

Putin, Hu hail strategic ties

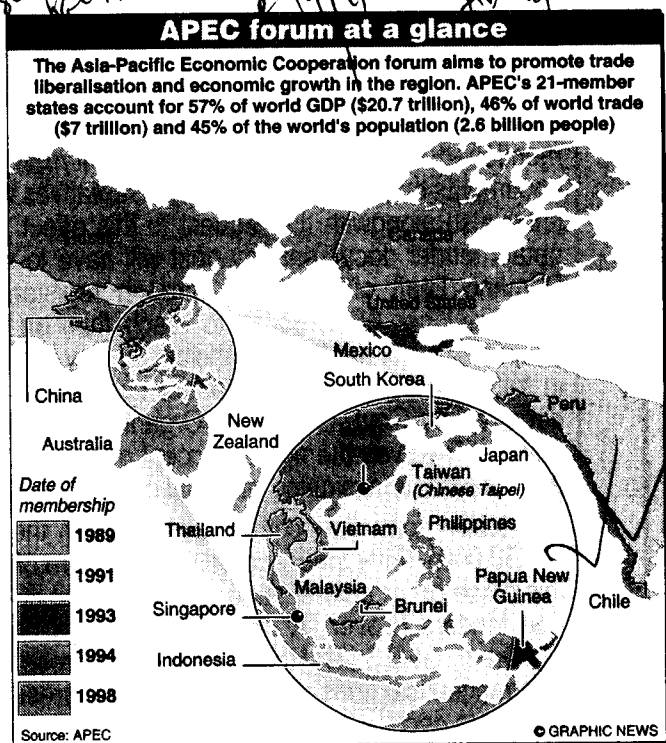
BUSAN (SOUTH KOREA): Russia said on Friday that President Vladimir Putin would visit China twice next year as he and his Chinese counterpart Hu Jintao hailed their countries' burgeoning partnership and said they were determined to expand it.

Speaking in front of reporters as he and Mr. Putin sat down for talks on the sidelines of the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit here, Mr. Hu noted that Sino-Russian relations had seen strong development and "major successes" in the past year alone.

"We held our first joint military exercises and launched a mechanism for consolidation on issues of strategic importance" to the two countries, he said, pointing to other advances in political, trade and economic bonds between Russia and China.

"We view relations with Russia as one of the most important, one of the most strategically significant components of our foreign policy," Mr. Hu said, adding that Beijing looked forward to taking the partnership to a higher level.

Mr. Putin said Russia felt the same way and that next year would be officially denoted "the year of Russia in China" followed by a reciprocal gesture



and accompanying special events in 2007.

Nuclear proposal

The United States urged Iran to reconsider a compromise, floated by Moscow, aimed at defusing the standoff over the Islamic Republic's atomic

programme and easing fears that it seeks nuclear arms.

U.S. President George W. Bush embraced the plan during talks with Mr. Putin here, said White House National Security Adviser Stephen Hadley.

However, Iran has rejected Mr. Putin's offer. — AFP

BUSH PRAISES TAIWAN DEMOCRACY ■ BEIJING BRUSHES ASIDE REMARKS

Tempers frayed ahead of Apec meet

Asia News Network

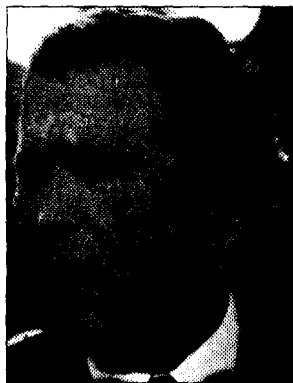
BUSAN/BEIJING/KYOTO, Nov. 16. — US President Mr George W Bush today prodded China to grant more political freedom to its 1.3 billion people and held up archrival Taiwan as a society that successfully moved from repression to democracy as it opened its economy. Bluntly rejecting Mr Bush's comments, Beijing said it would "not pay attention" to the criticism.

Also today, Japan strongly objected to a Chinese official's statement that Japanese Prime Minister Mr Junichiro Koizumi's visits to a war shrine were similar to worshipping Hitler.

Ahead of a weekend visit to Beijing, Mr Bush suggested China should follow Taiwan's path. "Modern Taiwan is free and democratic and prosperous. By embracing freedom at all levels, Taiwan has delivered prosperity to its people and created a free and democratic Chinese society."

The US President delivered that message to China both in a speech and in a joint news conference with Japanese Prime Minister Mr Junichiro Koizumi, an unflinching ally despite Mr Bush's record-low popularity and mounting problems at home.

Mr Bush bluntly urged Beijing: "What I say to the Chinese, as well as to others, is that a free society is



President Bush

'What I say to the Chinese, as well as to others, is that a free society is in your interests'

in your interests. To allow people to worship freely, for example, in your society is part of a stable, mature society. And that leadership should not fear freedoms within their society."

China's foreign minister brushed off Mr Bush's comments about Taiwan and political freedoms. "We have to work hard and not pay attention to those people who talk about this or that, trying to shake our conviction, especially when it comes to our love of the motherland," Mr Li Zhaoxing told reporters on the sidelines of a meeting of Pacific Rim economies in South Korea. Without mentioning Taiwan directly, Mr Li said all people in the greater China region "can work well together to



President Hu

'We have to work hard and not pay attention to those people who talk about this or that'

preserve stability and achieve prosperity."

