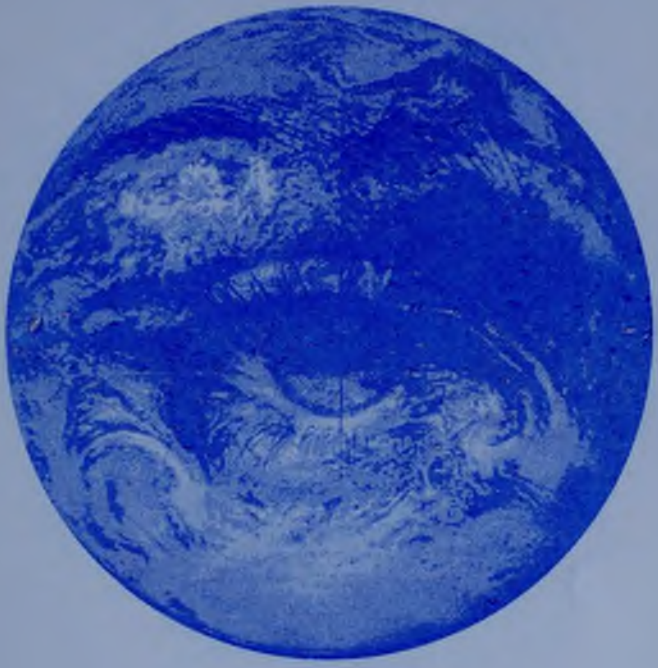
EYE ON UNESCAP

A Media file on coverage of economic and social issues



PART II

United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP)

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UNITED NATIONS NATIONS UNIES

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THANKS TO OUR FRIENDS IN THE MEDIA

By Kim Hak-Su, Executive Secretary, UNESCAP

2003 has been a busy year for us here at UNESCAP as well as globally for the United Nations, and the increasing amount of news coverage provided by you – the local, regional and international media is testimony to the importance of our work here in the Asia and Pacific region.

The international news media, in particular, is paying closer attention than ever before, and this sixth issue of Eye on UNESCAP contains reports about UNESCAP from media organizations in the region, both local and international.

With the assistance of the many UN Information Centres around the world, including our Bangkok-based UN Information Services (UNIS), we have participated in television and radio interviews with the BBC, CNBC, CNN, VOA, Star TV, and many more.

My programme of refocusing the work of UNESCAP into three thematic areas: Reducing Poverty, Managing Globalization, and Addressing Emerging Social Issues has revitalized our efforts to make Asia and the Pacific a better place for the region's 3.8 billion inhabitants, home to more than two thirds of the world's population.

Throughout this year, UNESCAP will provide our friends in the media much to write about and we look forward to working with you in order to highlight the work that remains to be done to improve the lives of the underprivileged.

January 2004



Mr. Kim Hak-Su talks to the media during the launch of the Bulletin on Asia-Pacific Perspectives, 19 December 2003.

EYE ON UNESCAP

The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) is the largest of the five UN Regional Commissions in terms of population served and area covered. It comprises 53 members and 9 associate members and represents approximately 62 percent of the world's population, or 3.8 billion people. UNESCAP plays a unique role as the only intergovernmental regional forum stretching from the Pacific to Turkey (excluding Iraq).

In 2003, UNESCAP continued to receive a high level of media coverage. UNESCAP-related news and articles were reported by major international news services and frequently appeared in the local and international press, while an increasing level of information on UNESCAP can be found on the Internet.

UNESCAP media coverage focused on all aspects of the organization's activities: quality of life -- regional economic cooperation, socio-economic development, poverty alleviation, and environment-related issues. A significant number of articles were devoted to human settlements, population and other humanitarian issues as well as areas of transportation, communications, information and space technology. Additionally, a number of articles were published in the observances of UN special "Days", e.g. UN Day for Women's Rights and International Peace, Human Rights Day, United Nation Day, and International Day of Disabled Persons.

In terms of geographical distribution of the coverage, the distinction between "local" and "worldwide" sources have become less clear as articles from national or local sources are often reproduced by internet-based news services with global outreach. However, it is still possible to determine whether the article was intended for local distribution or for a broader international audience. Hence, the division of sources into local and worldwide proves valuable as it helps to monitor which of the issues drew international attention, and which were merely of local interest.

The launch of UNESCAP's *Promoting the Millennium Development Goals in Asia and the Pacific: Meeting the Challenges of Poverty Reduction* report on 4 June 2003 was the year's most newsworthy event. Many news agencies and newspapers in the region and throughout the world reported it.

/...

The high coverage of this year's 59th annual Commission Session has been consistent over the last 3 years, despite this year's event being disrupted due to the outbreak of SARS. The 59th Commission Session was held in April and September, generating much interest from the media as it focused on 'Integrating economic and social concerns, especially HIV/AIDS, in meeting the needs of the region'.

As in previous years, the UNESCAP's "Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific 2003" attracted much attention from the experts and the general public. In addition to numerous articles on the socio-economic situation in particular countries, there were a considerable number of articles analyzing trends and developments on regional level.

Other UNESCAP meetings that generated strong media interest included the Expert group meeting on the state of the environment (Bangkok 9-10 July), the High level regional policy dialogue and seminar on facilitating WTO accession through regional cooperation (Bangkok 10-13 June), Regional training workshops for women with disabilities (Pattaya, 18-22 August), National seminar on capacity building in central Asia countries for managing globalization (Bishkek, 25-26 August), Launch of joint AusAid/UNESCAP HIV/AIDS study (Bangkok, 2 September), Special Body on Least Developed and Landlocked Developing Countries, sixth session (Bangkok, 1-2 September), First session of the Committee on Emerging Social Issues (Bangkok, 4-6 September), and the UNESCAP/CDPF Regional Seminar on an International Convention on Protection and Promotion of the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities (Beijing, 4-7 November).

UNIS, the United Nations Information Services for UNESCAP, has worked in close collaboration with various UNESCAP divisions, other United Nations Information Centres, United Nations Development Programmes and the Department of Public Information to ensure that the media adequately covers the organization's activities. The result has been a steady high media interest in the work of UNESCAP led by its Executive Secretary.

David Lazarus
Chief
United Nations Information Services (UNIS)
United Nations Economic and Social Commission
for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP)
Bangkok
January 2004

EXPLANATORY NOTES

1. The criterion for inclusion of articles in this volume has been set as follows: printed or electronic articles on UNESCAP and/or its activities including material that mentions, refers to or in any other respect concerns UNESCAP, was included.

2. Articles are divided into thematic groups and subgroups, according to UNESCAP's priorities and activities.

3. The volume is composed of articles that have been monitored and identified by the United Nations Information Services (UNIS) in Bangkok as well as articles that have been sent to UNIS by the United Nations Information Centers (UNIC) and the United Nations Development Programmes (UNDPs) in the region. Although this publication cannot claim to include the entire information on UNESCAP produced and covered in member countries and worldwide, efforts have been made to identify and include as much materials as possible on the organization.

4. It should be noted that an increasing amount of information is being posted on the Internet, either as original articles or as reproductions from other sources. In the latter case, the classification of the source is made according to the Internet site, rather than the original source.

5. Sources of articles are classified according to the country of origin or as "worldwide" or "United Nations". Most of the sources with global outreach, such as major international news agencies and news services (Reuters, AP, AFP, BBC, Xinhua, etc.), periodicals with regional and global circulation (*Wall Street Journal,* etc.*)* and international Internet news services (*Yahoo! News, NewsEdge Insight, ProQuest,* etc.), are categorized as "worldwide".

6. In cases where an article is reproduced and published by several sources, one version of the article is presented and, when possible, credit is given to the original source (for example, *Yahoo! News/Xinhua).*

7. Articles in a language other than English are marked by an asterisk.

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7.	'Ageing biggest issue in near future' – *Times of India*	5 May 2003	India	10
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FreeRealTime.com	http://www.freerealtime.com
Gulf News Online	http://www.gulf-news.com
Hindustan Times Internet Site	http://www.hindustantimes.com
Hoover's News Online	http://hovnews.hovers.com
InfoQuest	http://www.infoquest.com
The Independent Internet Edition	http://independent-bangladesh.com
IRINNews.org	http://irinnews.org
The Manila Times Internet Edition	http://www.manilatimes.net
News24.com	http://www.news24.com
The News Internet Edition	http://www.jang.com.pk
Newsday.com	http://www.newsday.com
NewsEdge Insight	http://www.newsedge.com
PhilStar.com	http://www.philstar.com
People's Daily	http://english.peopledaily.com.cn
The Star Online	http://thestar.com.my
UN News Centre	http://www.un.org/News/
UN Wire	http://www.unwire.org
Voice of America Online	http://www.VOANews.com
Xinhuanet	http://news.xinhuanet.com
Yahoo! Asia News	http://asia.news.yahoo.com
Yahoo! News	http://news.yahoo.com

1. Addressing Emerging Social Issues

02/27/2003 04:04:04

Asia-Pacific nations urged to tackle mounting AIDS crisis

Agence France Presse via NewsEdge Corporation : HONG KONG, Feb 26 (AFP) - Asia-Pacific nations must tackle the region's mounting AIDS crisis promptly if they are to avoid the problem escalating into the pandemic proportions of Africa, a leading United Nations official said Wednesday.

Speaking at the Foreign Correspondents Club, Kim Hak Su, executive secretary of the 61-member UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (**UNESCAP**), urged governments not to "repeat the African mistake".

"If Africa had controlled HIV/AIDS, it would not be in this situation. Twenty percent of the people (in Africa) are sick from HIV/AIDS and there are growing numbers of orphans," he said.

An estimated 30 million people in Africa have the AIDS virus.

South Africa has one of the highest HIV infection rates in the world, with five million of its 43 million citizens carrying the virus, and 360,000 deaths in 2001.

HIV first emerged in Asia in Thailand in the 1990s but has since spread to other countries, leaving the region at risk of becoming the new global centre of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, Kim said.

He did not give a figure for the total number of people in the Asia-Pacific affected by the disease.

But some 300,000 people are infected with HIV in Cambodia and there are an estimated five million carriers of the virus in India, the worst affected country in the region. Thailand has about 700,000 people infected with HIV.

The problem is also spiralling in China where infection is spreading through the use of dirty needles among drug users and the practice of selling blood for money in rural areas, Kim said. China has some one million HIV/AIDS carriers, he said.

The UN has warned, however, that the number of Chinese infected with HIV could soar to more than 10 million by the end of the decade.

Kim said that of the 61 countries in the Asia-Pacific only one ministerial-level representative had attended a special UN AIDS session in New York in 2001.

"That reflected how our political leaders were not paying attention to this HIV/AIDS (problem)," he said.

However, opinion had changed and senior officials -- including Thailand's Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra -- had contacted Kim about combating the AIDS issue immediately.

"If we don't properly control the problem now, then young people will become sufferers... and with young people getting sick, then where will our labour productivity and our labour workforce come from?" he added.

The UN has said it needs 10 billion dollars per year to fight AIDS.

al/pl/mfc

Asia-AIDS

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THOMSON
NEWSEDGE

PRESS CLIPPINGS TOTAL PAGE(S): 1

Press/Media: POST TODAY	Date: 27 February 2003
Page(s): A11	

Summary

The newspaper quoted from AFP-Hong Kong that "Mr. Kim Hak-Su, Executive Secretary of UNESCAP urged governments in Asia-Pacific region must tackle the region's mounting AIDS crisis promptly if they are to avoid the problem escalating into the pandemic proportions of Africa.

HIV first emerged in Asia and found in Thailand in the 1990s but has since spread to other countries, leaving the region at risk of becoming the new global centre of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, Mr. Kim said.

'ยูเอ็น'ออกเตือน เอดส์ระบาดหนัก เอเชียแปซิฟิก

ฮ่องกง (เอเอฟพี) — เจ้าหน้าที่ของสหประชาชาติวิตก โรคเอดส์ระบาดในหลายประเทศในภูมิภาคเอเชียแปซิฟิก บรรดาผู้นำประเทศเรียกร้องให้แก้ปัญหาวิกฤติโรคเอดส์หลังจากที่มีรายงานผู้ติดเชื้อเพิ่มมากขึ้นในทวีปแอฟริกา

คิม ฮัก ซู เลขาธิการยูเอ็น เอสแคปได้ออกมาเรียกร้องให้รัฐบาลของแต่ละประเทศในทวีปเอเชียเพิ่มความระมัดระวังในการควบคุมการแพร่ระบาดของโรคเอดส์ เพื่อไม่ให้โรคแพร่ระบาดอย่างรุนแรงเหมือนกับในทวีปแอฟริกา

ทั้งนี้ ประชาชนในแอฟริกาเจ็นราย 20% ป่วยเป็นโรคเอดส์ และมีจำนวนผู้ติดเชื้อเพิ่มสูงขึ้นเป็นที่คาดการณ์ว่ามีประชาชนในแอฟริกาประมาณ 30 ล้านคนติดเชื้อเอชไอวี

แอฟริกาจัดว่าเป็นทวีปที่มีผู้ติดเชื้อ เอชไอวีสูงที่สุดในโลก โดยมีผู้ติดเชื้อทั้งหมดประมาณ 5 ล้านคนจาก 43 ล้านคนทั้งประเทศ ส่งผลให้มีผู้เสียชีวิตจากการติดเชื้อดังกล่าวถึง 360,000 คน ในปี 2001

เชื้อ เอชไอวี แพร่ระบาดเข้ามาในเอเชีย โดยมีการค้นพบที่ประเทศไทยเมื่อทศวรรษที่ 90 ตั้งแต่นั้นมาก็แพร่ระบาดไปยังประเทศอื่นๆ ส่งผลให้ภูมิภาคเอเชียกลายเป็นศูนย์กลางของการแพร่ระบาดของ เชื้อเอชไอวี แต่ยังไม่มีรายงานของจำนวนผู้ติดเชื้อทั้งหมดในภูมิภาคเอเชียแปซิฟิก

ในกัมพูชามีผู้ติดเชื้อทั้งหมด 300,000 คน และคาดว่ายังมีอีก 5 ล้านคนที่เป็นพาหะของเชื้อเอชไอวี ในอินเดีย ซึ่งนับว่าเป็นประเทศที่มีผู้ติดเชื้อสูงที่สุดในภูมิภาค สำหรับประเทศไทยมีผู้ติดเชื้อ เอชไอวี 700,000 คน

ทางด้านสหประชาชาติได้กล่าวเตือนว่าจีนอาจมีผู้ติดเชื้อเอชไอวีเพิ่มสูงขึ้นมากกว่า 10 ล้านคน ภายใน 10 ปีนี้

นอกจากนี้ ในจำนวน 61 ประเทศในภูมิภาคเอเชียแปซิฟิก มีเพียงผู้แทนระดับรัฐมนตรีที่เข้าร่วมประชุมโรคเอดส์ของสหประชาชาติ ซึ่งจัดขึ้นที่นิวยอร์กเมื่อปี 2001 ซึ่งสะท้อนให้เห็นถึงการไม่ใส่ใจของผู้นำทางการเมืองเกี่ยวกับปัญหาดังกล่าว

ทั้งนี้ คิมกล่าวว่าหากไม่ดำเนินการควบคุมการติดเชื้อ จะส่งผลกระทบต่อคนรุ่นหนุ่มสาว ซึ่งเป็นแรงงานที่สำคัญต่อประเทศในที่สุด ○

PRESS CLIPPINGS TOTAL PAGE(S): 1

Press/Media: BANGKOK POST Date: 28 March 2003

Page(s): P. 9

Summary

LIFE WITH DISABILITIES

Able-bodied try out life in wheelchairs, blindfolded

Encounter unexpected obstacles in the street: phones set too high, doorways too narrow, ramps too steep, glass hazardous

ANJIRA ASSAVANONDA

Healthy people can never really understand what it's like to be disabled — but being blindfolded or seated in a wheelchair and left to care for yourself is a start.

That was the idea behind the disability simulation exercise organised by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (Escap) on Wednesday.

It was part of an international workshop to help public administration officials see the need to include disabled people in the development process.

The workshop, at a Bangkok hotel, was attended by about 20 officials from 13 countries in the Asia-Pacific region.

During the half-day exercise, participants were asked to put on various simulation devices, to get the feel of being disabled or very old and weak.

Some were seated in wheelchairs to learn what it was like to be crippled, while others were blindfolded to simulate being blind.

"I felt like parts of my body have died. There's no energy in my hands and I need somebody to come and assist me," said Muhammad Majid Qureshi, a special education director from Pakistan, who was made to wear a pair of spectacles that blurred his vision, while his elbows, knees and ankles were stiffened with strips of bandage.

Mr Majid said he could now understand better the feelings of his elderly parents.

Participants were made to move around the hotel building and along nearby streets while "disabled", to learn the difficulties of accessing and using public facilities.

All were clumsy and found their short journey difficult, hampered by many obstacles. Toilet entrances were too narrow for a wheelchair to pass through. Multi-level floors posed dangers for the blind and the elderly and were largely without ramp access for wheelchairs.

Ramps they did find were too steep for a wheelchair to roll up easily, public telephones were set too high for people in wheelchairs to reach, while decorative glass and mirrors, they found, posed dangers for people with impaired vision.

Kenneth Parker, a chartered building services engineer at Scotland's Robert Gordon University who ran the workshop, said the exercise was aimed at forcing participants to pay more attention to building and street environments.

"Actually, what we want is not a disabled-friendly environment but an environment that is fit for everyone. We hope this workshop will increase people's sensitivity, even if it was only a brief glimpse," he said. Creating a people-friendly environment did not require much money, just a considerate mind and proper architecture. Since the participants were high-ranking service officials, Mr Parker expected there would be more support for the idea.

Press/Media: BANGKOK POST
Page(s): P. 3 (Business)
Date: 31 March 2003

Summary

Travel Monitor

IMTIAZ MUQBIL
Hanoi

Disability-friendly tourism in infancy

Tired of the insensitive treatment from regional tourist industries, travellers with disabilities are beginning to make their case with the support of numbers and money.

The Asian tourist industry has done little over the years to accommodate people with disabilities even though, throughout the region, many people have been affected by physical, sensory and mental disabilities caused by everything from war to motorbike accidents.

The operators cite their limited action to high costs for a small market, according to a study presented at a seminar in Hanoi last week.

However, a study by Bruce Cameron, an Australian writer of travel guidebooks for people with disabilities, estimates that there are about 232 million people with disabilities in Europe, North America and the Asia-Pacific region, including Thailand, China, India and Australia.

And this number is growing according to Jean-Louis Vignuda, an official of the Tourism Unit at the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (Escap).

He said that as a result of demographic changes in industrialised countries, there would be more elderly people, which is a group comprising a large number of people with disabilities.

Now that there are estimates showing such high numbers, some changes may be in the works.

The national tourism organisations (NTOs) of the Greater Mekong Subregion countries attending the Escap-organised seminar have asked for a further analysis of the purchasing power of travellers with disabilities and the return on investments to facilitate them.

Mr Cameron said his study found shockingly low levels of information about travel for the disabled on the web sites of many Asia-Pacific NTOs and that travel agents did not know how to deal with them, while many hotels and airlines failed to provide adequate services for them.

"There are many myths about people with disabilities and tourism. These include that the market is inconsequential, that people with disabilities travel in 'packs', and that they are best catered for through activities organised by institutions and governments familiar with their needs," he said in the study.

The study was commissioned by Escap to follow up on initiatives identified in an earlier seminar on promoting barrier-free tourism in the Asia-Pacific region. It was designed to prove an economic rationale for developing barrier-free tourism, identify existing barriers to and good examples of barrier-free tourism within Escap member countries.

However, of Escap's roughly 60 member countries, 26 were identified for inclusion in the research. Of those 26, only seven responded to the questionnaire and one declined to participate. Three Southeast Asian airlines that were sent questionnaires did not even reply to them.

Mr Cameron says the results were surprising in that the travel industry was trying to attract other niche-market customer segments such as wellness and health, ecotourists and the gay and lesbian market.

"So why not people with disabilities?" he asked. "We like to travel just like anyone else. Ensuring good access for us means good business."

Mr Cameron, who lives in Sydney, spent a few days in Bangkok and Pattaya before travelling to Hanoi. He said he was shocked by the low level of facilities for travellers with disabilities. However, he did come across a newly opened Redemptorist Centre in Pattaya whose 46 rooms are specially designed to cater to them.

Through the Redemptorist Centre, he also found a tour operator, Help and Care Travel Company, headed by Prasong Thongwung who claims to have the first company in Thailand serving travellers with disabilities.

Its brochure lists a Tourism Authority of Thailand licence number, meaning that it is registered under the Tour Operators and Guides Act, though in an Internet search on facilities for disabled in Thailand, neither the operator nor the centre appeared.

In addition to the myths noted earlier about people with disabilities, Mr Cameron's study went on to say:

"Other myths include that accessible facilities are too expensive to build, such facilities are never used, and people with disabilities cannot afford to use them. Yet, people with disabilities have the same motivations to travel as the rest of the community. However, they have faced a range of constraints and barriers that impede their tourism desires.

The study adds: "Destination marketers and those responsible for planning destination regions can be proactive in removing the disabling barriers faced by travellers with disabilities.

"By doing so, they will create a competitive advantage for their destination through developing a barrier-free approach to this emerging market segment."

◆ *Imtiaz Muqbil is executive editor of Travel Impact Newswire, an e-mail-delivered feature and analysis service focusing on the Asia-Pacific travel industry.*

Press/Media: **BANGKOK POST**
Page(s): P. 1 and 5 (Outlook)
Date: 10 April 2003

Summary

Battling Bangkok

Civil servants and others struggle with traps and pitfalls to gain an insight into the daily challenges faced by the disabled

Story by
ANJIRA ASSAVANONDA and
KARNJARIYA SUKRUNG

Pictures by
SOMKID CHAIJITVANIT

If one wishes to understand other people, try stepping into their shoes.

That's exactly what a group of international workshop participants did last week to gain insight into the experience of being disabled.

On the streets of Bangkok, some took to wheelchairs while others blindfolded themselves or simulated being elderly by wrapping their arms and legs in heavy bandaging that slowed them down.

For four hours, the group of "disabled" walked and wheeled themselves around a hotel and then into the bustling streets around Bo Bae wholesale market.

The participants from 13 countries from the Asia-Pacific region were taking part in a UNESCAP International Workshop on Raising Awareness of Public Administration Personnel.



Muhammad Majid from Pakistan gains insight into old age: "Now I understand why the elderly do things so slowly and

Press/Media: BANGKOK POST
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"Doing this exercise allows people to see and feel things in such a way that in future, when they are involved in development plans or designing buildings, they'll be more empathetic towards the needs of people with a disability," said Kenneth Parker, a building services engineer from Robert Gordon University, Scotland, who has led exercises like this one before.

Ideally, he said, participants would stay "in the experience" for at least 24 hours.

"They should learn everything a person with disability has to deal with in a typical day, from eating breakfast to doing personal errands and travelling."

In this short workshop, however, just a few hours had to be enough. Participants were divided into three groups — six "blind", six "elderly" and six "wheelchair users". There were three helpers. Then they were dispatched into the world and asked to report back with their findings.

BEING 'ELDERLY'

To feel like an elderly person, Muhammad Majid, the director of Special Education from Pakistan, had to wear heavy bandages and straps around his knees, shins and arms in order to make his movements more difficult and stiffer. To simulate poor vision, he wore goggles that allowed little light.

"I feel old. These heavy straps are really weighing



Riddley Jayasinghe, university lecturer from Sri Lanka, learns about the life of the blind on a busy Bangkok street.

have problems putting on socks."



me down," said the tall, strong, middle-aged Majid. "I feel like parts of my body have died down. I can't walk very fast. I think I am actually limping all the time.

"It's also difficult for me to bend my knees and ankles and to use my fingers effectively. It makes climbing stairs quite an ordeal," he said as he held tightly to a stair rail, eyes fixed on the step ahead.

"I realise now how helpful the rail is for the elderly. It's really hard for them to negotiate steps, especially high steps, without good support."

Majid wasn't just slow, he was easily tired, he said. He and the other "elderly" constantly took short rests after a walk up a stairs or after walking on flat ground for a lengthy time. "Chairs are very helpful for the elderly. There should be more of them everywhere," he said as he found himself a sofa.

Small signs and notices were also a problem. "I have to put my face right up to the writing in order to be able to read it. Even the numbers on elevator buttons are too small and hard to read. This all makes me a bit clumsy and slow to press the button for the floor I want to go to. The numbers should be bigger and brighter."

Interestingly, there were times during the small exercise when he felt that as an elderly person he was being excluded.

"I felt left out of the group and ignored. People walked too fast, leaving me behind. I felt I wasn't given much attention. I think this might be how many elderly may feel regularly."

The glimpse into another world made Majid think of his parents.

"This is an eye-opener. It's making me understand my aged parents more. I understand now why they do things slowly or have difficulty with things like putting a pair of socks on.

"I think I'll hold a similar workshop for mobility trainers and others in my country so that they get the same experience."

BEING 'BLIND'

Riddley Jayasinghe, lecturer at the National Institute of Social Development in Sri Lanka, said life looked rather different when he was blindfolded for four short hours.

"It's horrible not being able to see a thing. I feel insecure and scared, because I don't know what's ahead of me or if I'm about to bump into things and hurt myself," he said.

Before making each step, Jayasinghe swung his walking stick about, looking for clues, even though he was clinging tight to the elbow of a helper from the Philippines who was constantly describing the scene for him.

"Once I found myself in the dark, my ears started really picking up sounds. I think sound is like radar for the blind. Is this glass?" he asked, while tapping his stick against a glass window.

"We should think about adding sound to the environment, to give the blind directions and make their lives easier."

Without sound, brail, or textured signs, Jayasinghe found using elevators difficult. There were no brail letters to help him find the button for his floor. When he wanted to answer a call of nature, it was impossible to figure out which of the two available bathrooms was for males.

"Without assistance, it's so difficult to go about," he said. "I can't imagine myself being blind and doing things by myself for long. It's good if a blind person has a personal assistant to help him all the time — but that would be so expensive," he said.

A HELPER'S EXPERIENCE

Dorji Phub's experience as a blind person's helper will change the way he works, he said.

Phub, the national programme officer at the Health and Education Ministry in Bhutan, had to stay right beside his "blind person" and guide him on his way.

"I had to be his eyes and warn him of obstacles coming our way."

To do the job well, he had to give it his entire attention — an excellent learning experience, he said.

"I used to sit in the office as a policy planner, thinking about what should be done for people with disabilities, without really knowing their reality. It's been great to learn what their real problems are," he said.

Things are more complicated than most policy planners realise, he said.

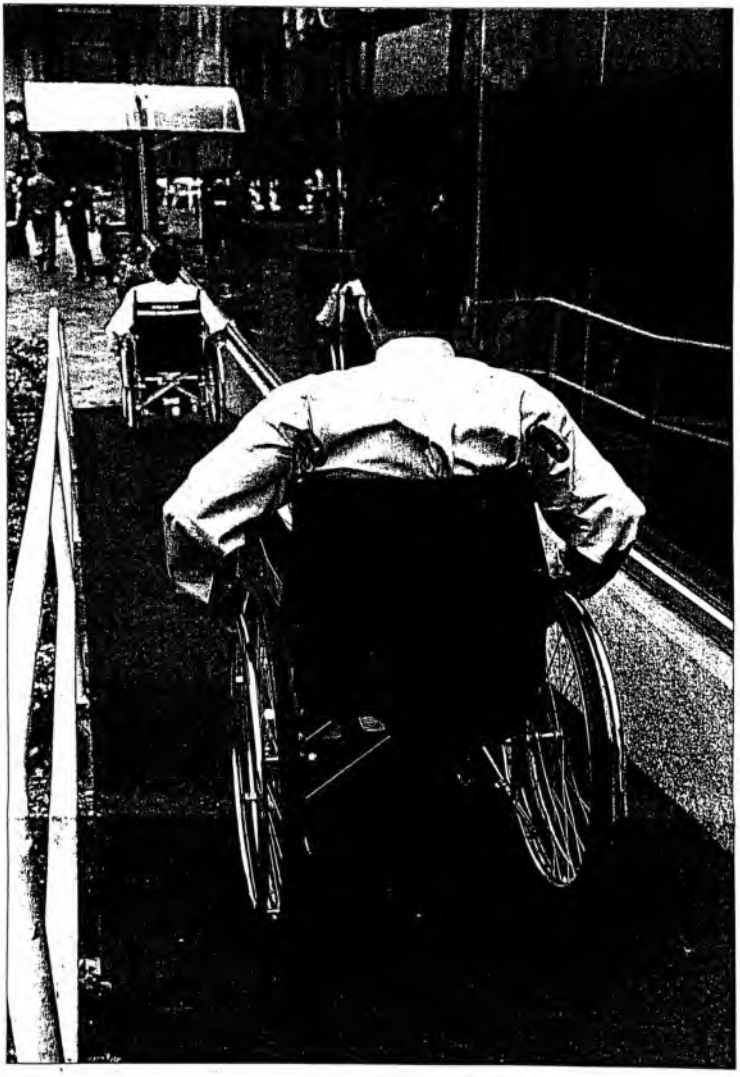
"When the disabled ask for help, the planners usually just give them sticks or wheelchairs. But it's more complex than that."

Phub felt he would put his workshop experience to good use when he returned to Bhutan. "I'll go back and look at what we have done in our policy paper, see if it needs to be adapted, then talk to all the stakeholders to get feedback. There's much to review," he said.

◆ *Continued on* page 5

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Date: 10 April 2003

Summary



A Vietnamese man takes a deep breath before rolling down a steep ramp. Pretending to be a wheelchair user helped him grasp the tough realities of the disabled-unfriendly city environment, he said.

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Summary

From page 1

Battling Bangkok

WHEELCHAIR LIFE

Hassan Mousavi Chelak, a social worker from the Social Security Office in Iran, was in a wheelchair once before, when he took part in a similar simulation exercise as a social work student at university.

Back then, he went so far as to play basketball on a wheelchair.

Still, in the Bangkok workshop he found it difficult to manoeuvre the wheelchair in many areas, including a heavily carpeted floor.

"Many places now provide ramps for wheelchairs but sometimes they're too steep to get up by yourself. I've tried to do some ramps on my own but found it really tough. You could easily just roll back down them," said Chelak.

Potholes and uneven surfaces made negotiating streets very tough.

"You could easily tumble over if you're not very careful."

But the most difficult thing was people staring at him. "Many people looked at me with pity. I could see it in their eyes, from hotel staff to vendors in the market. I didn't like it."

The wheelchair-bound Chelak tried hard to be independent, refusing help when it was offered. "Most people treat the disabled with pity, trying to help them, giving them everything, which is not what they need. The non-disabled must learn about the abilities disabled people have. They are independent-minded people who must be respected like everyone else.

"People should distinguish between pity and empathy. Empathy is good as it makes people more considerate and better understand the disabled, but pity is too much and sometimes it overlooks their rights as human beings."

ON REFLECTION

After their short experiences, all the participants had complaints about the hotel's facilities — which are similar to those of other establishments — and about Bangkok's streets.

"Before we had the simulation exercise, I felt the hotel was okay. But once I became an elderly person, it was no longer so friendly," said Majid. "There were many minor things that I hadn't thought of."

Toilet entrances, for example, were too narrow for wheelchairs. Floors were dotted with steps and few ramps. Some of the ramps were too steep. The reception counter was too high for wheelchair users to reach.

Glitzy decorations like glass and mirrors that gave off a lot of reflections were a problem for those with impaired vision.

On the street, the pavement was scattered with potholes, uneven pavements and vendor stalls that prevented wheelchair progress. ATM machines and telephone booths were too high for wheelchair users.

"People are not handicapped. It's the bad environment that's the handicap," said Parker. "All people should have access to places. This is a human rights issue. Don't think this whole thing is about being disabled-friendly. We should create people-friendly environments, environments that suit everyone."

Building barrier-free environments doesn't require a lot of money or extras, just a bit more thought and consideration, he said.

Floors should be level; there should be ramps instead of steps; stairs should be shallow; telephone booths and hotel counters should be lower, to make them more accessible.

"We're not creating a barrier-free environment for anyone but ourselves. Any of us might have an accident which could temporarily cripple us some day. And most certainly, aren't we all growing old?" said Parker.

International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

Asia Pacific FOCUS

SPECIAL ISSUE MANILA ACTION PLAN 2002

ISSUE 30 • APRIL 2003

MAP highlighted at UN Population Conference

"WE in the International Federation believe it is vital to any comprehensive action against the HIV/AIDS pandemic to sustain a parallel action against stigma and discrimination. The Asia-Pacific Red Cross and Red Crescent societies have set this as one of their major targets, and will be raising it with you in your capitals when they meet you to discuss joint action programmes," said Mr. Tadateru Konoe, Vice-President of the Japanese Red Cross Society and member of the Federation's Governing board, addressing the ministerial segment of the 5th Asian and Pacific Population Conference in Bangkok in mid December. The conference was jointly organized by the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).

MAP COMPLEMENTARITY

The ministerial segment followed a three-day meeting of officials of the ESCAP countries – i.e. the 57 member states. The conference adopted an action plan which emphasizes the need to address population issues, including reproductive health, gender equality, HIV/AIDS and migration as a key component to reducing poverty in the region and meeting the UN Millennium Development Goal of halving, by 2015, the number of people living on less than US$1 a day. Ministers from over 20 countries in the Asia-Pacific region attended the conference.

The International Federation was highly visible at the conference, and made six interventions on subjects of particular relevance to the Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement. The newly adopted Manila Action Plan – result of last month's 6th Regional Asia-Pacific Conference in the Philippines – was introduced to conference participants and its complimentarity to the Population Conference's own plan of action highlighted.

