is in Kuala Lumpur to attend the first Russia-ASEAN summit addressed the EAS briefly before removing Russia from the proceedings. There is some political support to the idea of making Russia a part of the EAS. But there are reservations too.

The most notable absentee at the

Amid tension, Asia sings unity anthem

Sixteen Nations Accept India's Demand For Annual Meeting

Kuala Lumpur: Leaders of 16 countries from India to New Zealand inaugurated a new forum on Wednesday in ambitious efforts to chart a pan-Asian community—a distant goal given rivalries festering among powers such as China and Japan.

The first East Asia Summit was the culmination of three days of meetings among the region's leaders here, hosted by the 10-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). "It was very historic," Philippine President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo told reporters after the 3 1/2-hour summit, noting that the group represents half the world's population and a third of its trade and income.

"The combined political will can do much to address issues that are of great interest to the region," she said.

The 10 ASEAN leaders joined with counterparts from Japan, China, India, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand. Russia attended as an observer and is pushing to be a full member, but there was no consensus yet on its admission. The leaders accepted a proposal by India and some other countries to meet every year instead of every two years as originally envisaged.

India also is pushing for strong European-style integration aiming for a region-wide free trade area. However, no concrete action was taken towards that end. A vague

statement at the end of the summit, said that it "could play a significant role in community-building in the region." "The East Asia Summit has just begun," Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi told other leaders. "It should evolve into an opportunity for tackling concrete issues, not for just talk," he was quoted as saying by a Japanese diplomat. The Malaysian host, Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, has stressed that, in any case, the group's efforts won't conflict with World Trade Organisation talks on a global free trade accord, currently under way in Hong Kong.

This week's conference in Kuala Lumpur was soured by a feud between heavyweights China and Japan over Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi's visits in recent years to Tokyo's Yasukuni Shrine, which honours war criminals along with the nation's 2.5 million war dead.

Ralph A Cossa, head of Pacific Forum CSIS in Hawaii, said it was challenging enough to tighten cooperation among the 10 countries of ASEAN—which range from impoverished and communist Laos to the oil-rich sultanate of Brunei. The East Asia Summit originally was proposed by Malaysia as a grouping of ASEAN plus Japan, China and South Korea, aimed at reducing US influence in the region. Agencies

Wen snubs Koizumi's request for pen



Kuala Lumpur: Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao appeared to make clear his continuing displeasure with Japanese counterpart Junichiro Koizumi when he ignored Koizumi's request to borrow his pen at the Asian summit here.

Wen had already refused to formally meet one-on-one with Koizumi at the summit amid a feud over the Japanese leader's visits to a shrine honouring war dead, including those executed for war crimes committed in China and elsewhere.

As leaders of the newly inaugurated East Asia Summit were signing a declaration on the group's establishment, Koizumi, seated next to Wen, leaned over and asked to borrow his pen. Wen ignored him for several seconds until Malaysian Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, smiling broadly, intervened to repeat the request. AP

15 DEC 2005

THE TIMES OF INDIA

Asian trade pact on the anvil

Straits Times/ANN & PTI

KUALA LUMPUR, Dec. 14. — Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh and leaders from 15 nations representing half of the world's population held the first East Asia Summit (EAS) here today, envisioning a possible pan-Asia free trade agreement.

The EAS seen as a precursor to a pan-Asian community and trading area that will boost interaction and cooperation in areas as diverse as fighting terrorism and bird flu, lowering trade barriers, and energy supplies.

The historic meeting brought together the Asean 10 with North-east Asia economic giants Japan, China and South Korea, fast-rising India, and major trading partners Australia and New Zealand. Russia attended as an observer and sought to become a member. The EAS will meet when Asean leaders gather annually.

At the end of the summit, a Kuala Lumpur declaration was adopted which stated that the EAS had been organised as a forum "for dialogue on broad strategic, political and economic issues of common interest and concern with the aim of promoting peace, stability and economic prosperity in East Asia".

The Prime Minister told the leaders that Asia has now "woken up", urging them to look for deeper economic integration. He also asked the summit for

making the most of such tools as FTAs and economic agreements.

An EAS declaration on avian flu prevention was also adopted by the summit members to step up cooperation for surveillance and capacity-building, research and development, risk-related communication and production and supply of vaccines and anti-viral drugs.

It also agreed to undertake follow-up action through existing Asean mechanisms in consultation with the World Bank, the FAO, the ADB and other world bodies. The East Asia summit was truly a meeting of friends with things in common and a with a vision of the region, the foreign ministry secretary (East), Mr Rajiv Sikri, said. The leaders in their 150 minutes of "cordial and friendly" discussions discussed the whole gambit of regional and financial architecture and felt every country could provide value-addition to realising the concept of East Asian Community. The next EAS will be held in Cebu in the Philippines in December 2006, Mr Sikri said.

Dr Singh said: "The world's eye was upon us and the hopes and aspirations of millions of people were focussed upon this framework to work in the future."

The Prime Minister returned home tonight after his four-day visit to Kuala Lumpur, a report adds from New Delhi.

More reports on page 2

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Asian Leaders Agree to New 16-Nation Association

Group is Seen as Part of Region's Effort to Develop Stronger Voice in World Affairs

By Edward Cody
Washington Post Foreign Service
Wednesday, December 14, 2005; 10:22 AM

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia, Dec. 14 -- Asian leaders agreed Wednesday to create a new, loosely united regional group, including India and Australia, to work on combating Asia's economic, security and political problems.

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The 16-nation association, which will hold annual summit conferences, significantly widened the traditional circle of cooperation among Asian nations represented by the 10-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and a sister group, ASEAN Plus Three, including China, Japan and South Korea.

Its formation, decided at the first East Asian Summit, marked an attempt to respond to a growing conviction among Asian leaders that their region requires a stronger independent voice in world affairs and a new forum without the preponderant role that has been played here by the United States since World War II.

"We have established the East Asia Summit as a forum for dialogue on broad strategic, political and economic issues of common interest and concern with the aim of promoting peace, stability and economic prosperity in East Asia," a communique said.

"This is something that is accepted by us all," added Malaysia's prime minister, Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, who hosted the summit in Kuala Lumpur in tandem with ASEAN's regular annual meetings.

But by accepting Australia, New Zealand and India into the new group, the leaders opened a number of unanswered questions about what goals it would seek, how unified it would try to become and how it would relate to the longstanding ASEAN and ASEAN Plus Three groupings. A team of senior Asian officials was assigned to weigh these issues and bring proposals to the next East Asia Summit, scheduled a year from now in the Philippines, Badawi said.

One question they will have to address is Russia's desire to join, raised by President Vladimir Putin in an appearance as an observer here and in an address to the gathered Asian leaders. The United States, which participates in other Asian-Pacific group, was not invited to the inaugural summit conference and did not participate even as an observer.

U.S. diplomats earlier had expressed concern about being left out, pointing out longstanding U.S. interests in the region and the U.S. military's dominant role in Asian security. But as the group was broadened to include Australia, India and New Zealand, it became clear there was plenty of weight to balance Chinese influence and, particularly through Australia, a ready channel for U.S. concerns.

Badawi, in a chairman's statement, said ASEAN's 10 members should remain "the driving force" behind attempts to tighten regional integration despite the welcome accorded to India, Australia and New Zealand. "ASEAN is the heart," he added at a news conference. "ASEAN will be playing the role of driver."

He suggested that, in any case, Australia, New Zealand and India could not be integrated to the same degree as other East Asian nations because of their ethnic, historical and strategic differences. At the same time, he said, they have interests that coincide with those of East Asian nations and thus it makes sense for them to join in discussions about the region's future.

Underlying the ambiguity about the new group's role and degrees of membership was concern over evolving power relationships as China becomes stronger and increasingly willing -- even eager -- to exercise regional leadership and Japan moves strategically closer to the United States.

China and Japan also have been divided by increasingly tense differences over Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi's regular visits to a shrine honoring Japan's war dead and rival claims to oil deposits and several small islands in the East Asian Sea. Those differences were on vivid display in Kuala Lumpur, where Premier Wen Jiabao refused to sit down with Koizumi for a regular China-Japan-South Korea meeting.

Seeking to soften the atmosphere, Koizumi leaned over during a signing ceremony Wednesday to ask Wen to loan him a pen. When the Chinese premier smiled and handed it over, assembled diplomats applauded.

Aside from the politesse, however, Japan joined Indonesia and Singapore in leading the fight to include India, Australia and New Zealand in the new grouping, diplomats said.

