

U.S. joins Japan, Australia for new strategic dialogue

India commended for agreeing to international nuclear safeguards

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SINGAPORE: The United States, Australia, and Japan charted out a new track of strategic dialogue on Saturday and commended India for agreeing to place its civilian nuclear energy facilities under relevant international safeguards.

On a different plane, the three welcomed "China's constructive engagement in the [Asia-Pacific] region." U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, Japanese Foreign Minister Taro Aso, and their Australian counterpart Alexander Downer held their inaugural meeting, under this new framework, in Sydney.

In a statement issued after the new strategic dialogue, the three said they "recognised the importance of reinforcing [their] global partnership with India."

Common cause

Describing their new forum, at the ministerial level, as an association of "long-standing democracies and developed economies" in the Asia-Pacific region, they said their "common cause" was to "maintain stability and security globally," with a particular focus on the area in which they already operated with some degree of cooperation and coordination.

Within this overarching framework, the three "noted that India's decision to place its civilian nuclear facilities and programmes under international safeguards would be a positive step towards expansion of the reach of the international non-proliferation regime."

The "global partnership" with India, which the new forum brought into focus at this stage, relates to the dialogue that each of these three countries independently holds with New Delhi on strategic and other issues of



PLANNING STRATEGY: Japanese Foreign Minister Taro Aso (left), Australian Foreign Minister Alexander Downer and U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice prior to their talks in Sydney on Saturday. - PHOTO: AFP

global concern and scope. Expressing themselves on a wide range of current global issues, the U.S., Japan, and Australia "discussed the need for concerted action at the United Nations Security Council" on Iran's suspected nuclear-weapons programme.

"Grave concern" was expressed over Iran's current attitudes and the need for Teheran's compliance with the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty was emphasised.

While no new ground was broken on any major issue, including Iraq and North Korea's nuclear-weapons programme,

regional diplomats emphasised that China, as a rising economic and military power, was very much on the radar of the new forum.

The new ministerial caucus outlined one of its aims as that of "supporting the emergence and consolidation of democracies" in the Asia-Pacific region.

Concern over China

AP reports:

They called on Iran to suspend all uranium enrichment activities and resume negotiations over its disputed nuclear programme.

In a joint statement following

trilateral regional security talks, they also called on North Korea to unconditionally and immediately return to six-party nuclear talks.

China's Parliament last week approved a 14.7 per cent increase in its annual military budget to \$35 billion.

Prior to leaving Washington last week, Ms. Rice had said the three countries must ensure that a build-up in China's military spending was "not outsized for China's regional ambitions and interests" - sparking concern that the United States would pursue a policy of containment.

India, Escap to cooperate more

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, Feb. 12. — India and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (Escap) have identified four new areas of cooperation — disaster management, infrastructure financing, setting up of an India-ESCAP cooperation fund and enhanced Indian participation in the Asia-Pacific technology transfer centre.

India has agreed to sponsor a study to be undertaken by RIS (Research & Information System for Developing Countries) and ICRIER (Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations) with a view to strengthening regional mechanisms and instruments for long-term infrastructure financing in the Asia-Pacific region. This was indicated when the secretary general of UN-Escap, Mr Kim Hak-Su met the minister of state for commerce, Mr Jairam Ramesh, here on Friday evening.

Escap is the UN regional arm for the Asia-Pacific region and serves as the main economic and social development forum within the UN system for this important region.

The resource requirement for infrastructure investment in the region is very large. UN-Escap has estimated that in four major infrastructure sectors, namely transport, ICT, energy and water, the requirement could be anywhere between \$220 billion and over \$500 billion per year.

THE STATESMAN

Clean Promise

Asia-Pacific partnership to counter runaway climate change

It's like asking the fox to guard the henhouse, declares a blogger, commenting on the solution proffered by the Asia-Pacific group of six (AP6) — the US, Australia, China, India, South Korea and Japan — to deal with greenhouse gas emissions. Step up voluntary clean technology use in industry to rein in carbon dioxide emissions, says the AP6, whose members together emit up to 50% of globally generated carbon dioxide. At its first meeting in Sydney this month, the AP6 discussed how countries can adopt a clean agenda outside of the Kyoto Protocol — that is, without having to compulsorily reduce current energy consumption levels. The US-led Asia-Pacific model has come in for severe criticism for placing the onus on industry volition to clean up the environment. Can this approach work, given the projection that by 2020, the world will use 45% more coal than it does today? The Sydney meet focused on softer (voluntary) commitments from industry — to share knowledge, develop technology and improve operating practices. Eight government-industry task forces will look at power generation, coal mining, building and appliances, production of cleaner fossil energy, renewable energy, steel, aluminium and cement to come up with priorities, action plans and progress indicators.

The success of the clean tech strategy will depend on how soon and how much of tech-transfer will be available to India and China. While the Sydney initiative is valid in promoting less-polluting ways of continuing with economic activity, it can at best only complement, not replace, initiatives laid down by the Kyoto Protocol that stresses the importance of cutbacks along with clean development mechanisms. Regulatory frameworks that make emissions reduction attractive to industry will help green production processes. A twin track approach — cutting back existing level of emissions and phasing out dirty technology — is necessary to make the green and gold paradigm work. Australia has set up a fund for clean development, contributing \$75 million. The US will follow with \$52 million. India is already learning from Canada, how to make coal cleaner. We have several renewable, alternative energy initiatives in the pipeline. The AP6 membership will be worthwhile only if it means greater access to affordable clean technology.