Times of India
5 May 2003

TIMES OF INDIA, PUNE 5/5/03

'Ageing biggest issue in near future'

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Pune: The chief of population and social integration section of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, Jerrold Huguet, has warned that a rapidly ageing population will be a critical issue facing India in the years to come.

Huguet said this at a function to inaugurate the Community Aid Sponsorship Programme (Casp) *bhavan* and its longevity centre on the Baner-Sus road here on Sunday. Former president R. Venkataraman, chief minister Sushilkumar Shinde and Lok Sabha speaker Manohar Joshi attended the function.

Addressing the gathering, Huguet said that the country's 60-plus population (around 80 million) was increasing by three per cent annually and is likely to double over the next 25 years.

"Incidentally, Japan continues to have the maximum number of people over 60 years in Asia," he said.

Huguet added that social security plans should be seen as a development issue to be integrated with the overall demographic plans. The problem of ageing was further compounded by the fact that a large section of the older population in India is illiterate and lives in rural areas which lack infrastructure.



Former president R. Venkataraman (left), Lok Sabha speaker Manohar Joshi, chief minister Sushilkumar Shinde and Casp president Sharadchandra Gokhale at the function to inaugurate Casp Bhavan on the Baner-Sus road on Sunday.

In his inaugural speech, Venkataraman said, older people with their experience, knowledge and skills could continue to contribute to the economy and society. The increase in the average life span has created a new demographic scenario in India, he said, adding that this has upturned the traditional population triangle.

Venkataraman said that if the new national policy on ageing enunciated by the Union government was implemented effectively, India could show the way to other developing countries. "Healthy, productive and 'participative ageing' can create a society for all ages," he remarked.

Lauding the work undertaken by Casp for destitute children, tribals, Aids patients and the elderly, Joshi pointed out that it was the duty of the government to look after these sections of society. "However, when the government fails to fulfil the duty, voluntary organisations have to step in," he said.

Shinde too praised the work done by Casp and other voluntary organisations, "which has spawned an excellent network of non-governmental organisations across the state".

5/5/03

The Indian EXPRESS

PUNE Newsline

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Old is gold, tap their riches, says former President

■ Lok Sabha Speaker, Chief Minister chip in with praise for the elderly at inauguration of The Longevity Centre

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
MAY 4

STRESSING on the role of elderly in national development, former president R Venkataraman on Sunday said India should explore the knowledge and experience from the large aged population. He made a strong plea to make the elderly part of the social development process in the country in his presidential address after inaugurating The Longevity Centre (TLC) started by Community Aid and Sponsorship Programme (CASP), an NGO which is headquartered in Pune.

Venkataraman said the doubling of the life expectancy in India from 32 to 62 in the last 50 years has given rise to a peculiar demographic challenge. ""The population triangle has gone upside down as the population of elderly has outgrown that of children in India," he said. However, policy makers and the public at large should look at the aged population as resources for guidance, he added.



Former President R Venkataraman inaugurating TLC on Sunday. Joshi is on the extreme right

The former president said healthy, productive and participatory ageing was the need of the hour in India. "It would create a rich society demographically spread over all ages," he said. In fact, Venkataraman suggested that the government should seek the help of certain non-governmental organisations (NGOs) which have a good track-record in its endeavour. Giving the example of CASP, he said such NGOs can not only ensure better implementation of projects but also deliver quicker results.

Jerrold Huguet, chief of the population and social integration unit of United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and Pacific (UN-ESCAP), said India has 80 million people aged 60-plus which is the highest in Asia. Ageing issues will become critical for India as a majority of the older persons are illiterate women languishing in rural areas without basic facilities, he pointed out. "Something has to be done quickly as the number of older persons in India is growing by three percent every year and is likely to double in the next 25 years," he said. Thus, not only care for older persons is important, but education, employment, pension systems and health care at all ages are crucial elements in planning for population ageing, said Huguet.

Lok Sabha Speaker Manohar Joshi said the government unfortunately has accepted the programmes and drafted policies for the ageing population but can show little progress in the implementation of them.

Chief Minister Sushil Kumar Shinde, caught on the wrong foot by Venkataraman and Joshi, attempted to belt out the names of several schemes which the state government runs for the welfare of children, women and the aged. "The state wants to ensure that nobody is hungry, illiterate or hungry, especially children," he added.

CASP director Dr Gokhale said TLC will work towards promoting better understanding of the issues and concerns of the aged at all levels, including the UN, the government, corporate sector and NGOs.

The Indian Express
5 May 2003

ข่มขืน: ตราโทษอาชญากรรมสงคราม





จากที่คุณนายเคโกะ โอคาตะ รองเลขาธิการองค์การสหประชาชาติ มอบหมายให้เอชาธิการองค์การสหประชาชาติ ศึกษาผลกระทบของสงครามที่มีต่อสตรี และบทบาทในการสร้างสันติภาพ กองทุนเพื่อการพัฒนาสตรีแห่งองค์กรสหประชาชาติ (ยูนิเฟม) จึงแต่งตั้งผู้เชี่ยวชาญอิสระ เอลิซาเบ็ท เรห์น จากฟินแลนด์ และ เอลเลน จอห์นสัน เซอร์ลีฟ จากไอบีเรีย ดำเนินการศึกษาเรื่องดังกล่าวและจัดทำเป็นรายงานเรื่อง "สตรี สงคราม และสันติภาพ:ผลกระทบของสงครามและบทบาทของสตรีในการสร้างสันติภาพ จากการประเมินของผู้เชี่ยวชาญอิสระเพื่อจะหยิบยกให้โลกได้รับรู้ถึงความเป็นจริงของผู้ได้รับผลกระทบจากสงคราม ซึ่งยูนิเฟมจัดแถลงเปิดตัวรายงานไปเมื่อเร็ว ๆ นี้ ที่ศูนย์ประชุมองค์การสหประชาชาติ

รายงานดังกล่าวเป็นข้อมูลที่ผู้เชี่ยวชาญอิสระทั้งสอง เข้าไปศึกษาสถานการณ์ในพื้นที่สงคราม 14 แห่งในแอฟริกา, ละตินอเมริกา, อเมริกาใต้, เอเชีย และยุโรปตะวันออก ทำให้ทราบถึงความเลวร้ายของความรุนแรงที่เกิดขึ้นกับเด็กและสตรี รวมถึงการกลายเป็นเครื่องมือสำคัญในการทำสงครามไปด้วย

ผู้หญิงถูกข่มขืนเพื่อสร้างความอับอายให้แก่ชายผู้เป็นศัตรู ซึ่งบังคับถูกบังคับให้เป็นพยานในเหตุการณ์นั้นด้วย หญิงมีครรภ์ถูกทำร้ายท้องจนแท้ง บางคนถูกทหารไปเป็นทาสทางเพศแก่กองกำลัง ถูกใช้งานอย่างหนัก ขาดสาธารณสุขที่ดีพอที่ให้ไม่สามารถป้องกันตนเองจากไวรัสและเสี่ยงต่อการติดเชื้อเช่น โรคเอดส์ได้ ผลการศึกษาที่พบนี้ทำให้รู้สึกชัดเจนมากขึ้นว่าจะมีความรุนแรงถึงขนาดนี้และทำเป็นระบบขนาดนี้ ดังนั้นจึงต้องมีการรณรงค์ให้สูงกว่าความรุนแรงในสตรีให้มากขึ้น

"แม้ว่าสงครามสิ้นสุดลง ก็ไม่ได้หมายความว่าความรุนแรงที่เกิดขึ้นกับสตรีจะยุติลงไปด้วย ความรุนแรงต่อเด็กและสตรียังคงดำเนินอย่างต่อเนื่อง รวมถึงผลกระทบต่าง ๆ ที่ตามมาทั้งในเรื่องครอบครัว การแตกสลาย หลังยุติ การศึกษา การสาธารณสุข ภาวะเศรษฐกิจ ภาวะเหล่านี้กลายเป็นเรื่องที่ผู้หญิงต้องเข้าไปดูแล โดยที่ไม่ได้รับความช่วยเหลือใด ๆ ทั้งสิ้น ไม่ได้รับการปกป้องหรือคุ้มครอง แม้แต่น้อย มีหน้าที่ทำความผิดกฎหมายไม่ได้รับการลงโทษแต่อย่างใด ซึ่งเป็นความเหลื่อมล้ำในระบบยุติธรรม ซึ่งเราต้องการให้การข่มขืนเป็นเรื่องอาชญากรรมสงคราม เป็นการทำลายมนุษยชาติ เราต้องการการปกป้องคุ้มครองและความเป็นธรรม ทั้งนี้ต้องดูความมั่นคงของมนุษย์ด้วย ซึ่งจะไม่เกิดขึ้นเลยหากสิทธิมนุษยชนไม่ได้รับการพัฒนาควบคู่กันไป แม้ว่าในหลายประเทศได้ลงปฏิญญาในเรื่องต่าง ๆ แล้วแต่มาตรการดำเนินการยังห่างกัน เราต้องการให้เกิดความเท่าเทียมกันโดยให้สตรีเข้าไปมีส่วนร่วมในการตรงนี้ด้วย" นางในลินกล่าว

ผอ.ยูนิเฟม กล่าวอีกว่า สันติภาพจะไม่เกิดหากไม่มีการพัฒนา ไม่มีการคุ้มเรื่องเสรีภาพ ความรุนแรง สุขภาพ สาธารณสุข ความเท่าเทียมกันทางเพศ หลายคนมองว่าการพัฒนาเรื่องเหล่านี้ต้องใช้งบประมาณมาก ค่าใช้จ่ายสูง หากคิดรวมแล้วจะเห็นว่าโลกปัจจุบันนี้ร่ำรวยขึ้นอยู่กับการจัดสรรงบประมาณมากกว่า ซึ่งส่วนใหญ่มักตกอยู่กับการทหาร ถ้าสามารถจัดการอย่างเหมาะสมลงทุนเรื่องความมั่นคงและสันติภาพ ก็จะได้สันติภาพตอบแทน โดย 3 วิธีในการสร้างมนุษยชาติคือการเชื่อมโยงระหว่างกัน การลงทุนในการพัฒนา และส่งเสริมจริยธรรมในความเป็นมนุษย์ที่มีคุณค่า ที่สำคัญคือต้องหาจุดร่วมและสันติภาพร่วมกัน.

Ms. Keiko Okaido, Deputy Executive Secretary of UNESCAP joined the launch of the report titled, "Women, War, Peace"

PakistanLink

Councillors asked to aspire for higher offices

RAWALPINDI : The two-day National Summit on 'The Role of Women Councillors and Mayors in Country's Development' ended here with the adopting of "Rawalpindi Declaration" which underlined the need for resolving difficulties faced by women through raising awareness, capacity development, networking, advocacy, resource and documentation.

The declaration also proposed to set up district resource centres as well as national resource facility for women councillors for coordination, facilitation, monitoring of the National Action Plan for Women in Local Government, collection and disseminating of information, advocating role of women and promoting networking among women in local government.

Advisor to Prime Minister on Women Development, Social Welfare and Special Education Nilofar Bakhtiar, who was the chief guest at the concluding session, urged for holding a national summit of women mayors and councillors every year.

Addressing the summit, Nilofar Bakhtiar urged upon the participating councilors to groom themselves particularly enhancing leadership qualities to acquire even higher positions in future.

The Advisor further said it was true that women had to face struggle due to socio-cultural obligations but at least they have now reached a stage where they were being accepted with their roles and responsibilities in the leadership at the grass root level.

She said that it was through the persistence and commitment that many great leaders of the world rose to high levels of leadership.

Thelma Kay, UNESCAP Director, on the occasion appreciated the features encompassed by the Rawalpindi Declaration and said the same would be shared with other councillors of the world particularly those of Asia-Pacific Region.

The participating councillors were also appreciated for making the Summit a success by

ensuring their participation from far flung areas.

In the end certificates were distributed among the councillors in recognition of their participation in the event.

During the summit, which started the other day, elected women councillors, naib nazims and nazims from all over the country participated in the seminar and shared their experiences with the participants of the Summit and also pointed out the problems they were facing.

The participants observed that in year 2001 the country had experienced a silent revolution and for the first time in the history of the country, women were given 33 per cent representation in a changed local bodies system, wherein the shackles of bureaucracy had been broken and people were made master of their destiny.

It was further observed that the introduction of new district and tehsil government system under the devolution of power plan was the first leap forward for the women role in politics and it would go a long way in defining and tailoring the future role of women in national politics.

The lady councillors who had come from all parts of the country expressed their views in the summit and most of them were critical of non-cooperation on part of government and other concerned elements.

Some of participants were of the view that though they were given 33 per cent representation but they were not provided with development funds and they were facing a lot of problems to get their job done. They further complained about the non-cooperative attitude of male members due to which they were facing a lot of problems.-

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■ HAPPY CAMPERS

Winning arts and minds

Annual retreat teaches children, many of them disabled, how to work together

■ *Laurie Rosenthal*
THE NATION

MORE THAN 150 DISABLED children from all over Thailand recently had the opportunity to join in the innovative "Art for All Camp" in the hills of Muaklek, just outside Bangkok.

Over 400 kids, art teachers, assistants and international participants spent five days at the Muaklek Paradise Hotel, where they learned not only how to express themselves through art and music but also how to share their strengths with one another.

The annual camp, which ended yesterday, was the brainchild of Dr Channarong Pornrungroj, Dean of Chulalongkorn University's Faculty of Fine and Applied Arts.

Channarong and other lecturers organised the programme to encourage disabled children to help one another.

"Society always says that disabled kids should learn to be independent, but that doesn't mean living alone," Channarong said.

At the camp, the children were organised into groups containing one blind child, one deaf, one mentally challenged and one disabled.

"In this way, we hope they can understand their worth. The blind child cannot see, but he can provide ears. The deaf child cannot hear, but he can provide sight. The one without the use of arms or legs still has a brain, and the one who is mentally-challenged still has physical strength," he said.

Each group shared a hotel room, with one proviso – that the blind child would sleep nearest to the bathroom.

"Otherwise, he might wake up during the night and not know how to move," Channarong said.

During the day, the groups worked on sculptures, paintings, weaving and music, with a bit of basic English thrown in for fun. Equally enjoyable was the mini-zoo, arranged by Charoen Pokphand and other supporters. Golden pythons, camels, ostriches, turtles, piglets, puppies, baby rabbits, chicks, ducklings and a four-year-old elephant were all available for touching and hugging. The activities were monitored by volunteers, students and lecturers, who were themselves disabled.

All the assistants were carefully selected after written and oral exams. Throughout the five days, 20 international delegates from Association of Southeast Asian Nations countries, Japan and as far away as Iran, also participated in the teaching-and-learning experience.

On Saturday, Her Serene Highness Princess Siriwanwaree Mahidol, youngest daughter of His Royal Highness Crown Prince Maha Vajiralongkorn, dropped in for a visit.

Supported previously by the National Lottery Bureau, the camp was financed this year by the Ministry of University Affairs and the UN's Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (Escap).

The Bt4 million annual budget is used not only for the Art for All Camp but also 12 other art camps throughout the country and research activities.

"We even have regional Asean camps," Channarong said.

"My dream is one day to have an international Art for All Camp," he added.



NATION/LAURIE ROSENTHAL

A CAMPER *carefully adds his own unique decoration to some paper draping an assistant.*

UNESCAP
Moving Forward Toward the Realization of An International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

"Bangkok Recommendations" Adopted

The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) hosted the "Expert Group Meeting and Seminar on an International Convention to Protect and Promote the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities" from June 2-4, 2003 at the UNESCAP Conference Center in Bangkok, Thailand. Eiichi Takada of Japan attended the meeting in his position as Board Member of the World Federation of the Deaf (WFD).



Expert Group Meeting and Seminar
(WFD Board Member Eiichi Takada on left)

The meeting opened with an address by Mr. Kim Hak-Su, Executive Secretary of UNESCAP and the presentation of a message sent by Ambassador Luis Gallegos of Ecuador, who is the Chairman of the UN Ad Hoc Committee on the International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.



Executive Committee Members of the National Association of the Deaf in Thailand attending the Expert Group Meeting and Seminar

The conference was attended by about 130 people, including representatives of SHO of persons with disabilities, governments, UN agencies, related bodies, and resource persons. Among the attendees were Mr. Abdullah Wardak, Minister of Martyrs and Disabled of Afghanistan, Mr. Andrew Byrnes, Professor of the Faculty of Law of the Australian National University, Mr. Clinton Edward Rapley, and others.

Discussions and presentations centered on the contents of the proposed International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. On the last day, the conference adopted the "Bangkok Recommendations on the Elaboration of a Comprehensive and Integral International Convention to Promote and Protect the Rights of Persons with Disabilities". The conference itself and the Bangkok Recommendations reveal that UNESCAP is strongly committed to the realization of the convention.

The 6th Session of the UN ESCAP Thematic Working Group on Disability-related Concerns (TWGDC)

Promotion of the "Biwako Millennium Framework" (BMF)

The 6th Session of the TWGDC, which is part of the UNESCAP Regional Coordination Mechanism, was held on June 5-6, 2003 at the UNESCAP Conference Center in Bangkok, Thailand. The conference was attended by 50 persons, including government representatives from Japan, Thailand, and other countries, representatives of related UN agencies and bodies, disability NGOs, etc. Eiichi Takada represented the World Federation of the Deaf.



On the second day, the conference (1) adopted the Terms of Reference for the TWGDC for 2003 to 2004, (2) adopted the "Evaluation of the Role of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific in the Implementation of the Agenda for Action for the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons, 1993-2002, and in the Achievements of the Decade", (3) decided to focus on the promotion of the "Biwako Millennium Framework for Action" of the "Second Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons, 2003-2012", (4) decided to support persons with disabilities in Afghanistan and Timor Leste, (5) decided to promote the drafting of the "Comprehensive and Integral International Convention to Promote and Protect the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities".

Support Toward Afghanistan and Timor Leste

Afghanistan is beginning to rebuild the country. The Afghanistan National Association of the Deaf is already enrolled as a member of WFD. The members of this association desired to attend the World Congress of the World Federation of the Deaf and requested assistance from the WFD General Secretariat, but were unable to get a response. Board Member Eiichi Takada of WFD received a formal letter from Minister Wardak of the Afghanistan Ministry of Martyrs and Disabled, requesting WFD's support for the Deaf in Afghanistan. Board Member Takada promised to contact Director Takeo Ogura, of WFD Regional Secretariat in Asia/Pacific promptly.

Government and NGO representatives of Timor Leste also approached Mr. Takada for assistance toward the Deaf in their country. Mr. Takada explained the importance of establishing a nationwide organization of the Deaf, which would be qualified to become a member of the World Federation of the Deaf. Mr. Takada promised to keep in contact with Timor Leste.

Bangkok Post
www.bangkokpost.com
Business

Travel Monitor

Migrant workers yield plethora of economic benefits

UN meeting discusses swelling expatriate populations

IMTIAZ MUQBIL

A low-profile meeting at the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (Escap) last week focussed attention on one of the most significant elements of the global travel industry: migration patterns.

The travel industry is a major beneficiary of the huge numbers of migrants, mainly job-seekers, on the move as a result of poverty, economic disparities and globalisation.

Migration travel generates billions of dollars in revenues for airlines and transport firms. Its darker side, illegal migration, is the reason for

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imposition of stringent visa policies that impede travel for holiday and leisure.

UN figures presented at the meeting on Migration and Development estimated 174.5 million migrants are scattered worldwide, or about 2.9% of the world's population. Of these, Europe is estimated to have 56 million migrants, the Asia-Pacific 55.5 million and North America 40.8 million.

Thelma Kay, chief of Escap's newly established Emerging Social Issues Division, said migration has increased rapidly in the Asia-Pacific region in recent years.

Major countries of origin are Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines and Sri Lanka while major destinations are Australia, Hong Kong, Japan, South Korea, New Zealand and Singapore.

She said the major reasons for migration were the widening levels of economic development between the rich and poor countries, as well as demographic changes such as the low growth rates of working age population in destination countries as against high growth in the source countries.

Papers presented at the meeting stressed the significance of what is becoming a ``broad and complex issue".

It was noted, for example, that most of the migrants are women who are in demand as domestic helpers, nurses and factory workers.

At the same time, it was recognised that migrant workers play an important role in economic development. Ms Kay said worker remittances comprised 8.2% of gross national product in the Philippines, 6.3% in Sri Lanka, 3.8% in Bangladesh and as high 2.4% of GNP

Generation
Economic Review
Mid-Year 2003
Year-End 2002
Mid-Year 2002
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in even large economies like India.

The recent Sars scare also highlighted the health impact of global migrant movements, especially in terms of HIV/Aids.

The impact on the travel industry was underscored. A paper by Supang Chantavanich, professor of Sociology at Chulalongkorn University, noted the problem of Thai entertainment workers and illegal migrants in Japan, most of whom enter by on a tourist or student visa or by claiming to be on a honeymoon with a Japanese husband.

Another paper on Indian migrants abroad estimated about 16.1 million Indians and people of Indian origin living in 133 countries. These include 1.6 million in Malaysia, one million in South Africa, 1.2 million in the UK and 1.67 million in the United States and just under a million in the UAE. Indians are also the top migrants in terms of remittances, totalling US$11 billion in 1999, according to the World Bank. The Philippines was next with $7 billion.

The expert group meeting provided food for thought on a broad range of issues of importance to the travel and tourism industries of Thailand and Asia-Pacific countries.

For example, Thailand is competing with Indonesia and the Philippines to attract a new kind of migrant, long-stay visitors, by offering special extended visa privileges. This is designed to attract ageing retirees fleeing the rich countries because of the cold weather and higher cost of living. Globalisation and increased investment by multinationals is also swelling the region's expatriate population, many of whom are white-collar executives and potential targets of marketing campaigns for business, leisure and conventions travel.

For example, two regional cities with large

1999

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For example, two regional cities with large upmarket expatriate populations are Hong Kong and Singapore. By recalculating the arrivals to Thailand by nationality and residence from both these cities in 2002, it can be estimated that Thailand received 190,000 expatriates from Hong Kong and about 136,000 from Singapore.

Regional countries are also trying to make use of their migrant populations abroad to act as tourism ambassadors. The Tourism Authority of Thailand is attempting to do this with the large number of Thai restaurants abroad; ditto the Philippines with its legions of musicians and entertainers.

The focus on developing travel and tourism in the Middle East will also create huge demand for migrant workers to staff the hotels, airlines and convention centres emerging there. .

Indeed, labour and migrant traffic is an important part of the revenue mix for many airlines, especially to and from the Middle East and South Asia.

According to Dang Nguyen Anh, head of the Department of Population Studies in Hanoi, economic globalisation will lead to continued increases in Asian migration and the critical concern is how to maximise the benefits and minimise the risks for both migrants and their families.uImtiaz Muqbil is executive editor of Travel Impact Newswire, an e-mailed feature and analysis service focusing on the Asia-Pacific travel industry.

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Asian Fertility Decline Reflects Changing Lifestyles

Patrick Goodenough
Pacific Rim Bureau Chief

Pacific Rim Bureau (CNSNews.com) - South Korea is the latest Asian country to release statistics illustrating the regional trend towards declining fertility, the result of family planning programs and changing lifestyles.

Figures from the country's National Statistical Office show that fewer babies were born in South Korea last year than in any previous year since birth rates were first recorded there three decades ago.

It said around 495,000 babies were born last year, 62,000 fewer than in 2001.

By contrast, when the government began compiling annual statistics in 1970, more than one million babies were born a year.



Total fertility rates (TFRs) are an important indicator

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when predicting population trends. TFR is defined as the average number of babies born to women during their reproductive years (15-44), with 2.1 being the generational replacement level.

South Korea's TFR has now fallen to 1.17, well below the replacement rate.

More than 60 countries in the world, including Western European nations, have fertility rates of below 2.1 -- the U.S. figure is 2.1 -- but it is in Asia where the figures are most striking.

Singapore has a fertility rate of 1.5 and dropping, while Hong Kong's TFR is 1.4; and in Thailand, a country where the total fertility rate exceeded six births per woman in the 1960s, the fertility rate is currently at around 1.9.

Taiwan, where women also had six or more children on average half a century ago, by 2001 they were giving birth to an average of 1.4 children each during the course of their fertile years.

In Japan, which has a TFR of 1.3, government officials have estimated that the population of 127 million could begin to shrink by 2007.

One organization researching population issues reckons that, if Japan's fertility rate stays at 1.3, "once the age structure of the population stabilizes, the total population will decline by about one-third in a single generation, or about 30 years."



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The implications of the below-replacement fertility in these countries are profound, according to experts.

"They affect the age structure of the population, giving rise to population ageing, labor- force shortages, increased elderly dependency ratios and feminization of the aged population," Bhakta Gubhaju and Yoshie Moriki-Durand of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) wrote in a recent report.

The United Nations has projected that the rate of childbearing will start to increase in Asian countries in the 2000-2050 period, but Gubhaju and Moriki-Durand expressed skepticism about any "rebound."

"In most countries it is highly unlikely that fertility will recover sufficiently to reach replacement level in the near future."

The report was published in the Journal of Population Research, a publication of the Australian Population Association, which dedicated an issue earlier this year to the problem of Asia's declining fertility rates.

Lifestyle changes, population control

The Honolulu-based East-West Center, an education and research organization which supports population control policies, attributes the trends in countries like Singapore, Thailand, Taiwan and South Korea to "possibly the best run [family planning programs] of any in the world."

The governments gave strong support, including financial backing, to the programs; neither religious groups nor powerful political lobbies strongly opposed the programs; and the authorities concerned cooperated with non-governmental organizations like local

branches of Planned Parenthood.

Other factors put forward by researchers and government officials relate to changing lifestyles.

South Korea's National Statistical Office cited dropping marriage rates, and the fact that people are getting married -- and having children -- later.

In Thailand, the College of Population Studies at Chulalongkorn University attributes the low fertility rate to a rising divorce rate: In 1993, 9.6 couples in every 100 got divorces, while in 2000 the figure had climbed to 20.9 couples -- a growing number of singles, women's career concerns, and people getting married older.

In Singapore, an institution promoting strong families called Family Matters! says many young people, following the examples seen in TV sitcoms or movies, don't see marriage as a lifelong commitment, nor is marriage seen as a prerequisite to sex.

"Commitment to marriage does not gel with the rising individualism and freedom in the 'me first' society, where self-gratification is more important," it said in a report.

Another factor is a high abortion rate. In Japan, the number of women under 25 having abortions rose from 18 percent in the late 1970s to 30 percent in the mid 1990s.

The effects of the Asian economic crises have also been blamed for smaller or no-child families in some countries.

Incentives

Facing the twin problems of a declining birth rate and an ageing population, regional

governments have launched or are considering launching various initiatives to counter the trend.

In Taiwan, the government started a campaign declaring that "three children are not too many" -- just a decade after authorities urged Taiwanese families not to have more than two babies each.

Couples who give birth to more than three children will be awarded a financial incentive.

In Singapore, where the lowest birth rate in 26 years looks likely this year, a former health minister has been appointed to head a committee tasked with boosting the number of marriages with children

Singapore's government has offered financial incentives like the "baby bonus," which gives parents generous sums for second and third babies, paid over six years to help defray the costs of bringing up children.

Japan has considered a range of steps in recent years to address the declining birth rate, including improving child-support programs, by setting up local committees to help parents with child-rearing advice and support.

South Korea has yet to act or declare promotion of childbirth to be government policy.

In an editorial last week, the Korea Times called on the government to "adopt a revolutionary policy ... before it's too late," including expanding financial support for childcare and offering incentives for childbirth.

Send a Letter to the Editor about this article.

Press/Media: BANGKOK POST
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Summary

ESCAP DECLARATION

More needs to be done to fight Aids

Prevention strategies not good enough

Aphaluck Bhatiasevi

Despite playing a leading role in combating HIV/Aids in the region, Thailand needs to do more to raise awareness on the prevention and control of the disease among youth, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific said yesterday.

San Yuenwah, Escap's chief of Health and Development Section, said "even in Thailand, where there is wide recognition of the disease, there is no room for compliance."

She said the country's 100% condom use campaign should focus more on the youth, and issues concerned with stigma and discrimination need to also be addressed.

She said so long as issues concerned with sex, sexuality, men who have sex with men, casual sex and multiple sex partners are not discussed openly, it will be difficult to address the problems.

Her comments came after the closure of the three-day annual Escap meeting, which for the first time in six decades focused on HIV/Aids.

The declaration adopted at the annual session called for an urgent increase in funds to implement the HIV prevention strategies, which include improved access to HIV preventive services and promotion of respectful and responsible sexual behaviour.

Ms Yuenwah said countries in the region need to contribute more towards the HIV/Aids fight.

"The problem right now is that the disease is at the micro level and we don't see it visibly. Unlike Sars, which was big big news because it hit people who took flights, HIV/Aids is a slow killer and has been around for a long time," she said.

Ms Yuenwan said though Thailand has one of the best anti-retroviral drugs distribution networks, it is accessible only to about 5% of the people who need the drugs.

"It's not anything to be satisfied with at this point. Even the best is not enough," she said.

Mr Kim Hak-Su, the Escap executive secretary, said if the countries did not immediately respond to the problem, the situation could become disastrous because it has a strong impact on each nation's economic growth.

He said the purpose of the three-day meeting, which also came up with a declaration of commitment on HIV/Aids, aims at seeking the highest political commitment in tackling the issue, "because somebody making an initiative at the highest level can make a very big difference."

Mr Kim said the HIV/Aids problem is more serious in South and Southeast Asia than East Asian nations.

Without naming names, he said some countries had a large number of cases but refused to admit they were in a crisis until recently.

"There is still a tendency of not telling the full story. They keep hiding information," he said, adding that this could worsen the situation which required an immediate action plan.

In another development, the World Health Organisation recently expressed concern about a recurrence of the Sars epidemic.

Considerable uncertainty surrounds the question of whether Sars might recur, perhaps according to a seasonal pattern, states a WHO press release issued on Tuesday.

The release said several respiratory illnesses remain subdued when the temperature and humidity are high and only return when it gets cooler.

The influenza bug infects about 10-20% of the population each year.

UNESCAP promomtes right-based approaches for people with disabilities

BANGKOK, Sept 5 (TNA) - The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) is promoting its member countries to formulate and implement right-based approaches to assist and support persons with disabilities in the region, according to executive secretary of UNESCAP.

Mr. Kim Hak -Su, the UNESCAP's Executive Secretary, who is also UN Under Secretary General concurrently, said that the UNESCAP was assisting its member countries to formulate and implement policies based on the rights-based approaches to support the improvement of living conditions and quality of life of People with disabilities.

The assistance was part of the Bangkok-based UN body's strategic attempts to help address socio-economic woes in the region, he indicated.

Among other moves, the UNESCAP organized a regional gathering, called the High-Level Intergovernmental Meeting to Conclude the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons 1993-2002 in the Japanese city of Otsu last October, in which the Biwako Millennium Framework (BMF) for Action towards an Inclusive, Rights-based and Barrier-Free Society for People with disabilities in the region was adopted, he stated.

"The BMF emphasizes the rights of People with disabilities to education, employment, and access to the built environment, public transport, and information and communications technologies (ICT)," he disclosed.

Mr. Kim made the remarks as part of his keynote speech delivered at the second phase of the UNESCAP's 59th session, held at the UN Conference Centre here on 1-4 September.

The UNESCAP had to divide its 59th session into two phases this year due to the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) epidemic, which struck the region earlier this year.

The UNESCAP now has 53 member countries and nine associate member countries in the Asian-Pacific region after its admission of Timor- Leste as its latest full member country in July.

Apart from the meeting in Otsu late last year, the UNESCAP is also supporting the tailoring of a new comprehensive and integral international human rights convention to promote and protect the rights and dignity of People with disabilities

by all parties concerned.

Workshops have been organized, aimed at brainstorming ideas and exchanging views of parties concerned, including governmental and non-governmental organizations, human rights institutions, and disabled persons' organizations (DPOs) on proposed and elaborated contents of the new convention.

For instance, the one organized here on 2-4 June, 2003, in which the Bangkok Recommendations on the Elaboration of a Comprehensive and Integral International Convention to Promote and Protect the Rights and Dignity of People with disabilities was adopted.

Realizing that most women and girls with disabilities have suffered even more difficulties and disadvantages in the society than men and boys with disabilities, as they are the most vulnerable and the least protected group having faced with triple discrimination--being female, disabled and poor--the parties concerned have attempted to include issues of women and girls with disabilities in the proposed new convention concretely.

The UNESCAP has supported the moves.

One good example was its organizing of a workshop on Women and Disability :Promoting Full Participation of Women with Disabilities in the Process of Elaborating on an International Convention to Promote and Protect the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities, held at the Bangkok-based UNESCAP office on 18-22 August, 2003.

At the end of the five-day workshop, participants adopted a statement of recommendations, saying mainly that elements of the new convention should ensure that women and girls with disabilities would enjoy the full range of human rights and freedom with dignity and without any discrimination, and that state parties should have an obligation to implement provisions to ensure equal protection and promotion of the rights of women and girls with disabilities.

The statement of recommendations also urged existing human rights bodies and mechanisms to intensify their efforts to address issues of disability, including those concerning women and girls with disabilities.

In its annual session last year, the UNESCAP also adopted the year 2003-2012 as the Second Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons, with the BMF being the core of collective moves towards the expected achievement of inclusive, rights-based and barrier-free society for People with disabilities in the region.

To view the 59th Session's Statement, please visit: The Rights-Based Approach to Social Development

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Annan praises China's efforts to help disabled people

www.chinaview.cn 2003-09-08 19:53

BEIJING, Sept. 8 (Xinhuanet) — In a message delivered to the Fourth Congress of the China Disabled Persons' Federation (CDPF), which was opened here Monday, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan spoke highly of China's efforts to assist the country's 60 million handicapped people.