As originally conceived by Malaysia and pushed by China, the new summit group was to include only the 10 ASEAN countries along with China, Japan and South Korea. That would have made it a vessel for Chinese diplomatic leadership in a forum distinct from other groups, such as the ASEAN Regional Forum or the Asian Pacific Economic Cooperation forum, that also include the United States.

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THE BIGGER PICTURE: *An East Asian community on the lines of the EU is a chimera*

Locating India

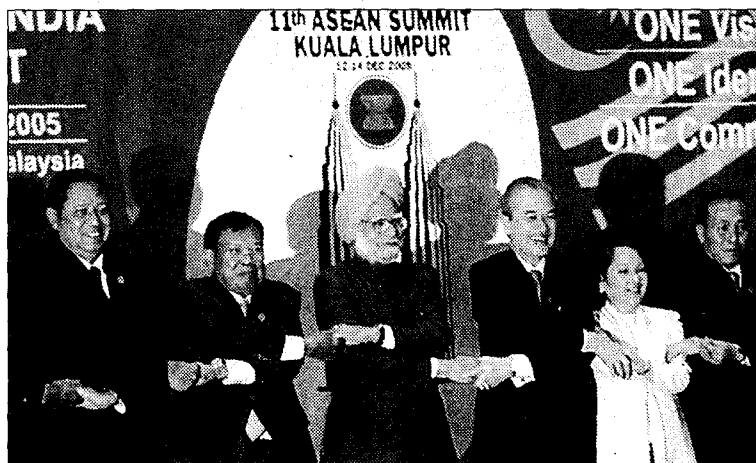
BY MANOJ JOSHI

TRADITIONALLY, THE American academic view of Asia stopped at South-east Asia. Since West Asia was the other area of focus, India and the rest of South Asia occupied a sort of a black hole. The rise of China, and some hard thinking in some Asean capitals, has rescued India from that limbo. Manmohan Singh's presence at the East Asia Summit (EAS) in Kuala Lumpur was expression of that change. Indeed, what was once a crack through which India fell, now provides South Asia a swing position from where it can comfortably play the great game, be it in west, east or central Asia.

While the future of West Asia is being sought to be settled by raw American and Israeli military power, a more subtle process seems to be at work in East Asia. This was manifested at the EAS where ten Asean nations seek to work out the future of Asia with China, South Korea, Japan, India, Australia and New Zealand. Through the Cold War, the Asean was seen as part of the Western alliance, evidenced by its role in checking Vietnam and Cambodia. Subsequently too, the Asean, through institutions like the Asean Regional Forum (ARF), served as a platform to explicate US policies in Asia. What we are witnessing now is a shift, motivated as much by the Asean's need to be more 'non-aligned' as to the rise of China, aided greatly by the US mis-steps in West Asia.

The original idea for the summit came from former Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohammed in the early Nineties. His vision, strongly imbued with anti-colonialism, sought to exclude the US and what he saw as its surrogates, Australia and New Zealand, from Asian deliberations. The US, in turn, pushed for the creation of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (Apec) grouping as its major platform in the region. India did not figure in this list, but more because of the black hole effect. In Mahathir's scheme of things, the dominant role was to be played by Japan. His vision materialised in the form of an Asean+3 summit in 1989, the 'plus three' being China, Japan and South Korea.

An East Asian community to check the US is as much of a



chimera as the non-aligned movement was, or for that matter, the Moscow-Beijing axis in the Fifties and Sixties. The 21st century seems to be different, as indicated by the huge trade between China, the putative leader of this new bloc, and the US. Globalisation has ensured that in today's world, difficult political relationships neither help nor hinder commerce. So while the emergence of an East Asian Free Trade Area need not be too far-fetched a development, an East Asian community on the lines of the EU lies in a somewhat more remote future.

For one thing, the countries meeting in Kuala Lumpur represent several political and cultural streams. They represent a bewildering diversity, with India alone being host to a dozen well-developed languages with their own script and ethnicities. Of the 16 members of EAS, four — Japan, Thailand, the Philippines, Australia and South Korea — are military allies of the US.

The US may not be a formal invitee to the summit, but its presence is certainly registered, and not just through its surrogate, Australia, or military ally, Japan. The US is there by virtue of its long history in Asia, as well as its economic and military strength and location. Physically distant from East or West Asia, the US remains the ally of choice to balance a regional hegemon. Notwithstanding the Vietnam war and Iraq, many Asian countries see America as a good bet for the simple reason that as of today, it has the real power to in-

fluence events. Another reason why the EAS idea is likely to remain that of a free trade area, rather than a political community, is that only eight of its 16 constituent nations are democracies. Others are dictatorships, either of the military, or of the proletariat, and the others lie in between.

India, with its billion-strong population and a strong economic presence, makes for a significant entity, capable of exerting a formidable gravitational pull of its own. China comes in with little but a hugely growing economy on the credit side of the ledger. It has unresolved disputes — the Spratly Islands with several Asean countries and the border with India. Its relations with Japan, the world's second-largest economy, are in awful shape. Indeed, with Tokyo moving to amend its pacifist constitution and deepen its military relations with the US, the future of the relations between the two Asian giants doesn't look all that good. But neither does it bode well for a putative East Asian community where these two countries are supposed to play a lead role.

Since the early Nineties, India has articulated a 'look East' policy and there is an underlying shift powering this policy. As of 2004, nearly 20 per cent of Indian merchandise trade is with the Asean +3, as compared to 19 per cent with the EU and 12.9 with the US. But direction of trade statistics can tell you little about the nature of political relations. Notwithstanding pious declarations, Beijing has prob-

lems with the US, Japan as well as India. Public declarations notwithstanding, Beijing does not miss any opportunity to politically weaken India's position vis-à-vis its neighbours. It works along the realpolitik principle of using them to check India's pre-eminence in the South Asian region. This is not very different from the way the US uses China's neighbours — India, Japan, countries of the Asean — to check China's efforts to establish its pre-eminence in the Asian region. In the process, the US is willing to make greater overtures to India — such as coordinating its Nepal, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka policy with India, and, in the words of its own officials, taking a number of other measures to give India a leg-up to become a world power.

Many people tend to see this as a Manichean contest between India and China. Some insist that China is a sinister force seeking to use its growing economic might to architect new regional political and security structures. Others would argue that it is simply a natural outgrowth of China's economic dynamism and an effort to secure cheaper access to South-east Asian resources and markets. China can be seen both as a threat and an opportunity. The moves to an EAS, or a wider Asian community, can also be used as a means of knitting it in a web of relationships that moderate its behaviour.

A lot has been said about the shadow boxing that preceded the summit and the power games being played out in the EAS. But Manmohan Singh's remarks on the need to promote economic linkages with the region bring out the limited Indian agenda. New Delhi sees its main challenge as one of fostering commercial links and free trade agreements with the region and not that of a rival political grouping of the EU and the US. On the other hand, as long as the original Asean + 3 idea was there, China probably saw the EAS as a means of providing a political and security framework to rival that of the US. But with India and Australia in the picture, the chances are that the Chinese ardour for the EAS will cool rapidly. In all likelihood, the meeting will become another body like the APEC or the ARF where leaders meet, declarations are made, but little is done.

PM LEAVES FOR EAST ASIA SUMMIT TOMORROW

India inclusion stirs China

SNS & Agencies

NEW DELHI/KUALA LUMPUR, Dec. 9. — China relishes its smooth ties with South-east Asia, nurtured as they are by rocketing trade. But that relationship — and Asean — is being stirred by the growing regional diplomacy of China's economic rival, India, and US allies, Australia and New Zealand.

China will be forced to share the stage with all three at next week's inaugural East Asia Summit in Kuala Lumpur, potentially diluting its burgeoning influence on the region and highlighting South-east Asian concerns about Beijing's role. "Their presence could be a hindrance to China's attempts to expand its influence," said Mr Purnendra Jain of the Center for Asian Studies at the University of Adelaide in Australia. "China is not

India-Asean FTA by 2007: Nath

KUALA LUMPUR, Dec. 9. — India and the 10-member Asean are expected to finalise a long-awaited Free Trade Agreement (FTA) by January 2007 as negotiations between the two sides are about to be completed. "We have passed many, many milestones," commerce minister Mr Kamal Nath said here today, adding that with an FTA in place, trade between India and Asean could go up by 30 per cent annually. Nath is in Kuala Lumpur to attend an Asean-India ministerial-level meeting. — AP

Another report on page 9

very keen to have India in," he pointed out.