In separate remarks shown on Hong Kong Cable TV, Mr Li also defended China's human rights record, saying "everything we do is for improving the people's livelihood, that includes guaranteeing the people's material rights, political rights and cultural and education rights and democratic development rights, and so on."

Meanwhile in a snub to China, the Japanese Chief Cabinet Secretary, Mr Shinzo Abe, told reporters that the comparison of Mr Koizumi's visits to the war shrine to "worshipping Hitler", which was made by the Chinese foreign minister, was not appropriate. "I can't help but feel



Prime Minister Koizumi

'Something is wrong in comparing war shrine visits to worshipping Hitler'

that something is wrong with using such a metaphor," he told reporters.

Mr Abe added that Mr Koizumi's visits were aimed at the soldiers killed in the war, not those held responsible for Japan's conquest of East Asia in the 1930s and 1940s. "The PM is praying for those who died for the country and is paying respect to those people... It is of course not aimed towards a particular individual."

Also today, Pacific Rim Cabinet ministers — whose nations conduct nearly half of the world's trade — urged participants in global trade talks to overcome their differences at a key meeting in Hong Kong next month, warning that the credibility of the world's trade



President Roh

Inexperienced in foreign policy, the South Korean leader is likely to face problems

body was at stake.

Mr Bush and Chinese President Mr Hu Jintao arrived in South Korea ahead of a summit of Asia-Pacific leaders who are expected to discuss ways to promote trade, as well as solutions to bird flu and terrorism.

In a joint statement, Apec trade and foreign ministers said a successful World Trade Organisation meeting in Hong Kong was critical to the success of the so-called Doha round of trade talks, which they hoped can be completed by the end of 2006.

The statement acknowledged "considerable divergences" and said "a clear roadmap" must be established if the Doha round is to succeed.

(With AP inputs)

ECONOMIC PACT SIGNED IN VIENTIANE

India leader of Asia-Pacific bloc

Press Trust of India

VIENTIANE (Laos), July 28. — Asia-Pacific nations, including India, came together today to unveil a landmark partnership aimed at developing cleaner energy technologies for reducing global warming.

Described as complementary to the Kyoto protocol, the partnership between India, USA, Japan, Australia, South Korea and China on "Clean Development and Climate", envisages a combined effort towards development, deployment and transfer of cleaner and more efficient technologies, consistent with the principles of the UN Framework Convention of Climate Change.

Minister of state for external affairs Mr Rao Inderjeet Singh announced the adoption of a "Vision Statement" for the partnership, adding that despite progress at many levels, 43 per cent of Indian households still did not have electricity.

"With growing economy, India's energy needs are going to increase in the future. We need to develop in a balanced manner and have taken steps at the national level to achieve

Yashwant concern

NEW DELHI, July 28. — Former external affairs minister Mr Yashwant Sinha today voiced his concern over reports that India was proposing to join a regional pact led by the USA to deal with global warming. Raising the issue during Zero Hour in the Rajya Sabha, Mr Sinha said news reports suggest that a regional pact was being formed by the USA which included countries like India, Australia, South Korea and China. The senior BJP leader wondered whether the pact would violate the commitment made by India and 140 other countries to the Kyoto Protocol on global warming. The USA is not a signatory to the Kyoto Protocol, he pointed out.

energy efficiency," he told reporters at the Asia-Pacific security conference here. Mr Singh was here in place of the external affairs minister, Mr Natwar Singh, to attend the conference. The landmark partnership envisages a collaboration among the six countries to promote and create an enabling environment for the development, diffusion, deployment and transfer of existing and emerging, cost-effective

and cleaner technologies and practices.

The five founding members has made it clear that the partnership would not compete with the Kyoto agreement but would rather endeavour to be complementary to it. "Kyoto protocol could do with a bit of complementarity," Australian foreign minister Mr Alexander Downer told press. "It is not a competitor to the Kyoto protocol and will not try to undermine the protocol," he said, adding: "We are not trying to detract from the Kyoto protocol in anyway. We are complementing it".

Mr Singh said that the "Vision Statement" was referred to in the Delhi declaration, which has made significant departure from the previous declarations by stressing on the importance of sustainable development and the need for considering any climatic changes that might be engendered in the process.

India also welcomes newer technologies like nano-technology, advanced biotechnology, next generation nuclear fission and fusion technology — all of which has been included in the "Vision Statement", the minister said.

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THE STATESMAN

Myanmar to forgo key ASEAN post

VJX HQ-17
VIENTIANE (LAOS): Military-ruled Myanmar on Sunday hinted it would forgo a regional chairmanship to spare neighbours from rebukes by the West over the junta's poor democracy record, as Asia-Pacific nations opened their top annual security conference.

Australia also was set to embrace a regional nonaggression pact, reversing longstanding opposition after Asian neighbours made the accord a condition for attending a summit next December aimed at moving toward a big East Asian trade bloc.

Canberra will sign a declaration of intent to join the pact during the six-day conference in Laos and have its parliament ratify the pact before signing it by December, Laotian Deputy Foreign Minister Bounkeut Sangsomsak said on Sunday.

The 10-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations plus more than a dozen other governments with interests in the region — such as the U.S., Russia, European Union and China — opened talks leading up to the ASEAN Regional Forum on Thursday and Friday.

Forum officials worked on an agreement about sharing intelligence to better combat international terrorism, officials said.

"The recent bombings in London and Egypt are a reminder that this sort of thing can take place at any time and any place," Indonesian Foreign Ministry spokesman Marty Natalegawa said. — AP