Annan's message said: "You raised public awareness during the International Decade of Disabled Persons. Your NGO forum in 2000 helped to advance international dialogue on the rights of persons with disabilities. You are strongly supporting the elaboration of an international convention on the rights of persons with disabilities. And your efforts to mobilize disabled people, volunteers and others are demonstrating the vital importance of participation in the decisions affecting their lives."

Annan stressed that disabled men, women and children, as well as their families, relatives and communities, can and must be involved in all aspects of disability programs, from policy-makingto the implementation and evaluation of projects.

The congress is a valuable opportunity to share best practices, strengthen China's advocacy and deepen the partnerships — within China and with the international community — that are essential for achieving "our common goals", he noted.

The UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) also sent a message to congratulate the congress. It places the Chinese government as among the strongest supporters ofthe elaboration process of an international convention to protect and promote the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities.
Enditem

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Sep 16, 2003

The price of Cambodia's WTO entry

By Marwaan Macan-Markar

BANGKOK - After an eight-and-a-half year quest, Cambodia has finally gained admission into the World Trade Organization (WTO) - sparking a debate over whether membership will be a panacea or bitter pill for this poor Southeast Asian nation.

The decision on Thursday by ministers attending the 146-nation WTO meeting in Cancun, Mexico, to approve both Cambodia's and Nepal's applications marks the first time the organization has opened its doors to least developed countries (LDCs) since it was established in 1995.

By gaining membership in the Geneva-based WTO starting next year, Phnom Penh hopes to give a boost to the mainstay of its export sector - garments.

Officials from the garment trade, which contributed some 85 percent of the country's US$1.5 billion in export revenues in 2002, have said that WTO membership will help Cambodia to attract more investment to an industry that employs more than 200,000 people.

However, international humanitarian agencies such as Oxfam and Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF) are worried by the impact that being bound by WTO rules will have on 170,000 Cambodians living with the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) that can cause AIDS.

At the heart of their concern are the new trade rules on access to essential medicines that will come into force almost immediately after Cambodia becomes a member. Critics have said this will strangle the lifeline - generic anti-retroviral (ARV) drugs - that those with AIDS need.

"It is going to be hard for Cambodia to get medicines at affordable prices, and that is the price Cambodia will pay immediately for the dubious benefits of joining this club of trading nations," said Alex Renton, spokesperson for Oxfam's Southeast Asia office.

The reasons are varied, according to background papers by Oxfam and MSF prepared on the eve of the WTO ministerial meeting. For one, these analyses say, Cambodia will not be entitled to the benefits given to the 30 LDCs that have been with the WTO since its inception.

"Cambodia has been forced into immediately halting the use of affordable generic versions of new medicines, even though the

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Doha declaration allows LDCs to wait until at least 2016 to implement this complicated and far-reaching agreement," says Oxfam's report, "Cambodia's Accession to the WTO: How the Law of the Jungle is Applied to One of the World's Poorest Nations".

At the last WTO ministerial meeting, held in Doha, Qatar, in 2001, member governments agreed in the wake of growing pressure from poor countries hit by HIV/AIDS, humanitarian agencies and activists to reconsider its rules on Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS).

The outcome was the Declaration on the TRIPS Agreement and Public Health, which underscored the need to place people over profits when it came to dispensing medicines to patients afflicted by killer diseases such as AIDS in the developing world.

It meant that countries could in the event of medical emergencies work around costly patent-protected ARVs produced by the giant pharmaceutical multinationals by either importing or producing cheaper, generic versions of the anti-AIDS drugs.

A cheap-drug deal was reached among WTO members ahead of the Cancun meeting, supposedly aimed at easing stringent patent rules in order to allow poor countries access to drugs for public health needs.

But Oxfam says it is of little use because of the complex conditions poor countries are expected to follow if they want to benefit from generic drugs.

"The case of Cambodia's accession not only demonstrates how some [WTO] members are completely disregarding their Doha commitments, but also sets a dangerous precedent for other developing countries wishing to join the WTO," MSF argues in its background paper.

Compounding these concerns is another factor: Cambodia's main supplier of generic anti-AIDS drugs, India, is due to become TRIPS-compliant by 2005 - and this will cut off the country's current supply line of more affordable drugs.

Little wonder, then, that the prospect of cheap anti-AIDS drugs drying up has begun to unnerve some of the country's public health officials. "This is a big concern in Cambodia, gaining access to generic drugs and to distribute it to the patients," said Dr Tia Phalla, secretary general of the National AIDS Authority.

The magnitude of these concerns can be understood in light of Cambodia's HIV-prevalence rate of more than 2 percent, the highest of any country in Asia, according to a report by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP).

There are more than 170,000 people living with HIV in Cambodia. But the National AIDS Authority says only 700 patients have access to the generic anti-AIDS drugs distributed by humanitarian agencies and non-governmental organizations.

The limited number of those with HIV who are on ARVs is in keeping with the average across the Asian continent, where only 4 percent, or about 43,000, of the 1 million who need the medication have access to it, states the ESCAP study.

"Worldwide, less than 10 percent of HIV/AIDS patients have

access to ARVs," said Paul Toh, an adviser at the Southeast Asia office of the Joint United Nations Program on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS). "Countries like Cambodia are very reliant on imported generic drugs for their HIV/AIDS patients. To produce ARVs for all its patients would cripple the public health budget."

Yet, critics say, pharmaceutical companies in industrialized countries rake in huge profits when governments enforce trade rules to protect the patents of the brand-name drugs the multinationals produce.

According to a US-based website that lobbies for affordable health care, the pharmaceutical industry is one of the most profitable industries in the United States. "Sales of ARVs alone roughly total $3 billion a year," it reveals.

"High prices have been the single biggest obstacle to providing ARV drugs to people living with HIV/AIDS," states the ESCAP report. "The main patent-holding manufacturers resisted calls for lower prices and were reluctant to license production to other manufacturers."

(Inter Press Service)

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LIFESTYLE FEATURE - Business Life

High economic costs of Asia's AIDS crisis

By Wilson Lee Flores
The Philippine STAR 09/15/2003



Worried About Aids? Please Learn All the Facts

Asia's serious HIV/AIDS crisis poses a danger to the state of health of our economically-weak republic, even as millions of our Filipino overseas contract workers and legions of seafarers are scattered worldwide. Add to that is the fact that the government's budget is not enough for better health facilities. And how come Asia's media were so alarmed by the SARS health crisis and its crippling economic impact on the region, but not so much on the explosive growth of HIV/AIDS?

Asia today has an alarming eight million people living with HIV/AIDS, and 2,658 new cases are being reported daily. How can we take for granted a crisis that's bigger and more economically disastrous than SARS? The AIDS epidemic is not only a chilling health crisis, but also an economic, social and security issue. Why the high economic costs? AIDS has killed millions worldwide, reducing the workforce, worsening famine, impoverishing families and orphaning millions of children in the hardest-hit regions.

This year, a new 116-page World Bank study released in New York said that if AIDS were to continue unchecked, it could wreck a society in three generations. A similar study, prepared by researchers for the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) on Southeast Asia's AIDS problems states that globally, HIV/AIDS is estimated to reverse annual economic growth by as much as two percentage points in the worst-affected countries. As its prevalence increases in any given society, its effect on economic growth worsens at a faster rate.

The Asia-Pacific region now accounts for one of every five new HIV infections worldwide. Last year, AIDS killed about half a million people in our region.

Also last year, an estimated one million adults, children and young people acquired HIV. Of the over 8 million people living with HIV/AIDS in Asia by the end of 2002, about 2.6 million were young people aged 15 to 24!

For our ASEAN neighbors Indonesia, Malaysia or Thailand, such grim scenarios result in billions of dollars in losses. Malaysia, Thailand and Indonesia, however, have considerably advanced anti-AIDS programs compared to parts of India, Myanmar and most of Africa. World Bank researchers confirmed other studies that AIDS has a more disastrous impact since it kills most young adults, threatening three generations of people and can precipitate socio-economic collapse for whole nation-states.

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FIRST THAI NATIONAL SUMMIT OF WOMEN MAYORS AND COUNCILLOR OPENS 2 OCTOBER

Bangkok--Sep 26--UNISBKK

UN seeks more women in local government

BANGKOK (United Nations Information Services) -- UNESCAP and the M Social Development and Human Security of Thailand will hold the first Thai Na Summit of Women Mayors and Councillors at the United Nations Conference C Bangkok from 2-3 October 2003.

Approximately 150 locally-elected officials from throughout the country as representatives from the Thai government and United Nations officials are exp attend.

Ms. Kanjana Silpa-archa, a prominent Member of Parliament and consulta the Minister of Social Development and Human Security of Thailand, will open Summit at 09:00 hrs on 2 October. Ms. Thelma Kay, Director of UNESCAP's Emerging Social Issues Division, and Mr. Apai Chantanachulaka, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security, will also the gathering.

The aim of the Summit is to promote the participation and representation women in local government. It is expected to adopt a national action plan to pr participation and representation of women in Thai local government.

According to UNESCAP, equality between women and men in local gover creates a healthier and more just society. "I am sure if women had an equal sh decision-making in local government, our cities would be much cleaner, health friendlier places to live in," said Mr. Kim Hak-Su, UNESCAP Executive Secreta

The Thai National Summit of Women Mayors and Councillors is the latest component of a UNESCAP initiative to implement the multi-phase Advanceme Women in Urban Local Government project begun in 1999. The initial phase o project culminated in the first-ever Asia-Pacific Summit of Women Mayors and Councillors, which was held in Phitsanulok, Thailand in June 2001. It produced Phitsanulok Declaration which called for a variety of measures to advance the participation of women in local government. In the second phase of the project UNESCAP has been assisting selected countries in implementing country-leve activities. Earlier this year nationalsummits were held in the Philippines, Pakist Sri Lanka.

For further information, please contact:
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E-mail: unisbkk.unescap@un.org End.

-PM-



BREAKING NEWS

Pacific regional workshop to study children's rights

Strong requests and concerns from Pacific Island child welfare officials, on pressing child prostitution and pornography issues, have resulted in a major regional training workshop.

The Pacific Regional Workshop on Combating Poverty and Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children will be held in Fiji next week.

It's being organised by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific and the End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography and Trafficking in Children International.

The workshop will consider ways to protect Pacific Island children and implement the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

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BUSINESS SPORTS WORLD NATION SHANGHAI FEATURES

Job surety for disabled

China is working on the Provisions for the Protection of the Employment of Handicapped People - a new legislation - in an effort to guarantee the rights c and employment for the handicapped population, one of the most vulnerable in the country.

This was disclosed yesterday by Deng Pufang, chairman of the China Disabled Persons' Federation at the opening of the Fourth Congress of the federation.

In the next five years, the CDPF will participate in drafting and promul-gating law, while stepping up efforts on professional training of handicapped people promoting their employment through various means, Deng noted.

Efforts will be made to provide social security insurance for all persons with disabilities and medicare for those who are handicapped, poverty-stricken anc jobless, he added.

According to the CDPF leader, China has 60 million disabled people, about 84 percent of whom are employed. With the help of the government and all parti concerned, 4.99 million handicapped people who were suffering from great difficulties have had their worries about basic needs relieved, he said.

Deng, son of late leader Deng Xiao-ping, was paralyzed after a fall from a hig window during the violence of the 1966-76 "cultural revolution."

Deng said the Chinese government is working hard to help the handicapped a the goal of "equality, participation and sharing."

In the first 20 years of this century, China will try to improve the basic conditi disabled people, respect and protect their rights, and improve their ethical an cultural quality, the CDPF chairman revealed.

As different areas in the country enjoy different stages of development, Deng that developed cities like Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou and Tianjin will take t lead in helping the disabled reach the goal of prosperity.

The opening of the congress was also attended by President Hu Jintao, Premi Jiabao and other senior Chinese leaders.

In a message delivered to the congress, United Nations Secretary-General Ko Annan spoke highly of China's efforts to assist the country's handicapped peo

He stressed that disabled men, women and children, as well as their families, relatives and communities, can and must be involved in all aspects of disabilit programs, from policy-making to the implementation and evaluation of projec

The congress is a valuable oppor-tunity to share best practices, strengthen Cl advocacy and deepen the partnerships - within China and with the internation community - that are essential for achieving "our common goals," the secreta general noted.

The UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific also sent a message, praising the Chinese government's efforts.

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RIGHTS-ASIA:

HIV-Positive Women Pay High Price to be Mothers

Marwaan Macan-Markar

BANGKOK, Oct 8 (IPS) - Marisa Netgaiboon is ready for the price she will have to pay when motherhood comes -- a life of humiliation and harsh taunts from her community and even from people who are expected to be caring, like doctors and nurses.

That is because the 35-year-old from southern Thailand's Ranong province has been living with HIV for the past 12 years. She was infected by her husband.

"The community I live in has accepted me as a person with HIV, but when I get pregnant that will change for sure. I know," says Marisa, an unusually tall and broad-shouldered woman for a Thai. "They will condemn me for my pregnancy."

She expects as hostile a reception from any of the hospitals she may turn to when its time to deliver her baby. "I will have to face discrimination and comments from the doctors and nurses because I am an HIV-positive woman."

Yet Marisa is determined to face this harsh world because of her desire to enjoy the pleasures of motherhood. "I will not stop loving, not stop becoming pregnant, not stop having a family as the society expects me to," she asserts, her voice rising to make the point. "I want a normal family life. I would like the society to open up and tolerate HIV-positive women as human beings."

There are other Thai women like Marisa who feel as combative, such as Junsuda, whose fear of being taunted by her community forces her not to reveal her last name. This 34-year-old from Bangkok has been living with HIV since she was 17 years old.

Junsuda has already endured the humiliation that Marisa anticipates. She was rejected by four hospitals when it was time to deliver her baby two years ago, because she requested a caesarean operation.

Such a climate, however, has not beaten down into silence these people who are living with HIV, as reflected in their active presence at a week-long conference here on the reproductive health in the Asia and the Pacific.

The Second Asia Pacific Conference on Reproductive and Sexual Health offered a platform to raise regional and global consciousness about the need for clear policies to ease the hostility

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women with HIV face when they want to get pregnant.

Susan Paxton of Australia, for one, made a strong case against the practice of subjecting pregnant women to test for HIV. This is an "act of discrimination" in the health sector, said Paxton of the Asia-Pacific Network of People Living with HIV/AIDS.

Until such time that hospitals have a mechanism sensitive to the particular concerns of women with HIV û including counselling facilities û this attempt at testing should be put on hold, Paxton argued during a well-attended session on Tuesday afternoon..

"The main purpose of such testing is not for the woman's health but to advise her against child birth," she added during a later discussion. "The decision about becoming pregnant is not always under the women's control."

To drive home the point that discrimination like this cuts across both South and South-east Asia, Paxton quoted from the first-ever regional study on AIDS-related discrimination. Of the 753 people surveyed from India, Indonesia, Philippines and India, some 46 percent were women, out of which nearly half, who were pregnant, admitted that they had been coerced into taking an HIV test.

The report also exposed other disturbing figures: 40 percent of women said they were had not been provided pre-test counselling, 52 percent said there had been no post-test counselling and 21 percent said they were not advised about such a test.

Once the tests revealed HIV-positive status, 14 percent of the women were told to have an abortion, a third of the women were told not to have the child and three percent had their baby taken away from them.

Such accounts, in fact, have brought to the fore a reproductive health issue that was not in the spotlight during the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development, the U.N. conference in Cairo that produced a document aimed at shaping the world's reproductive health agenda.

"The reproductive health issues that matter to HIV-positive women have gained in importance since the ICPD, and it is an issue that is still evolving, because it is very sensitive," Michael Mbizvo, a reproductive health expert at the World Health Organisation, told IPS.

"We need more research to be done to ensure that the women with HIV have a right to be pregnant and to be mothers," he added. "Hopefully when we mark the 10 years since the ICPD, we will have a new document that has addressed this problem in concrete language based on evidence."

This development comes in the wake of more girls and women being infected with HIV/AIDS. At the end of 2002, for instance, 19.2 million women across the world had been struck by the pandemic, and they amounted to some 46 percent of the 42 million people living with HIV/AIDS.

In the Asia-Pacific region, women make up 13 percent of the HIV-positive adults living in East Asia and the Pacific, while across South and South-east Asia 35 percent of those afflicted with the deadly virus are women, states a report released this year by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), a regional U.N. agency.

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Marisa and Junsuda are among them. While they try to draw attention to their predicament as members of Power of Life, a group of Thais living with HIV/AIDS, they are determined to stand tall against the social and cultural pressure they face.

"There is no concern about our feelings, about how we live in society," says Junsuda. "So we have to say 'no' to this system, reject it and fight to be able to control our lives." (END/2003)

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Press/Media: SOUTH CHINA MORNING POST
Page(s): P. A15
Date: 10 October 2003

PREVENTING A PANDEMIC | KIM HAK-SU

Asia's Aids challenge

The Asia-Pacific region need not accept HIV-Aids as an inevitable death warrant for its past sins. Instead, there is a critical need to focus attention on providing adequate resources to tackle the problem, especially in the wake of Sars and the terror it wrought. The Sars crisis brought home the pernicious threat posed to the economic well-being of the region by the less-visible and longer-term public-health problem of HIV-Aids.

The sheer magnitude of the possible effects of the HIV-Aids pandemic, compared with the tremendous benefits that could be realised, is the strongest argument for immediate action by governments, civil society and the private sector. Indeed, everyone is a stakeholder. Available resources do not match those needed for a comprehensive response to tackle the spread of HIV. All low- and middle-income countries in the region will need about US$7 billion by 2007. Conservative estimates show there is an 80 per cent shortfall.

Equally important is a timely, rapid and regular flow of funds to implement treatment programmes. The success stories in preventing the spread of the disease have been the result of strong leadership. A prompt commitment on a national and political level, as has happened in Cambodia, Thailand and Botswana, for example, has paved the way for success. The involvement of all ministries – not just the ministry of health is another crucial factor. In Africa, HIV-Aids has had a devastating effect. Indeed, the pandemic is in an advanced stage of evolution. Meanwhile, in the Asia-Pacific region, there has been little said about the disease's spread. Thus far, most of its impact has been at the micro, or household, level. A lack of focus on the problem has, in turn, provided all the right conditions for it to grow into a spectre that now looms large over the region.

Let us just consider the figures: First, on a global scale, five young people become infected every minute. Second, the Asia-Pacific region now accounts for one in five new HIV infections.



Third, more than eight million people in the region were living with the virus by the end of last year, including 2.6 million people aged 15 to 24.

Fourth, Aids claimed approximately 500,000 lives in the region last year. And lastly, by 2010, 19 million new infections are predicted in the 21 countries of the Asia-Pacific region, which equates to more than twice the present rate of infection.

What is the compelling rationale for immediate action? Quite simply, early intervention prevents more infections. A delay in comprehensive responses could halve the number of cases that would have been prevented by 2010. It would also mean a greater loss of productivity and, consequently, a reduction in gross domestic product per-capita growth.

Early intervention makes economic sense. Money spent fighting Aids pays for itself more than three times over, if the economic value of lives saved, lost productivity and health-care costs are added up. A comprehensive, expanded programme of prevention, treatment, care and support must be reinforced with national efforts to ensure there is enough food for everyone, and to provide health care and education for all.

The Asia-Pacific region has the gift of time because HIV-Aids has yet to reach the scale of a sub-Saharan African catastrophe. The region's people may look back on this time as a turning point, when concerted efforts could have made – or indeed did make – a difference by saving millions of lives.

Kim Hak-Su is executive secretary of the Bangkok-based United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

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RIGHTS-THAILAND:

Limited AIDS Drugs Force Doctors to Play God

Marwaan Macan-Markar

BANGKOK, Oct 14 (IPS) - Annop Lekhakul's early steps into the world of medicine have led him to a role that comes close to playing God. After all, he holds the power over longer life or quick death for the patients with HIV at the government hospital he serves here in Thailand.

Tuesdays leave the young doctor drained. That is the day 60 people with HIV call at the hospital in Non Jok, some 40 kilometres east of the Thai capital Bangkok, for their weekly course in counselling and treatment.

Among them are the 19 patients the 26-year-old Annop has chosen to receive the anti-retroviral (ARV) drug cocktail, which slows down the spread of AIDS in the body. The consequence of that decision - that he also has to face the 41 other HIV patients who have no access to the anti-AIDS drugs - does not sit lightly on him.

"It is a troubling decision to make about who will get the drugs and who won't," Annop said on a recent morning in the lime-green painted room the hospital uses for its Tuesday afternoon sessions with the HIV patients from the vicinity. "We base it on a combination of factors - who needs it most, good compliance to the ARV treatment and who came first."

Doctors in other government hospitals across Thailand are not immune from this predicament either. Currently, there are 400 hospitals dispensing free anti-AIDS drugs to HIV patients in the same way the 60-bed Non Chok hospital does - based on a quota system.

Under this mechanism - the Extended Access to Care programme - which was launched by the government in October last year, small state-funded hospitals such as the one where Annop works receive ARVs to treat 20 patients at a time. Larger hospitals receive a quota of drugs to care for 40 patients.

As a result, a little over 20,000 of an estimated 200,000 HIV patients who need anti-AIDS drugs for their survival are enjoying a fresh lease of life in this South-east Asian country, say public health workers and activists seeking to secure wider coverage of ARV

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treatment.

"The government is aiming to get 50,000 HIV patients on ARV treatment by the end of 2004," Dr Koen Frederix of the medical relief agency Medicins Sans Frontiers (MSF) told IPS. "This effort reflects the dramatic change in Thailand over the past two years to provide ARVs to the many people who could not afford to pay for the drugs."

Such an achievement in Thailand, which has an estimated 670,000 people living with HIV/AIDS out of a population of 63.5 million people, is considered remarkable when set against the pattern across the Asia-Pacific region.

Currently, only 43,000, or some four percent, of the one million people with HIV across the continent who need the anti-AIDS drugs have access to them, states a report released this year by the Bangkok-based Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), a regional U.N. agency.

By contrast in Thailand, where over 300,000 people have died due to the pandemic since HIV was first detected in the 1980s, ARV coverage hovers around 10 percent of those who need it. Officials aim to reach 20 percent coverage in a year.

But as recent reports and statements reveal, there is little room for optimism that both Thailand and Asia will witness a manifold increase in the supply of the ARV drug cocktail, which has been available globally since the mid-1990s, to people who desperately need it.

A shortfall in the funds needed to inject more life into ARV therapy is a key reason.

Once again, Thailand helps illustrate this point. In 1996, the country spent over 85 million U.S. dollars on HIV/AIDS programmes, 92 percent of which came from the government and local resources, says Swarup Sarkar of the Joint United Nations Programme on AIDS (UNAIDS). "But the government investment for HIV/AIDS programmes in 2002 was 35 million U.S. dollars."

Preliminary estimates of the amount Asia-Pacific countries have committed this year through public sector funding to tackle HIV/AIDS - including the provision of anti-AIDS drugs - comes to around 200 million U.S. dollars.

But according to Sarkar, this is a number that is woefully inadequate, given that this region needs "an investment of 1.5 billion U.S. dollars for 2003 to tackle HIV/AIDS".

The United Nations' point man on HIV/AIDS asserts that governments must take the lead to change this unhealthy picture. "The money must come from local governments to begin, with help from outside," Peter Piot, executive director of UNAIDS, told IPS in an interview.

The drop in the price of anti-retroviral drugs has made such therapy accessible to many, he added. "Countries that cannot produce the drugs can now import it to provide the treatment."

Piot's call to governments to demonstrate that their hearts lie with

those afflicted by HIV/AIDS comes at a time when the Asia-Pacific is facing a worrying picture.

Already, there are seven million cases of HIV in the region, with one million new infections reported every year, states UNAIDS. It adds that the annual death toll from the epidemic has now reached half a million people.

Sudjai Tapa is one face among those statistics. The 39-year-old Thai from the country's north-east has been living with HIV for the past 10 years. But he considers himself fortunate, since he has been on the ARV regimen for the past three years.

"I was near death till I began taking the drugs," he said, a pensive look in his eyes. "The medicines enabled me to return to a normal life. So it is painful to think of my friends with HIV who don't have access to the ARV drugs." (END/2003)

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Working to help the world's disabled

(2003-11-04 22:23) (China Daily)

Government officials and representatives of non-governmental organizations for disabled persons in Asia and the Pacific are gathering in Beijing to push for a "practical and effective" International Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

An ad hoc committee of the United Nations decided in June to establish the first special convention in its history to safeguard the rights and interests of persons with disabilities, who comprise about one 10th of the global population.

The Beijing seminar, organized by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) and the China Disabled Persons' Federation, is the last in a series of gatherings aimed at establishing the UN convention this year.

The four-day seminar, which opened yesterday, is aimed at boosting public awareness of the process of establishing the convention and to evaluate and endorse the draft of a convention text prepared by an Expert Group Workshop last month in Bangkok, Thailand.

The governmental participants are expected to develop a joint statement expressing collective determination and willingness to support the convention. The statement will be submitted to the ad hoc committee for another round of discussion next year.

A number of new and emerging global issues, such as poverty, increased inequality, armed conflicts, the continuing AIDS threat and technological advances require more complex norms, processes, institutions and mechanisms to address the situation of persons with disabilities, said UNESCAP deputy executive secretary K. Okaido.

China, an enthusiastic initiator and promoter of the international convention, will pledge its constructive efforts as always, said Deng Pufang, president of the China Disabled Persons Federation.

"Asia and the Pacific is the region of most vigorous economic and social development in the world and should play an important

role in world issues, including those regarding persons with disabilities," said Deng.

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Summary

HIV/AIDS

Information sought on victims

Plan to put more under treatment

Aphaluck Bhatiasevi

In an attempt to make anti-retroviral drugs available to most HIV/Aids victims, private businesses have been urged to provide the Public Health Ministry with voluntary information on their employees.

It is estimated that there are at least 670,000 carriers of the virus in the country, but less than 4% have access to anti-retroviral (ARV) treatment.

This year, the ministry plans to provide 50,000 people with free ARV treatment.

Dr Charal Trinvuthiphong, director-general of the Disease Control Department, said since it was not possible to provide these drugs to all the infected people, only the most in need should be identified. Last year, the ministry provided anti-retroviral drugs to some 20,000 patients. It is estimated that about 10% of those carrying the infection have low white blood cell counts and should not be left untreated, said Dr Charal.

He said the Thailand Business Coalition on Aids (TBCA) should cooperate with the ministry in identifying people with HIV/Aids who need urgent treatment. Ms Ellen Devlin of TBCA said this partnership between the ministry and the TBCA will not only be limited to its members, but also include many multinational companies.

The plan to expand the ARV treatment has not been free of concern.

"Hospital services and staff, especially in the public sector, are overstretched," states the UN-Escap project fact sheet.

Apart from cooperating in health care delivery, Ms Nanda Krairiksh, chief of UN-Escap's Programme Management Division, said the project will also organise home-based care and psycho-social support to people living with the virus.

The project seeks to enable those living with HIV/Aids to play a more active role in contributing to quality treatment and care for the other people living with the virus, said Ms Nanda.

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Women gather here to gauge progress

Delegations of feminists' organization in 19 countries along with key figures from local women's groups and governmental bodies gathered yesterday in Seoul for the start of a three-day conference to discuss what progress has been made since gender equality was established as an international issue at 1995's Beijing Platform for Action.

Thelma Kay, Chief of Emerging Social Issues Division within United Nation's Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, declared the conference would address "new challenges, which lie ahead in the light of important developments such as post 9/11 and post-Cancun," referring to the terrorist attacks on the United States and the failure of the World Trade Organization to make headway on global agricultural disputes.

The review of gender equity issues is based on the monitoring of 12 indicators establish by Unescap. These include critical concerns affecting the status of women, such as poverty, education, health, violence, armed conflict, power and decision-making, institutional mechanisms for women's advancement, human rights, media, environment and children. One key concern at the meeting was domestic violence. According to a recent UNICEF study, up to half of the female population around the world suffers from violence in the home.

Alefina Vuki, a representative from the Ministry for Women, Social Welfare and Poverty Alleviation on the Pacific island of Fiji, said domestic violence was "the most common and recognized form of violence" in her country. "The highest political will" is needed to address it, she said.

Singapore, according to its Community Development Ministry representative, has developed new policies to combat domestic violence. Police investigators are now required to notify victims of domestic violence when the person who perpetrated it is released from detention.

On other issues, a representative from Korea's Ministry of Gender Equality said progress was being made in several areas. Ahn Jae-heon, a deputy minister, said Korea had founded a planning committee for eradicating the sex trade and had expanded the number of shelters for women.

"The most urgent issue facing Korea is how to transfer legal and

institutional equality we have achieved to social equality pertaining to our everyday lives," Ms. Ahn said. "The reason Korea was unable to achieve a full-scale gender equality is because national policies have marginalized women's issues."

by Park Soo-mee <myfeast@joongang.co.kr>

2003.11.13

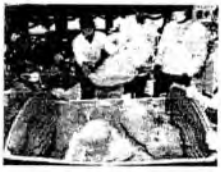
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Asian Countries Fighting Uphill Battle with Increasing Drug Abuse

Ron Corben
Bangkok
01 Dec 2003, 18:35 UTC

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AP

Public Health Ministry officials throw bags of methamphetamine into a cart before burning it during the 20th narcotic destruction ceremony in Ayutthaya, Thailand

Asian countries are dealing with an explosion of amphetamine-type drug abuse.

Asia has become the world's fastest growing market for amphetamine-type stimulants or ATS, also known as "fun drugs."

The United Nations recently issued its first global assessment on amphetamine-type drugs showing a ten-fold increase in seizures of ATS over the past decade to 40 tons in 2001. The report warned that the drug's popularity is spreading at an alarming rate. More than 40 million people used the drugs last year, mostly in East and Southeast Asia, followed by Europe, Australia and the United States.

Dr. John Howard, a director of clinical services at a Sydney drug rehabilitation center, says ATS is a big problem for Asia.,

"ATS is now the major drug of concern in Thailand [and] its becoming the drug of concern for a major part of Laos, it's becoming a drug of concern in Vietnam and it's certainly a drug of concern in Yunnan province in China," he said.

For crime syndicates, the United Nations estimates ATS trafficking brings in up to $65 billion a year, with profit margins of up to 4,000 percent.

Thailand's Golden Triangle, where it shares borders with Burma and Laos, is the epicenter of ATS trafficking. The area has long been known for production of opiates, especially heroin.

Now hundreds of millions of ATS pills flood into Thailand from factories in eastern provinces of Burma.

A U.S. narcotics law enforcement official in Bangkok, Douglas Rasmussen, says the rise in ATS trafficking has prompted governments to enact tougher laws and build more prisons, including some for young offenders. "Unfortunately one of those [responses] is building more prisons and more juvenile facilities to house those people who have been identified as offenders," he

said.

Countries including China, Malaysia, Singapore, Vietnam and Thailand all have death penalty statutes for users and traffickers of both ATS and narcotics.

But the U.N.'s Economic and Social Commission for Asia Pacific says tough laws are not solving the problem.

Dr. Howard in Australia agrees, saying legal responses seldom curb drug abuse. "Of course we know from everywhere that never works," he said. "And so the region is awash with this problem of the drugs."

In Thailand, prison populations have exploded in part because of harsher drug laws. Fifteen prisons with the capacity to hold 90,000 inmates now hold 170,000, more than half of whom are there on drug offenses.

ATS drugs are moving north from Thailand and Burma to the southern Chinese province of Yunnan, with much of it also destined for the booming coastal regions around Shanghai.

China's has seen a dramatic increase in the number of registered drug users, despite some of the world's toughest penalties for drug related offenses.

Yang Fang, a psychiatrist at the Yunnan Institute for Drug Abuse, says ATS use by young people is becoming a bigger problem. "Some youth began to try ATS in disco hall and some bars," she said.

China's detoxification programs have seen some success, but relapse is common because the programs lack follow-on support such as counseling and vocational guidance. Ms. Fang says Yunnan authorities are trying to change that by offering drug prevention programs in schools and communities.

Several other Asian countries are now considering alternatives to jail sentences. They are experimenting with harm reduction programs that contain the damage done by drug abuse, and community support programs, such as education and vocational training.

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A battle victory, but war continues

A year ago this week, His Majesty the King focused on the nation's greatest security threat during his birthday audience. The King's advice to take seriously the problems of illegal drugs spurred the government to action. Some say it has performed too zealously. But Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra is making a mistake by claiming victory in the war on drugs. Indeed, he has won only a battle.

First, the good news. After a shaky and unconvincing start, Mr Thaksin himself directed a campaign. It aimed specifically at intimidating drug users, abusers and street peddlers. It was controversial, too deadly (about which more in a moment) but obviously effective. Much drug use halted, and small-time sellers, particularly of methamphetamines, disappeared off the street. The campaign massively reduced drug use and peddling, and incidents of violent abuse of drugs have almost disappeared from Thai life.

The campaign itself was bloody by any measure. The government claimed that some 2,100 mostly small-time drug sellers were killed by friends or rivals _ ``bad guys killing bad guys" _ while the police were forced to kill 30 others in self defence. It may be a mark of Thai cynicism that almost no one believes these claims.

It is also no matter of pride that many Thais support extra-judicial killings if they make drug peddlers disappear.

Mr Thaksin promised to investigate every killing, but the government has announced the results of exactly none. Human rights groups, particularly abroad, are using these facts and figures against the country.

Two other problems loom. The most troubling is that not a single ``big fish" was nabbed during the hot-season anti-drugs campaign that began in February _ or since. This means that the big shots who smuggle, wholesale and profit from the drugs trade are at large, peddling their influence and corruption, and organising

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new networks to build the number of drug customers again.