With the Prime Minister, Dr Manmohan Singh, leaving for Malaysia on Sunday, India's engagement in Asia will go up a notch. Dr Singh will be attending two back-to-back events — fourth India-Asean summit and the first-ever East Asia summit. The East Asia summit will be attended by the 10 Asean members, as well as China, Japan, South Korea, India, Australia and New Zealand.

Recently, there were reports that China and Malaysia were reluctant to base a proposed East Asian

Community on a more expanded Asean plus six. Instead, they preferred to have the Asean plus three nations as the driving force.

The secretary (east), ministry of external affairs, Mr Rajiv Sikri, refused to hazard a guess as to what shape the EAC could take, saying that it was still being evolved.

However, he asserted that the East Asia summit would not "supplant" the Asean plus three mechanism and dismissed views that India was interested in encouraging any rivalry with China.

Democracy demand, page 2

10 DEC 2005

THE STATESMAN

Towards an assertive Asia

The future of East Asia, or for that matter, Asia, would be in the hands of leaders from 10+3+1+2 ~ Asean, China-Japan-South Korea, India, as well as Australia and New Zealand ~ when they meet in Kuala Lumpur on 14 December.

Although the inaugural meeting would be replete with symbolism and fanfare, it is hard to foresee what the actual ramifications might be. Obviously with Malaysia as host of the East Asian Summit, Asean (Association of South-East Asian Nations) is moving forward to strengthen its identity, despite uncertainties and divergences among member-countries on the course of the EAS.

For the time being, priority is now being placed on the ongoing Asean+3 process. Some Asean members have expressed concern that without further consolidation of their 10-year-old cooperation, the newly emerged EAS may be overwhelmed by Asean+3. To allay this fear, Asean and China, Japan and South Korea will sign a separate declaration among themselves stressing the imperatives of their cooperation and community building.

The staunch desire to construct the future rule-based community within East Asia among Asean+3 has caused uneasiness with India, Australia and New Zealand. While they are appreciative of being part of the EAS, they have not yet come to terms as to why they are not part of the emerging East Asian community. When the concept was introduced in the early 1990s, it was quickly turned down because it was viewed as an anti-American grouping during the first year of President Bill Clinton's administration.

The international community will soon find out if the future of East Asia will stretch from Kashmir in India to Southland in New Zealand ~ or simply be limited to Asean+3.

After almost two years of discussion, EAS founding members have not yet agreed if their summit will serve as a springboard for the formation of an East Asian Community (EAC). As the summit approaches, they have not yet agreed on the nitty-gritties of the EAS modality.

When an East Asian Community was proposed years ago by South Korea and later Japan, it envisaged a much bigger community-building process that would link the region with the broader Asia-Pacific: The participation of Australia and New Zealand, as well as India, would complement this idea.

But the idea of East Asian cooperation that Asean worked on was based on Asean+3 and its enlargement. In the beginning, hopes were high that Asean would be more accommodating in allowing non-Asean EAS founders to do more and in the process gradually transform EAS into a regionwide forum

The international community will find out if the future of East Asia will stretch from Kashmir in India to Southland in New Zealand ~ or simply be limited to Asean+3, writes
KAVI CHONGKITTAVORN



Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao (centre top), Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (left top) and Laotian Prime Minister Bounnhang Vorachith (right top), witness the signing of a trade pact by the commerce ministers of their countries ~ all Asean members ~ at Vientiane, Laos, on Tuesday. — PTI

for community-building. But that has turned out to have been wishful thinking. At the Kuala Lumpur summit, Asean+3 leaders will again reiterate that the much-heralded EAS should be just a strategic dialogue forum for leaders to discuss important issues of common interest.

It will be a forum with a loose structure and no fixed agenda. In that sense, EAS will have nothing to do directly with community-building in East Asia. Obviously, Asean views community-building in East Asia as an Asean+3 process; with the Asean Community and Asean's bilateral dialogue partners (China, Japan and South Korea) as well as bilateral cooperation among the three, as the building blocks. They will not speak of establishing a secretariat, as Malaysia has suggested in the beginning.

Asean will lead and chair all future meetings,

very much to the chagrin of Japan, which prefers other non-Asean countries to co-chair meetings.

In a nutshell, Asean will be calling the shots, as it always has done and as in the Asean Regional Forum. Asean leaders see EAS as an Asian-type G-8 meeting which will take up specific themes or issues, including invitations of specific guests. For example, in the past year, China and India were invited to join in G-8 discussions.

The Declaration on the Asean Plus Three Summit that will be signed by their leaders will ensure that the process that began in 1992 continues.

Vietnam, Laos, Myanmar and Cambodia have been demanding that Asean+3 be the main driving force and that it should not be diluted in any way by the new forum. A series of summit meetings that would also include Russia will take place with the

announcement of the establishment of an "eminent persons group" to prepare the drafting of an Asean Charter. The EPG group will study future scenarios for Asean beyond the current action plan for 2020. Whatever the group agrees to will be reflected in the Charter. Prominent Asean personalities such as former Filipino President Fidel Ramos, former Malaysian deputy prime minister Musa Hitam, former Singaporean foreign minister S Jayakumar, former Indonesian foreign minister Ali Alatas and former Thai foreign minister Kasem Samosornkasemri have agreed to join the group.

They expect to finish the draft Charter within a year. To help them, the Jakarta-based Asean Secretariat has a finished draft which encompasses important elements found in all Asean documents and action plans.

In recent years, Asean states have realised that they have to work closer together to tackle common problems, especially serious cross-border issues such as terrorism, haze and pollutions, people-trafficking and drug-smuggling, and contagious diseases such as bird flu and SARS.

The law-binding Charter will facilitate cooperation on such issues. For instance, if need be, in the case of anti-terrorism cooperation, there could be a speedy extradition of persons involved in terrorist acts. Through increased cooperation, some of the key Asean members, such as Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Singapore, hope that member-countries will talk less about the non-interference principle and opt for practical approaches.

The discreet but sustained pressure from the Asean MPs' Caucus on Myanmar was cited as a good example. As host of the EAS, Malaysia wants to leave a legacy that it has made Asean more engaged with the rest of the world and that EAS should be a non-exclusive entity.

Not long ago, Malaysian Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said that he wished to see Asean become more open and down to earth. He is now working to make sure that this happens.

At the summit, the Malaysian leader will head a scheduled 15-minute meeting between representatives from Asean civil-society organisations and his Asean colleagues. It will be the first such major encounter, underscoring the host's desire to make Asean less elitist.

There are at least 50 organisations registered as Asean nongovernmental organisations. But only a few, such as Asean-ISIS and the Asean University Network, are recognised and enjoy regular contacts with Asean senior officials.

(The author is Assistant Group Editor, Nation Multimedia Group Plc, specialising in regional issues.)

The Nation/ANN

FOURTH DEATH IN INDONESIA ■ CHINA REPORTS OUTBR

Bird flu alarm in Asia

Asia News Network & AP

JAKARTA, Oct. 25. — Indonesian authorities today confirmed the country's fourth human death from bird flu, while China reported an outbreak of the virus among geese in eastern Anhui province — its second outbreak in a week.

■ Indonesia

The latest Indonesian victim, a 23-year-old man from Bogor, West Java, was admitted to hospital in late September and died two days later, said Mr Hariadi Wibisono, a health ministry official. A Hong Kong lab confirmed the test results yesterday, he and a WHO official said today.

The H5N1 strain of bird flu has swept through poultry populations in many parts of Asia since 2003, jumping to humans and killing more than 60 people. Most human cases have been linked to contact with sick birds.

The UN's Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) would launch a "military-like" campaign, including house-to-house searches for infected birds, to tackle bird flu in Indonesia.

■ China

Bird flu sickened 2,100 geese in eastern China and killed about a quarter of them, a UN official said today. The agriculture ministry confirmed yesterday that the birds died of the H5N1 virus in Liangying, a village in Anhui province.

Meanwhile, experts from agriculture ministry have been sent to help disease control in the village. So far, the affected area has been sterilised. No human infections or no new poultry bird flu deaths



WINGS OF TERROR: Indonesian bird-sellers play with their pigeons while waiting for customers in Jakarta on Tuesday. — AFP

Fear flies into Germany

BERLIN, Oct. 25. — Dead wild geese in western Germany showed positive results for a form of bird flu during preliminary tests, a health official said today. He, however, added that the geese died from poisoning. Further tests would be needed to confirm the virus and to tell whether it was the deadly H5N1 strain of bird flu, said Mr Stefan Brent, president of the bureau carrying out the testing at a press conference in Koblenz in the state of Rheinland-Pfalz. Mr Brent said that some 5 percent of wild birds could be expected to carry some form of bird flu, and called the results of the tests "no sensational find". — AP

were reported in the province.

