

COOPERATION ■ Countries decide to hold defence policy dialogue

India, Japan to boost military ties

AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE

TOKYO, MAY 25

INDIA and Japan today pledged to step up military cooperation, as Tokyo tries to move closer to New Delhi, which is seeking to modernise its armed forces.

Defence Minister Pranab Mukherjee was at the start of a visit to Japan and China, which have seen growing friction with each other and are both seeking to improve ties with India.

Mukherjee and Japanese Defence Agency Director General Fukushima Nukaga signed an agreement to "promote wide-range cooperation in the defence and security field" including technical areas and training.

The two democracies share the goals of promoting "peace and stability in Asia and at the global level" and of countering terrorism and the spread of weapons of mass destruction, a joint statement said.

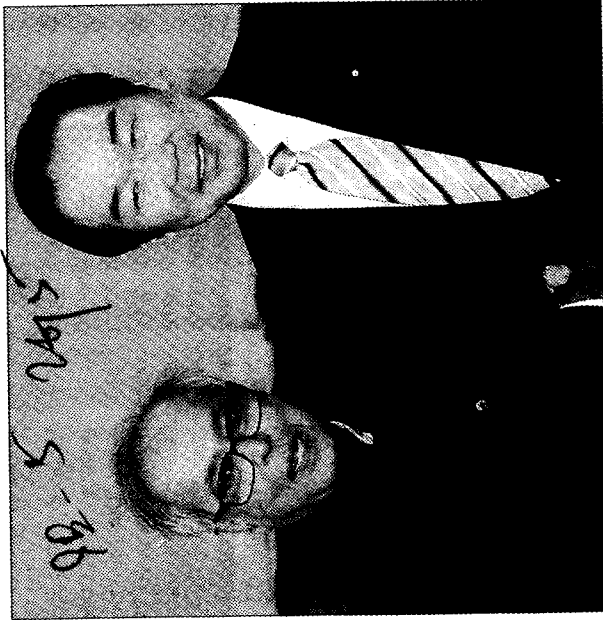
They called for greater military coordination including meetings between defence chiefs at regular intervals and the holding of a "defence policy dialogue" between the two countries.

Japan, which is officially pacifist, strictly bars military exports. But in 2004 it relaxed the ban to allow exports to the US, its main ally, and it has considered limited cooperation with southeast Asia to fight piracy — a major concern to Tokyo which imports nearly all its oil.

Japan has also been seeking to build warmer ties with India to balance tension between Tokyo and Beijing. The country's Chief Cabinet Secretary Shinzo Abe, who will meet Mukherjee tomorrow, said earlier this year that "our relations with India have been relatively weak though it is a country very friendly to Japan."

But India has also been working to repair ties with China. The two countries have never established a formal border after a brief but bitter military conflict in 1962.

Mukherjee is due to arrive in Beijing on Sunday for a five-day visit in which he will meet Defence Minister Cao Gangchuan and Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing.



Defence Minister Pranab Mukherjee with Japan Defence Agency Director General Fukushima Nukaga in Tokyo on Thursday. AP

India, Japan to pursue cooperation in defence

The aim is to promote stability and prosperity in Asia and in the world at large

P. S. Suryanarayana

SINGAPORE: India and Japan on Thursday expressed "determination to pursue cooperation" in the defence and security domain to promote "stability and prosperity in Asia and in the world at large."

Describing themselves as "partners in peace," the two countries identified "mechanisms" for such cooperation.

Defence Minister Pranab Mukherjee and Japanese Minister of State for Defence Fukushima Nukaga, who held talks in Tokyo earlier in the day, issued a joint statement, outlining the political ambience and parameters of such cooperation.

The document is in tune with the decision made by the Prime Ministers of the two countries in April last to "reinforce the strategic focus of the global partnership between India and Japan."

The centrepieces of the cooperative "mechanisms" are the "holding of a defence policy dialogue from time to time" and the "holding of regular comprehensive security dialogue and military-to-military talks."

At the political level, the Defence Ministers will also meet at "regular intervals." The political "foundation" of the bilateral

- The two countries will hold defence policy dialogue periodically

- The Defence Ministers will also meet at regular intervals

- Proliferation of weapons of mass destruction a "common challenge"

partnership, now agreed upon, has been traced to the "commitment" of the two countries to "democratic values, human rights, pluralism, open society and the rule of law."

Significantly, the "proliferation of weapons of mass destruction," an issue Japan cited to impose economic sanctions on India following its nuclear tests in 1998, is now seen by both as their common "challenge" in the "emerging security environment in Asia and at the global level."

Maritime traffic

Some of the shared "objectives" to meet the many challenges across the new security landscape in Asia and beyond have been spelt out.

These include the "countering of terrorism and extremism" as

also the principle of "contributing to the safety and stability of regional maritime traffic," besides the promotion of international cooperation for disaster management.

The key "mechanisms" of cooperation include the "holding of goodwill exercises between the Indian Navy and the Japan Maritime Self-Defence Force."