In addition, Mr Thaksin has talked about the drug-smuggling threat from Burma, but has refused to address the problem in public with the military junta. The Rangoon dictators, particularly new Prime Minister Khin Nyunt, are close to leaders of the United Wa State Army and other groups known to have an interest in drug smuggling.

Despite claims Rangoon is edging the gangs out of the drugs trade, the news columns of this newspaper continue to detail almost daily seizures of large speed pill shipments from northern Burma. Heroin smuggling has reached record levels from the Golden Triangle. And the United Nations stated categorically last week at a Bangkok conference that Southeast Asia is losing the drug war. The UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific said use of drugs by young people is increasing throughout the region, and specifically in Thailand.

Mr Thaksin, ministers and government supporters should go easy on the rhetoric and stick with the facts as they pat each other on the back today. They deserve praise for spearheading a successful crackdown on street sales and for cutting casual abuse of methamphetamines, probably by a huge amount. They owe the country an accounting of the violence, most especially in cases where friends and families of victims claim mistaken identity. But acting on the advice of the King, they have clearly reduced the amount of drug abuse.

This battle victory is not the end of the war. Drug abuse among youth is highly troubling, and contributes to the spread of Aids among teens and young adults. Big-time drug traffickers remain free and poised to create and feed a drug habit again. The bureaucracy and security services remain vulnerable to bribery and corruption by drug traffickers. The past year has been a big step forward against drugs, not final victory.

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UNESCAP hails Viet Nam's care of disabled people

(12/02/2003 – 18:27GMT+7)

Ha Noi, Dec. 2 (VNA) - The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) has hailed Viet Nam for its activities to help disabled people.

Viet Nam is the first country in the region to give priorities to seven programmes for the disabled people and include programmes on disabled people, said Vice Minister of Labour, War Invalids and Social Affairs Nguyen Dinh Lieu at talks in Ha Noi on Tuesday.

He said Viet Nam will help raise social awareness about disabled people, and encourage the disabled to overcome difficulties and integrate into the community.

During the talks under the title "Bringing the Ordinance on Disabled People into Life", participants dealt with issues relating to families of disabled people, handicapped women and children, their access to information technology and telecommunications, and poverty reduction programmes.-Enditem

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Asian Economy

Dec 4, 2003

Asia's regional labor tensions grow

By John Berthelsen

The increasing tempo of immigration roundups in Japan and Korea is shining the spotlight on an issue that has long been largely a Western concern. As Asia becomes more prosperous, intra-regional immigration, both legal and illegal, is skyrocketing and raising social tensions in what for generations have mostly been homogenous, mono-ethnic societies.

These foreign workers are a growing necessity for Asia's increasingly prosperous employers, who find in them people who are hungry for jobs that local countrymen regard as dirty, dangerous or demeaning - just as Western businessmen have known for decades. Where poverty-stricken Chinese long saw their future in Jinshan --gold mountain, their name first for San Francisco, and later for the United States - and Indians, Pakistanis and Filipinos fled towards the oil fields of the Middle East and the factories of Germany, France and England, today Korea, Japan and Taiwan are increasingly becoming magnets for such economic boat people.

Multi-ethnic Western societies, particularly the US with its polyglot agglomeration of races, religions and ethnic groups, have absorbed waves of immigration, sometimes with ease, sometimes with severe hostility. The Asian nations do not appear able to deal with that reality yet. Both Japan and Korea have ordered Draconian crackdowns on overstayed migrants in recent weeks.

The outbreak of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome in early 2003 spurred some of these xenophobic tendencies. Eric Teo Chu Cheow, council secretary of the Singapore Institute of International Affairs and a resource panel member of the Singapore Parliamentary Committee on Defense and Foreign Affairs, wrote in April that "viruses, like a myriad of other cross-border problems, still fester across the region. These problems include the rapid spread of deadly diseases and AIDS, the trafficking of drugs, arms, women and children as well as clandestine labor movement, and environmental and health hazards."

International immigration for employment has grown so rapidly as an economic and social phenomenon in Asia, according to the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) that there currently about 5.5 million migrant workers are in the main destination economies in East and Southeast Asia.

Official deployments from major countries of origin, at about 1 million workers in 1990, more than doubled to 2.4 million by the end

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of the decade, although real numbers are far higher because so many migrate without registering with national authorities, and bring UNESCAP's total to 5.5 million.

"Social issues are emerging because of the millions of international migrants working outside of their home countries," according to the UNESCAP report, prepared for the Fifth Asian and Pacific Population Conference in Bangkok in December 2002. "The scope of international labor migration requires more thorough planning at the national level and among countries at the regional and sub-regional level."

Certainly there are plenty of social issues. There are concerns over the impact on Asia's traditionally strong family structures, particularly when women leave, as they do in the Philippines, Indonesia, Sri Lanka and other countries to become domestics elsewhere. Migration, the UN report points out, has the potential to improve the status and autonomy of women, whether they are the migrants or their husbands are and they are left alone to care for the family.

Human trafficking is obviously a serious problem, with estimates of the annual number of women and children victims in Southeast Asia as high as 200,000 to 225,000 and on the rise because of the increasing involvement of organized crime.

Nonetheless, remittances of earnings from overseas workers are enormously important to the countries of origin as well as to the families left behind, who use the money largely for subsistence, but do manage to put some into homebuilding and a small amount for investment. According to the World Bank, they are the third world's second-largest source of development capital, behind foreign direct investment but well outpacing either capital market flows or official development assistance. These remittances amounted to US$72.3 billion in 2001, or 1.3 percent of the world's gross domestic product.

The changing demographics of immigration are clearly shown in the UNESCAP document from the 2002 Bangkok meeting. In 1990, 65 percent of the workers leaving the Philippines were going to the Middle East, only 27 percent seeking work in Asia itself. By 1998, the number of workers going to the Middle East had fallen to 47 percent, with the numbers working in Asia rising to 46 percent. The two Gulf Wars have changed the face of immigration dramatically as Asian workers shy away from war zones. Thailand in 1999 deployed more than 202,000 workers overseas, with only 9 percent going to the Middle East. A full 89 percent were in Asia, with 57 percent going to Taiwan alone.

There are significant population movements across land borders between India and Nepal, Bangladesh to India, China and Russia. There are also huge internal migrations, such as those in China, where hundreds of thousands of people are constantly on the move. Interestingly enough, much of this labor migration is a crawl up the economic ladder, with Burmese fleeing to Thailand to take jobs vacated by Thais on their way to the Middle East or Hong Kong to take jobs that affluent Arabs or Chinese won't do.

The Philippines is traditionally the biggest provider of what UNESCAP calls "annual deployments", with as many as 800,000 moving to other countries looking for work. Indonesia and India normally send about 400,000 abroad, with Bangladesh, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Thailand routinely deploying 100,000 to 200,000.

As a percentage of the labor force, these economic migrants are

flooding into the most open societies. Although Brunei is an anomaly, with 36 percent of its workers from outside the tiny, oil-steeped sultanate, Singapore is second, with 24 percent of its workers from overseas, working in a wide variety of skill levels to sustain its economic output.

The richest of the industrial countries, Japan and Korea, however, are doing their best to keep them out or limit their access. The work force in Japan, with the most developed industrial society in Asia, is comprised of less than 1 percent foreign workers, compared to other industrialized societies such as the US, with far higher numbers.

Japan aims to keep it that way. Politicians in recent elections inveighed against foreign criminals and newspapers editorialized against their influence. In September, authorities responded by going after as many as 250,000 foreign workers believed to have overstayed their visas in the biggest dragnet for foreigners ever recorded in a single swoop.

A breakdown of foreign workers by Japan's Ministry of Justice shows that the biggest single category for foreign workers is entertainers, most of them from the Philippines, who work in Japan's bars. The second largest group is "trainees", who are allowed to stay up to three years. In reality, they are guest workers.

Korea, relatively new to the concept of labor shortages and domestic workers who don't want to do dirty or demeaning jobs, has about 630,000 foreign workers, accounting for about 1.3 percent of its 49 million population. Of those, about 290,000 are undocumented. Under the provisions of a law passed recently, unregistered migrant workers were ordered to be out of Korea by November 14, with those employing them to be fined 20,000 won (US$17,000) if they were caught. The dislocations have been wrenching, with four workers committing suicide and others hiding in empty buildings or running for their lives to get away from immigration authorities.

UNESCAP asks: Does a true regional labor market exist across Asia? True labor markets imply that labor demand and supply cross international boundaries to other countries, with workers having access to information about jobs and being able to choose between them. There would be some convergence in wage levels, and there would be unified laws, regulations and labor-related institutions.

Certainly, the UN agency says, the latter two are nonexistent except in certain highly-specialized occupations such as information technology or manufacturing. But, the report says, a Thai construction worker may well have at least partial information about work opportunities in other regional countries.

Because so much of the labor migration within the region has been clandestine or irregular, as the Korean and Japanese authorities can attest, the rights and benefits of migrant workers are often weak, and for those on the run, nonexistent.

Governments, partly because of rife xenophobia, have been slow to recognize the value of such overseas employment. But, as the countries grow in prosperity and, in the case of Singapore, Hong Kong, Japan and other developed economies, birth rates continue to fall below replacement levels and they inevitably must turn to international labor migration to maintain their economic status.

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THAILAND: 'Post' receives Unescap award

Praise for coverage of disability issues

Bangkok Post
Thursday, December 4, 2003

The Bangkok Post has been recognised by Unescap for its extensive coverage of the plight of the disabled.

The UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia-Pacific presented its award yesterday, the International Day of the Disabled.

It was awarded to the Post in recognition of "outstanding achievements in promoting disability issues to the public and reporting the voices of persons with disabilities."

A message from UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, read by Unescap deputy executive secretary Keiko Okaido, praised the role of the media and non-governmental organisations in raising awareness of issues affecting the disabled.

"The media is a key partner in the process of empowering persons with disabilities, in

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addressing discrimination, prejudice and ignorance, and in ending stereotypical portrayals of persons with disabilities," Mr Annan said.

"Non-governmental organisations also have a vital role to play in building understanding among society as a whole _ on issues as diverse as the impact of landmines, the importance of educating disabled children, and the need to utilise information and communications technologies to empower disabled persons." Mr Annan also said the UN General Assembly was scheduled to commence drafting of a "Comprehensive and Integral International Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities."

The preparation of the convention would require a consultative process at the national, regional and global levels _ a process in which the voices of disabled people must be heard, he said.

Mr Annan said that giving the disabled "a voice of their own" should not be restricted to one day a year.

"This is a welcome opportunity, but is one that we should not confine just to this important day," he said.

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INTERNATIONAL DAY OF THE DISABLED

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Date: 10 December 2003

Picture by SOMKIAT CHEUNTVANIT

Speaking out

Disabled people struggle for equal opportunities and rights

Story by **HEAMAKARN SRICHARASCHANYA**

It is often said that the voice of the disabled is too soft to be heard. If they gathered together and voiced the need for equality and better welfare, would it be loud enough to gain public attention and cause some changes in society?

The United Nations announced December 3 as the International Day of Disabled Persons. To mark the occasion, a seminar on "A Voice of Our Own" was held at its office to serve as a stage for the disabled to speak out concerning their problems and needs.

Akkamol Patayanan, former president of the Thai Youth Foundation for the Blind, said that discrimination against the disabled still occurs widely.

"Because we are handicapped, it does not mean that we do not have the potential to do things," he said. "The disabled are not different from normal people."

Take a look at the former US President Franklin D. Roosevelt, who had poliomyelitis, he said. He could still do the top job and achieve much.

Akkamol has a bachelor's degree from Chulalongkorn University's Faculty of Political Science. He said disadvantages in education is a basic hindrance for equal opportunity for the disabled.

"Although there are some government scholarships for the disabled like a quota to get into public universities, it is not enough," he said.

"Only a certain group of people is served, not those at the grass roots."

An ideal solution to this problem in his opinion is through social construction — discrimination against the disabled should be removed.

"The effective way is to promote equal rights," he said. "However, this requires cooperation from both international and national organisations."

He added that international organisations play an important role in bridging the gap between the two groups since the international organisations can be powerful enough to make changes in local policies.

Chakkrit Metchanun, secretary of the Association of Parents of Thai Persons with Autism, who has an autistic son, said that he hopes to see no discrimination against people with autism.

The bad experience he has gone through stems from education. "When my son was three, no school accepted him," he said, adding that schools should be equipped to handle children with developmental disorders.

According to him, people with autism should have an equal right to life, to have an adequate standard of living and access to health care. He said that there should be more health promotion supporting people with disorders.

> **'People with autism should have an equal right to life, to have an adequate standard of living and access to health care.'**
>
> CHAKKRIT METCHANUN
> *Secretary of the Association of Parents of Thai Persons with Autism*

In the long run, his concern, reflecting that of many who live with disabled people, is about how his son would be able to live if he and his wife were to die.

But the rights and welfare of the disabled nowadays are better than those of yesterday.

According to Boonlert Changyai, senior executive editor of *Matichon* newspaper, the new constitution offered greater recognition of basic human rights, which include those of the disabled.

"After the new constitution, which truly came from the public, the rights of the public, including those of the disabled, as a whole are better protected," he said.

That does not mean problems have been wiped away.

"One of the hurdles which the disabled have to face is the fact that the laws do not benefit them yet, and government officials are not helpful enough," he said. "But once the authorities are willing to follow the constitution, the situation will improve."

He suggested that the disabled continue to voice their needs even if their voices were "soft" and the government did not pay attention.

One way to amplify their voice would be to forge cooperation between organisations of the disabled and other goodwill organisations who wish to help the disadvantaged.

"The call for basic rights is a political movement," he said, adding that Thai disabled people should tell the government about the exact problems they have and what they really want the government to do about them.

He said cooperation between international organisations and local groups would also make their voices louder. As a result, the government would pay more attention.

At the regional level, the overall outlook of the fight for equal rights is expected to improve. According to Kaj Nagara, a representative from Escap, governments in the Asia-Pacific region have declared the extension of the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons, 1993-2002, for another decade, 2003-2012.

As policy guidelines for the renewed decade, the high-level intergovernmental meeting to conclude the Asian and Pacific Decade held in Japan on October 2002, adopted the Biwako Millennium Framework for action towards an inclusive, barrier-free and rights-based society for persons with disabilities in Asia and the Pacific (BMF).

BMF incorporates disability concerns into national policies and programmes to achieve the targets of the United Nation's millennium development goals.

"This should have an impact on the national laws," she said. "With help from the mass media, we should be able to make some positive changes."

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Summary

HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Task force to tackle sex trade

Experts urge greater cooperation in fight

Canberra, AFP

Australia's top crime fighting agency has set up a task force with extra powers to stop people-smugglers bringing sex slaves into the country — with Thailand's trafficking problem cited as one of the worst, said Justice Minister Chris Ellison.

Mr Ellison signed an agreement with Phnom Penh yesterday that will increase police cooperation on people-smuggling, after signing earlier accords with Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia and China. He said the Australian Crime Commission (ACC) task force had been given the authority to use coercive powers to stamp out the "repugnant" trade.

He said: "The Australian government and its law enforcement agencies are committed to the fight against people-trafficking for sexual exploitation, and the ACC's new special intelligence operation is another weapon against this vile transnational organised crime."

Australian authorities said hundreds of young women are lured annually from across Asia with promises of glamorous jobs, but once they arrived they are forced to work as sex slaves.

The ACC has since April been investigating suspected links between the sex industry and people-smuggling by organised crime syndicates.

Mr Ellison visited Southeast Asia for discussions with local officials about the problem. Thailand's trafficking problem is regarded as particularly acute, as the kingdom is simultaneously a country of origin, transit and destination.

Chulalongkorn University law professor Vitit Muntabhorn said a lack of awareness in dealing with the issue was one of the primary obstacles in stopping human trafficking.

He said: "The life of a trafficking victim can be like torture. We have to work with all parties involved, including the government and local authorities because this is where these things are happening." Trafficking in women and children is reportedly on the rise in Asia, but the lack of a plan to combat the trade was hampering the efforts of police, judiciary and rights groups.

The United Nations estimated more than 200,000 women and children were trafficked annually in Asia, largely for sexual exploitation.

"Trafficking is a rapidly-growing problem and is trans-boundary in nature," said UN official Thelma Kay.

"This affects many countries in the Asian region where there is no comprehensive legal framework."

She said greater cooperation was needed between government and non-government groups to fight trafficking.

Ms Kay said a new UN book provided the first comprehensive set of guidelines for dealing with human trafficking, and would significantly improve coordination between organisations fighting to protect vulnerable people.

"Cooperation is the absolute key to fighting trafficking, but we have to understand what it means," said International Organisation for Migration spokeswoman Irena Vojackova-Sollorano.

"It does not mean sitting and discussing how good our projects are."

Trafficking ranks among the fastest growing transnational crimes.

The US State Department believed as many as two million people, the vast majority of them women and children, are being trafficked across international borders each year. Experts have estimated the multi-billion-dollar business is more lucrative than the illegal arms trade.

2. Managing Globalization

2.1 Environment and Sustainable Development

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BEST IN NEWSPAPER DESIGN IN ASIA
The Straits Times INTERACTIVE

S'pore hailed as model for cleanup of polluted cities

Unlike places with 'toothless' environment authorities, Singapore has practices worth studying and adopting, says top UN official

By Sharmilpal Kaur

THE Asia-Pacific region has 12 of the world's 15 most polluted cities, and a United Nations body is looking to Singapore as a model of how these cities can be cleaned up.

In a study, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (Escap) cited the Republic's organised approach to combating pollution, resulting in more people being aware of the environment.

Mr Ravi Sawhney, director for environment and sustainability of the UN body, said: 'Singapore is a model whose practices we would like to study and document for others to adopt and adapt.

'In Singapore, you can breathe the air. In some countries, you can also see it.'

The top UN official noted that cities such as New Delhi in India, Beijing in China, and Teheran in Iran and other countries in the region face resource depletion, waste, pollution, worsened living conditions and trans-boundary environmental problems.

Weak implementation of pollution policies has hampered attempts at resolving the problems started by rapid economic expansion in the region.

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In these countries, various ministries 'worked in compartments', instead of together.

He added: 'Yes, countries articulate the policy but the environment ministries in most countries are toothless.'

Mr Sawhney told The Straits Times that these countries can improve by learning from others in the region who have done well, such as Kitakyushu in south Japan, which was a polluted city before.

Escap has a network of 54 cities in which members learn the best practices from one another. Singapore is not such a member, but it has an understanding with Escap to give technical help to other countries.

Mr Sawhney was in Singapore to attend a trade show at Suntec City, showcasing companies in the environment, water, chemical and petrochemical industries.

It was launched on Tuesday by Dr Vivian Balakrishnan, Minister of State for National Development and Trade and Industry.

He highlighted the need for environmental management as well as the tremendous savings for chemical and petrochemical companies that export to the United States, because of the recent US-Singapore free trade agreement.

They will get most of the $146 million savings in tariffs estimated for non-textile exports, he said.

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Published December 24, 2003

Pollution spreads as Asia grows

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By JASON SZEP

EVERY two years, Indonesia loses about four million hectares of forest, an area roughly the size of Switzerland, to rapacious logging.



A billowing problem: smoke from a house in China only serves to underscore the fact that six of the world's 15 most polluted cities are in Asia

Skies in northern China glow orange in sandstorms that cross the Pacific and lay dust on western US. In Hong Kong, raw sewage bobs in its pearl-blue harbour.

From inner Mongolia to the Indian sub-continent and tropical South-east Asia, says one senior UN environmental official, the region's ecology and environment is deteriorating as its factories and economies boom. Although governments are rolling out unprecedented initiatives to tackle Asian pollution - underscored by a meeting of South-east Asian environment ministers in mid-December in Myanmar - the policies are often badly enforced, the official adds.

'Things could get worse before they get better,' Ravi Sawhney, director of the environment and sustainable development division of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for the Asia-Pacific, or Unescap, told Reuters.

Mr Sawhney is studying Asia's environment for the UN State of

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the Environment Report released every five years. Although the next report is not due until 2005, he said indications point to a broad-based worsening in environmental conditions.

'There are policy initiatives that have been taken and laws enacted and so on. But the problem is the actual implementation,' he said.

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As if to highlight what he says, landslips and mudslides as recently as November and mid-December in corners of Indonesia and the Philippines plagued by illegal logging swept away or buried alive whole families.

Six of the world's 15 most polluted cities are in Asia, and the region generates a third of the world's carbon dioxide emissions. In Asia's developing regions, around 785 million people lack regular access to safe water, UN statistics show.

But there are pockets of improvement. The air quality in notoriously polluted Bangkok, Dhaka, New Delhi and several Chinese cities is healthier after most of Asia, except for Indonesia, phased out lead from petrol, said Cornie Huizenga of the Asian Development Bank's Clean Air Initiative.

Bangladesh, which is spending US$30 million over two years to bring natural gas to 100 petrol stations, is replacing high-polluting two-stroke engines in its rickshaw taxis in the capital Dhaka with cleaner-burning natural gas power.

'It's an unequal picture. There are cities where the situation is getting better,' said Mr Huizenga, adding that a growing number of cities have put up air monitoring systems.

Thailand's 'tuk tuk' taxis now run on liquefied petroleum gas, while buses and taxis in New Delhi and Bombay are phasing out diesel and running instead on compressed natural gas. 'This is very much the story of the future,' he added.

Mr Huizenga and other environmental experts helped the Association of South-east Asian Nations (Asean) draw up an anti-pollution plan as rising wealth brings demands for better urban conditions after decades of squalor in some countries.

The South-east Asian Environment Ministers meeting in Myanmar approved a non-binding 'framework' which calls on Asean to develop stronger urban anti-polluting strategies beginning with a series of workshops next year.

'Due to rapid growth, you're getting overlapping problems - water, air, land - on top of each other, making a very complex situation,' said Peter Marcotullio, a researcher in the Institute of Advanced Studies at the United Nations University in Tokyo.

'So part of what is being done here is to tease out some of these problems so that city managers can deal with them one at a time, as opposed to what seems to be happening is that they are all coming at them at the same time.'

Fixing Asia's environmental mess - from stifling sandstorms and rapid soil erosion in China to treating sewage in Indian rivers and SEA air pollution - is turning into a billion-dollar business. The US Department of Commerce is sending an 'Environmental Technologies' trade mission to Malaysia, Thailand and Vietnam next March to scout for opportunities for US companies, citing 'significant' potential for US expansion.

It estimates that Malaysia's 'environmental' market is worth around US$800 million, mostly for safe water supply and sewage treatment, and says Thailand needs to spend around US$1.2-1.5 billion on clean water and sanitation by 2020.

In Vietnam, a pollution control equipment and services market was worth US$450 million in 2003 alone, it said. Other environmental problems, however, are festering.

In Indonesia, home to the world's third-largest tropical forests after Brazil and the Congo, forests have disappeared at a rate three to four times faster than those in Brazil since 1990, mostly because of logging and burning, says international environmental group Global Forest Watch.

'Every year, the country is losing nearly two million hectares of forest. If this rate continues, then by 2010, most forest in Sumatra and Kalimantan will disappear,' Longgena Ginting, head of local environmental group Walhi, told Reuters, referring to two of Indonesia's biggest islands.

Much of this feeds huge demand for timber in economically booming China where logging was banned after excessive tree-felling contributed to floods that killed around 4,000 people in 1998. - Reuters

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Summary

ASIA / IMPROVING THE ENVIRONMENT

UN: Most nations now have laws

But experts agree that enforcement lacking

Singapore, Reuters

Every two years, Indonesia loses about four million hectares of forest, an area roughly the size of Switzerland, to rapacious logging.

Skies in northern China glow orange in sandstorms that cross the Pacific and lay dust on the western United States. In Hong Kong, raw sewage bobs in its once pearl-blue harbour.

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"Things could get worse before they get better," Ravi Sawhney, director of the environment and sustainable development division of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for the Asia-Pacific, or Unescap, said.

Mr Sawhney is studying Asia's environment for the UN "State of the Environment Report" released every five years. Although the next report is not due until 2005, Mr Sawhney said indications point to a broad-based worsening in environmental conditions.

"There are policy initiatives that have been taken and laws enacted and so on. But the problem is the actual implementation," he said.

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But there are pockets of improvement.

The air quality in notoriously polluted Bangkok, Dhaka, New Delhi and several Chinese cities is healthier after most of Asia, except for Indonesia, phased out lead from gasoline, said Cornie Huizenga of the Asian Development Bank's Clean Air Initiative. Bangladesh, which is spending $30 million over two years to bring natural gas to 100 petrol stations, is replacing high-polluting two-stroke engines in its rickshaw taxis in Dhaka with cleaner-burning natural gas power.

"It's an unequal picture. There are cities where the situation is getting better," said Mr Huizenga, adding that a growing number of cities have put up air monitoring systems.

Thailand's "tuk tuk" taxis now run on liquefied petroleum gas, while buses and taxis in New Delhi and Bombay are phasing out diesel and running instead on compressed natural gas.

"This is very much the story of the future," he added. Mr Huizenga and other environmental experts helped Asean draw up an anti-pollution plan as rising wealth brings demands for better urban conditions after decades of squalor. Southeast Asian environment ministers meeting in Burma approved a non-binding "framework" which calls on Asean to develop stronger urban anti-polluting strategies beginning with a series of workshops next year.

"Due to rapid growth, you're getting overlapping water, air, land problems on top of each other, making a very complex situation," said Peter Marcotullio, a researcher at the Institute of Advanced Studies at the United Nations University in Tokyo.

"So part of what is being done here is to tease out some of these problems so that city managers can deal with them one at a time, as opposed to what seems to be happening is that they are all coming at them at the same time."

Fixing Asia's environmental mess is turning into a billion-dollar business. US Department of Commerce is sending an "Environmental Technologies" trade mission to Malaysia, Thailand and Vietnam next March to scout for opportunities for US companies, citing "significant" potential. It estimates that Malaysia's "environmental" market is worth $800 million, mostly for safe water supply and sewage treatment.

Thailand, the US says, needs to spend up to $1.5 billion on clean water and sanitation by 2020.

In Vietnam, a pollution control equipment and services market was worth US$450 million in 2003 alone, it said.

Other environmental problems, however, are festering.

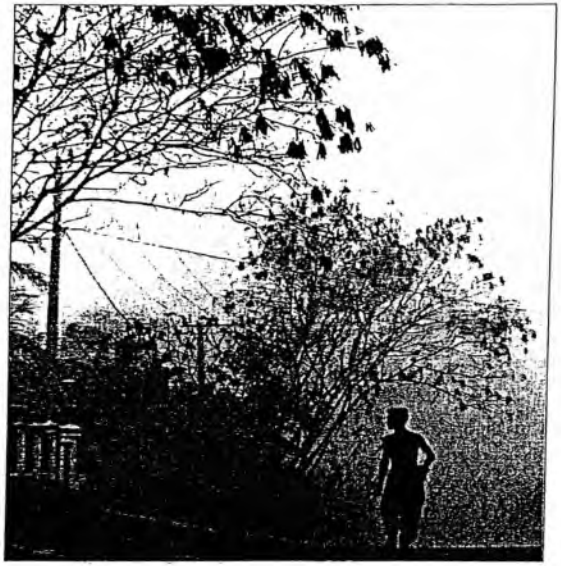
In Indonesia, home to the world's third-largest tropical forests after Brazil and the Congo, forests have disappeared at a rate three to four times faster than those in Brazil since 1990, mostly because of logging and burning, says environmental group Global Forest Watch.

"Every year the country is losing nearly two million hectares of forest. If this rate continues then by 2010 most forest in Sumatra and Kalimantan will disappear," Longgena Ginting, head of local environmental group Walhi, said.

Much of this feeds huge demand for timber in economically booming China where logging was banned after excessive tree-felling contributed to floods that killed around 4,000 people in 1998.

Chee Yoke Ling of the Third World Network, a Malaysian lobby group, said countries such as Malaysia had nice-sounding environmental laws but fell down on implementation, as damage to tropical forests in Borneo's Sarawak and Sabah states continues.

But Waldemar Mathews from a Bavarian environmental research institute said: "We had the same problems in Europe 30 years ago. And we started with the same discussions."



An Indonesian boy is silhouetted against smog from forest fires near Jambi on Indonesia's island of Sumatra in this file photo taken June 18, 1998. — REUTERS

Sawhney is studying Asia's environment for the UN "State of the Environment Report" released every five years. Although the next report is not due until 2005, Sawhney said indications point to a broad-based worsening in environmental conditions.

"There are policy initiatives that have been taken and laws enacted and so on. But the problem is the actual implementation," he said.

As if to highlight what he says, landslips and mudslides as recently as November and mid-December in corners of Indonesia and the Philippines plagued by illegal logging swept away or buried alive whole families.

Winds of change

Six of the world's 15 most polluted cities are in Asia, and the region generates a third of the world's carbon dioxide emissions. In Asia's developing regions, around 785 million people lack regular access to safe water, UN statistics show.

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Southeast Asian Environment Ministers meeting in Myanmar approved a non-binding "framework" which calls on ASEAN to develop stronger urban anti-polluting strategies beginning with a series of workshops next year.

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Fixing Asia's environmental mess – from stifling sandstorms and rapid soil erosion in China to treating sewage in Indian rivers and Southeast Asian air pollution – is turning into a billion-dollar business.

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Festering issues
Other environmental problems, however, are festering.

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"Every year the country is losing nearly two million hectares of forest. If this rate continues then by 2010 most forest in Sumatra and Kalimantan will disappear," Longgena Ginting, head of local environmental group Walhi, told Reuters, referring to two of Indonesia's biggest islands.

Much of this feeds huge demand for timber in economically booming China where logging was banned after excessive tree-felling contributed to floods that killed around 4,000 people in 1998.

Chee Yoke Ling of the Third World Network, a Malaysian lobby group, said countries such as Malaysia had nice-sounding environmental laws but fell down on implementation, as damage to tropical forests in Borneo's Sarawak and Sabah states continues.

"We have it but we don't enforce it," she said.

Chinese sandstorms are widely attributed to over-grazing, over-ploughing and over-use of water resources.

ASEAN's "Framework on Environmentally Sustainable Cities" uses some European cities as a model and is partly funded with German taxpayer money through the Hanns Seidel Foundation.

"We had the same problems in Europe years ago, starting 30 years ago with completely poisoned lakes, rivers, in Germany, poisoned air," said Waldemar Mathews, managing director of the Bavarian Institute of Applied Environmental Research and Technology. "And we started with the same discussions."

ASEAN groups Brunei, Malaysia, Indonesia, Vietnam, Singapore, Laos, Cambodia, the Philippines, Myanmar and Thailand.

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2.2 Information, Communication and Space Technology

Associated Press

01/15/2003 01:21:27

Asia agrees to work together to spread Internet use in region

BC-AS-GEN--Japan-Information Summit, 1st Ld-Writethru
Asia agrees to work together to spread Internet use in region
Eds: ADDS final tally of attendance in 2nd graf; comment from education group in 8th-9th grafs; U.N. official comment in 11th-12th grafs; minor edit thruout to conform.
By YURI KAGEYAMA=
Associated Press Writer=
TOKYO (AP) _ Representatives from Asian governments, businesses and grass-roots groups vowed to wipe out inequalities in Internet growth Wednesday, wrapping up a three-day meeting to hammer out a regional agreement for a U.N.-initiated technology world summit in December.

The Tokyo Declaration was adopted at the final session of the Asian Regional Conference, which drew 600 people representing 48 countries, 21 international organizations, 53 businesses and more than 100 nongovernment groups.

The regional meetings, including previous ones in Europe and Africa, are preparing for the Dec. 10-12 World Summit on the Information Society in Geneva, aimed at offering a global vision for the Internet age for fighting cybercrime, protecting copyright and setting standards while protecting freedoms, privacy and human rights.

``High-quality access attainable through broadband has great potential to help better deliver essential services required to meet basic human needs,'' the 11-page Tokyo statement said.

Participants said widespread use of Internet technology can reduce poverty, zap information to remote areas, boost the quality of education and help developing nations long left out of technological innovations.

While declaring lofty goals, the gathering did not attempt to come up with specifics, leaving the challenge of working out a policy agreement and action plan for the world summit.

Some critics are worried an agreement among governments to police cyberspace or regulate information may encourage censorship on the Net and restrict news coverage.

Robert Francis Garcia of Asian South Pacific Bureau of Adult Education in the Philippines called the Tokyo Declaration ``a compromise document'' that was more about fostering economic growth than about ensuring human rights.

``It is silent on certain security issues,'' he told reporters after the meeting held at a Tokyo hotel. ``It doesn't have a mention of the issue of censorship.''

Wednesday's agreement said measures against cybercrime ``must respect the sovereignty of nations and maintain respect for the constitutional and other rights of all persons, including freedom of expression.''

Kim Hak-Su, head of the U.N. Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, or **ESCAP**, who was a main speaker at the conference, acknowledged more work was needed.

``The Tokyo Declaration is directional,'' he said. ``We need more meetings.''

A clear reminder of the deep divisions in the region came on Tuesday, when talks were delayed for several hours after China protested the presence of Taiwan nongovernment groups as an affront to its ``one-China policy.''

China claims Taiwan as its territory and says it has no right to conduct foreign relations, which makes the self-governing island's role in international meetings a sensitive matter.

China returned to the sessions after a backroom compromise with Japanese organizers that allowed representatives from Taiwan to stay as part of a Japanese nonprofit organization. It was unclear whether China would make similar protests at the preparatory meeting set for February in Geneva.

Representatives of nongovernment groups commended the conference for bringing in grass-roots views but were outraged by China's opposition to the participation of Taiwan groups, criticizing it as unneeded government intervention.

Adam Peake of the Center for Global Communications in Tokyo said he feared nongovernment groups' right to attend was ``being negotiated away.''