The provincial animal disease control centre has taken a series of measures to demand mandatory immunity in all poultry farms. Major Chinese cities are straining every nerve against a possible bird flu pandemic outbreak. All epidemic monitoring networks and pre-schemes for emergency have been activated.

Today, Beijing launched a thorough surveillance on poultry and bird markets.

■ Vietnam

Authorities in Vietnam, the country hardest hit by bird flu with more than 40 human deaths, is considering banning live poultry in all urban areas along with the sale of raw blood pudding — a local dish — made from ducks or geese.

Meanwhile, another six million doses of vaccine to inoculate domestic birds against bird flu have arrived from China easing fears that there would be a shortage for the programme now underway.

They would be followed by six million doses each day until they totalled 260 million, said National Veterinary Company director Dr Pham Quang Thai.

■ Thailand

Avian influenza has spread to more than half of Thailand, with 39 provinces reporting confirmed or suspected cases of fresh bird-flu infections.

Last week, the authorities had just 21 provinces under close watch for bird flu, suggesting the virus is spreading rapidly.

Meanwhile, five provinces have been put on a list of provinces with severe bird-flu problems. Officials were busy culling fowl suspected of contracting bird flu. At the same time, officials complained they were facing resistance from some villagers who had tried to prevent them from taking their birds.

Asia 19/10 Koizumi's shrine visit evokes anger, Japan to smoothen ties

Tokyo: Some 200 Japanese lawmakers paid a mass visit to a Tokyo war shrine on Tuesday, with Asian nations still fuming over Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi's trip there the previous day.

Japan's neighbours including China and South Korea protested vociferously at the prime minister's visit to the Yasukuni shrine in central Tokyo on Monday, the fifth time he had done so since taking office in 2001. Koizumi's political opponents lambasted the Prime Minister for his visit and even a cabinet minister described the visit as "extremely regrettable".

Koizumi says neighbouring countries should not interfere in matters of personal faith, a view echoed by lawmakers from his ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) who were among



PRAYING FOR THE DEAD: Japanese Shinto priests with paper umbrellas during an autumn festival at the Yasukuni Shrine

the cross-party group that visited the shrine. Yasukuni, built in June 1869 as a holy site Shinto, honours 2.5 million

Japanese war dead including some Class A war criminals and is seen by China and South Korea as a symbol of past militarism.

While Koizumi prayed in front of the shrine as a general worshipper, in an effort to portray the visit as a personal pilgrimage, the lawmakers carried out their traditional worship at the main hall.

Meanwhile, Japan's foreign minister pledged on Tuesday to smooth ties with China and South Korea. The shrine visit chills the air at a time when Japan is seeking co-operation

from China and South Korea in resolving the standoff over North Korea's nuclear weapons. Agencies

Nuclear pact boosts China's clout in the region

Beijing: China's success in orchestrating a landmark six-nation accord on ending North Korea's nuclear programme has clinched its role as a major peacemaker in the region—regardless of the challenges ahead, analysts say.

Beijing appeared jubilant over having bridged the seemingly irreconcilable differences between its longtime ally Pyongyang and Washington—as well as its neighbours South Korea, Japan and Russia.

"China has worked to construct a lasting peace in Asia to the benefit of the entire world," crowed a commentary in the communist party's newspaper, People's Daily. "There is no turning back," it said.

Just keeping the six nations talking is an achievement, said Yan Xuetong, director of the Institute of International Studies at Beijing's Tsinghua University. "So long as these talks can continue, we have the hope to

thanked the Chinese hosts for brokering the agreement. Beijing's success in nudging the governments towards a settlement was a test case for its diplomatic clout, said Richard Baum, a political scientist at the University of California, Los Angeles.

That clearly is growing.

A US official, speaking on condition of anonymity in order to talk freely, said that when the talks bogged down, the Chinese threatened to disclose that the US side was "isolated" on the wording of the document and refusing to back down.

Sensing that North Korea might not sign on otherwise, the US negotiators lobbied Washington to accept the deal, he said.

The potential impact of the agreement stretches well beyond nuclear disarmament to include pledges by rivals North and South Korea to improve ties, and by both Japan and the US to move towards normalising ties

with Pyongyang.

"Beijing is just testing its wings as a global player. This agreement is a major sign of China having achieved that stature," Barun said. China is striving to project the image of a benign power in Asia, where it appears to be cultivating a closer relationship with the United States.

During the talks, the US and Chinese negotiators played a successful "Peking Opera" against the North, he says: Washington as the "red faced" mask, or bad cop, to Beijing's "white faced" mask, or good cop.

"From past experience, we don't expect it will be very smooth in implementing the agreement in the future," said Zhu Feng, a professor at Peking University's School of International Relations. "The agreement shows that China has an irreplaceable diplomatic role in the Northeast Asian region," he added. ^{AP}



The importance of being China and India

The two neighbours are the focus of a lot of attention in the U.S. and closer home in the East Asian region.

P. S. Suryanarayana

19-11

1984

THE "IMPORTANCE of being China on the global stage," as some Sinologists felicitously portray now, is a diplomatic reality that Mao Zedong was fully aware of as far back as the early 1970s. The United States had then wooed China, as a tactical ally rather than a strategic partner, in an "entente" against the Soviet Union.

Since then, China has dramatically raised its profile as a global player, despite the international outcry, orchestrated by the U.S. itself, over the Chinese leaders' action against the "pro-democracy activists" who massed themselves at the Tiananmen Square in Beijing in 1989.

Not surprisingly, the "rise of China" is a phenomenon that each of the major powers has been either welcoming or coming to terms with, depending on its "comfort level" in dealing with Beijing at any given time.

The relevant factors at work, both before and after 1989, are: China's rapid economic progress under "socialism with Chinese characteristics," growing military prowess and skilful diplomacy, which first came into reckoning when Beijing became a veto-emPOWERED permanent member of the United Nations Security Council by seizing the moment of Washington's need for an anti-Soviet ally in the socialist bloc in the early 1970s.

To date, there is no dimming of the international community's focus on "the rise of China." U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said in Beijing over a month ago that "our goal is to see the rise of a China that is a positive force in international politics." However, Ms. Rice did cast doubts over how far China's rise was "positive," from a U.S. standpoint, as of now.

Moreover, she portrayed the U.S. as an enduring "force for stability and peace in this [East Asian] region" and questioned the legitimacy of China's military profile. She voiced "concerns" over Beijing's "significant military build-up" which, in the U.S. unilateralist view, was not warranted by objective factors.

On a different but related plane, several East Asian leaders have in recent months begun to speak positively about the "rise of India" as a parallel, not neutralising, reality in global politics. Some tend to see "the rise of [both] China and India" as a robust new development.

As recently as on August 9, Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong exhorted his compatriots to take advantage of the economic opportunities in a growing China and also an emerging India.

Mr. Lee is among those leaders who have generally appreciated the remark that Prime Minister Manmohan Singh made several

months ago about the world being large enough to accommodate the rise of both India and China as two aspiring global players.

However, some China experts as also "China-sceptics" among the region's diplomats and analysts have begun to look at an emerging "scenario." The issues in focus are the latest "strategic entente" between India and the U.S., seen to be a new geopolitical strand, and its possible consequences for the China-India equation, which was generally reckoned to have hit an upward curve not long ago.

It is now reckoned in some quarters of East Asia that the China-India equation may come under the litmus test of how far Beijing will be willing and able to back India for a permanent seat in the U.N. Security Council.

For now, the perception among observers is that Beijing sees India's "band-wagon" ride with Japan as a negative factor. The Chinese Foreign Ministry has indicated that China will feel compelled to "vote against," if the Group of Four - Japan, India, Brazil, and Germany - presses for a "forcible voting" on its resolution, designed to seek a permanent seat for each.

In a larger perspective, matters of prime strategic interest to China are the new India-U.S. "Framework Defence Agreement" and the signs that the U.S. is acknowledging

India's *de facto* status as a nuclear-weapons possessing state on the basis of a civilian nuclear energy deal.