The idea is to graduate to "future possible exercises in areas of mutual interest," and these will be of a "progressively advanced nature." Regular exchange of visits at the highest echelons of the military services, ship visits, exchange of student officers and mutual invitations to "witness designated military activities" are cited as the other "mechanisms."

Though the navies of India and Japan joined those of the United States and Australia to form a "core group" after the Indian Ocean tsunami of December 2004, there is nothing in the joint statement to indicate the extension of such four-party cooperation to other areas of military interest. The statement makes no reference to the U.S.-led Proliferation Security Initiative, though Japan is an active participant.



ALL SMILES: Defence Minister Pranab Mukherjee and Japanese Minister of State for Defence Fukushima Nukaga exchange documents on the joint statement after talks in Tokyo on Thursday. - PHOTO: AFP

India, Japan agree on annual N-dialogue

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 4

IN TRYING to build a greater understanding on nuclear issues, India and Japan agreed today to start an annual dialogue on nuclear matters under the framework of disarmament and non-proliferation.

From an Indian standpoint, it allows New Delhi to discuss issues that will help iron out differences which could pave the way for gaining greater international cooperation on civilian nuclear energy. Japan being a member of the Nuclear Suppliers Group will play a crucial role when the grouping meets next possibly in March.

The decision was taken during discussions between Minister of State for Foreign Affairs E Ahamed and visiting Japanese Foreign Minister Taro Aso.

"The ministers agreed to launch a ... dialogue on disarmament and non-proliferation, with the objective of promoting commonalities and enlarging areas of convergence for mutual cooperation in a constructive manner."

The dialogue will also ad-



dress the issues linked with hightechnology trade. It will be conducted at the level of joint secretaries and takes forward the resolve to work on areas of convergence in nuclear matters, which was stated during Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi's visit in April.

Indo-Japan relations came under strain after the Pokhran tests in 1998. While the two sides have been able to ensure that bilateral relations were no severely affected by the tests, India continues to seek a better understanding from Japan on nuclear issues.

This has become more significant after India and the US

reached an understanding to work towards meaningful civilian nuclear cooperation on July 18. Washington is also pushing a proposal at the 44-member NSG to lift restrictions on supplying nuclear technology to India which is not a member of the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

Besides this, the two sides also agreed on converting the foreign minister level meeting into a strategic dialogue.

Aso, who visited the Delhi Metro project, also held discussions on the proposed freight corridor between Delhi and Mumbai as well as Delhi and Howrah. Japan has agreed to facilitate funding of this.

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India, Japan studying freight corridors

Japan International Cooperation Agency to conduct a survey for Delhi-Mumbai, Delhi-Howrah links

Diplomatic Correspondent

NEW DELHI: India and Japan agreed on Wednesday that the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) would conduct a "feasibility study survey" for the proposed multimodal freight corridors to link Delhi-Mumbai and Delhi-Howrah.

A joint press release issued after talks between Japanese Foreign Minister Taro Aso and Indian leaders said "notes" had been exchanged to facilitate the study for the project, agreed upon by the two sides during the visit of Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi in April 2005.

Mr. Aso, who met National Security Adviser M.K. Narayanan and Minister of State for External Affairs E. Ahamed, also agreed to launch official-level dialogue on disarmament and non-proliferation.

High-technology trade

The objective behind the dialogue was to promote commonalities and enlarge areas of convergence for mutual cooperation in a constructive manner. "This dialogue will also address the issues relating to high-technology trade."

A Japanese official said Tokyo had begun talks with the United States on the enlargement of the United Nations' Security Council even while it was "committed" to the idea of the G-4 grouping, which includes India, Japan, Germany and Brazil.

(India has been aware for some time now that Tokyo is lukewarm to the idea of the G-4 given the open support for its entry into the Security Council as a permanent member from the U.S. Official sources maintain that Japan is hedging its bets on Council expansion by opening a new, unilateral dialogue with the U.S., outside the G-4 framework).

Asked whether Japan would support India's case for technol-



ON THE FAST TRACK: Japanese Foreign Minister Taro Aso and Delhi Metro Rail Corporation's Managing Director E. Sreedharan during a ride on a Metro train in New Delhi on Wednesday. - PHOTO: V.V. KRISHNAN

ogy transfer and fuel supplies in the Nuclear Suppliers' Group (NSG), the Japanese official did not give a direct answer. He merely said Japan was aware of the importance for India of civilian nuclear energy.

At the same time, the nuclear issue was a "very important question" for Japan. The official,

however, stressed that India and Japan needed to discuss the civilian nuclear issue further. According to the official, Japan wanted the credibility of the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT) maintained.

Strategic focus

The two sides also agreed to

enhance the strategic focus of the India-Japan Global Partnership. From now on, Foreign Minister-level talks will have a "strategic perspective" to them.

Referring to the work of the India-Japan Study Group on examining the possibility of a comprehensive economic partnership, the release said the

Group was expected to submit its report by June 2006.

On people-to-people exchanges, Mr. Aso conveyed the decision of the Japanese side for the exchange of 4,000 people in Japanese language, technology, youth interaction and related fields.