``I do have the right to be heard,'' he said. Officials taking part in the forum said countries must work together to spread and develop affordable technology to bridge the ``digital divide,'' while maintaining cultural diversity and encouraging poor nations to create as well as consume network content.

``When you dream alone, it is still a dream, but when you dream together, it is already a beginning of reality,'' Adama Samassekou, who heads the preparatory committee for the summit, said in a closing speech. ``Let us then dream together.''

- basic information
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ICT Success Story

NEWSROOM : NEWSLETTER : 20 FEBRUARY 2003

WSIS Asia-Pacific Regional Conference. Tokyo (Japan), 13-15 January 2003



At the meeting, representatives of 48 Governments, 21 International Organizations, 53 Private Sector Entities and 116 NGOs discussed a number of issues related to the Information Society and debated over the content of the final output of the meeting, a document called the Tokyo Declaration. The Declaration will go forward as an substantial input of the Asia-Pacific Region to the second preparatory meeting of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) which will be held from 17 to 28 February 2003 in Geneva bringing together participants from around the world as part of the large planning process that must precede the December Summit.

The Tokyo Declaration touches on a wide range of issues related to the Information

Society and includes a call for greater information security, a balance between content owners and users in the area of intellectual property rights, and more work on the digital divide.

The conference heard more pledges to bridge the digital divide and several points in the Declaration focuses on extending the benefits of the information society to the poor and otherwise disadvantaged.

"The digital divide unfortunately is widening," said Kim Hak Su, the Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for the Asia-Pacific and the U.N.'s highest ranking official in Asia.

"This digital divide will be with us for some years to come and we have to work very hard. There is no magic formula but we should work hard," he said. Kim admitted that promises to help have been made before and the problem often comes down to paying for things. "We need the private sector to do many things. Governments cannot do everything anymore."

Speaking after the event, a number of NGOs that had taken part in the summit said they were broadly satisfied with the outcome but had hoped for greater commitment in a number of areas such as a social justice. They were satisfied with the inclusion of a reference to human rights in the declaration, despite some attempts to change it, they said.

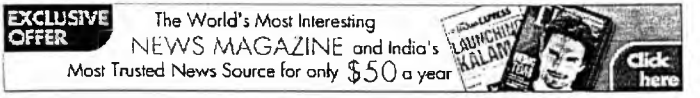
The groups also repeated protests over the deregistration of NGOs from Taiwan on Tuesday as the result of repeated protests by the Chinese government delegation.

"There is discrimination against the principles of WSIS for a comprehensive inclusion of all stakeholders in the information society including civil society, which includes Taiwanese NGOs as well," said Chuang Chiting, the International Affairs Director of the Taiwan Association for Human Rights.

"As Taiwan is a very powerful ICT country and it provides major input to the information society, we do hope our voices can be heard and be constructive towards a better future in the international community," she said. The representatives were allowed to stay at the meeting under the affiliation of a Japanese NGO.

For more information, see: www. www.wsis-japan.jp

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Updated : 2003-05-02



TECH'N BIZ

Networked To Face Disaster: 9/11 A Crucial Lesson

Our Efe Bureau

New Delhi: From January to September 2002 alone, natural catastrophes in the world have cost countries and communities an estimated $56 billion, according to an United Nations study. Add to that man-made destructions —the 9/11 World Trade Center attack being one such. Reason enough for organisations around the world to sit up and think about how they can be better prepared in facing disasters. Or maybe for countries to strategise on disaster preparedness. In all this, modern technology has a key role to play.

Harnessing modern technology and increasing regional cooperation in disaster preparedness could save lives and help prevent some of the billions of dollars in property damage each year across Asia-Pacific region. This was the consensus at a recent UN meeting. In fact, the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) recently established a new information, communication and space technology division, towards the same objective.

But besides prevention and warning, some other aspects of disaster management are attracting much attention worldwide. While one of them is responding to an emergency situation, another is what is known as business continuity planning (BCP). Needless to say that without IT, disaster management of any kind will be impossible in today's age and day.

The basics first. Business continuity planning or BCP is what organisations are focusing on in an aggressive manner. Consulting firm PricewaterhouseCoopers describes BCP as 'a statement of actions to be taken, resources to be used, the procedures to be followed before, during and after a disaster which renders a business function totally or partially unavailable.' Importantly, points out a senior official at PwC that BCP needs to be a business plan, though technology (including IT) forms an integral part of the plan.

'Network Review', a journal catering to IT professionals, looks at lessons learnt from 9/11 in an article on disaster management. It says: "Perhaps the most important lesson learnt from the event was that one cannot possibly prepare for every disaster scenario, but the more extensive the planning and preparation, the better prepared the organisations were to react to the unexpected."

Talking about successes and failures, the article points out that a number of organisations in and around WTC had put in BCPs after the 1993 attack on WTC. Those who had continued with that plan, performed much better than the rest. Interestingly, those which planned just for IT recovery and ignored the people aspect of BCP, kind of failed. So, it is the wholesome approach, with a well-knit IT backbone, that holds the real answer.

Consider this, for instance. According to Gartner Research, business survival requires planning for every type of business disruption, including natural disasters, hardware and communication failures, internal or external sabotage of acts of terrorism, and the failures of supply chain and sales affiliate organisation.

But, PricewaterhouseCoopers executive director (global risk management solutions) Neel Ratan shows a contrasting picture as far as global versus Indian scenario is concerned (read Q&A). Around 63 per cent of global businesses with continuity programs have an enterprise-wide approach to their planning that include tasks for their critical business partners or suppliers, he says. However, most Indian companies do not have a well-documented and tested business continuity management plan to manage disasters.

Coming to disaster preparedness, a suitable warning system could be of immense help, according to www.gisdevelopment.net. In a section on 'role of IT in disaster management', the website says: "Although it is not possible to completely avoid natural disasters, sufferings can be minimised by creating proper awareness of the likely disasters and their likely impact by developing a suitable warning system, through application of IT tools."

Geographical Information System (GIS) and Remote Sensing tools are among those used to reduce disaster risk. GIS tools are needed for effective and efficient storage and manipulation of remotely sensed data and other spatial and non-spatial data types, for both scientific management and policy oriented information. Whether it is drought, earthquake, floods or landslides, GIS and remote sensing tools can be used effectively. The use could be varied—from early warning of drought condition to preparing seismic hazard maps for assessing risk to monitoring flood inundated areas.

On the IT front, Internet too plays a crucial role. The Internet provides a revolutionary option for rapid dissemination of disaster management information.

Take for instance the case of a non-government organisation in Gujarat, Sristi, which was able to set up a wide database of volunteers after the severe earthquake that hit the state two years ago, courtesy Internet (read case study).

Then there are IT tools and solutions for responding to an emergency situation. For example, US-based Intergraph is an organisation behind tech requirements for disaster management.

The Washington DC Metro Communications Centre had installed Intergraph public safety computer-aided system just a little before the 9/11 attack. The computer aided system included 66 terminals set up to despatch police and fire units, communicate with them and track their locations using global positioning satellites (GPS). According to Intergraph, the system was tested to its limit on 9/11 after the attack!

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News Update at 18.00 hrs (IST)

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Business

Samsung to bridge 'digital divide'

New Delhi, May 26. (PTI): Samsung Electronics today announced the launch of its single-largest social programme outside Korea called 'Samsung DigitAll Hope', which will donate $600,000 to organisations supporting the use of technology to improve lives of youth and helping bridge the digital divide.

The programme is being simultaneously launched in eight countries -- India, Australia, Thailand, Vietnam, Indonesia, Philippines, Malaysia and Singapore.

"Ensuring that all young people have equal access to information technology is an increasingly important issue for the future development of the Asia-Pacific region," Executive Secretary of the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific Kim Hak-Su said.

"I understand that Samsung is one of the first such companies to establish such a large-scale, unified regional social programme in Asia-Pacific focussing on this issue," he added.

Samsung has sought consultation from National Youth Agencies throughout the region and UNESCAP to identify organisations matching Samsung's 2003 programme objectives.

Speaking on the occasion, Director of Samsung India R Zutshi said the company has been supporting sports and educational projects since 1995 and has now set up 'Digital Adventure' in Mumbai and Delhi to educate youth in new technologies.

Besides, the company has invested Rs one crore in setting up a technology laboratory at IIT to further encourage technology.

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Japan Aims To Become World's Broadband Hub, Pushes For ABP

Wednesday, December 03, 2003
By Kim Yong-seok

Japan is discussing with the United Nations on its ambitious plan to build a region-wide broadband network across Asia by 2010, a source close to the Electronic Times said on December 2.

Japan is set to become the world's information technology hub by successfully implementing the plan called 'Asia Broadband Platform', a move expected to spark keen competition with Korea, one of the world's telecom powerhouses.

"Japan has proposed link between its ABP and ESCAP's Asia Highway and Busan-Siberia Railway Project," said Kim Hak-su, director at United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP).

"The proposal aims to establish a broadband network along railways and highways across Asia, and Japan has asked for consideration to begin talks with other Asian countries," Director Kim added.

"Japan's information infrastructure initiative will likely have a far-reaching economic effect through the region," Kim said. "Korea could become a major part of the regional information economic block by cooperating with Japan in human resources and policy-making."

"Japan is leading ahead in broadband competition, injecting staggering amounts of funds into building such infrastructure as FTTH and IPv6," said the Ministry of Information and Communication. "We have crafted countermoves, which include setting up of a broadband communications network, extending the Trans Euro-Asia Network to Malaysia and reinforcing Korea-China-Japan cooperation in IPv6 standardization."

"Japan hopes to secure a land base for its Asia-wide network," said a researcher at the Korea Information Strategy Development Institute (KISDI). "Then, it can become an information technology hub in the region and take a lead in standardization of next-generation Internet such as IPv6."

Japan announced in March this year the ambitious plan aimed to establish access to Asia-wide broadband; link broadband networks across Asia; facilitate evolution into IPv6 networks; push for digitalization and worldwide promotion of Asian culture based on broadband infrastructure; utilize translation technology for major languages; and foster researchers and experts on the regional level.

It also said that it would invest 15 billion dollars into the program by 2005.

"Asia remains widely divided in terms of digitalization, and once ABP is implemented through 2010, we will better understand the flow of information across the region," said Tajiri Nobuyuki, director of information infrastructure at the Ministry of Interior of Japan.

ESCAP is presently pushing for Asia Highway Project, aiming to establish an extensive web of 47 networks including No. 1 Asia Highway that links Tokyo, Busan, Seoul, Pyongyang, Beijing, Hanoi and Istanbul. Busan-Siberia Railway Project is a railroad initiative aimed to link Siberia and inter-Korean routes.

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Page(s): P. 2 (Perspective)
Date: 14 December 2003

Summary

Heping the poor get to first base in ICT

As world leaders gather in Geneva for the world's first cyber-summit, the United Nations in Asia Pacific pleads for the poor not to be left out

KIM HAK-SU

"The world is inexorably heading towards an information society, and governments need to see not the writing on the wall but the pulsing cursor on the screen," said UN Under-Secretary-General for information and public information, Shashi Tharoor.

In 2000, the United Nations Millennium Declaration adopted at the Millennium Summit in New York, resolved to ensure that the benefits of new technology, particularly information and communication technology (ICT), were available to all.

The world economy is in the midst of a profound transformation. Spurred on by breakthroughs in ICT in particular, the global information revolution has created the potential for accelerating broad-based growth and sustainable development, including poverty eradication in developing countries. The possibilities are endless.

The summit meeting organised by a UN-body, International Telecommunications Union (ITU) has an ambitious agenda. While questions of security, freedom of expression, spam, Internet governance may be raised, the real underlying purpose is for all to ensure that the poor are not left out in this major revolution in terms of the way we think and do things.

The Asian and Pacific region accounts for two thirds of the world population and the ICT market of the region is the biggest in the developing world and the fastest-growing.

Several countries in the region are major players in ICT and are moving at a rapid pace in both the public and the private sectors. However, many countries are still struggling with basic infrastructure needs and other pressing developmental agendas. Not all countries have equally benefited from the transition to the new global economy.

Many developing countries in Asia and the Pacific, particularly the least-developed countries, the developing island countries and the economies in transition, account for only a small faction of the global digital economy.

The phenomenally rapid advances in ICT thus pose an immense challenge for many countries to catch up, reflecting the wide spread of the digital divide.

After three years of reform and revitalisation of UNESCAP, ICT has come to the forefront of the activities in our three programmed areas of poverty alleviation, managing globalisation and emerging social issues.

UNESCAP is further promoting an interdisciplinary approach to dealing with ICT involving all of its substantive divisions.

UNESCAP is working towards turning the digital divide into a dividend, as the regional contribution to this World Summit, UNESCAP's sixty two member-countries and partners from the Regional Interagency Working Group on ICT have organised a number of high-level regional conferences.

This was done to ensure that the region's voice is heard as the world gathers to make commitments, and to debate the future of ICT and its development.

In this we are guided by the Tokyo Declaration adopted by the Asia-Pacific Regional Conference for the World Summit in January this year, which provides critical guiding principles for bridging the digital divide and building an information society in Asia and the Pacific.

This proves that the regional exchange of experiences and best practices, the regional networking of initiatives and the creation and pursuit of a common regional vision play decisive roles in the creation of the information society.



Kim Hak-Su

These initiatives have been underscored. Last month, UNESCAP's Committee on Managing Globalisation expressed appreciation to ESCAP for playing a leading and coordinating role in developing a regional consensus for the first phase of the World Summit.

Our members requested us to continue to play that role in the implementation of the follow-up to the first phase and the regional preparations for the second phase in Tunisia in 2005.

A regional plan of action towards the information society has also been requested and will be formulated based on the regional road map developed earlier. The regional action plan will complement national action plans and include considerations of the World Summit on the Information Society, the Millennium Development Goals and the World Summit on Sustainable Development.

The benefits of ICT are in no doubt, but we must ensure that the poor are heard in this discussion as another guiding MDG goal is to halve poverty by 2015.

◆ *Mr Kim Hak-Su, is Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Secretary of UNESCAP. This is an edited version of a statement delivered at the World Summit on the Information Society, in Geneva, 10 December 2003.*

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On information summit's third day, UN officials stress need for cooperation

12 December – As the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) moved into its third day today in Geneva, United Nations officials continued to stress the need for global cooperation in spreading the potential power of information and communications technologies (ICT) in development activities as well as taking into account the needs of those in poorer countries.

Speaking during the Summit's morning session, Imelda Henkin, Deputy Executive Director for Management of the UN Population Fund (UNFPA), said the agency believes that technology has a vital part to play in creating a new form of empowerment if it can be used to benefit the poorest by fostering knowledge generation and sharing at all levels of society.

UNFPA also recognizes that it is equally important for countries and communities to be able to capture, synthesize and apply knowledge that is vital for their own development, Ms. Henkin said. Respect for cultural differences and experiences should be at the heart of the Summit and that capturing, synthesizing and sharing these experiences could pave the way for the development process as a basis for achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

In his statement, Michel Jarraud, Deputy Secretary-General of the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), noted that ICTs have played a key role in meteorology since the 19th century with the advent of the telegraph. The information society, therefore, needs to further the capabilities of the National Meteorological and Hydrological Services in producing and delivering information, warnings and comprehensive and effective services to population in support of safety of life and property and the general welfare of the people in a wide range of weather-sensitive economic sectors.

He re-emphasized that the availability of information technology has a key role to play in enabling and fostering access to weather, water and climate information and services, and that it should help to pave the way for sustainable development in developing and least developed countries, enabling populations and various economic sectors to benefit from comprehensive and effective information and warnings in support of safety of life and property and of economic and social development.

For his part, the Executive Director of the UN Fund for International

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Partnerships (UNFIP), Amir A. Dossal, said finding solutions to complex problems - like polio, HIV/AIDS, access to safe drinking water, environmentally sustainable growth, refugee crises, and the digital divide - were too vast and too complex to be confronted by sovereign States or the United Nations alone.

Numerous innovations were coming from developing countries, which need to find their way to other countries, so that they may benefit with what works and what does not, Mr. Dossal said. More importantly, they were contributing to national efforts to meet the MDGs, which have now been placed at the heart of the global agenda. "Working together, engaging with all actors of civil society is not only the best chance; it may also be the only chance we have to meet these global targets," he said.

In yesterday afternoon's session, Juan Somavía, Director-General of the International Labour Organization (ILO), said the true measure of any technology was whether or not it improved lives. People were concerned about their families' welfare, they wished to live in dignity and hope, and information and communication technologies were a channel to these aspirations.

The promise was far from fulfilled, however, as the Summit needed to consider three issues: policies, with the right investment and employment policies designed to promote a fair society; the digitally excluded were often the socially excluded, and this should be remedied in a socially-conscious and respectful manner; and, protection of the workers in the information society, Mr. Somavía said.

Kim Hak-Su, Executive Secretary of the UN Economic Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), said the global ICT revolution could accelerate broad-based growth and sustainable development. ICT development in Asia and the Pacific was moving at a rapid pace, but not all countries and regions had benefited in the move towards the new global economy.

Mr. Kim said the new information society provided an opportunity to catch up for these countries, and to bridge the digital divide, alleviate poverty, manage social integration and promote emerging social issues. The regional exchange of experiences and best practices, the regional networking of initiatives and pursuance of a common vision played a decisive role in the creation of the information society.

For her part, the Executive Secretary of the UN Economic Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), Mervat Tallawy, said the new revolution of the information and knowledge society was most unconventional, since it was one where distances were becoming shorter, with great incentives for productivity and employment. However, challenges remained, with the digital divide between countries and societies which would continue to grow if every opportunity was not explored to remedy the situation.

It was imperative to use the regional dimensions and regional integration to make the most of the revolution, and it was important within this dimension to unite national needs and international demands, Ms. Tallawy stressed. For the Western Asia area, this would prove to be a challenge, although ESCWA had undertaken many initiatives with the aim of removing difficulties and eliminating gaps in the region, and it was hoping that these steps would limit the digital divide and enhance cooperation with countries of the North, as well as help to create the information society in which peace would prevail.

The Acting UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Bertrand Ramcharan, said respect for the dignity of human beings should be well represented through the development of ICTs. He reaffirmed the adoption of a common vision together with the information technology, which had an impact on freedom of expression. Governments should prevent the dissemination of hate speeches and other racist propaganda through the information media.

The enjoyment of human rights, such as the right to education, health, to adequate housing and food, required more efforts, Mr. Ramcharan said. People should have equal participation in information technology, and they should be able to freely enjoy their rights. He pleaded for democracy to be strengthened while appealing for ICTs to work for the protection of human rights in general.

12/16/2003 04:05:44

UN/ WSIS/ promotion of ICTS can help world attain Millennium Development Goals;

Participants stress ICTs must be harne

M2 PRESSWIRE via NewsEdge Corporation : ** NOTE: TRUNCATED STORY **

AZZAM Al-AHMAD, Minister of Telecommunications and Information Technology of Palestine, said Palestine had made it its aim to strive towards the information society in its most advanced form, not only because of its importance in solving many of the hard conditions of living under occupation and the dissection of the country, but also because of the basic need for international technology similar to other people around the world. The siege policy and the erection of the apartheid separation wall had had devastating efforts upon Palestinian communities, workers, universities and businesses. The Palestinian national strategy for information technology faced many obstacles, foremost of which were the siege, closures and dissection of its geographical unity. In addition, there was the refusal of Israel to implement the resolutions of the international institutions as regarded the rights of Palestine to direct access to the international gateway, the systematic and repeated destruction of the telecommunications infrastructure, radio and television stations, and the imposition of restrictions to import necessary telecommunications and information technology equipment.

He concluded by saying that he hoped the Summit would come out with recommendations in the fields of knowledge and information and communication technologies to benefit both advanced and developing countries in the fields of development and to strengthen relations among peoples, and the improvement of cultural dialogue and information interchange.

Juan Somavia, Director-General of the International Labour Organization (ILO), said the true measure of any technology was whether or not it improved lives. People were concerned about their families' welfare, they wished to live in dignity and hope, and information and communication technologies were a channel to these aspirations.

However, the promise was far from fulfilled. The Summit needed to consider three issues: policies, with the right investment and employment policies designed to promote a fair society; the digitally excluded were often the socially excluded, and this should be remedied in a socially-conscious and respectful manner; and, protection of the workers in the information society.

Diversity was also an important issue - for there was no one solution for the development of ICTs in all societies. The ICTs could be used in building better societies that were based on respect for rights and principles of solidarity -- and together the nations of the world should manage to achieve this. It was hoped that this would be an achievement of the Summit, and one that would not be a missed opportunity.

TIMOTHY BALDING, Director General of theWorld Association of Newspapers, said that the draft Declaration of Principles that the Summit was to adopt tomorrow had clearly affirmed the freedom of expression and that this freedom was central and crucial to the information society.

Unhappily, dozens of the governments that would be adopting the text mercilessly and cynically persecuted the men and women whose job was to enable and to facilitate the free flow of information. Thousands of journalists and human rights activities were each year arrested and imprisoned, frequently beaten and sometimes murdered, for trying to exercise their human right to free expression. The next phase of the Summit would take place in Tunis, a country that repeatedly violated its commitments to the United Nations Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human

Rights to respect free speech and press freedom, a country where censorship was a way of life and where journalists were harassed and jailed. The Summit in Tunis should be abandoned unless Tunis began to respect human rights.

PASQUALE PISTRIO, President and CEO of STMicroelectronics, said that he was one of the representatives of the private sector within the United Nations ICT Task Force. He said that while the strengthening of the infrastructure for ICTs was essential, more attention needed to be focused on educating and training people so that they could utilize ICTs. Participants were told about a proposal that he had made which involved thousands of private sector businesses that could dedicate some of their time and energy to help to educate and train those who did not have sufficient knowledge to use the systems. It was suggested that medium to large scale private sector businesses donate 0.1 per cent of their annual revenue and 0.1 per cent of their employers' working hours for the education and training of others. Aside from the positive economic and social impact of such an initiative, it would also help to build partnerships and team spirit. His corporation had already undertaken work in the field of illiteracy and hoped to reach as many people as possible in the next 10 years.

Thomas Leavey, Director-Generalof the Universal Postal Union (UPU), said posts were in a unique position to help make the Summit's draft Plan of Action a reality in key areas: in providing access to information and knowledge; in building confidence in new technologies and ensuring their security; and in developing the infrastructure needed for the information society. The UPU was committed to universal service. In developing countries especially, this meant bringing to people traditional communication services that empowered them and broke the chains of poverty and isolation. The Summit's draft Declaration of Principles and Plan of Action had identified confidence, trust and security as main pillars of the information society. Posts were eager to contribute to the information society and its challenges. Postal services worldwide could use their unique capabilities to ensure that millions of people could participate in the information society and reap its many benefits.

JANE LUBICHENCO, President of the International Council of Scientific Unions (ICSU), said her group's mission was to work for the good of human beings. Scientific research was beneficial to building an equitable society. The organization's advocacy for scientific research had been recognized by the United Nations, with the Secretary-General acknowledging its achievements. Access to scientific knowledge requiredhuman capacity in order to ensure universality of the information society. Further, access to scientific achievements was essential.

From the scientific prospective, the work done by the Summit would be helpful. The challenge would be how to put the words of the Declaration of the Summit into practice.

Katsuji Ebisawa, President of NHK (Japan Broadcasting Corporation), said broadcasting played a leading role in the information society of the twenty-first century, since it was an expression of culture expressed through technology, and had constantly evolved over the previous century. The principal role of broadcasting was not expected to change, since it would remain impartial and continue to offer programmes to nurture the intellectual needs of people, and to help them to make appropriate judgments, notwithstanding the developments in technology that would undoubtedly continue in the future. Broadcasting could assertively play its part in eliminating the digital divide, and it could allow an equal number of people to benefit from the information society. It was expected that in the future, broadcasting equipment would be used for ever more services and it would take up ever greater places in human lives, bringing people together, promoting dialogue among civilizations whilst promoting human understanding.

Kim **Hak-Su**, Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), said the world economy was in the midst of a profound transformation, spurred on by breakthroughs in information and communication technologies, in particular. The global ICT revolution could accelerate broad-based growth and sustainable development. ICT development in

Asia and the Pacific was moving at a rapid pace, but not all countries and regions had benefited in the move towards the new global economy. The new information society provided an opportunity to catch up for these countries, and to bridge the digital divide, alleviate poverty, manage social integration and promote emerging social issues. The regional exchange of experiences and best practices, the regional networking of initiatives and pursuance of a common vision played a decisive role in the creation of the information society.

LIZ BURNS, President of the International Association for Volunteer Effort, said that volunteering was a clear expression to serve society.

People volunteered to carry out activities, including participation in providing vaccination in developing countries. Volunteers continued to generate information and communication technologies for the benefit of society. They were using information technology in their efforts to accomplish their tasks. The use of ICTs was found to be significant in the development of the role of volunteers. The United Nations had recognized the work of the volunteers in a resolution passed by the General Assembly in 2001. A plan would be presented tomorrow on how to make use of the information and technologies through volunteering efforts. The Summit should give recognition to the role of the volunteers.

OLGA USKOVA, President of the Cognitive Technologies Companies, said that Russia had been emerging from being a country with economic problems to being a country making economic progress. Much of this progress was a direct result of initiatives undertaken by the Government to promote and encourage investments in ICTs and e-business. Recently, the domestic market had been witnessing a flow of capital. From big businesses to small businesses, there had been significant improvements in the economy. At the same time, it was clear that further economic growth in the country would require further commitment and investments in infrastructure. After highlighting some of the initiatives undertaken by the Russian Government to this effort, she noted that e-commerce was currently underway in Russia. Projects were being implemented under the auspices of the Russian Ministry of Telecommunications. She welcomed the fact that Russian regional authorities had also realized the enormous economic potential of

e-commerce in enhancing regional economic growth, another factor that would strengthen the Russian economy.

SALLY BURCH, President of theAgencia Latinoamericana de Informacion (ALAI), said emphasis should be placed on people with regard to information and communication technologies. Civil society supported the participation of people in all aspects of the information society. She called for the respect for bi-diversity and cultural rights of people.

The protection of intellectual property should be done in a manner to favour those who needed it. The information and communication technologies should serve the economic, social and cultural interests of the people.

Mervat Tallawy, Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), said today there was a new dawn, a new revolution of the information and knowledge society. This revolution was most unconventional, since it was one where distances were becoming shorter, with great incentives for productivity and employment. However, challenges remained, with the digital divide between countries and societies which would continue to grow if every opportunity was not explored to remedy the situation. It was imperative to use the regional dimensions and regional integration to make the most of the revolution, and it was important within this dimension to unite national needs and international demands. For the Western Asia area, this would prove to be a challenge, although ESCWA had undertaken many initiatives with the aim of removing difficulties and eliminating gaps in the region, and it was hoping that these steps would limit the digital divide and enhance cooperation with countries of the North, as well as help to create the information society in which peace would prevail.

2.3 Trade and Investment

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UN agency to help RP deal with globalization worries

BusinessWorld; Manila; Jan 17, 2003; Cathy Rose A. Garcia;

*NAICS:*928120
Start Page: 1
ISSN: 01163930
Companies: United Nations *NAICS:***928120**

Abstract:
*UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (**ESCAP**) executive secretary Kim Hak-Su yesterday said the agency will be assisting member countries on how to address problems related with globalization.*

*"**ESCAP** is focused on helping member countries with globalization. These include trade promotion, investment promotion and other areas, to allow countries to address problems," Mr. Kim told BusinessWorld, in an interview.*

*"I will ask Ms. [Gloria Macapagal Arroyo] on how **ESCAP** and the Philippines can work together. The Philippines is a member country. I want to listen to member country's opinions and suggestions on how **ESCAP** can do better," he said.*

Full Text:

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A United Nations (UN) regional agency is committed to helping developing countries, like the Philippines, to deal with the effects of increasing globalization.

UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) executive secretary Kim Hak-Su yesterday said the agency will be assisting member countries on how to address problems related with globalization.

"ESCAP is focused on helping member countries with globalization. These include trade promotion, investment promotion and other areas, to allow countries to address problems," Mr. Kim told BusinessWorld, in an interview.

Programs being envisioned by the UN agency include trade negotiation skills and tactics, as well as environmental negotiations with view to understanding the many protocols and conventions.

Mr. Kim, who is also UN undersecretary-general, said the Philippines should take advantage of its edge in the information communications technology (ICT) sector over other countries.

"One area of advantage is information communications technology. We are seeing the Philippines has great

potential because you are an English- speaking people... I want to know what plans the Philippines has in terms of the the ICT sector," he said.

The UN official said ESCAP is also focused on reducing poverty in the region. This is in line with the United Nations Millennium Declaration, which was adopted at the UN General assembly in September 2000, which has the goal of reducing worldwide poverty by half by 2015.

Mr. Kim said governments should partner with civil society and private sector to reduce poverty. "There should be strong commitment from government. There should be more allocation of government money and priority to reduce poverty... One is to have tripartite pacts between government, civil society and private sector, as well as the poor themselves so they can help themselves," he said.

ESCAP, which is the largest regional commission in the world, is spreading best practices in poverty alleviation in the Asia-Pacific region, to allow developing countries to adapt these practices.

The UN agency is also strengthening its "early warning" strategies on emerging social issues such as population aging, labor migration, human trafficking and HIV/AIDS in the region. Mr. Kim said he will discuss these issues during his meeting with President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo in Malacanan Palace today.

"I will ask Ms. Macapagal-Arroyo on how ESCAP and the Philippines can work together. The Philippines is a member country. I want to listen to member country's opinions and suggestions on how ESCAP can do better," he said.

Mr. Kim is also set to meet with Asian Development Bank president Tadao Chino.

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Kish island to host ECO investment meeting

Tehran, Feb 9, IRNA -- Secretary General of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) Mojtaba Arastu said here Sunday that the first ECO regional investment seminar is to be held in southern island of Kish from February 17-18.

Secretariat of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) quoted Arastu as saying that the meeting will study the feasibility of investment in member countries and ways of securing technical and financial assistance from international organization for investment in the free trade zones of member countries.

Arastu said the meeting is to draw up draft of an agreement among members for investment security in the host country.

ECO groups Iran, Pakistan and Turkey as founding members and Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan.

Arastu said participants would represent the public and private sectors and organizations from the ECO states and such international organizations as the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the Islamic Development Bank.

ARASTU DUE IN KABUL

Arastu is to leave Tehran for Afghanistan on Thursday for a three-day official visit at the invitation by Afghan Foreign Minister Abdullah Abdullah to follow up the approvals of the seventh ECO summit and Istanbul meeting.

The seventh ECO summit calls for contribution of ECO members to Afghan reconstruction and setting up a fund to provide the country with financial assistance for its reconstruction endeavors.

Arastu is to meet with Head of Afghan government Hamed Karzai as well as ministers and senior officials of the country.

BG/AH

End

BACK

last Update Monday, 10-Feb-2003 13:21:25 PST
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TOTAL PAGE(S): 1

Press/Media: The Economic Times

Date: 24 February 2003

Page(s):

Summary

India, China sign pact to lower trade tariffs

REUTERS [SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 22, 2003 07 07 51 PM]

BEIJING: China and India signed an agreement on Saturday allowing the two countries to lower trade tariffs between them, China's Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Cooperation (MOFTEC) said.

The agreement, signed in Beijing, will enable the two countries enjoy tariff rates lower than those they offer under the "most favoured nation" tag, MOFTEC said in a statement.

"(The agreement) will further reduce trade obstacles and accelerate bilateral trade growth," it said but gave few details.

The two countries would implement the new rates "as soon as possible within the year 2003", it said.

The agreement was in accordance with a pact signed in 1975 by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission of Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP), it said.

The pact allows developing nations belonging to UNESCAP, including China, India, South Korea, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Laos, to offer favourable tariffs to each other.

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India, China sign pact to offer lower tariffs

Reuters
Beijing, February 22

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Home > Business > Reuters > **Report**

India, China sign pact to offer lower tariffs

February 22, 2003 17:07 IST

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BBC

China, India reach agreement on reciprocal preferential customs treatment

BBC Monitoring Asia Pacific - Political; London; Feb 23, 2003;

Start Page: 1
Dateline: CHINA

Abstract:

*The "Bangkok Treaty" was signed in 1975 and its full name is "The First Trade Talks Treaty Between Asia-Pacific Economically and Socially Developing States". The treaty is presided over by the United Nations Asia-Pacific Economics and Societies Committee (**ESCAP**), and is a preferential trade arrangement reached between member developing states that principally provide for mutual preferential customs treatment and non-tariff concessions. Current member states are India, South Korea, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Laos, and China.*

Full Text:

Xinhua news agency for Hong Kong, Beijing, in Chinese 1131 22 Feb03/BBC Monitoring/(c) BBC

Text of report by Che Yu-ming entitled "China and India will provide each other more preferential customs treatment" carried by official Chinese news agency Xinhua (New China News Agency)

Beijing, 22 February: Chinese and Indian delegations in Beijing on 22 February reached agreement on applying the "Bangkok Treaty" and to provide each other even greater preferential customs treatment than provided by most-favoured-nation status by the end of this year.

On the 21 and 22 February, delegations from China and India engaged in bilateral negotiations over issues regarding jointly applying the "Bangkok Treaty". After frank, friendly, and constructive talks, the two sides successfully arrived at an agreement stipulating that China and India will, with the utmost speed, jointly apply the "Bangkok Treaty" by the end of 2003.

Responsible officials of the Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Cooperation say that this indicates China and India will act according to the "Bangkok Treaty" and stipulates that each will provide the other even greater preferential customs treatment than that of most-favoured-nation status. As a result, the two sides will gradually reduce trade obstacles and promote the expansion of bilateral trade.