Relevant to the China-India equation is the view of John Mearsheimer, an American "offensive realist," that India, now "a wild card" for the strategic purposes of the U.S. might yet figure in its calculus for the containment of Beijing.

The reasoning is that the U.S. could see to co-opt New Delhi for a "division" of security-related functions in the Indian Ocean region, with an eye on the growing China.

Significantly, Sheng Lijun, Singapore-based Chinese specialist on international affairs, emphasises that New Delhi, "which" near the world hub, the Indian Ocean, "will be eyed by the U.S. in more ways than one" as a potential ally or a challenger.

New Delhi "can [perhaps] focus on its naval expansion," and India's nuclear weapons "almost relieve" it of its perceived concerns about "a land threat from the north [China]." In a conversation with *The Hindu*, Mr. Sheng makes out a case against this scenario, that "it is in India's interest to have a rising China," which would "serve as a cover for India to catch up."

However, "if China is down, then [a rising India will be taken by the U.S. as a challenge]." So China and India should both rise he says.

THE HINDU

Asia, Africa ink strategic partnership

Move Aimed At Ensuring Peace, Stability In The Continents

Bandung (Indonesia): Asian and African leaders on Sunday signed New Asian-African Strategic Partnership (NAASP) to ensure peace, stability and security in the two continents by boosting trade and stepping up cooperation in war against terrorism.

Through the strategic partnership "we will pool together the vast resources and the tremendous creative energies of Asia and Africa to solve some of the most persistent problems of development," Yudhoyono told the signing ceremony. In the declaration, the leaders said "We are determined to prevent conflict and resolve disputes by peaceful means and endeavour to explore innovative mechanisms for confidence building and dispute resolution as well as for post-conflict peace building."

"The strategic partnership provides a momentum in



PM Manmohan Singh addresses the Bandung meet

PM speech honour for India

Bandung: In an honour for India, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on Sunday represented Asia at a ceremony to sign the NAASP here. Singh was chosen to speak on behalf of Asia at the ceremony attended by leaders of 106 countries to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the historic Bandung Conference. The PM also led the Asian leaders in the symbolic walk to the Conference hall where the 1955 meet was held. The organisers had decided that only one leader will speak on behalf of a continent each. While India was asked to represent Asia, Namibia represented Africa at the ceremony. PTI

achieving peace, prosperity and progress" and will be based on nine principles and ideals, the declaration said.

A summit of heads of state and government will be held every four years, a meeting of foreign ministers every two years and sectoral ministerial and other technical meetings when deemed as necessary to develop and institutionalise the process of NAASP. A business summit in conjunction with the summit of the top leaders will also be held every four years.

"We envision an Asian-African region at peace with itself and with the world at large, working together as a concert of nations."

They decided that NAASP shall be conducted through three tiers of interaction — an inter-governmental forum, sub-regional organisations and people-to-people interaction, particularly business and civil society. PTI

New Delhi

ready for any Saarc date

Jakarta: India has said it was ready to accept any suitable date proposed by current chairman, Bangladesh, for the Saarc summit if it was acceptable to the other five member states. This was conveyed by external affairs minister K Natwar Singh to his Bangladeshi counterpart Morshed Khan when he met him here on Saturday on the sidelines of the Asian-African meet.

The issue of rescheduling the Saarc summit was raised by Morshed, whose country is the current chairman of the forum, external affairs ministry spokesman said here on Sunday. PTI

Jakarta meet revives Bandung memories

China Daily/Asia News Network

BEIJING, April 22. — The historic conference of Bandung of 1955, in Indonesia, was remembered today, as Jakarta brought together leaders of the “decolonised peoples of Asia and Africa”.

Back in 1955, “the spirit of Bandung” moved historic leaders like Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai, Indian Prime Minister Jawahral Nehru, Egyptian President Abdul Nasser and King Norodom Sihanouk of Cambodia to gather in Indonesia, at the invitation of President Soekarno. It was then dubbed “the greatest gathering of all times”, as decolonisation gathered steam.

The Bandung jubilee commemoration, at the invitation of Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhyono, was undoubtedly one of the biggest Third World gatherings too, though the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) was indirectly engen-

dered by Bandung.

As President Hu Jintao of China and President Dr APJ Abdul Kamal of India made the historic trip, joined by an impressive group of Third World leaders, both from Asia and africa, Bandung held significance today from an Asian perspective, not only for the similarities with 1955 but also for the differences.

Bandung represents, once again, the rise of “Asianism”, as also seen in 1955, whereby an Asian-African solidarity would propel the two regions and their people to face the decolonising West. Now, there is no doubt Asia is rising again, especially its two most populous nations, China and India, which are trying to reclaim their rightful status in the world.

The recent summit between the Chinese and Indian Premiers, Mr Wen Jiabao and Dr Manmohan Singh, captured world media attention, as many political analysts hailed a “new Asian century”.

23 APR 2005

THE STATESMAN

West wary about Asian giants' new-found love

By Rashmee Roshan Lall / TNN

London: Anxious Western think tanks are furiously plotting just what India and China's pledge to create an "Asian century" will mean for the new world order and the Western axis of power, just 48 hours after Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao called for Beijing and Delhi jointly to build twin "pagodas" of cooperation.

"What does an Asian century really mean? What does Asian mean? Does India share 'Asian' values with China; does it have more shared values with China than with the US and UK," asked Dr Gareth Price, head of Asia programmes at London's Royal Institute of International Affairs (RIIA).

Price's questions came just eight weeks before the first Anglo-American brainstorming conference on these and other issues in London, even as Western diplomats and observers took significant note that Beijing and New Delhi had shaken hands "on an alliance of giants".

Price told TOI on Tuesday the West was obviously concerned about "what China and India's more important global role would really mean for; how would it affect the international architecture?" Price said, "We are obviously some way away from a United States of Chindia" but China's agreement to back India's bid for a seat on the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) posed important geo-political questions, not least whether an empowered India-China axis would "subscribe to the way things have always been done."

Even as Jiabao concluded his four-day tour of South Asia, boffins in wary Western capitals were suggesting that India's decision to cooperate with China in building an "Asian century" might be a blessing because New Delhi shared the Western commitment to democracy and human rights far more than Beijing.

Commentators said India's reaction to Kathmandu's recent royal bloodless coup appeared to underline the extent to which it shared Western rather than Chinese values on democracy and human rights. While



BHAI-BHAI: Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao

watchful Western commentators noted the new mood of Hindi-Chini cooperation at the significance of their signing a slew of accords, including the 11-point road map that sets out to resolve 40-year-old border disputes, many sounded a note of caution about Indo-Chinese bonhomie.

Price said there was "clearly a long way to go" in terms of real cooperation between the Asian giants and even economic cooperation was not really a given. "There is fierce competition between the two countries in the energy sector", he pointed out, adding that even the much-hyped recent big rise in bilateral exports was largely Indian exports of raw material such as pig iron to China.

On Tuesday, in yet another sign the West was sitting up and taking notice of the emerging Asian alliance of giants, The Times, London described the Beijing-Delhi handshake as marking "the end of decades of suspicion, fuelled by China's traditional close ties with Pakistan."

The paper said India and China's "flurry of communiqués but little bombast (spoke)...volumes about how well their strengths and weaknesses complement each other."

13 APR 2005

THE TIMES OF INDIA

Wen sets store by trilateral cooperation

By Amit Baruah

NEW DELHI, APRIL 12. Trilateral cooperation between India, China and Russia will help democratise international relations and safeguard world peace, security and stability, the Chinese Premier, Wen Jiabao, told a group of senior journalists today.

The three countries shared "identical and similar" views on many issues, Mr. Wen said. "Co-ordination and cooperation" among them served the interest of peace and stability in the region and the world at large.

China, India and Russia were all "influential" countries and China was "positive towards trilateral cooperation," Mr. Wen said. This "cooperation and co-ordination" was by no means an alliance and not targeted at any other country.

Mr. Wen, who left for Beijing later in the day, said that his visit to India had produced "rich results" and that reporters could see "all the smiles" on his face. He quoted his Indian

counterpart, Manmohan Singh, as telling him on Monday, that "we two are making history."

A day after the Foreign Secretary, Shyam Saran, said that China would be happy to see India as a permanent member of the United Nations' Security Council, Mr. Wen preferred to stick to the language contained in Monday's joint statement on the issue. "China reiterates that we attach great importance to the ... role of India in international affairs because India is a very populous and important

developing country. We fully understand and support the Indian aspiration to play an even bigger role in international affairs, including in the United Nations," he maintained.