The "Bangkok Treaty" was signed in 1975 and its full name is "The First Trade Talks Treaty Between Asia-Pacific Economically and Socially Developing States". The treaty is presided over by the United Nations Asia-Pacific Economics and Societies Committee (ESCAP), and is a preferential trade arrangement reached between member developing states that principally provide for mutual preferential customs treatment and non-tariff concessions. Current member states are India, South Korea, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Laos, and China.

Credit: Xinhua news agency for Hong Kong, Beijing, in Chinese 1131 22 Feb 03

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Date: 8 May 2003

US-S'pore pact 'boosts all of Asean'

■ *Montira Narkvichien*
THE NATION,
DOW JONES NEWSWIRES

THE US-SINGAPORE Free Trade Agreement (USSFTA) signed this week will highlight Singapore's position as Asean's financial and banking hub.

Bangkok-based international trade analysts hailed the agreement, saying it would expand trade liberalisation in Asean and benefit all member countries.

The USSFTA, which Singapore Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong and US President George W Bush signed on Tuesday, is the first bilateral free-trade agreement between the US and an Asian nation.

"The USSFTA signifies the presence of the US within the closer economic partnership of Asean through its cooperation with Singapore, especially in the financial services sector in the region," said Thanavath Phonvichai, director of the University of Thai Chamber of Commerce's Centre for Economic and Business Forecasting.

But that does not necessarily mean that agricultural commodities-based countries such as Thailand or Malaysia should free up protective regulations on sensitive items, he said.

Because the island-state wants to promote itself as a "duty-free trading broker port", it is ready to open its doors and lift existing stringent regulations on retail banking and financial services, said Kiat Sittheeamorn, president of the International Chamber of Commerce.

"As Singapore is the region's financial hub, it should lead to an increase flow of trade between the US and the region," Kiat said of the agreement.

With international trade amounting to three times its gross domestic product, Singapore has been eager to formalise the agreement – its fourth such bilateral deal after pacts with New Zealand, Australia and Japan.

Ravi Sawhney, a leading economist with the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, said that the agreement would lead to trade liberalisation and expansion on a wider scale.

A US-Asean Free Trade Agreement is also expected to be on the agenda when Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra meets with President Bush on a state visit to Washington on June 10.

The USSFTA is expected to boost Singapore's gross domestic product by 0.5 per cent, through higher contributions from the manufacturing and services sectors, Raymond Lim, the Singaporean minister of state for foreign affairs, trade and industry, said at an American Chamber of Commerce luncheon on Tuesday.

Under the agreement, the US will immediately eliminate 92 per cent of tariffs on Singaporean imports. The remaining tariffs will be eliminated within eight years.

Sectors that will benefit are electronics, chemicals and petrochemicals, instrumentation equipment, processed foods and mineral products. Only exports that have undergone substantial transformation in Singapore can be designated as originating there and qualify for preferential tariffs.

> ■ The USSFTA is expected to boost Singapore's gross domestic product by 0.5 per cent, through higher contributions from the manufacturing and services sectors.

Financial and legal services to US companies are expected to benefit substantially.

"Under the USSFTA, US banks will enjoy accelerated liberalisation in our financial and insurance service sectors," Lim said.

US banks will be able to offer previously restricted retail banking services and insurance services in Singapore. The existing quota for US banking licences in Singapore will also be lifted, said Lim.

Singapore will give US banks better access to Singapore's retail banking sector by removing the restrictions for qualifying full banks (QFBs) within 18 months and wholesale-bank licences within three years.

Citibank, a unit of Citigroup Inc, is the only US bank that is licensed to offer an almost full spectrum of retail banking services in Singapore. Other foreign banks that have a similar QFB status are Standard Chartered Bank, ABN-Amro Holdings, HSBC, BNP Paribas, and Malaysia's Malayan Banking Berhad.

Another highly regulated area – the legal services sector – will also be opened up significantly to US companies after the free trade agreement, Lim added.

Singapore will also amend legislation to further enhance its protection of intellectual property rights.

cc: Mr. Kim Hak-Su
Ms. Keiko Okaido
Mr. F.A. Uriarte, Jr.
Mr. Ravi Sawhney
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WTO's Doha development round under threat of collapse: UN

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BANGKOK, June 16 (AFP) - The WTO's ambitious round of trade liberalization talks is "at serious risk of collapsing" due to a series of missed deadlines since the round was launched 19 months ago, a UN body warned Monday.

The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (**UNESCAP**) also said developing nations could stand to see real income reduced by a massive 32 billion dollars should the floundering negotiations on the Doha development agenda fail.

"Negotiations are at serious risk of collapsing," Kim Hak-Su, the executive secretary of **UNESCAP**, headquartered in Bangkok, said in a statement.

He pointed to a series of deadlines on negotiations relating to affordable medicines, market access for non-agricultural goods and reform of a dispute settelment system that have passed without adequate resolution.

"Missed deadlines erode confidence and the credibility of the negotiating process ... (but) if there is movement on sufficient scale and speed, the negotiations can be salvaged," Kim said.

The Doha development agenda, launched with great fanfare in the Qatari capital Doha in November 2001, aims to establish a more equitable approach to international trade for developing and least-developed countries.

Nations who launched the round have been unable to agree on how they plan to tear down trade barriers by the agreed target date at the end of 2004.

The slipping schedule has cast a cloud over this September's full WTO ministerial meeting in Cancun, Mexico, that is to serve as a mid-term review of progress under the Doha round.

Participants at a Bangkok conference last week co-sponsored by the World Trade Organization and **UNESCAP**, which provides the WTO with technical assistance, said failure to reach agreement on the Doha agenda could have immense repurcussions for the developing world.

"By World Bank estimates, income gains for developing countries to the extent of USD400 billion dollars by 2015 could be achieved if the Doha mandate of removing distortions on agriculture is achieved," conference chairman Jose-Antonio Buencamino of the Philippines said in the statement.

"If the negotiations collapse with backsliding on virtually every commitment, developing countries will see real income reduced by 32 billion dollars while developed countries will experience a decline of 27 billion dollars," Kim added.

On June 2 in Dhaka the world's least-developed countries pledged to unite to face upcoming WTO negotiations and carry forward their agreed agenda from a strong position when the body meets in Cancun.

mlm/sdm

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WTO's Doha development round under threat of collapse: UN

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JUNE 17, 2003

World trade talks close to collapse, UN body warns

BANGKOK - The World Trade Organisation's ambitious round of trade liberalisation talks is 'at serious risk of collapsing' because of missed deadlines since the round was launched 19 months ago, a United Nations body warned yesterday.

The UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (Unescap) also said developing nations could see real income reduced by a massive US$32 billion (S$55 billion) if the negotiations on the Doha development agenda failed.

'Negotiations are at serious risk of collapsing,' said Mr Kim Hak-Su, executive secretary of the Bangkok-based Unescap.

He said a series of deadlines on negotiations relating to affordable medicines, market access for non-agricultural goods and reform of a dispute-settlement system had passed without resolution.

'Missed deadlines erode confidence and the credibility of the negotiating process,' he said, while adding that 'if there is movement on sufficient scale and speed, the negotiations can be salvaged'.

The Doha development agenda, launched with great fanfare in the Qatari capital of Doha in November 2001, aims to establish a more equitable approach to trade for developing and least-developed countries.

Nations who launched the round have been unable to agree on how to tear down trade barriers by the target date at the end of next year.

Meanwhile, Malaysian Minister of International Trade and Industry Rafidah Aziz also struck a warning note when she said that Asean must make efforts to stay relevant in the global supply and production network by examining the possibility of free trade agreements with China, Japan and South Korea.

\-- AFP, Bernama

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UN: WTO Doha round under threat of collapse

MENAFN - 17/06/2003

The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific warned the WTO's ambitious round of trade talks was at serious risk of collapsing due to a series of missed deadlines since the launch of the round 19 months ago, AFP reported.

The UN body said developing nations could stand to see real income reduced by $32 billion should the negotiations on the Doha development agenda fail. The Doha development agenda aims to establish a more equitable approach to international trade for developing and least-developed countries.

Economists estimate income gains for developing countries of around $400 billion by 2015 could be achieved if the Doha mandate of removing distortions on agriculture is achieved.

The Daily Star
Comitted to PEOPLE'S RIGHT TO KNOW
Vol. 4 Num 44 Thu. July 10, 2003
Business

Bangkok Agreement to be renamed as APTA

Star Business Report

The Bangkok Agreement (BA) is likely to be renamed as the Asia-Pacific Trade Agreement (APTA) soon, sources said.

Representatives from five member countries of the BA -- Bangladesh, India, South Korea, Sri Lanka and China -- will sit for discussion on August 25 in Bangkok to finalise their position on the issue.

Organised by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), the forthcoming meeting, 12th session of the standing committee of the BA, will continue for four days in the Thai capital.

The meeting is likely to okay the draft text for the APTA, common rules of origin under the proposed trade bloc and accession of Pakistan to the APTA that will make it a six-nation pact, sources said.

Bangladesh will emphasis the inclusion of a clause in the proposed trade agreement to reap extra preferential benefit as a least developed country (LDC), sources in the commerce ministry said.

The meeting of the standing committee will also lay stress on reaching a consensus for common rules of origin to facilitate trade among the member countries, a high official in the Tariff Commission told The Daily Star.

Signed in 1975, the BA has now five members with insignificant achievement in trade and investment owing to complex rules of origin. The member countries from time to time give concession to each other in import duties under the agreement.

"Due to complex rules of origin criteria, it is difficult to reap benefit for a country like Bangladesh from such duty concession," said and official concerned.

The ensuing meeting will discuss the simplification of the rules and common origin regulations for facilitating exports among the member countries. It may agree to include Pakistan in APTA to further accelerate the forum.

Besides Pakistan, countries like Fiji, Iran, Nepal, Vietnam, Japan and New Zealand have shown their interests to join the proposed trade bloc, sources said.

Once the member countries are agreed to rename the 28-year-old BA as APTA, it has to be endorsed by the World Trade Organisation (WTO), which is a mandatory condition, they added.

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Politics

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Protection from Negative Consequences of Globalization Discussed

A two-day national seminar on increasing Azerbaijan's capacity to solve issues connected with globalization started at the Center for Economic Reforms (CER) of the Ministry of Economic Development today.



29/08/2003 03:31
Baku Today

CER and UNESCAP (UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pasific) have organized the seminar. Mark Prokchin from UNESCAP reported that globalization served accumulation of wealth, so Azerbaijan (and the other newly independent states) had to promptly respond to the external changes.
Foreign investment is very important for the economy of developing countries. Azerbaijan needs foreign investment in its non-oil sector and the development of small and medium enterprise. The image of the country is very important in attracting small foreign investments to the non-oil sector of Azerbaijan.

It was reported that these investors had too little information on Azerbaijan, though the country had enough laws to attract investments. It was already stressed that the corruption made medium foreign investors avoid investing in the economy of developing countries, including Azerbaijan too. The representatives of different ministries and departments, scientists and experts are participating in the seminar.

Information for this report provided by Turan.

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Business

BIMST-EC free trade

Government drafts lists of goods, services

Nazmul Ahsan

Bangladesh has determined its approach towards the extent of duty free access of goods and services under a proposed free trade agreement within BIMST-EC.

BIMST-EC is a trade bloc comprising Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, Sri Lanka and Thailand.

Official sources said Bangladesh wants to see free movement of goods more open than services in the region. Therefore, they said, Bangladesh will go for 'negative list approach' for goods and 'positive list approach' for service sector.

The negative list approach means allowing duty-free movement of all products within the region excepting the items included in the list while the positive list approach means the opposite -- recommending duty free movement of enlisted items only.

An inter-ministerial meeting last week decided the approach and it will be placed at the cabinet meeting for final approval, sources said.

Representatives from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Industries, Board of Investment, Tariff Commission and the National Board of Revenue attended the meeting.

The meeting also decided to include special and differential clauses to be awarded to the least developed countries (LDCs) in the proposed FTA agreement. Bangladesh and Myanmar are two LDCs among five members of the trade bloc.

Officials said the positive list approach has been adopted for the service sector considering the possible negative impact on economy.

"Once we opt for negative list approach for this sector, the FTA deal could adversely affect the growth of Bangladesh's service sector," a high official told The Daily Star yesterday, requesting anonymity.

To protect local investors, Bangladesh has long been arguing to the World Trade Organisation (WTO) for not opening service sector to foreign investment, he said.

Some of the sub-sectors under service sector are -- business, communication, construction and related engineering services, educational, environmental, financial, ealth and social services, tourism and travel services.

Earlier, a study group comprising representatives from government and private sector proposed some 2,100 items under 14 major sectors to be included in the negative list of goods for FTA within BIMST-EC.

The major sectors include textile and clothing, electrical and electronic goods, agriculture products, agro-based products, food, bread, confectionery, jam, jelly and others, soft drinks and beverage, television, refrigerator and air conditioner,

cosmetics and toiletries, plastic products, wooden furniture, cement, carpets and pharmaceutical products.

The Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, Sri Lanka and Thailand Economic Co-operation (BIMST-EC) was formed in 1997 to promote trade and investment in the region.

The foreign ministers of the five member countries at the BIMST-EC summit in Colombo last year decided to finalise the proposed FTA agreement by February 2004 when the next summit takes place at Phuket in Thailand.

Before the summit, the sixth meeting of the BIMST-EC Standing Committee will be held from September17 to 19 next in Bangkok to finalise the summit agenda. Foreign secretaries of the member countries will attend the meeting, sources said.

A three-member Bangladesh delegation, led by Foreign Secretary Shamser Mobin Chowdhury will attend the meeting. The other members are Fazlur Rahman, trade consultant of the Ministry of Commerce and Bangladesh ambassador in Thailand.

The meeting of the Standing Committee will review the progress in the proposed FTA and opinion of Bangladesh on it.

The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) is likely to reveal a report on FTA, particularly in the case of BIMST-EC by this month, sources said.

Press/Media: BANGKOK POST
Page(s): P. 4
Date: 20 September 2003

Summary

Asian framework sought

Thailand pushes for Bimst-Ec formation

Achara Ashayagachat

Thailand will push for a free-trade-area framework with Bangladesh, Burma, India and Sri Lanka when its leaders meet in Phuket early next year.

Also on the agenda will be closer cooperation on tourism and improved transport links.

Senior officials of Bimst-Ec (Bangladesh, India, Burma, Sri Lanka and Thailand-Economic Cooperation) were preparing a draft of the leaders' declaration for the summit to be held on Feb 9, said Pisan Manawapat, head of the Foreign Ministry's International Economic Affairs Department.

India and Sri Lanka already had a free-trade area while Thailand and India would take a similar step next month.

The framework would help other members prepare for a region-wide free-trade area in the medium or long term, Mr Pisan said.

Thailand, as summit host, would also propose that the Bangkok-based Institute of Trade Development (ITD) offer training on rules of origin to enhance trade among member countries, he said.

Future cooperation would also focus on construction, healthcare, education, fisheries and energy, Mr Pisan said.

A formal announcement of 2004 as the Visit Bimst-Ec Year and a football match featuring under-21 players from all member countries would be other summit highlights.

The Bimst-Ec forum was first held with only four countries in 1997. Burma joined the group shortly after that.

Next year's summit would be preceded by meetings of senior official and of foreign ministers, Mr Pisan said.

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China to host its first ever UN Secretariat office

19 November – The first office from the United Nations Secretariat to be established in China is set to open in Beijing later this month following the historic signing in Bangkok today of an agreement with the Chinese Government.

Under the Host Country Headquarters Agreement with the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), the new headquarters for the Asian and Pacific Centre for Agricultural Engineering and Machinery (APCAEM) will be located in the China International Science and Technology Convention Centre in Beijing.

"The opening of the Centre signifies the recognition by ESCAP Member States of the importance of the organization in furthering the cause of agro-based technologies in agricultural production," the Commission said in a news release.

It is anticipated that the Centre will attract more member countries and financial contributions from the private sector in the form of public-private partnership, as it increasingly proves itself to be beneficial to its stakeholders with substantive and tangible accomplishments in the near future.

APCAEM currently has 13 member countries: Bangladesh, China, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, India, Indonesia, Iran, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines, the Republic of Korea, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Viet Nam.

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Last updated at (Beijing Time) Thursday, November 20, 2003

First UN agency's HQ established in China

The United Nations and the Chinese government on Wednesday declared the establishment of the first office from the UN Secretariat in China at a brief agreement signing ceremony held in Bangkok.

PRINT DISCUSSION CHINESE SEND TO FRIEND

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"The opening of the APCAEM office in Beijing will strengthen cooperation between the government of China and the UNESCAP, whichhas always been substantial," UNESCAP Executive Secretary Kim Hak-Su said at the signing ceremony.

He added that the "UNESCAP has its roots in China, since the then Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East was establishedin Shanghai back in 1947."

"The opening of APCAEM is significant for the improvement of international cooperation in the fields of agriculture technology,farm mechanization, food processing and biotechnology," said China's Permanent Representative to the UNESCAP Zhang Wanhai, who signed the agreement on behalf of the Chinese government.

He also said that the Chinese government welcomes more international organizations to set up their offices in China, which will benefit the development of related Chinese sectors and speed up China's process of opening up.

The APCAEM headquarters is located at the China International Science and Technology Convention Center in Beijing, "fully

mechanized, modernized and high-tech," according to Kim.

He noted that, in addition to these office facilities, China also provided an additional 3.8 million US dollars in financial support.

The APCAEM aims to improve research and development of agriculture engineering and machinery and strengthen related cooperation in the region. It currently has 13 members, with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea becoming the 13th member in July 2003.

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Thursday,Nov.20,2003

1st UN agency's HQ established in China

www.chinaview.cn 2003-11-19 20:04:50

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UN Secretariat to open first office in China

BEIJING : The United Nations said its Secretariat would open its first office in China later this month.

The announcement on the UN's website followed the signing in Bangkok Thursday of an agreement with the Chinese government.

The UN's Asian agricultural development agency, Asian and Pacific Centre for Agricultural Engineering and Machinery, will open its headquarters in the Chinese capital Beijing, a statement said.

"The opening of the centre signifies the recognition by ESCAP (United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific) member states of the importance of the organization in furthering the cause of agro-based technologies in agricultural production," the statement said.

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The Secretariat is the hands-on manager of the UN and oversees the day-to-day work of the world body's various departments and agencies. .end (paragraph)<<AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE -- 11/20/03>> <P><< Copyright ©2003 Agence France Presse. >>

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Vice-Premier: China to strengthen cooperation with ESCAP

(2003-11-26 22:26) (Xinhua)

Chinese Vice-Premier Hui Liangyu said Wednesday that China will strengthen pragmatic cooperation with the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) of the United Nations to eliminate poverty.

Hui told deputy secretary-general of the UN and Executive Secretary of ESCAP Kim Hak-Su during their meeting that such cooperation will also benefit economic and social development of China and the Asia-Pacific region.

Kim is here attending a session of the Asian and Pacific Center for Agricultural Engineering and Machinery (APCAEM), the first UN organization based in China.

Kim Hak-Su thanked China for its consistent support for the work of ESCAP. He said the APCAEM will help contribute to poverty elimination in the Asia-Pacific region.

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More Int'l organizations to set up headquarters in China: UN Official

www.chinaview.cn 2003-11-26 23:03:33

BEIJING, Nov. 26 (Xinhuanet) -- UN Undersecretary Kim Hak-Su said here Wednesday China has a competitive edge in terms of hosting international organization offices due to its rapid socioeconomic development and he expects more international organizations to set up their head offices in China.

Kim made the remark at the opening ceremony of the 2nd council meeting of the Asian and Pacific Center for Agricultural Engineering and Machinery (APCAEM), the first China-based official UN organizations.

However, Kim said, Chinese cities need to enhance their facilities to attract more international organizations, including high-quality bilingual schools and leisure facilities of various kinds.

He suggested China learn from the experience of successful host cities of international organizations, such as Vienna and Geneva.

The APCAEM, founded in 1977, currently has 15 member countries.It is one of the four organizations under the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, where Kim also serves as executive secretary.

There are some 40,000 international organizations around the globe, but only a few have set up their head offices in China so far. Enditem

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Last updated at: (Beijing Time) Thursday, November 27, 2003

More Int'l organizations to set up headquarters in China: UN Official

UN Undersecretary Kim Hak-Su said Wednesday China has a competitive edge in terms of hosting international organization offices due to its rapid socioeconomic development and he expects more international organizations to set up their head offices in China.

PRINT DISCUSSION CHINESE SEND TO FRIEND

UN Undersecretary Kim Hak-Su said Wednesday China has a competitive edge in terms of hosting international organization offices due to its rapid socioeconomic development and he expects more international organizations to set up their head offices in China.

Kim made the remark at the opening ceremony of the 2nd council meeting of the Asian and Pacific Center for Agricultural Engineering and Machinery (APCAEM), the first China-based official UN organizations.

However, Kim said, Chinese cities need to enhance their facilities to attract more international organizations, including high-quality bilingual schools and leisure facilities of various kinds.

He suggested China learn from the experience of successful host cities of international organizations, such as Vienna and Geneva.

The APCAEM, founded in 1977, currently has 15 member countries.It is one of the four organizations under the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, where Kim also serves as executive secretary.

There are some 40,000 international organizations around the globe, but only a few have set up their head offices in China so far.

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Int'l business conference to be held in city next month

ECONOMIC DESK

A 2-day international business conference will be held in the city on January 17-18 to discuss the present global economic scenario against the backdrop of the terrorist attacks on America and the collapse of Cancun WTO talks.

Over 200 participants from more than 28 countries and international agencies are expected to join the biggest business meet in Dhaka since the Cancun fiasco.

International Chamber of Commerce-Bangladesh (ICCB) is hosting the international business conference, theme of which is 'Global Economic Governance and Challenges of Multilateralism'.

Announcing the programme at a meeting with editors and senior journalists in the city yesterday, ICCB President Mahbubur Rahman said Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia would formally open the conference at Hotel Sonargaon.

Thai Prime Minister Dr Thaksin Shinawatra would deliver his keynote speech in the opening session, reports UNB.

Samsom H Chowdhury, Rashed Maksud Khan and Abul Kasem were present at the meeting at Dhaka Club.

Bahrain, Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, Czech Republic, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Republic of Korea, Nepal, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippines, Russia, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Switzerland, Togo, Thailand, Turkey, Vietnam and the United Kingdom have confirmed their participation in the business meet.

Secretary General of UNCTAD Rubens Ricupero and Swedish Minister for International Development and Cooperation Carin Jamtin are also expected to join the event.

Rahman said there would be an opening plenary on Governance and Multilateralism on November 17 while three business sessions would be held the following day.

Those who confirmed their participation include former Indian Prime Minister IK Gujral, WTO Director General Dr Supachai Pantichpakdi, Indonesian Industry and Trade Minister Ms Rini Sumarno Soewandi, Sri Lankan Commerce Minister Ravi Karunanyake, Turkey's Industry and Trade Minister Ali Coskun, Bangladesh Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan and Commerce Minister Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury, Governor of Japan Bank for International Cooperation Syosuke Shinozawa, Executive Secretary of UN ESCAP Dr Kim Hak-Su, ICC chairman Jean-Rene Fourtou, ICC Vice-

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fnWEB Industry Report - Railway at the Center of Infrastructure Spending in Asia

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fnWEB - Bangkok - January 6, 2003 - Ron Corben - Asia's railway networks are in the limelight of infrastructure spending with more than US$70 billion of projects underway or planned before 2006, mostly based in China, but with opportunities elsewhere, including Thailand.



The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific - ESCAP - is forecasting that between 2001 to 2006 about US$73 billion is to be spent in new rail infrastructure - US$46 billion of this in China alone.

"The large number of projects aimed at railway infrastructure

development across the region shows that many governments are aware of the inherent strength of the railways as a safe, environmentally-friendly and technologically innovative mode of transport," ESCAP said in a recent report.

The expansion programs have marked a renaissance in rail transport, viewed by industry analysts as offering the best alternative in mass transit systems for both people and goods movement throughout the region.

From the plans of a Trans-Asian Railway (TAR) of four decades ago, of a 14,000-km rail link between Singapore and Turkey, the economic realities of the 21st century have placed rail as a cornerstone for regional transport.

Paul Anderson, chief operating officer of Bangkok's mass transit skytrain says rail systems will be the key to future non-road mass transport systems in Asia, as highways fail to match rising vehicle demand.

"Worldwide we can see the damaging effects of pollution, and the costs to the economy in terms of lost foreign exchange through purchasing fuel," Anderson says. The rising costs and damage to public health in the major cities will leave governments with few options.

"So I can see that governments will reverse the trend from roads to investing in non-roads-based mass transit systems like the Bangkok mass transit system .and I see a great future," he said.

BTS' Mr Anderson was the general manager, railway systems for the Kowloon-Canton Railway Corp. His responsibilities included the design, construction, and project management of all railway systems before coming to Bangkok.

Asia's cities, clogged by traffic and pollution, need rail systems. "I am interested in trying to build rail infrastructure to help the world's environment. I think that (Asia's) cities will need an enormous amount of help in the next 20 to 50 years to solve the greenhouse (gas environmental) problem, " Anderson said.

"If motorization is the future for these cities it doesn't go well for the rest of the world. So I feel I am contributing something to these cities in general by building railway infrastructure," he added. So far the Bangkok Mass Transit System - or BTS - is only having a small dent in the city's congested traffic byways.

The weekday average of about 140,000 passengers a day three years ago has risen to 320,000. "So we have had a remarkable increase in patronage reversing all the trends of all the mass transit systems in Asia," he said.

"Each day there are about 22 million trips in public transport in Bangkok. So in the future, when the rail infrastructure is implemented we can see that the number of trips in the market growing .... just because of suppressed demand," he added.

Once extensions are completed - including across the Chao Phraya River to semi-suburban Thonburi, patronage is expected to rise to over one million trips a day from the current 320,000. The increase will be necessary, as break-even on the US$1.1 billion investment so far requires at least 500,00 to 600,000 trips a day.

In Thailand, at present there are 4,119 kms of train networks throughout the country consisting of 3,954 kms of single-track line and 165 kms of double track lines. The UN ESCAP, in a report, says there urgent development is required to enhance the capability of competition between train and other modes and improve efficiency in operating by increasing the capacity of each track line.

The State Rail Authority of Thailand (SRT) is working on double tracking projects for commuter lines around Bangkok with a total distance of 249 kms. The SRT's Hua mak to ChachoengSao link - worth 8.8 billion baht - is due for completion in 2004. One double tracking project approved, but not yet uynderway, is the 12 billion baht Ban Pachee-Lopburi. Ban Pachee-Mab Kabao, Talingchan-Nakornpathom link, due for completion in 2003.

David Aldridge, the Sydney-based chief executive officer of rail signaling firm, Aldridge Railway Signals Pty Ltd, says contracts in Malaysia and Thailand are just part of other opportunities that range from the north - south rail link on

Peninsular Korea, as well as a fast train project linking Taiwan's capital of Taipei and the southern port city of Kaoshung.

Also being completed is Thailand's Mass Transit Authority's (MRTA) underground rail system coving a distance of 20 kms from Hua Lamphong (Central) Railway station to the outlying Bang Su station. But altogether the system once operational, will cover a distance of about 54 kms. The new system is due to begin operations in 2004.

Australian engineering house, Leighton Asia, has already completed is a US$138 million track rehabilitation project for the State Rail Authority of Thailand (SRT), and there is another 3,500 kms of rail refurbishing work. Leighton Asia is also carrying out a US$42 million double tracking rail work in Indonesia's West Java, due for completion in 2005.

Recent reports noted that China was building an additional 1,500 kms of new lines each year to the current 70,000 kms of routes - at an annual cost of US$6.0 billion. Within a few years, China is expected to overtake Russia with the world's second largest rail network.

This work includes further expansion of the western rail link, with the planned "Jinghu" high-speed line between Beijing and Shanghai along with electrification and track duplication work.

The Kowloon-Canton Railway (KCR) mega project is designed to reach a wider commuter population. The West Rail project, with surface, elevated and tunnel sections and costing US$6.62, in one Hong Kong's largest civil engineering works ever undertaken.

Australia's Leighton Asia Ltd is one of the successful bidders in gaining work from the West Rail project. Partnered with Rail Services Australia (RSA), Leighton is responsible for the Permanent Way - Southern Area from Nam Cheong Station to the Southern Abutment of Kam Sheung Road Station, including Pat Heung Depot. Other work on the same system is the HK$863 million upgrade and and extensions of a light rail system in Hong Kong, due for completion in December 2004.

Leighton Asia's group communications manager, Chris

Gordon, says the rising demand for rail infrastructure has been reflected in the growing share of Leighton Asia's workload and a focus of recent years.

Across North- and South East Asia, Leighton Asia together with partners such as is carrying out a range of projects that reflect the ongoing expenditure to boost mass transit systems.

"Asia is spending a lot of money" on rail expansion and development, says Michael Walsh, Brisbane-based general manager consulting for Queensland Rail - soon to be QR Enterprises. "Rail is undergoing a renaissance," Walsh says.

"From Singapore to China - initially to Kunming - on offer is a narrow guage rail line. There will be many years of work doing that," he
said. "I'd see from here to 2020 a huge amount of work going on. China is simply so big".

Singapore is also looking to expand its domestic services, says Aldridge. "There is much more work in Singapore. The government recognizes that rail offers a capacity to be able to move people economically," he said. Indonesia too, is expected to look for international companies to undertake upgrading work "for the next few years".

One of the most successful of the range of international companies bidding for work in the region has been Siemens covering areas ranging from rail signaling to rail cars. In late November Siemens Rail Systems announced it had secured a contract for rail signaling in China's eastern city of Nanjing.

The Nanjing Metro Corporations has plans to put six new metro and light rail lines totaling 139 track kilometers into operation, with the first section due to be inaugurated in 2005.

In 2001, Siemens Ltd was awarded the HK$237 million contract to install a new signaling system for the Kowloon-Canton Railway Corp (KCRC) light rail system. This had followed the signaling and operations control systems for a new metro line in Guangzhou. It marked another successful development for Siemens' joint venture in China, established in 1995.

Malaysian rail authorities awarded Siemens Transportation Systems with the contract to supply signaling and control equipment worth about 71 million Euros for the link between Rawang and Ipoh. The contract came though Mitsui of Tokyo which is the general contractor for the overall project of electrification and double tracking.

Siemens is responsible for the system engineering together with the supply and commissioning of the centralized traffic control system. The German company was also involved in the installation of interlockings for Kuala Lumpur's new train station and "turnkey realization" of the rapid transit link between Kuala Lumpur and the international airport.

In 2001, Siemens had been called on to supply signaling and control equipment for the new Xinmin Line in the south section of Shanghai.

Siemens and Canada's Alcatel Transport Automation Systems are two of the international heavyweights that are seeking work across the region. Others that regularly are bidding include Bombardier Transportation, GE Transportation Systems, and Telenor Radio Systems, as well as Australian-based Westinghouse Rail Systems Ltd and, Aldridge Railway Signals Pty Ltd.

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by NewsEdge

September 17, 2003
Wednesday

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LOCAL News

Call for collaboration of ports and shipping

By Azlan Othman



Pehin Zakaria delivering his speech at the launch of the Port Strategic Planning Workshop

Amid an increase in world seaborne trade, container traffic and bright out maritime industry including the ports sector, port and shipping owners wi collaborate, Minister of Communications, Pehin Dato Seri Setia Awg Hj yesterday.

"Port and shipping services will need to be competitive in every sense, pa terms of costs. However it is expected, while there will be stiff competiti area, there will be collaboration in others."

"Port operators and shipping owners may have to collaborate in some are the enlarge intra-regional trade. Trade liberalisation efforts alone are insu generate trade expansions. Trade expansion requires efficient ports and sl services-linking different ports of the region to the rest of the world."

Pehin Hj Zakaria said this at the launching ceremony of the Port Strategic Workshop which was jointly organised by the Ports Department and Islar Development Bank Regional Office, with the cooperation of United Nati Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) Muara Container Terminal Sdn Bhd.

Touching on port security, Pehin Hj Zakaria said that Brunei as the 157th state of the International Maritime Organisation, attaches great importanc international obligations and responsibilities in ensuring that safety and r maritime transport operations within its territories.

"In this regard, Brunei is taking necessary steps to meet the requirements

The Daily Star
Committed to PEOPLE'S RIGHT TO KNOW
Vol. 4 Num 140 Tue. October 14, 2003
Front Page

Asian Highway bypasses Bangladesh

Rafiq Hasan

India is constructing roads leaving Bangladesh out of the proposed Asian Highway that aims at developing traffic network among 38 Asian nations and Europe via Turkey.

New Delhi's move came after Dhaka did not agree to an Indian proposal for road transit and transshipment through Bangladesh, and India decided to run roads through its northeastern states Assam and Monipur connecting to Thailand via Myanmar, sources said.

An agreement was signed among India, Thailand and Myanmar two years ago to develop the road network.

Foreign ministers of the three countries will meet in New Delhi in December to discuss the highway-building issue further.

India also offered Myanmar financial and technical assistance for developing the infrastructure required for the highway. If Myanmar now allows India other facilities, mainly customs and immigration, and develops its own infrastructure for entry into the Asian Highway, Bangladesh will be isolated from the giant communication network, the sources said.

India is also exploring the possibility of linking Akkyab Port in Myanmar to its northeastern states to transport export-import goods.

It will organise a seminar this month to exchange views with the countries concerned on the subject and a Bangladesh government representative will participate in it, the sources said.

"Bangladesh runs the risk of being shut out of an international network missing the chance of new investment because of the plan. It may also lose foreign currency that could be earned from providing port, road and railway services for international traffic," said Dr M Rahmatullah, programme director (transport and infrastructure) of the Centre for Policy Dialogue, a civil-society think-tank.

"If Bangladesh is not linked to the highway, investors will think twice before they bankroll because of difficulties carrying raw materials and supplying finished goods," he said.