On the boundary dispute, he said that as long as the two sides showed sincerity, patience and perseverance in addressing the problem, the India-China border could be turned into a "boundary of peace and friendship."

On Sikkim, Mr. Wen said that it was "known to all" that this

was no longer a problem in bilateral relations with India.

China wanted to further economic cooperation with India and Beijing would like to focus on cooperation between "industries" in hi-tech, scientific and technological fields.

Mr. Wen said that China welcomed India's "liaison" with regional groupings, including the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation and the "ASEAN plus three" arrangement.

More reports on Page 11

13 APR 2005

THE HINDU

Asia's superpowers

Are Beijing and Tokyo coming into collision?

Spreading anti-Japanese protests in China, apparently to do with Japanese history books that gloss over atrocities committed in Asia during the 1930s and 1940s, are not only about history, they're also about the present. The Japanese not acknowledging the full extent of their atrocities in Asian countries before and during World War II is old hat, they have never been as uninhibited about this as, say, the Germans have in acknowledging Nazi atrocities. A cynic would note that Chinese authorities have not been upfront about acknowledging Maoist atrocities either. China and Japan are the dominant powers of the 21st century Asia that is in the making, and they may be, to some extent, coming into collision. The Chinese military is modernizing at a rapid pace, while neo-nationalists in Japan have called for ditching the country's pacifist Constitution and getting the Japanese military to acquire offensive capabilities as well as a mandate for overseas operations. Both countries claim the Diaoyutai/Senkaku islands, hoping to mine the seabeds around them for minerals and oil. Japan and India want to become permanent members of the UN Security Council, whereas China would like to frustrate both in order to retain its supremacy in Asia.

Beijing sees Tokyo as a cat's paw of Washington — as Paris does London within the EU — while Tokyo would like to involve Washington in Asia as a balance against Beijing. Concomitant with Beijing's nationalist assertions over Taiwan and its ongoing military modernization programme, Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi has also pandered to the nationalist camp in Japan by undertaking annual visits to the controversial Yasukuni shrine, which honours Japan's war dead. Delhi has so far paid more attention to Beijing, which is understandable as it would like to settle the border dispute and neutralize Beijing's support for Islamabad. A border settlement with Beijing, on the basis of both sides keeping whatever they have, would be of immense value in pressing for a broadly similar settlement with Islamabad. But Tokyo must be an integral part of Delhi's "look east" policy as well, more so because the Japanese and Indian economies are complementary rather than competitive and Japan could be a source of much-needed FDI, from which the Chinese have benefited immensely despite all the rivalry with the Japanese.

13 APR 2005

THE STATESMAN

POLICY IN ASIA

Washington Concerned About European Moves

By DMITRY KOSYREV

51-8
9/4
There seems to be a new dimension to American diplomacy: to prevent the EU from trying to pursue a more proactive and independent policy in the Far East which, owing to its rapid economic growth, is becoming one of the most important regions in global politics.

American concerns over EU policy in Asia emerged in Seoul and Beijing, the last two legs of the Asian tour of Condoleezza Rice, the US secretary of state. America's front pages quoted Rice as saying that the Europeans "should do nothing" that would upset the balance of forces in Asia, in particular, by selling sophisticated weapons to China. She said the US would otherwise have to build up its military potential in the Pacific in response.

Trade presence

It is not the first time that Washington has warned Europe about lifting the arms embargo, which was imposed after the events in Tiananmen Square in 1989. However, the Americans have never before been so open in proclaiming the Pacific "their territory". And now we can hear them say, "It is the United States — not Europe — that has defended the Pacific".

The 25 EU member-states have not smoothed over all their differences on the embargo. However, they rather seem to be discussing how to lift the embargo, and not whether it should be lifted at all. The latest example is the Paris news conference after a meeting between the leaders of France, Germany, Russia and Spain. France is known to be the main advocate of lifting the embargo. At the news conference, the Russian president amused the audience by saying that if the embargo remained in force, it would be only better for Russia because it would have fewer competitors. He added, though, that Russia would be ready to cooperate with the

The author is a political commentator associated with Ria Novosti

Europeans in developing new weapons systems for Beijing if the ban were lifted. In other words, Russia will help the EU re-adjust to the market after a 16-year hiatus.

Condoleezza Rice is certainly not seeking to play into Mos-

cow's hands rather than Brussels' and help Russia maintain its leading positions on the Chinese weapons market. Evidently, the Russian-Chinese partnership is already a customary element of Pacific policy, whereas cooperation between China and Europe is something of a novelty.



The Europeans have so far proven to be quite capable of maintaining trade relations with Asia, and China in particular, but, apart from business deals, the European policy in the region is virtually insignificant.

Diplomatic record
In 2003, EU-China trade increased by 44 per cent, and in 2004 was up 36 per cent, which left the EU as China's biggest trade partner, leaving the US in the third place after Japan. China, in turn, became the EU's second biggest trade partner after the US.

Diplomatic record

EU diplomats have not always

been a success in Asia. For example, the EU has been caught up in a long-standing row with China's southern neighbours, the Asean (Association of South-East Asian Nations) group. The Europeans have long criticised the military regime in

Myanmar, an Asean member-state. These debates have only aggravated the situation, as promoting European values in Asia is as dubious a cause as promoting Asian values in Europe. However, there are other more successful examples of the EU's recent policy in Asia and on China's north-western borders in particular. A recent resolution of the European Parliament called for resuming fuel oil deliveries to North Korea's thermo-power stations to be financed by the European Commission. Until 2003, when the US began accusing Pyongyang of secret nuclear developments, fuel oil was delivered from America.

The same resolution envisages that the EU should earmark four million euros for an organisation that played the key role in the stability on the Korean peninsula until the Bush administra-

tion came to power. The organisation is KEDO (the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organisation), which was to build a nuclear power station for Pyongyang. The project was mostly sponsored by Europe, though it is regarded as American. President Bush's accusations with regard to North Korea froze the KEDO project before the foundations could even be laid.

And, lastly, the Europeans have no intention of taking for granted the US arguments that Pyongyang has its own nuclear programme. The European Parliament is calling for hearings to clarify the situation.

Independent policy

The European Parliament's move means it is not happy about the way US diplomats are trying to resolve the Korean "nuclear crisis". Therefore, the Europeans are preparing to pursue their own policy in the region. It is important to remember that the Korean issue was one of the major issues discussed at the secretary of state's meeting with the Chinese leadership in Beijing. Reports clearly indicate that the US would like to resume negotiations with North Korea which Russia, South Korea, Japan and China, but not the Europeans, are also party to. However, the European Parliament's resolution indicates that Europe is tired of waiting and is joining diplomats from Beijing, Moscow and Seoul in calling for Washington to be more realistic in its proposals for North Korea.

Considering the rise of China and the decline in US influence, America has too many problems in the Pacific to remain calm when a new player emerges. However, the US will apparently have to put up with Europe's increasing activity in the Far East as well as in the Middle East. It will be an independent policy that does not always or necessarily coincide with the policies pursued by the US or even Russia or Japan.

India and Pakistan have started a new chapter of friendship but this long path of bonhomie is full of hurdles... The highway shouldn't just be used to ferry people, but also to promote trade. Let Kashmiri products reach Afghanistan, Iran and the markets of Pakistan through this highway. — Dr Manmohan Singh, flagging off the first peace bus.

★
No religion allows violence. It is against all human civilisations. All they wanted to do is to meet their loved ones from whom they have been separated for decades. We express grave sorrow at this very unfortunate incident and offer our sympathies to the injured and their families. — Mr Khurshid Kasuri, Pakistan foreign minister, after the terrorist attack on the Tourism Reception Centre in Srinagar housing passengers scheduled to travel to Muzaffarabad.

★
We are proud of what we have achieved in the last eight years... It's a big choice and there's a lot at stake... The British people are

the boss and they are the ones who will make it. — Mr Tony Blair, after seeking Queen Elizabeth's permission to dissolve parliament.

★
I read so much about the so-called improvements in Bengal's work culture. But when I come across such experience, I get confused as to which is correct — the created perception or the real life experience. — Mr Rahul Kumar, MD, Amul, alleging harassment by officials of the state animal resources development department.

★
The publicity he got was bigger. What he did was very little. — Miss Jayalalitha criticising actor Vivek Oberoi who had thrown himself into relief work in a tsunami-ravaged village in Chennai.

★
We've been in Kolkata for seven months and we've faced six bandhs. This puts off international customers. — Mr Azim Premji,

on RECORD

Wipro chairman.

★
We want and wish it (the UPA government) to last. It will last while continuing to adhere to the CMP. — Mr Sitaram Yechury, CPI-M politburo member.

★
When I took over, the KMC was a bankrupt organisation. We initiated a major revenue collection drive, spent Rs 400 crore on the water supply network, and the focus will now shift to road repairs. — Mr Subrata Mukherjee, mayor of Kolkata.

★
I am ready to sit with the mayor for a debate. Most of the projects being completed now were conceived during the Left Front tenure. The present board is just reaping the benefit of our policies. — Mr Asok Bhat-tacharya, West Bengal's urban development minister.

★
As Speaker of the Lok Sabha

which represents the world's largest democracy, if I am not trusted in any of the countries, then I should not go there. We have to be exempted from security checks as heads of government and heads of state. We must respect each other. It is all the more painful when a Commonwealth country does this. It is an affront to India that some country insists on rigorous checks on its Speaker. — Mr Somnath Chatterjee, Lok Sabha speaker, calling off his visit to Sydney because he does not want to be frisked at the airport.

★
They can go from absolute adoration to criticism very quickly. — Rahul Dravid, vice-captain, Indian cricket team, on Indian fans.

★
I have to score runs, that's the foremost thing. Captaincy is not on my mind. — Sourav Ganguly, Indian cricket captain, after Pakistan won the Bangalore Test.

China is no threat, says Wen

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, APRIL 6. The Chinese Prime Minister, Wen Jiabao, said here today a "strong and more developed" China would never pose threat to any country and declared here that his country would unswervingly pursue its policy of "good-neighbourly relationships."

Addressing the delegates from 26 Asian countries, gathered here to attend the 4th Asia Cooperation Dialogue (ACD) ministerial meeting, Mr. Wen dwelt at length on reasons why the threat perception was "misplaced" and assured his country would always be a "trustworthy and a reliable partner."

Land boundary

The ACD, a pan-Asian grouping, has two dimensions — dialogue and cooperation. While 19 areas have been identified for functional cooperation among member-states, India is the prime mover for the sectors of biotechnology and transportation linkages.

The Union Minister for Science and Technology, Kapil Sibal, proposed that an ACD Consortium on Biotechnology be set up and said India was ready to host its headquarters.

Stating that China has resolved the land boundary with most of its neighbours and reached agreement with others on having a joint development in the South China Sea, Mr. Wen said China would continue to appropriately handle the issues left over by history through consultations on an "equal footing, mutual understanding and ac-

commodation." He said despite having a per capita GDP slightly over \$1,000, China still has a long way to go before it was modernised.

"Even if we become stronger and more developed, we will not stand in the way of others, still less become a threat to others. China will never seek hegemony."

He said China would continue to broaden and deepen its economic cooperation with Asian countries. "Countries, large or small, rich or poor, are all our equal partners, and mutual benefit and we are dedicated to our goals to achieve win-win results."

"It is with sincerity and firmness that China adheres to the path of peaceful development. No matter how international climate might change, the Chinese people will always be a trustworthy and reliable partner for the Asian peoples," Mr. Wen said.

Mr. Wen said Asia needs peace, which was the precondition and guarantee for well-being and prosperity. "Warfare or conflicts not only cause agony and suffering to the people but waste the time and opportunity for national development."

In his inaugural address, the Pakistani Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz said his country was committed to a peaceful settlement of the Kashmir problem with India as per the "wishes and aspirations" of Kashmiris and it was imperative that the dialogue process to resolve the outstanding issues should be "sustained and result-oriented."



STRATEGIC ALLIANCE: The Pakistani President, Pervez Musharraf (right), greets the Chinese Prime Minister, Wen Jiabao, in Islamabad on Wednesday. — Reuters

'Asian cooperation dialogue can help promote economic ties' A9-12

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, APRIL 5. The Pakistan Foreign Minister, Khurshheed Mehmood Kasuri, today called for using Asian Cooperation Dialogue (ACD) as a platform to realise enhanced economic cooperation amongst the Asian states by sharing the fruits of progress and prosperity.

"The emergence of ACD is a region-wide process reflecting our common desire of self-reliance, consolidation and building a partnership from individual strengths of each state," Mr. Kasuri said here while inaugurating a high-level expert seminar on 'Economic Cooperation in Asia.'

The seminar has been organised ahead of the ACD Ministerial Meeting to be held here tomorrow. The seminar was al-

so addressed by the Deputy Prime Minister of Thailand, the Governor of the China Development Bank, the Foreign Ministers of Bangladesh and Singapore and the Governor of the State Bank of Pakistan.

Representatives from 25 countries, including 18 Foreign Ministers, are taking part in the Ministerial meeting. The Union Science and Technology Minister, Kapil Sibal, is representing India. It would be inaugurated by the Pakistan Prime Minister, Shaukat Aziz, and the Chinese Premier, Wen Jiabao, would deliver the keynote address at the conference.

The Foreign Minister said that the ACD was an evolving process that was started in 2002 on the initiative of Thailand towards promoting regional integration through establishing Asia-wide linkages and de-

pendencies and forging strategic partnerships.

The Pakistan Foreign Minister told the seminar that the ultimate barometer of success is to realise the vision of a common greater Asian neighbourhood consisting of peaceful and prosperous societies cooperating with each other in diverse fields for their common good, progress, prosperity and happiness of their peoples and capable of contributing to the civilisation of the 21st century.

He said the realisation of the vision of an Asian community necessitates defining what steps "we must take, both in the short and long-term to develop conducive conditions and essential building blocks" which would act as a factor of stability and promotion of cooperation amongst the Asian countries.

"The Asia Cooperation Dialogue should act as the main facilitator in forging these essentials of cooperation. Among others, some of the steps in these areas could include creating an ACD Agricultural and Agro-based Industries Council, institutionalising meetings of the Finance and Trade Ministers, heads of the central banks, and regular consultations amongst the chambers of commerce and industries and stock exchanges," he maintained.

Mr. Kasuri said Asia's rise and its economic and political strength was being increasingly felt across the globe. The rise of Asian economic might — starting from Japan in the early 1960s to East Asia, China, South Korea in the present — has led to a new balance of global economic power, he observed.

"Some political pundits have termed it as a shift in the centre of gravity of world affairs from the West Atlantic to Asia. This places greater responsibility on us — the Asian leadership," the Minister said.

06 APR 2005

THE HINDU

PROBLEM IN ASIA

Japan Is Proving Difficult To Manage For China

By SP SETH

It would seem that Japan is emerging as Beijing's targeted bad boy. Internet users are posting angry messages on websites designed to let out their hatred against Japan. Some are even predicting war. The Chinese authorities are quick to shut down sites advocating democracy and other activities. But they are looking the other way where Japan-bashing is concerned.

Why is Beijing allowing it? One explanation could be that it is a safety valve to channel popular disaffection into a national cause with the broadest popular appeal. Japan fits the bill. It hasn't apologised adequately for its wartime atrocities. It has sought to whitewash its history books by tinkering with wartime facts to paint Japan in a favourable light.

American decline

Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi of Japan has angered China by his annual visits to the Yasukuni shrine, housing its war dead, including World War II war criminals. Its recent defence policy white paper has infuriated Beijing by labelling China (and North Korea) as security threats. According to press reports, their top leadership (Hu Jintao and Koizumi) are barely on speaking terms. And Japan is proving difficult to manage in terms of China's regional and global ambitions.

China is working to become a superpower. The timing is right because the United States is stuck with Iraq and global terrorism. In other words, the United States is over-reaching itself. According to Qian Qichen, China's former foreign minister and an influential policy formulator, the US overdependence on military force would lead to "absolute insecurity of the American Empire and its demise because of expansion it cannot cope with".