But the Indian move did not ruffle the communications ministry.

Officials said Bangladesh has proposed the Asian Highway through Dhaka and Yangon via Cox's Bazar and Teknaf.

The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, the coordinating body, also agreed to the proposal saying it had no objection if Bangladesh and Myanmar could mutually develop a road network.

Bangladesh developed much of the road network and Myanmar sought help in

constructing a bridge over the Naaf, a bordering river, the communications ministry officials said. A technical team will visit Myanmar soon to assess how Bangladesh can help Yangon.

The officials claim Bangladesh is in a better position and many roads could be part of the Asian Highway. "It depends on facilities rather than infrastructure to be included in the network," a senior official said.

The main component is allowing transportation of foreign goods and people through a country with necessary customs and immigration clearance, he said, adding Bangladesh cannot object to India's plan.

"We are not much worried about New Delhi's preparation because we have also advanced a lot in developing the road network with Myanmar under a bilateral agreement," said State Minister for Communications Salah Uddin Ahmed.

Which roads will be considered part of the Asian Highway is important and Myanmar has a lot of interest in developing a road network through Bangladesh because it would be much easier for it; otherwise, it will have to travel around 500 kilometres more to reach New Delhi, another official said.

But the experts fear the road with Myanmar may be considered a bilateral road, not part of the Asian Highway and Bangladesh would lose international traffic.

Bangladesh also proposed a number of roads connecting Dhaka with Teknaf, Benapole, Tamabil and Bangla Bandha to be considered the Asian Highway.

Much of the road network has already been developed and some portions are under construction, sources said.

An intergovernmental meeting will take place in Bangkok in November, where technical experts will exchange views on developing the roads.

Developing roads and other facilities for entry into the highway has no deadline, but the progress made is reviewed every five years, the sources said.


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Communications Minister ditches Asian highway report as 'baseless'

Communications Minister Nazmul Huda on Tuesday dismissed as 'baseless' media reports that Ban out of the proposed Asian highway.
"Bangladesh exists very much on the road and route maps of the Asian highway," he told .

A couple of newspapers, including an English-language daily, reported Tuesday that India was cons Bangladesh out of the proposed highway that aims at developing a network among 38 Asian n Turkey.

India has decided to build roads through its northeastern states for connecting to Thailand via Myanm given consent to an Indian proposal for road transit and transshipment through Bangladesh, the report

Huda, however, sees nothing wrong 'if any country plans its own route map'. "India, Myanmar and B their own way."
As per an ESCAP (Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific) criterion, any three co their own road maps and route maps.

"The important factor, for us, is that what we are planning for our own," said the minister. "Banglade keeping in view her future priorities."

The Asian highway status map on the ESCAP website shows that the highway would be linked with Tamabil (Bangladesh); later, it would be linked with India through Bangladesh via Banglabandha and B

Bangladesh, however, has proposed a different route-link with Myanmar, via Cox's Bazar, to cut do with Yangon as well as dependence on India, sources said.
According to the ESCAP website, the Asian Highway project was initiated in 1959, with an aim to assi and efficient land transport linkages within Asia and the Pacific.
During the first phase of the project, between 1960 and 1970, considerable progress was made.
However, progress slowed down when the financial assistance for the project was suspended in 1975.

At its 48th session in 1992, ESCAP endorsed the integrated Asian land-transport infrastructure comprising the Asian Highway and the Trans-Asian Railway, and facilitation of land transport proj phase II (1992-1998) of the Transport and Communications Decade for Asia and the Pacific.

Under the first project, the Asian highway routes in 18 countries were reviewed and a new network agreed by a policy-level expert group meeting in 1993.

Countries covered by this new network are: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, India, Indon of Iran, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Philip Lanka, Thailand and Viet Nam.
Later, more countries were included in the network.
As a result of various studies by ESCAP in cooperation with the members, a new Asian highway netwo Road classification and design standards for the highway were also revised and international borde measures introduced.
Now, work has been initiated for the formalisation of the highway network and plans are under intergovernmental agreement on the Asian highway network, which will define the routes and d establish a coordination mechanism for its development.

Too many news sources

The communications minister referred to the government's recent policy for 'looking towards the east' a been working on a plan to set up a road-link with Yangon (Myanmar) and Bangkok (Thailand).

"Dhaka is hopeful of attaining a bilateral deal, regarding road transportation, with Yangon," he said. "La Thailand."

ESCAP, the coordinating body, has also agreed to the proposal, saying it has no objection if the two cou develop a road network, sources said.

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THE move by the US and Singapore to enforce visa restrictions on Muslim seafarers, BUSINESS TIMES
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THE move by the US and Singapore to enforce visa restrictions on Muslim seafarers, BUSINESS TIMES

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THE move by the US and Singapore to enforce visa restrictions on Muslim seafarers has been denounced by Muslim countries which attended the recent meeting of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (**Escap**) in Bangkok.

The countries attending the meeting of **Escap** Maritime Manpower Planning and Training said the move has created practical problems and difficulties for Muslim seafarers to serve on vessels calling at US ports. Manpower agents from Bangladesh, Pakistan and Hong Kong have demanded that the US and Singapore revise or lift their recently implemented visa restrictions on Muslim seafarers. Agents said shipping lines are reluctant to hire Muslim seafarers because of restrictions on ships going to US ports.

As of October 1, all seafarers must apply for US visas at their home residences. Representatives at the **Escap** manpower meeting acknowledged that the US carries out background checks on ``all'' foreign seafarers but they maintained that the process is more stringent on Muslim countries. The manpower agents said it takes moreprocessing time to get the visa.

For instance in Singapore, it now takes between seven and 10 days to get a visa, and for the US visa takes six to eight weeks because the request has to be sent to Washington for clearance. Before this, the US is the only country to require seafarers to have a visa to enter the country and now Singapore is also imposing this requirement. Traditionally, seafarers have always enjoyed international status and are not divided up on the basis of their nationalities. Manpower agents said because the US controls nearly 40 per cent of the world's cargo movements, nearly all vessels have to call at US ports. Concerned ship-owners and shipping lines are also pushing the US to ease the visa restrictions.

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BUSINESS TIMES



US, S'pore visa curbs on Muslim seafarers slammed

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Concerned ship-owners and shipping lines are also pushing the US to ease the visa restrictions. — PortsWorld

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7 November – The railways of China and Mongolia will start cargo train service tomorrow between Tianjin port, east of Beijing, and Mongolia's capital, Ulaanbaatar, as part of a project to connect Asia and Europe by rail, the United Nations regional commission for Asia and the Pacific said today.

"On 8 November, as the train is flagged on its way, the railways of China and Mongolia will take the first step towards the implementation of a grander vision to link Asia and Europe by land and one that may eventually change the face of transport in north-east Asia," said Barry Cable, Chief of the Transport and Tourism Division of the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP).

A pilot container block-train will make the 1,700-kilometre journey as part of ESCAP's Trans-Asian Railway project under a six-country agreement reached at a meeting in Ulaanbaatar in early October.

Under the agreement, China, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Kazakhstan, Mongolia, the Republic of Korea and the Russian Federation made a commitment to boost rail movement across borders and recognize the role of railways in regional economic development.

The ESCAP project will help to provide land-bridge services linking two of the world's most economically active regions, northeast Asia and the European Union.

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Cargo train makes first rail trip between China and Mongolia - UN commission

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The railways of China and Mongolia will start cargo train service tomorrow between Tianjin port, east of Beijing, and Mongolia's capital, Ulaanbaatar, as part of a project to connect Asia and Europe by rail, the United Nations regional commission for Asia and the Pacific said today.

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Seminar to focus on transport outlook

The International Chamber of Commerce (Thailand) will hold a seminar on ``Transport Facilitation and Trade Growth in Asia'' at the UN Conference Centre in Bangkok on Nov 27-28.

Participants will discuss ways in which trade expansion will spur demand for transport and logistics.

Co-sponsors are the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (Escap) and the Transportation Institute of Chulalongkorn University.

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UN/ Landmark decision adopted by ESCAP to extend Asian Highway Network

M2 PRESSWIRE via NewsEdge Corporation : BANGKOK, (UN Information Services) -- Delegates from 32 members of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (**UNESCAP**) have brought the vision of an efficient, reliable regional transport network to a reality by adopting the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Asian Highway Network.

The Intergovernmental Agreement lays a framework for coordinated development of the international highways in Asia, as well as between Asia and Europe. This is the first intergovernmental agreement developed under the auspices of **UNESCAP** and the agreement will be deposited with the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

The Asian Highway route AH1 now extends from Pusan to Fukuoka and Tokyo. Now, the Asian Highway network will extend to 32 member countries with more than 140,000 kilometres of highways across the whole of Asia.

"The availability of transport linkages and services is a decisive factor if countries are to participate in the globalizing economy.

Consequently, there is a need to put in place transport infrastructure linkages in anticipation of increased intra- and interregional trade", **UNESCAP** Executive Secretary Mr. Kim Hak-Su told the Intergovernmental Meeting, held from 17 to 18 November at the United Nations Conference Centre.

The formalization of the Asian Highway network through an intergovernmental agreement was one of the priority activities of the Regional Action Programme adopted by the Ministerial Conference on Infrastructure held in Seoul in 2001 and endorsed by the Commission at its fifty-eighth session.

A signing ceremony of the Intergovernmental Agreement would be held during the sixtieth session of the **UNESCAP** Commission at Shanghai, China, in April 2004.

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BC-Editorials-Japan-4

Japanese editorial excerpts -4-+

TOKYO, Nov. 22 (Kyodo) Selected editorial excerpts from the Japanese press:

ASIAN HIGHWAY DREAM (IHT/Asahi as translated from the Japanese-language Asahi Shimbun's editorial published Nov. 21)

Decades after the idea was first mooted, a trans-Asian highway allowing people to drive from the Far East, across the Eurasian continent to Turkey and onto Europe, is finally coming together. The same route that took Marco Polo four years to cover in the 13th century will now take only 20 days.

Japan has decided to join the Asian Highway. In its inception, the project was viewed as a post-World War II reconstruction program. It was first adopted in 1959 by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (**ESCAP**), then named the Economic Commission for Asia and Far East. Their hopes were quickly crushed, though. The starting point of route No. 1 was to be Saigon, soon to be embroiled in the Vietnam War. Fighting soon spread to Laos and Cambodia. India and Pakistan, meantime, fought three wars. After that, Soviet troops intervened militarily in Afghanistan. A civil war followed. The next theater for hostilities was between Iran and Iraq, and so on ...

With each conflict, the dream of a trans-Asian highway receded farther and farther from reality. One setback followed another. The history of the Asian Highway runs parallel to the difficult history of Asian countries. But the project did not die. When the Cold War ended, countries of Central Asia, Russia, South Korea and North Korea lined up to join the project.

The plan is not to create a completely new road, but to connect existing roads, erect uniform road signs and create an environment where people can travel freely. Last year, **ESCAP** designated 55 routes with a total length of 140,000 kilometers.

With Japan as the 32nd participant, the new Route 1 will start in Tokyo and connect from Fukuoka to South Korea's Pusan via ferry. It will then continue on to Beijing, Bangkok, New Delhi, Kabul and finally Istanbul. There are other routes, also. For example, Route 5 will go northward from Shanghai and on to Turkey.

A web of roads alone will not ensure free travel. The borders of North Korea and Myanmar (Burma) remain closed. To allow smooth passage, transit procedures need to be simplified, but in some cases, political and security issues will make immediate solutions difficult.

But if an environment can be created where barriers between countries are lowered, and people can travel freely, economic and cultural exchanges will deepen, and new opportunities will open for Eurasia.

Until now, the Japanese government had been cautious about joining the project. Various rationales were raised: The project would not merit a country like Japan, separated from the continent by the sea; participation would mean relaxing immigration controls which would put the island country's security at risk. This resistance no doubt shifted as concern was raised about Japan being left behind the Asian trend toward creating a new economic area. Although the decision to participate came quite late, it is still a welcome one.

Twenty thousand kilometers to Istanbul. We look forward to seeing a road sign like that in the center of Tokyo. (Nov. 22)

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PROTÉGÉS
YOUNG ARTISTS OF EXCEPTIONAL PROMISE

IT ALL STARTS HERE: Tokyo to be starting point of Asian Highway

The Asahi Shimbun

The U.N.-sanctioned network will crisscross Asia through the Korean Peninsula to Istanbul.

BANGKOK-It could soon be official: The road through Asia begins in Tokyo.

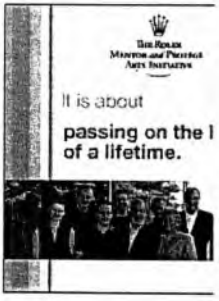
Japan has decided to participate in a trans-Asian highway project led by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP).

Government representatives agreed to make Tokyo the origin of the highway at a meeting here on the so-called Asian Highway earlier this week. The move pushed South Korea's Pusan from the starting spot.

Route 1 will run from Tokyo through Fukuoka. It will pick up again in Pusan and run up the Korean Peninsula via Pyongyang, down through China to Vietnam, then west all the way to Istanbul.

Tokyo's status as the origin is somewhat symbolic, since no route will be built linking Japan to the continent. The highway will use existing roads in participating countries to create a transborder network using common signs.

In Japan, expressways between Tokyo and Fukuoka, including the



Tomei and Meishin, are expected to be designated part of Route 1.

A pact inaugurating the highway will be signed by the 32 member nations of ESCAP at a general convention slated for April in Shanghai. Eight nations have to ratify the agreement for it to take effect.

Though Japan has cooperated with the project, such as by dispatching road specialists, it had declined to become a stop along the network.

But Tokyo decided to join the project at the meeting in Bangkok to affirm Japan's central role in Asia, officials said.

The United Nations launched the Asian Highway project in 1959, but progress stalled in the late 1960s due to wars and international tensions.

The project revived in the late 1980s with the end of the Cold War and the ensuing spread of market economies. China, Russia, North Korea and central Asian nations joined around that time.

Last year, 55 routes in 31 participating nations were decided. (IHT/Asahi: November 21,2003) (11/21)

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Asian highway network to spread across continent after landmark deal - UN

21 November – The Asian Highway network will be extended across 32 countries over the whole of the continent after delegates to the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) reached a landmark agreement this week.

During a two-day a meeting in Bangkok, ESCAP developed its first intergovernmental agreement - a deal it said in a statement would realize "the vision of an efficient, reliable regional transport network" for the continent.

The Asian highway route AH1 currently runs from Pusan in the Republic of Korea to Fukuoka and Tokyo in Japan. The new agreement means the network will eventually extend to 32 member countries of ESCAP with more than 140,000 kilometres of highways.

ESCAP Executive Secretary Kim Hak-Su told the meeting that strong transport links are crucial if countries want to advance in a globalized economy. The agreement will be formally signed in Shanghai in April.

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EDITORIAL:Asian Highway dream

The 20,000-km route runs across many borders.

D ecades after the idea was first mooted, a trans-Asian highway allowing people to drive from the Far East, across the Eurasian continent to Turkey and onto Europe, is finally coming together. The same route that took Marco Polo four years to cover in the 13th century will now take only 20 days.

Japan has decided to join the Asian Highway. In its inception, the project was viewed as a post-World War II reconstruction program. It was first adopted in 1959 by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), then named the Economic Commission for Asia and Far East. Asian countries that had recently gained independence embraced this grand vision.

Their hopes were quickly crushed, though. The starting point of route No. 1 was to be Saigon, soon to be embroiled in the Vietnam War. Fighting soon spread to Laos and Cambodia. India and Pakistan, meantime, fought three wars. After that, Soviet troops intervened militarily in Afghanistan. A civil war followed. The next theater for hostilities was between Iran and Iraq, and so on ...

With each conflict, the dream of a trans-Asian highway receded farther and farther from reality. One setback followed another. The history of the Asian Highway runs parallel to the difficult history of Asian countries. But the project did not die. When the Cold War

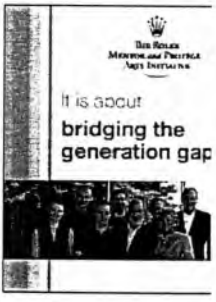
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ended, countries of Central Asia, Russia, South Korea and North Korea lined up to join the project.

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But if an environment can be created where barriers between countries are lowered, and people can travel freely, economic and cultural exchanges will deepen, and new opportunities will open for Eurasia.

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Twenty thousand kilometers to Istanbul. We look forward to seeing a road sign like that in the center of Tokyo.

--The Asahi Shimbun, Nov. 21(IHT/Asahi: November 22,2003)
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Press/Media: BANGKOK POST
Page(s): P. 3 (Business)
Date: 24 November 2003

Summary

Travel Monitor

IMTIAZ MUQBIL

Developing the Asian Highway network

Progress made in creating 140,000-km system

After years of arduous negotiations, representatives of 32 Asia-Pacific countries last week adopted an agreement that sets out the minimum terms, conditions and standards for joining, coordinating and developing the vast, 140,000-kilometre Asian Highway network.

Due to be signed at the 60th ministerial session of the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia-Pacific (Escap) in April 2004, the agreement marks a major step towards the creation of a massive land transport network designed to link up the regions capital cities, tourism spots, industrial and agricultural centres, and sea and river ports.

The Russian delegate to the meeting, whose country has about 16,800 kilometres of Asian Highway running through it, hailed the agreement as one of Escap's most efficient actions.

The agreement sets up a framework for common classification and design standards for various highway routes, including signage. It also lays out the modalities for proposing new routes and mechanism for dispute settlement and withdrawal from the agreement.

The network includes routes ranging from two-lane roads with design speeds of 30 kilometres per hour to access-controlled highways, and bans mopeds, animal-drawn carts, bicycles and pedestrians.

Once signed and ratified, countries will have to clearly mark all the highway routes with the appropriate signage.

Described as Escap's long-running flagship programme, the Asian Highway aims to develop an effective network across Asia and connecting Asia with Europe and Western Asia. Since 1992, it has been part of the Asian Land Transport Infrastructure Development (Altid) programme, which also includes the Trans-Asian Railway.

According to Barry Cable, director of Escap's Transport and Tourism Division, the efficient establishment of such a network has to be founded on international co-operation, co-ordination and planning.

While national planners ordinarily give highest priority to national networks, an effective international network can be of great benefit to each country it connects for instance, by increasing trade and tourism. In particular, landlocked countries have no access to seaports without international highways or railways through neighbouring countries.

Mr Cable noted that a number of issues had to be overcome before the agreement could be adopted.

One of these is alignment of roads, to avoid situations where a road connecting two countries, and developed by each country individually, does not meet at the same point on the border.

Another potential problem is that standards for road networks differ from one country to another. Different road signs and markings, varying road quality and different standards for roads and bridges will all present difficulties for traffic along international routes.

An important issue for technicians or investors is access to information about highway networks, Mr Cable said.

Many countries have national road databases, but face difficulties collecting and analysing data and information on such things as road conditions, surface quality, traffic conditions, road accidents and, maintenance records.

More significantly, it is not easy for international transporters, technicians or investors to obtain information on international routes relying on information provided by individual countries, he said.

The meeting also added Japan to the Asian Highway, with its first route being from Tokyo to Fukuoka.

Delegates to the Escap meeting were clearly both relieved and elated. The Indian delegate said it would set the stage for further negotiations between countries to facilitate travel by improving border-crossing formalities. It will also give an impetus to India's road-development programme.

The Korean delegate said the agreement had given great momentum to the Altid project and would complement the railway line now being laid between North Korea and South Korea. The project began in 2000 and is expected to be finalised in 2004.

The Mongolian delegate said the agreement would go a long way towards meeting needs of the land-locked countries, which, also include Laos, Bhutan, Afghanistan and many of the Central Asian Republics.

The Nepalese delegate said Escap would now need to address other emerging issues like road safety. Nepal has one of the highest road casualty rates in the world.

Japanese highway expert Tetsuo Miyairi said it was also important to complete the multi-modality of the network by ensuring coordinated linkages with airports adding that air travel had been one of the missing links.

◆ *Imtiaz Muqbil is executive editor of Travel Impact Newswire, an e-mailed feature and analysis service focusing on the Asia-Pacific travel industry.*

3. Reducing Poverty

PRESS CLIPPINGS

TOTAL PAGE(S): 2

Press/Media: BANGKOK POST (Perspective)

Page(s): 5

Date: 12 January 2003

Summary

COMMENTARY

Kim Hak - Su

War on poverty needs focus

The recently concluded Fifth Asian and Pacific Population Conference held in Bangkok generated discussion on many major problems, but the fundamental issue of poverty was scarcely touched



Kim Hak-Su: Fighting poverty

Held only once every ten years, the Asian and Pacific Population Conferences are crucial forums for sharing information for formulating policies on a range of issues that are vital to improving the health, well-being and prosperity of all the people living in the Asian and Pacific region.

The purpose of the most recent conference, held in Bangkok last month, was to address the linkages between population issues and poverty. However, the debate was somehow dominated by the topics of abortion and adolescent sexual activity.

That was a sad development. In the end, consensus was reached and all countries endorsed the Fifth Asian and Pacific Conference Plan of Action on Population and Poverty. Above all, the conference provided a unique opportunity to focus worldwide attention on the fundamental problem of alleviating poverty.

As we enter the third year of the millennium, poverty is still the most pressing concern facing most nations, and especially those of Asia and the Pacific. If, as some claim, poverty is one of the root causes of terrorism, then this concern is more timely and pressing than ever.

The UNESCAP region is home to 3.7 billion people _ that is 62 percent of the global population of 6.2 billion. It is also home to the largest number of poor people. This is despite the remarkable advances of the past four decades.

In 1960, 65 percent of people in the Asian and Pacific region were living below the poverty line. By 2000, that number had declined to 17 percent. Yet, tremendous gaps persist.

Asia and the Pacific is the most diverse corner of the globe, with highly-developed Tiger economies existing alongside nations mired in the Least Developed Country status. Stunning disparities also exist between rich and poor within the nations.

Forging policy guidelines that can effectively address the problems confronting such a wide variety of countries is a challenge.

Nonetheless, the 40 delegations participating in the Fifth Asian and Pacific Population Conference have just met this challenge.

The decennial regional population conferences are more than just talk shops. Recommendations for priority actions have been implemented by governments across the region to spur development and uplift the lives of millions.

At the time of the first conference, held in New Delhi in 1963, only five countries had population policies, and the region was in the midst of a population explosion with an average total fertility rate of 5.6 children per woman.

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CLIPPINGS TOTAL P 2

Press/Media: **BANGKOK POST (Perspective)** Date: 12 January 2003

Page(s): 5

Summary

Today, virtually all member countries have population policies and all but seven have made the transition towards low fertility rates, with many reaching a rate of 2.1 children, the figure at which a population stabilises. Larger families are generally poorer families, and countries with high fertility rates are generally less developed.

In 1963, starvation was a major problem facing many nations. Today, participants at the Bangkok conference were tackling issues such as HIV/Aids, population ageing, gender equality, trafficking of women and children, and reproductive health.

The Plan of Action agreed upon by the Asian and Pacific nations has implications for the world at large. The Bali Declaration on Population and Sustainable Development adopted at the 1992 meeting in Bali served as a foundation upon which global population policies were formulated at the International Conference on Population and Development held in Cairo in 1994.

With population issues becoming ever more complex, the Programme of Action adopted at Cairo is regarded as the blueprint for social and economic development around the globe. Its prescient and common-sense formulas won the approval of all 179 nations participating in that conference.

During the recent Bangkok conference, the Cairo Programme of Action was partly called into question, let there be no mistake. The language of the Cairo Programme of Action is to be reaffirmed. It says: In no case should abortion be promoted as a method of family planning. All governments are urged to strengthen their commitment to women's health, to deal with the health impact of unsafe abortion as a major public health concern and to reduce the recourse to abortion through expanded and improved family planning services. Every attempt should be made to eliminate the need for abortion.

One more evidence that the language of the ICPD is unequivocal is that those countries which have laws prohibiting abortion still reaffirmed their commitment to the Cairo Programme.

Now the time has come to strengthen our resolve to tackle the problems that keep people shackled in poverty.

At the Fifth Asian and Pacific Conference held in Bangkok from 11 to 17 December, all the countries of the Asian and Pacific region passed a Plan of Action that will guide the policies and programmes in the field of population and poverty for the next 10 years.

This will be our commitment and we will continue to do that, with no backtracking, as long as poverty exists.

Kim Hak-Su is the United Nations Under Secretary General and Executive Secretary of UNESCAP.

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Philippine president lauds UNESCAP efforts in helping poor

Source: Xinhua News Agency
Date: 01/17/2003 05:07
Price: Free
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Document ID: FB20030117380000034
Subject(s): XIN; Asia; Community; Executive; Poverty; President

Philippine president lauds UNESCAP efforts in helping poor

Story Filed: Friday, January 17, 2003 5:07 AM EST

MANILA, Jan 17, 2003 (Xinhua Via COMTEX) – Philippine President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo Friday lauded the efforts of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) in helping the Filipino poor.

Arroyo expressed this sentiment during a courtesy call in the Presidential Palace by Kim **Hak-Su**, executive secretary of UNESCAP for Asia and the Pacific, the Philippine News Agency reported.

"Your projects are a very big contribution to the improvement of life. We thank you for your interest in these programs," Arroyo told Kim.

Kim said UNESCAP is coordinating all its efforts in forming the framework and strategies for its anti-poverty thrusts and programs in the country.

UNESCAP Asia and the Pacific office is very much involved in the anti-poverty projects, many of which are connected with the Couples for Christ (CFC) comprehensive community development program.

Arroyo also noted that the Philippines belongs to one of the most successful micro-lending countries in the world and suggested that the CFC, in coordination with UNESCAP, participate in micro- lending schemes for the poor.

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PRESS CLIPPINGS TOTAL PAGE(S): 1

Press/Media: BANGKOK POST
Page(s): 5 (Opinion & Analysis)
Date: 19 January 2003

Alleviating poverty

I read an interesting commentary in the January 12, 2003 issue of *Perspective*, from Mr Kim Hak-Su, executive secretary of the UNESCAP. However, the sub-heading is misleading as it contradicts the main body of the article. While the sub-heading states that poverty was scarcely touched during the conference, in the second paragraph it is stated that the conference provided a unique opportunity to focus worldwide attention on the fundamental problem of alleviating poverty.

While it is true that the debate in the drafting committee was dominated by topics on abortion and adolescent reproductive health, many sessions in the main meeting dealt with issues of population and poverty. Actually, UNESCAP and UNFPA have to be credited for providing excellent documentation on population and poverty and for the efficient organisation of the conference. The conference was special, as all Asian countries were united in reaffirming their commitment to the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) Programme of Action, adopted at Cairo, ICPD.

They were so committed to the issues that certain paragraphs of the Plan of Action were actually voted and all countries except one voted in favour of reproductive rights, provision of information and RH services to young people and the promotion of condom use to stem the spread of HIV/Aids. Of course as the commentary says, countries where abortion is not legal also voted in favour of RH services as they firmly believe that the 5ht Asian Pacific Population Conference as well as ICPD (Cairo) Programme of Actions do not promote abortion and underage sex.

This is a welcome development. The Fifth Asian and Pacific Population Conference has increased resolve of the countries to strengthen their population and reproductive health programmes as it is clear to them that without tackling these issues, poverty cannot be reduced or eliminated.

Shiv Khare
Executive Director, Asian Forum of Parliamentarians on Population and Development

Outside influence

It is unfortunate that even the UNESCAP executive secretary hesitates to explain why "the debate was somehow dominated by the topics of abortion and adolescent sexual activity" (Commentary in *Perspective* of Jan 12, 2003).

The underlying reason for this was that one powerful country, from outside the Asia and Pacific region, played what its own delegate more than once termed as "the devil's role" in ensuring that for most of the time participants remained involved in discussions on abortion and adolescent sexual activity.

I was a participant at the conference and was pained to see how one country, just because of its power, was to promote its government's domestic agenda, trying persistently to divert the attention of all other countries from the main issues. However, credit goes to the member countries which followed the original agenda, as well as the guidelines provided in the opening address by Prime Minister Thaksin, and did manage to discuss poverty.

A Participant

Associated Press

03/06/2003 09:42:44

Wrong policy guides poverty alleviation drive, says expert

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Millions of Indonesians will remain poor if the government sticks to its current poverty alleviation strategy that focuses on economic growth, but neglects the country's rural economy, said a poverty expert on Wednesday.

University of Gadjah Mada economist and noted poverty expert Mubyarto lashed out at economists who continued to preach that economic growth was the only strategy to alleviate poverty.

This approach did not work before the 1997 financial crisis and remained ineffective after the crisis, he said.

``Five years after the crisis, many people, including noted economists, still don't understand the real nature of poverty in Indonesia,'' Mubyarto said in his paper presented at a workshop on evaluating poverty alleviation programs organized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UN-**ESCAP**).

The high leakage of funds from the social safety net program launched after the 1997 crisis was one example of this failure.

He said much of the funds went to people who were not poor.

The government forgot the rural economy when it thought that mass lay-offs in various industries during the crisis had produced millions of new poor people, he explained.

``They (economists) never see or never want to see the growing ekonomi rakyat (people's economy), which has absorbed unemployme from the formal sector,'' Mubyarto argued.

Instead, the government insisted on prescribing policies that were macroeconomic-heavy to boost economic growth and help the poor.

However, worshiping growth kept scarce capital limited to only a

few business sectors, leaving out the informal sectors or the rural economy. Before the crisis, the fallacy of this approach was already apparent.

Indonesia's economy, which expanded rapidly over almost three decades, failed to distribute the subsequently accumulated new wealth equally among its population. Capital was confined to the local conglomerates and to multinationals that drove the economy.

Mubyarto said the gap between rich and poor became wider over the years, eventually leading to the violent student protest known as the Malari Affair in 1974.

``Even if the Malari Affair had prompted the government to issue various equity programs, it was not sufficient to encourage the shift

in development strategy away from a growth-oriented to an equity-oriented strategy," he said.

And the unbalanced strategy continued after the 1997 crisis, he added.

Around US$60 billion in government bonds was issued to raise

funds to help banks recover from the crisis. Many of these banks were ailing because they had become cash cows for the business groups of their respective owners. When the crisis quashed those businesses, the banks were left with around $43 billion in bad loans.

Despite the costly bail-out program, however, the banking sector remains fragile almost five years after the crisis. Tax payers, meanwhile, are still paying for the $60 billion government bonds, plus their accumulated interest.

``This bank recapitalization program is the most recent and clearest proof that the inequitable policy sides with the conglomerates on the one hand, while it neglects the economic aspirations of the 'little people' on the other," Mubyarto said.

The government should aim for an equal distribution of wealth. This, he said, would vitalize the rural economy on which most of the poor now depend to survive.

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UNESCAP calls for commitment to realize Millennium Development

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UNESCAP calls for commitment to realize Millennium Development Goals, XINHUA
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UNESCAP calls for commitment to realize Millennium Development Goals, XINHUA

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BANGKOK, June 4 (Xinhua)--The United Nations' Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) Wednesday called for constant commitment and good governance to achieve goals laid down by UN members at 2000's Millennium Summit.

The Asia-Pacific region has achieved ``one of the largest decreases in mass poverty in human history,'' but was still faced with huge challenges in various fields, said a UNESCAP report reviewing the process of achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The MDGs, agreed at the UN General Assembly in September 2000, set specific human development targets in the areas of poverty, education, gender equality, health and the environment, all of which were to be achieved by 2015.

The region had reduced the overall incidence of income poverty from 34 to 24 percent in the 1990s, said the report, which listed the goal of eradicating extreme poverty and hunger as the most fundamental one.

If the trend continued until 2015, ``the region could be expected to achieve the target'' of MDGs, said the report.

But ``disturbing'' factors would slow the region's progress in achieving all MDGs, said UNESCAP's Executive Secretary Kim Hak-Su at a press conference for the release of the report.

Economic growth in the region still faced severe challenges and was ``fragile'' to external shocks including the financial crisis in 1997 and the current outbreak of SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome), said Kim, who noted that the report stressed economic growth's importance to realizing MDGs.

"Prolonged economic recession" was regarded as a major challenge for the **ESCAP** region to realize MDGs, according to UN Resident Coordinator and UN Development Program Resident Representative Robert England.

He therefore called for commitment from all parties including UN agencies, international organizations and governments to the ``

global campaign" of achieving MDGs. The report also said that the objective should be diversified growth that fosters equity-combining market-based incentives with ``pro-poor" measures that boost the capacity of the poor to take advantage of new opportunities, while also ensuring adequate social protection for the most vulnerable groups, said the report.

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Summary

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---ASIA AND THE PACIFIC---

ASIA-PACIFIC REGION FACES HUGE SOCIAL CHALLENGES - SAYS UN

While the Asia-Pacific region has achieved "one of the largest decreases in mass poverty in human history," huge challenges still exist in basic education, gender equality, child health, maternal mortality and environmental sustainability, according to a United Nations report released on 4 June in Bangkok. The joint report by the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and the UN Development Programme (UNDP) also finds sharp contrasts in the performance of individual countries. It further notes "unacceptable and unconscionable" declines in aid flows to the least developed countries, and calls for reforms in the international trade system to help the poorest countries.

Entitled, Promoting the Millennium Development Goals in Asia and the Pacific: Meeting the Challenges of Poverty Reduction, it is the first ever regional report on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), a list of targets drawn up in 2000 at the UN Millennium Summit to combat poverty, hunger, illiteracy, environmental degradation and discrimination against women, and to be achieved by 2015. Introducing the report, ESCAP Executive Secretary Kim Hak-Su emphasized that the prime responsibility for achieving the MDGs lies with individual countries, but he said the report can help countries in the region to cooperate and learn from each other about "success stories" on swiftly reducing mass poverty, sustaining economic growth and social change for achieving the MDGs.