Therefore, China sees excellent opportunities in America's predicament. It has already made quite an impact in South-east

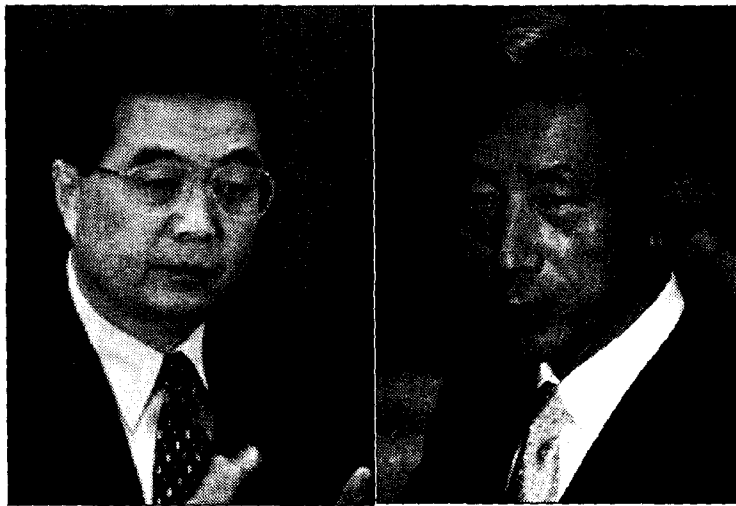
The author is a freelance writer

Asia through a series of diplomatic and trade initiatives, the most important being the free trade agreement with Association of South East Asian Nations.

In the case of South Korea, it has virtually detached Seoul from its US alliance. According to Professors James E Auer and Robyn Lim, "South Korea has

States seem keen to keep China on its side, aware of its own difficult situation. That would explain why Washington is keen to "rein in" Taipei lest it provokes China and creates more difficulties for the United States.

The trick for Beijing, though, is to manage its relationship with the United States without seem-



become a de facto ally of China. Thus its value to the United States as an ally has been undermined, and the congruence of strategic interest that underpinned this alliance during the cold war is rapidly eroding".

Seoul is not comfortable with the US hard line on North Korea. President Roh of South Korea has been urging Washington to be more tolerant of North Korea, even calling its nuclear ambitions an "understandable" attempt at defence. Both North and South Korea are now part of China's regional political and security zone.

Benign message

On its north, Beijing has cleared the decks to further develop its relations with Russia with the signing of a border agreement between the two countries. And it is seeking to improve relations with India.

In other words, China's political and security environment is quite benign. Even the United

States is increasingly challenging its global supremacy. This might make the United States less concerned about China's regional and global ambitions. And could even create a political partnership of sorts between the two countries.

It is worth noting that, for some time now, Beijing has generally avoided branding the United States as a "hegemonic" power. It used to be the hallmark of its frequent pronouncements on the US foreign policy. Even the most recent criticism of the US global over-reach by Qian Qichen, a former foreign minister, has been disclaimed saying that he wasn't really its author.

In other words, Beijing has opted for cooperation rather than confrontation with the United States, regarding it as a strategic necessity. It hopes that it will bear political dividends on Taiwan by diluting US commitment to defend the island.

Beijing doesn't want the world to think that China is an expansionist power in the old

colonial tradition. It is, therefore, keen to send a benign message. According to a senior Chinese diplomat, "There is a fear about the future orientation of Chinese foreign policy. It is not surprising because in world history many big powers rose and caused earthquakes. But...China is going to be different because the world has changed. It's not like in the past when powers had to expand territorially in order to get markets".

Japanese skepticism

This is no longer necessary in a globalised world, she said. In any case, "China is going to primarily engage with its own [internal] problems for a long time to come". In other words it doesn't have a "hegemonic" agenda, and is not competing with the United States for global supremacy.

This broad message, repeated in bilateral and multilateral contacts, has acquired a certain resonance of its own in many Asian countries. A notable exception is Japan, which regards China as a threat. Japan is not buying China's message of "peaceful rise".

According to Professor Robert Sutter at Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service, "Chinese officials and specialists...admit that Japan poses a special problem for China's peaceful and moderate approach to Asia, and that US support for Japan feeds into this problem".

Indeed, Tokyo is no longer a passive element in the US-Japan security alliance. It is participating in the development of the US missile defence system, has committed (non-combatant) troops in Iraq and is generally going in the direction of re-interpreting or modifying its pacifist constitution.

China, therefore, has a problem in Asia with Japan. The mistake, though, is to treat Japan as an American appendage. Beijing hopes to deal with Tokyo as part of their strategic equation with the United States. But Japan will be a difficult customer, with or without its US alliance.

THE STATESMAN

02 FEB 2005

Fr 21/1/05

Aid worth \$2-billion descends on Asia

Delivering relief still nightmare

Bangkok, Jan. 1 (Reuters): A multinational force of aid workers, military aircraft and ships descended on Asia as global tsunami relief pledges topped \$2 billion, but the hundreds of tonnes of aid created a logistical nightmare.

The hardest part still proved to be getting aid from clogged airports out to areas rendered barely accessible by the destruction of roads, phones, boats and harbours — but some aid was finally getting through today, six days on.

With airports under strain, Australian military transporters had to be diverted from the worst-hit area, Indonesia's northern province of Aceh where 80,000 are dead.

Military bases in Singapore, untouched by the tsunami, opened their gates to store emergency supplies in warehouses.

Aid officials, often unaware of what aid was coming until the aircraft doors opened, urged donors to let them know in advance what they were flying in.

Across the Indian Ocean region, they battled to coordinate efforts to help millions left homeless by the massive waves, unleashed by an undersea quake, that killed over 124,000 people.

Indonesia has called an international summit for January 6 to discuss how best to cope with the tsunami relief operation, one of the biggest

humanitarian aid campaigns in history. Supplies that had been stacked up at the airport in Aceh's capital, Banda Aceh, for want of onward transport, were reaching the city itself to which many survivors have fled. Ample supplies of eggs, rice, noodles and biscuits were seen at one camp.

Little, though, was making it by land to people in more remote areas.

Banda Aceh airport can handle large military aircraft due to a long-running secessionist conflict, but with only one runway it was groaning under the weight of round-the-clock operations by the giant Antonov and C-130 transporters.

"The aircraft going in and going out are just taxing the capacity to the very limit," Michael Elmquist, head of the UN disaster relief operation in Indonesia, said.

The UN refugee agency UNHCR said it planned to begin airlifting 400 tonnes of shelter and emergency supplies into Aceh from warehouses in Copenhagen and Dubai starting tomorrow.

It said its airlift would meet the needs of some 100,000 people in the ravaged province.

In Sri Lanka, the worst-hit nation after Indonesia, the US is despatching up to 1,500 Marines and a mini aircraft carrier with some 20 helicopters to assist in relief and reconstruction of the island where more than 28,000 died.

FROM CALM RESORT TO SWIRLING FLOOD



(Clockwise from top left) A combo of pictures from Chedu resort in Phuket, Thailand, shows (1) staff preparing for the day as the first swell edges towards the lawns followed by the second (2) and third (3) swells which engulfed the hotel restaurant and the surrounding gardens. The fourth picture shows the resort submerged in water. (AFP)

US military arrives with help in Aceh

Banda Aceh, Jan. 1 (Reuters): Substantial help finally began reaching refugees in Indonesia's devastated Aceh province today, and the US military arrived in force to speed the flow of critically needed aid.

Supplies had started pouring into the airport at the provincial capital, Banda Aceh, yesterday, but much had failed to get out to the nearly 110,000 made homeless by Sunday's massive earthquake and the powerful tsunami it triggered.

In the heart of Banda Aceh today, bulldozers cleared a path through the destruction left by the tsunami and bodies could be seen sticking out of piles of debris nearly four metres high that eerily line the streets.

Elsewhere birds picked at hundreds of bloated, decaying corpses clogging a canal cutting through the provincial capital and filling the air with a nauseating stench.

Hundreds of survivors gathered at Banda Aceh's airport today, captivated by the hive of activity created by five US Sea Hawk helicopters, Singaporean military Super Puma choppers and Australian and Indonesian Hercules transports.

"We just got here, we're here to help and we're going to keep working until the mission is done... Where they say they need aid we will move it," Captain Larry Burt, commander of US Carrier Air Wing Two, said.

The disaster is now known to have killed more than 80,000 people on northern Sumatra island, all but a handful of them in Aceh. Officials say the final toll may exceed 100,000.

But while aid was finally getting through to some of the needy after days of delay — a refugee camp at a mosque in Banda Aceh had ample supplies of food early today — many were still searching for help.

Faced with the possible spread of disease from polluted water supplies and the hundreds of bodies lying untouched, some survivors — many in face masks — began to flee Banda Aceh.

ed water supplies and the hundreds of bodies lying untouched, some survivors — many in face masks — began to flee Banda Aceh.

THE TELEGRAPH



Two-year-old Angelica Martin, who survived the tsunami, in Phuket. (AFP)