The report identifies slow economic growth, declining official development assistance (ODA) and uneven distribution of income and unfavourable social conditions as some of the key obstacles to reduce poverty and achieving other MDGs in Asia and the Pacific. It argues that future progress towards the MDGs in the region will rely heavily on its ability to foster sustained economic growth and cautions that two-digit growth rates witnessed in late 1980s and early 1990s may be difficult to sustain in the coming years. The report finds that between 1990 and 2000, assistance to the region from countries belonging to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) fell to $14.15 billion from $14.34 billion. In particular, there are worrying declines in flows to the least developed countries - a reduction the report declares as "unacceptable and unconscionable."

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4 June 2003

WEDNESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

Despite striking successes Asia-Pacific region faces huge social challenges – UN

Asia-Pacific

4 June – While the Asia-Pacific region has achieved "one of the largest decreases in mass poverty in human history," huge challenges still exist in basic education, gender equality, child health, maternal mortality and environmental sustainability, according to a United Nations report released today in Bangkok.

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It argues that future progress towards the MDGs in the region will rely heavily on its ability to foster sustained economic growth and cautions that two-digit growth rates witnessed in late 1980s and early 1990s may be difficult to sustain in the coming years. Given that, the objective should be diversified growth that fosters equity – combining market-based incentives with "pro-poor" measures that boost the capacity of the poor to take advantage of new opportunities, while also ensuring adequate social protection for the most vulnerable groups.

The report finds that between 1990 and 2000, assistance to the region from countries belonging to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) fell to $14.15 billion from $14.34 billion. In particular, there are worrying declines in flows to the least developed countries – a reduction the report declares as "unacceptable and unconscionable."

* * *

06/04/2003 06:34:35

U.N. report says Asia-Pacific poverty reduced despite aid cuts

Bangkok (dpa) - Asia-Pacific nations have achieved striking success in reducing poverty despite a reduction in the past decade of aid given by developed nations to those most in need of help, according to a United Nations report issued Wednesday.

The U.N. report is the first to assess the region's progress towards achieving the 2015 Millennium Development Goals as agreed by world leaders at the United Nations General Assembly in September 2000.

They set specific human development targets in the areas of poverty, education, gender equality, health and the environment, all of which were to be achieved by 2015.

The report, entitled ``Promoting the Millennium Development Goals in Asia and the Pacific: Meeting the Challenges of Poverty Reduction'', was officially launched in Bangkok by Kim **Hak-Su**, executive secretary of the U.N. Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP), and Robert England, U.N. Development Programme (UNDP) resident representative.

Although the region has achieved ``one of the largest decreases in mass poverty in human history'', it said, huge challenges still exist in the fields of basic education, gender equality, child health, maternal mortality and environmental sustainability.

It also found sharp contrasts in the performance of individual countries in the region.

Kim emphasized that the prime responsibility for achieving the development goals lies with individual countries, but he said the U.N. report could help countries in the region to cooperate and learn from each other about ``success stories'' on swiftly reducing mass poverty, sustaining economic growth and social change for achieving the millennium development goals.

He said the joint UNESCAP-UNDP report could serve as a basis for strong advocacy to the region's governments, many of which will not reach several of the targets contained in the development goals by 2015.

The report identified slow economic growth, declining official development assistance and uneven distribution of income and unfavourable social conditions as some of the key obstacles to reduce poverty and achieving the development goals in the region.

The report argued that future progress towards the goals will rely heavily on its ability to foster sustained economic growth.

The report cautioned that two-digit growth rates witnessed in the late 1980s and early 1990s may be difficult to sustain in the coming years.

It said the objective should be diversified growth that fosters equity - combining market-based incentives with ``pro-poor'' measures that boost the capacity of the poor to take advantage of new opportunities, while also ensuring adequate social protection for the most vulnerable groups.

The report also found that between 1990 and 2000, assistance to the region from countries belonging to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development fell from 14.34 billion dollars to 14.15 billion dollars.

It noted worrying declines in flows to the least developed countries - a reduction the report declared was ``unacceptable and unconscionable''. dpa jh pw

AP-NY-06-04-03 0634EDT

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Press/Media: BANGKOK POST
Page(s): P. 4
Date: 5 June 2003

Summary

ECONOMIC FORECAST

UN points to slower rate of development

Long-term recession may increase poverty

Anuraj Manibhandu

The prospect of a prolonged economic recession is causing concern that progress towards UN social development goals may recede or stagnate, United Nations officials said yesterday.

The remarks were made at the launching of a report compiled by the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, and the UN Development Programme.

Escap shared the World Bank forecast that the region would still outperform others despite downside risks, said economist Raj Kumar. But poverty reduction, he added, was proceeding more slowly now because the regional states were not enjoying the same growth rates as those before the 1997 financial crisis.

Kim Hak-Su, Escap's executive secretary, said countries recording high growth rates, like Thailand and China, suffered less inequality.

Robert England, of the UNDP, stressed the importance of governance, or the way society is organised, and how governments are "held accountable" to their people. He also pointed to a scarcity of "good data" in many countries.

Homi Kharas, chief economist of the World Bank, said poorer economies in East Asia in particular needed to "plan for the worst" even though they might have strong fundamentals like education, high savings and a productive business sector.

Sheldon Shaeffer, of the United Nations Economic Social and Cultural Organisation, said high rates of HIV/Aids, like those of poverty, could return to the region unless states advocated against them, promoted sustained analysis, and fought "indifference and self-satisfaction."

Mr Kim estimated the regional population of HIV/Aids sufferers at about seven million. In Thailand, he said, "strong political commitment" had reduced the affected population from one million to about 700,000 at present.

But the number of Thai children orphaned by the HIV/Aids, says the report, has increased from 48,000 at the end of 1997 to 75,000 in 1999, to 290,000 in 2001. The figures came from UNAIDS and the World Health Organisation.

Besides poverty eradication and battles against deadly diseases, world leaders who convened in New York in September 2000 also pledged to achieve by 2015: universal primary education, more gender equality, less child mortality, more maternal health, environmental sustainability, and a partnership for development.

In environmental protection, Thailand ranks bottom among 11 Southeast Asian countries, with 3.3 % of land area covered by forest in 2000. Brunei tops the list with 85.8% of forested land, followed by Cambodia with 83.9 %, Malaysia 65.9%, Indonesia 65.2%, and Burma 60.2%.

Overseas development aid, foreign direct investment and trade gains are the most important external sources for meeting the millenium goals, the report says. More south-south co-operation, through development of existing trade initiatives, sharing of technical innovations, and debt monitoring would help, the report adds.

In the run

Thailand is making progress towards some millenium development goals. But its performance is patchy.

	Cambodia	Indonesia	Malaysia	Philippines	Thailand	Vietnam
Poverty reduction *(% of population living below $1(43baht) a day)*	35.5	8.3	0.0	13.2	5.2	9.6
Universal education *(% of children in primary schools)*	102.6*	94.8	98.3	100.6	76.9	97.4
Gender equality *(% of parliamentary seats held by women)*	7	8	10	18	9	26
HIV/Aids control *(orphans)*	55,000	18,000	14,000	4,100	290,000	22,000

Note*: exceeds 100 due to inconsistencies in enrolment and/or population data

Sources: ESCAP and UNDP

POST graphics

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PRESS CLIPPINGS TOTAL PAGE(S): 1

Press/Media: **The Nation** Date: 6 June 2003
Page(s): 5A

Summary

Escap gives Thailand mixed grades

■ *Pennapa Hongthong, Pravit Rojanaphruk*
THE NATION

THAILAND HAS done a good job of reducing poverty, child mortality rates and gender inequalities, according to the latest UN regional report on millennium development goals (MDGs) released yesterday.

The figures for HIV/Aids and environmental sustainability are less encouraging, however, the report said.

Speaking at the report's launch yesterday, Kim Hak-Su, executive secretary of the UN's Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (Escap), put Thailand on a list of the countries that have been particularly successful at reducing extreme poverty and hunger – along with China, Indonesia, Malaysia and Vietnam.

He referred to the report's finding that the proportion of the Thai population earning below US$1 (Bt42) a day had been reduced from 12.5 per cent in the early 1990s to 5.2 per cent by the late 1990s.

The reduction is ahead of an original MDG to reduce the proportion to 6.3 per cent by 2015, he said.

According to the report, Thailand might be able to reduce the proportion of the population earning less than $1 a day to 0.6 per cent by 2015.

The MDGs were agreed to by 191 nations at the UN General Assembly in 2000, and comprise eight goals that all signatories have committed to achieve by 2015.

Besides eradicating extreme poverty and hunger, the other seven goals include achieving universal primary education, promoting gender equality and empowering women, reducing child mortality, combating HIV/Aids and other diseases, and ensuring environmental sustainability.

The report, a joint effort by Escap and the United Nations Development Programme, complements the Kingdom for having made significant progress in promoting child healthcare and reducing child malnutrition.

However, while it identifies the region as having achieved "one of the largest decreases in mass poverty in human history", huge challenges still exist in the fields of basic education, gender equality and child health.

How we fare in comparison

Here are some interesting comparisons between the various development indicators of Thailand and other Asia-Pacific nations.

● The proportion of population earning below one US dollar (Bt41.3) per day.
In Thailand this decreased from an average of 12.5 per cent in 1990-1996 to 5.2 per cent in the late 1990s, and is predicted to drop to a mere 0.6 per cent by 2015. In Laos the figures were 53 per cent, 34.6 per cent and 15.3 per cent for 2015. China's figure is expected to drop to 4.7 per cent by 2015 from 15.3 per cent in the late 1990s.

● The percentage of children below five who are moderately or severely underweight.
In Thailand this figure was 26 per cent for the mid-1990s period and dropped to 19 per cent in the period between 1995 and 2001. In Bangladesh, it reduced from 67 per cent to 48 per cent.

● The proportion of seats held by women in national parliament.
In Thailand this increased from 3 per cent in the early 1990s to 9 per cent in the early 2000s. In Laos it increased from 6 per cent to 21 per cent, from 18 per cent to 26 per cent in Vietnam and from 6 per cent to 25 per cent in Australia.

● The number of children orphaned by HIV/Aids.
In Thailand the number increased from 48,000 at the end of 1997 to 290,000 by the end of 2001. In China, the number shot up from 720 to 76,000 in the same period. The Philippines succeeded in restricting it to only 4,100 from 480 at the end of 1997.

● The proportion of land area covered by forest.
Thailand saw its forests decrease from 31.1 per cent of its land area in 1990 to 28.9 per cent in 2000. Burma also saw a decrease – from 60.2 per cent to 52.3 per cent. Japan managed to increase its forest area from 63.8 per cent to 64 per cent. – THE NATION

PRESS CLIPPINGS TOTAL PAGE(S): 1

Press/Media: UDOMSARN WEEKLY
Page(s): P. 1 & 4

Date: July 6-12, 2003

Poverty in Asia has been reduced, but issues on mother and child's health as well as environment remain worrisome



ความยากจนในเอเชียลดลง ปัญหาแม่,เด็ก-สวล.ยังน่าห่วง

กรุงเทพฯ • เอสแคป แถลงข่าวรายงานประเมินความก้าวหน้าของภูมิภาคในการบรรลุเป้าหมายการพัฒนาสหัสวรรษ (MDG - Millennium Development Goals) ในปี ค.ศ.2015 ฉบับแรกของเอเชียและแปซิฟิก ที่องค์การสหประชาชาติ ถนนราชดำเนิน เมื่อวันที่ 4 มิถุนายน ที่ผ่านมา

รายงานฉบับนี้จัดทำโดยคณะกรรมการเศรษฐกิจและสังคมสำหรับเอเชียแปซิฟิก (เอสแคป) และโครงการพัฒนาสหประชาชาติ (ยูเอ็นดีพี) ระบุว่าขณะนี้ภูมิภาคเอเชียและแปซิฟิกประสบความสำเร็จในการลดความยากจนได้อย่างมาก แต่ปัญหาที่ยังน่าเป็นห่วงก็คือ เรื่องการศึกษาขั้นพื้นฐาน ความเท่าเทียมทางเพศ สุขภาพเด็ก การเสียชีวิตในมารดา และความยั่งยืน

+ (อ่านต่อหน้า 4)

ความยากจน

(ต่อจากหน้า 1)

ทางสิ่งแวดล้อม นอกจากนี้ในการแก้ปัญหาความยากจนในแต่ละประเทศก็ยังมีความแตกต่างกันมากด้วย

อุปสรรคสำคัญในการลดความยากจนก็คือการชะลอตัวของการเติบโตทางเศรษฐกิจ การลดขนาดความช่วยเหลือการพัฒนาอย่างเป็นทางการ (ODA) การกระจายรายได้ที่ไม่สม่ำเสมอ ตลอดจนสภาพสังคมที่ไม่เอื้ออำนวย รายงานยังระบุอีกว่าการที่จะไปถึงเป้าหมายเอ็มดีจีได้นั้นควรส่งเสริมความเท่าเทียมความเสมอภาคร่วมกับแรงจูงใจทางการตลาด ช่วยเสริมสมรรถภาพคนจน และต้องมีการประกันคุ้มครองทางสังคมสำหรับกลุ่มที่เปราะบางด้วย

ข้อมูลจากรายงานฉบับนี้ยังบอกด้วยว่าระหว่างปี1990-2000 ความช่วยเหลือสำหรับภูมิภาคนี้จากประเทศกลุ่มองค์การเพื่อการพัฒนาและความร่วมมือทางเศรษฐกิจ ลดลงจาก 14.34 พันล้าน เหลือ 14.15 พันล้าน โดยเฉพาะประเทศที่พัฒนาน้อยที่สุดได้รับความช่วยเหลือลดลงอย่างน่าเป็นห่วง รายงานยังเรียกร้องให้มีการปฏิรูปเรื่องระบบการค้าระหว่างประเทศเพื่อช่วยประเทศที่ยากจน

โดยขณะที่ภูมิภาคนี้ถูกกระหน่ำด้วยปัญหาเศรษฐกิจ สงครามและโรคภัยไข้เจ็บ และหลายประเทศยังล้าหลังในการเข้าสู่เป้าหมายการพัฒนาแห่งสหัสวรรษ แต่ก็ยังมีเวลาพลิกฟื้นกลับคืนมาได้ หากแต่ละประเทศมุ่งที่จะเข้าสู่กระบวนการพัฒนามนุษย์และทำงานร่วมกันและร่วมมือเป็นหุ้นส่วนกันระหว่างประเทศ

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UN: High-level round table examines regional dimensions of implementing financing for development commitments

M2 Presswire. Coventry: Oct 30, 2003. pg. 1

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Abstract (Article Summary)

Indeed, with ODA in decline and no real movement on the issue of debt relief, what had really been achieved in the 12 months since Monterrey? The developing world still saw its natural resources depleted, its technical capacities diminished or ignored, its markets deemed invisible and, for the poorest of the poor, deepening poverty and marginalization wrought by conflict, unchecked globalization and the spread of epidemics.

The Executive Secretary of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), Hak-Su Kim, said that the region's banking sector had been rocked by a series of crises during the 1990's, but had since recovered somewhat and was gearing up to drive microeconomic investment and development schemes, and tap domestic savings to develop bond markets in Asia. Still, the Asia-Pacific region was home to a staggering 800,000 million of the world's poorest people. The ESCAP was working to ensure sustainable development for those people and the wider region.

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M2 PRESSWIRE-30 October 2003-UN: High-level round table examines regional dimensions of implementing financing for development commitments (C)1994-2003 M2 COMMUNICATIONS LTD

Some 18 months after the 2002 International Conference on Financing for Development, held in Monterrey Mexico, representatives of regional groups, United Nations Member States, intergovernmental agencies and grass roots organizations gathered at a round table discussion on the regional dimensions of implementing the Conference's outcome, the "Monterrey Consensus".

The Executive Secretary of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), Hak-Su Kim, said that the region's banking sector had been rocked by a series of crises during the 1990's, but had since recovered somewhat and was gearing up to drive microeconomic investment and development schemes, and tap domestic savings to develop bond markets in Asia. Still, the Asia-Pacific region was home to a staggering 800,000 million of the world's poorest people. The ESCAP was working to ensure sustainable development for those people and the wider region.

Koos Richelle, Director General for development of the European Commission, said the Commission had been supporting regional organizations throughout the world with a focus on Africa, Latin American and the Caribbean, and Asia and the Pacific. It promoted ownership of the initiatives with the regions. While the programmes focused on specific themes, issues such as trade, infrastructure and the protection of national resources had emerged as areas of particular concern. Economic partnerships had been created in the area of trade to promote more substantive cooperation within and among the regions, as well as with the wider international community.

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From:ProQuest

Press/Media: BANGKOK POST
Page(s): P. 8 (Business))
Date: 20 December 2003

Summary

ASIAN ECONOMIES

Most nations to see higher growth in '04

Parista Yuthamanop

Economic growth in Asia is expected to pick up in 2004, with all economies expect Hong Kong and Russia likely to show gains, according to the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (Escap).

Growth in the region excluding Japan was forecast at 5.8% next year compared with 5.4% this year. Thai economic growth was projected at 6.5% in 2004, compared with 6% this year.

Kim Hak-Su, the Escap executive secretary, said Asian countries should increase their focus on long-term development strategies.

"We are worried that Asian governments do not have enough focus on long-term development issues. They are more preoccupied on the one-year budget cycle," he said.

For Thailand, Mr Kim said policymakers should consider the lessons of South Korea, where policies of stimulating domestic demand led to household debt problems.

Mr Kim said the growth of Asian economies in 2004 would be bolstered by consumer confidence which had led to business confidence and investment.

Inflation was expected to remain benign in 2004, even as prices for some industrial commodities have risen by around 20% over the past year.

Interest rates were also expected to remain low until 2005, helping support investment growth, Mr Kim said.

The US and Japanese markets were expected to grow further in 2004, whereas Europe would remain stagnant. But Asian economic growth would be bolstered by steady intra-regional trade, propelled by raw material imports from China.

Mr Kim said one policy issue going forward was striking a balance between exports, foreign direct investment, government spending and domestic savings to boost private investment.

He said that while the undervalued Chinese yuan was now posing an imbalance for the global economy, it was unlikely that China would make a sudden revaluation in the near future.

PRESS CLIPPINGS

TOTAL PAGE(S): 1

Press/Media: The Nation

Page(s): 2B (Business)

Date: 20 December 2003

Summary

Think long term, UN tells govt

■ *Benjaprut Akkarasriprapai*
THE NATION

WHILE THAILAND EXPECTS to enjoy continued strong GDP growth next year cent of around 6.5 per cent, the government also needs to be concerned about long-term economic development, according to a United Nations representative.

Kim Hak-su, the executive secretary of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (Escap), said that most countries in the region had to confront major development challenges that go beyond short-term economic management.

He said that countries needed to embody structural change, such as progress in poverty eradication, in accordance with internationally agreed commitments of the so-called Millennium Development Goals.

Kim was speaking yesterday at the launch of Escap's "Bulletin on Asia-Pacific Perspectives 2003/04".

"Most Asian governments are not thinking on a long-term agenda, but are concerned more on one-year performances. Long-term objectives may not be reached if there is too much preoccupation with the short term", he said.

Moreover, governments needed to concentrate on non-financial resources, such as human-resources development, by providing efficient training and education.

Kim said that while non-performing loans (NPLs) were no longer an issue in regards to Thailand's economic development, the Kingdom should take notice of "diligent asset management", such as practised in Korea, to maintain the credibility of the banking system.

He said that if there were no new shocks – such as SARS and war in Iraq – the economies of countries in the region would prosper.

According to Escap's bulletin, India will enjoy GDP growth of 6.3 per cent next year, up from to 6.1 per cent this year, while China's GDP will increase by 8.4 per cent and Vietnam's 7.2 per cent.

"If China continues annual growth rates of by 7 to 8 per cent a year, it will overtake Japan's economy in by 2015", Kim said.

Despite pressure from the US, China has no intention of devaluing its currency because a sudden change would have a global effect, he said.

"China has a trade surplus with the US, while it has deficits with many countries, especially in Asia – Thailand in particular", he said.

Kim said China was not likely to devalue its currency in the medium term, while the US was likely to implement policies to pressure China to do so.

4. Various



BUSINESS FEATURE - Agriculture

RP to host international aquaculture meet

By Rudy A. Fernandez
The Philippine STAR 01/19/2003

The Philippines will host the Asia-Pacific "AquaMarkets 2003" set to be held on Feb. 3-7, 2003 at the Philippine International Convention Center (PICC) in Manila.

With "Accessing markets and fulfilling market requirements of aquatic products" as its theme, the five-day activity will be convened by the Network of Aquaculture Centers in Asia-Pacific (NACA) in collaboration with the Department of Agriculture (DA), Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR), Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), and Philshrimp, a national federation of aquaculture producers and exporters.

Cooperating organizations are the United Nations-Food and Agriculture Organization (UN-FAO) and Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

Pedro Bueno, the Filipino director general of NACA, told **The STAR** that preparations are now being made for the holding of AquaMarkets 2003.

Core participants are representatives and member and participating governments of NACA. All others are invited to exchange experiences, views and opinions on issues and approaches relating to accessing and meeting requirements of markets for aquaculture products.

Bangkok, Thailand-based NACA started as a development arm of FAO but became an autonomous regional organized owned and operated by its member governments in 1990. It now has 14 member countries.

The holding of "AquaMarkets 2003" stems from the recommendations to address issues related to market access and market requirements for aquaculture products raised in previous top-level conferences.

These include the NACA/FAO Conference on Aquaculture in the Third Millennium held in Bangkok in February 2000, ASEAN-SEAFDEC (Southeast Asian Fisheries Development Center) "Fish for the People" conference in Bangkok in December 2001, COFI-AquaCulture Sub-Committee in Beijing in April 2002, and Asean-European Union AquaChallenge Workshop also held in Beijing in April 2002.

Results from relevant surveys of other organizations such as the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) similarly indicated the need for diversification or products and markets, value addition, and joint ventures in processing and marketing and simplification of trade policies and procedures, among other things.

AquaMarkets 2003 will feature a regional seminar-cum-consultation (with exhibition) with the following:

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• A background paper on the situation and trends on accessing and meeting market requirements for aquaculture products with the view to identifying priority issues and the action required at the national and regional levels.

• Reports on the experiences of countries or organizations and sharing of views on relevant issues and action proposals.

• Presentations and panel discussions on selected issue areas including product standards, safety and quality, including certification; market efficiency; trade and marketing linkages with poverty, food security; and environmental sustainability; international trade agreements and national import regulations; and tariff and non-tariff barriers to trade.

• Open forum after each panel discussion and development of action recommendations for consideration at the consultation.

• A joint session to deliberate on the role of governments and international organization in support of measures to access and meet requirements of markets for aquaculture products.

Venecia Jr.? Will it work in the Philippines?

- I see him as a person of zero cedibility ,so it will not. He is too much a trapo that every action h
- Only if Sincerity can be proven which is very hard to prove. First proof that will be convincing is
- What is this gimmick again by the Speaker of the House of Thieves! JDV is really restless. He does n

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International Women's Day Observance at the United Nations Conference Centre, Friday, 7 March 2003

Bangkok--Feb 27--UNISBKK

The United Nations family in Bangkok will observe International Women's Day on Friday, 7 March 2003 at the United Nations Conference Centre.

For this important event, UNESCAP and the inter-agency Thematic Working Group on Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality (TWG-WEGE) will organize the observance under this year's theme "Gender Equality and the United Nations Millennium Goals (MDGs)." The event will comprise an exhibition in which local women's groups and the United Nations agencies will participate as well as side events for school girls and young women from the Thai community with a performance by Mai Kheet Fai, a local women's drama group, in addition to video viewing and discussions among youth.

A substantive panel discussion on "Gender Equality and MDGs" will be organized from 10 to 11 AM. The key note address will be delivered by Ms. Panit Nitithaanprapas, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security, Royal Thai Government. The panelists include prominent scholars and experts, namely Dr. Pensri Phijaisanit, Professor Emeritus, Mahidol University; Mr. Syed Nuruzzaman, Poverty Centre, UNESCAP; Ms. Vibeke Jensen, Programme Specialist, UNESCO, Asian and Pacific Regional Bureau for Education; and Ms. Kamina Lyall, Southeast Asia Correspondent for the "Australian". Ms. Thelma Kay, Chief, Gender and Development Section of UNESCAP's Emerging Social Issues Division will be the moderator.

This year's commemoration of the Day is open to the public. Those who are interested are cordially invited to participate in the opening ceremony, which will take place on 7 March 2003 in the Ground Floor at the United Nations Conference Center from 9 AM, as well as to stay on for the Day's events.

Mr. Kim Hak-Su, the Executive Secretary of UNESCAP, and a representative from UNDP Bangkok will inaugurate the event.

PRESS CLIPPINGS
Tel: (66-2) 288-1866-9 Fax: (66-2) 288 1052 E-mail: unisbks.unescap@un.org
TOTAL PAGE(S): 1
Press/Media: The Nation
Page(s): 4B
Date: 27 February 2003
Summary

Royal participant

King Carl XVI Gustaf of Sweden, left, on his way to a briefing on economic issues yesterday, during his state visit to Thailand.

Tel: (66-2) 288-1866-9 Fax: (66-2) 288 1052 E-mail: unisas.unescap@un.org

PRESS CLIPPINGS

TOTAL PAGE(S): 1

Press/Media: **BANGKOK POST**

Page(s): Outlook P. 2

Date: 6 March 2003

Summary

Women's Day activities

The United Nations family in Bangkok will observe International Women's Day on Friday at the United Nations Conference Centre.

UN Escap and the inter-agency Thematic Working Group on Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality will organise the event under this year's theme "Gender Equality and the United Nations Millennium Goals (MDG)."

The event will comprise an exhibition in which local women's groups and the United Nations agencies will participate as well as side events for school girls and young women from the Thai community. There will be a performance by Mai Kheet Fai, a local women's drama group, in addition to video viewing and discussions among youth.

A substantive panel discussion on "Gender Equality and MDGs" will be held from 10 to 11am.

This year's event is open to the public. The opening ceremony will take place on Friday at the United Nations Conference Centre, ground floor, from 9am. For further information, call 02-288-1864-9.

China - Enabling a New Era of Changes



As China marks a quarter-century of economic change and transformation, it stands poised to enter a new era. With the World Trade Organization entrance finally behind it, and the 2008 Olympics and Expo 2010 ahead of it, China is undergoing a new wave of changes in every sense. Moreover conditions worldwide are presaging its entry as a strategic partner and player on global and regional levels. Nonetheless, a host of economic, fiscal and business challenges surround its first systematized leadership transition. How China manages its multiple transformations is the story of its new era.

Drawing together a broad array of expertise, regional analysis and concrete business judgments, this book sets a benchmark in synthesizing and clarifying the diverse factors that are shaping China's century.

China - Enabling a New Era of Changes, the second in a series of books from the World Economic Forum on Asia, presents:

- deep insight by leading economists and thinkers from China and abroad
- provocative analyses of Chinaâ€™s strategic relations, globally and with East Asia and Japan
- short policy pieces by regional- and central-level Chinese government leaders
- views from foreign and Chinese business people in a continuous dialogue.

This book is both a handbook for the general reader interested in the creation of one of the world's leading economies, and a thought provoking commentary on China's evolution.

Table of Contents

Part I - Introduction
Mapping Chinaâ€™s Future: What Scenarios, What Strategies? by Pamela C.M. Mar and Frank-JÃ¼rgen Richter of the World Economic Forum

Part II - Perspectives
on Economy

- Reform and Development: The Dual-Transformation

Point of View



"The authors present an interesting and useful look at envisioning a "worst case" and creating a "best case" for the future of China â€" and in between, many different scenarios could be imagined. The real scenario could be determined by the Chinese leaders, supported by the people of China"

Kim Hak-Su, Executive Secretary, United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP)

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Daily News

Tuesday, 8 April 2003

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Sri Lanka offers fellowships for Afghans

(Excerpt)

The 22nd training programme sponsored by the Technical Cooperation Programme of Ministry of Foreign Affairs (TCP-MOFA), the "Regional Training Programme on Biodiversity and Conservation of Medicinal Plants" was inaugurated at the Postgraduate Institute of Agriculture, University of Peradeniya recently.

The special feature of this programme is that, for the first time, two Afghan nationals were able to join the participants from Cambodia, Laos, Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal, and Sri Lanka, states a Foreign Affairs Ministry press release. . . .

Hasanthi Dissanayake, Acting Director, Technical Cooperation, said that TCP-MOFA offers fellowships to nationals of South and South East Asian countries and to the member countries of Group of 15. It is expected to expand fellowships to other developing countries in the near future as a part of Sri Lanka's contribution to South-South cooperation.

She emphasized that the Memorandum of Understanding signed in May 2002 between Minister Tyronne Fernando and the Director General of UNESCAP in Bangkok also facilitates partial financial assistance for TCP-MOFA activities. Dissanayake further said that as of now, 21 programmes have been concluded with fellowship awarded to 179 foreign and 55 Lankan participants to follow programmes on a wide range of themes.

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HEALTH: Asian Leaders Pledge Joint War against SARS (Excerpt)

Marwaan Macan-Markar

BANGKOK, Apr 29 (IPS) - In a sign of regional solidarity, leaders of South-east Asian nations and China pledged at special summit here Tuesday to use unity, shared resources and openness to combat the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS).

For one, the leaders agreed that their countries would stop people suspected to have SARS from travelling abroad -- going further than the initial measures limited to preventing those suspected to have the virus from coming into a country. ...

Countries that are already short of doctors and nursing staff will be faced with added burdens if they have find staff to monitor diseases like SARS, says Raj Kumar, head of the research division at the Bangkok-based U.N. Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP).

"There is a need for more aid for these countries," he adds. "It should be seen as an international public good, strengthening public health surveillance." (END/2003)

Read more

HEALTH: Vietnam's Case Shows SARS Can be Controlled

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/MAY DAY/THAILAND: Gov't Eyes Crackdown on Undocumented Workers

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HEALTH-CHINA: SARS Tests Maturity of a Usually Sheltered Public

HEALTH: SARS May Hog Headlines But Malaria Still Major Killer in Africa

HEALTH: Zambia to Vaccinate Five Million Children

PRESS CLIPPINGS

TOTAL PAGE(S): 1

Press/Media: THE NATION
Page(s): 11A

Date: 17 MAY 2003

From Wildean wit to **Wind in the Willows**

FOR MORE THAN half a century, he has travelled around the world to stage his uniquely creative solo performance art. Now it's the Land of Smiles' turn to witness the distinctive One Man Theatre production of Brian D Barnes.

The Sheraton Grande Sukhumvit Hotel, in conjunction with the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, is presenting two exceptional performances by Barnes, who is celebrating 50 years on the professional stage.

On Friday night, Barnes will transport viewers back to Victorian England to meet a notorious Irish playwright and witcracker in "The Provocative Oscar Wilde".

Wilde was indeed very provocative, as a person, as a humorist, as a storyteller and as a playwright. Barnes's "The Provocative Oscar Wilde" is a clear and intimate insight into a towering figure in British literature, retold with love and admiration from the perspective of Robert Ross, Oscar's literary executor and former lover.

In this one-man theatre production, Barnes will perform various characters with minimal use of props and costumes. Tickets are Bt1,800 inclusive of a three-course dinner at Rossini's, Bt1,500 inclusive of buffet at Orchid Cafe, Bt1,300 with a set dinner at Basil and Riva's and Bt700 for the show only. Dinner starts at 6.30pm and the show starts at 8.30pm.

The second solo performance is on Sunday afternoon, when Barnes will get his audience in the family mood with an adaptation of Kenneth Grahame's unforgettable story, "The Wind in the Willows".

This timeless tale creates a world peopled with woodland and riverbank creatures talking about the adventures of Mole, Water Rat, Badger, and Toad. "The Wind in the Willows" was originally told as a children's story but has since become a classic treasure by adults and one of the most popular books in the English language.

Tickets are Bt1,500 inclusive of Sunday Jazz Brunch and Bt700 for show only. Brunch starts at 1.30am and show starts at 2pm.

The Nation



Oscar Wilde: a master of wit known as much for his extravagant dress as for his paradoxical views on art, literature, and morality.

PRESS CLIPPINGS TOTAL PAGE(S): 1

Press/Media: DAILY NEWS Page(s): P. 5	Date: July 2, 2003

A farewell party for HE Mr. Mohammad Hasan Aqueel of Pakistan



เลี้ยงอำลา มะมีร์ นสรัต อาลี คาห์น ประธานแม่โขงเมเนจเมนท์ กรุ๊ป เป็นเจ้าภาพจัดงานเลี้ยงอำลาให้แก่ พล.ต.มูฮัมหมัด อัสซาน อาคีล เอกอัครราชทูตปากีสถาน และภริยา ในโอกาสหมดวาระหน้าที่ โดยมี ม.ร.ว.เทพ เทวกุล องคมนตรี มาร่วมงาน ที่โรงแรมคอนราด



Thailand condemns Baghdad blast

From correspondents in Bangkok
August 20, 2003

THAILAND tonight condemned the attack on the UN headquarters in Baghdad, and warned the unrest would not cease until the country was rehabilitated and Iraqis were able to govern themselves.

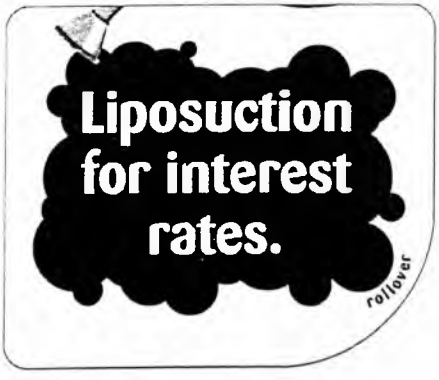
Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra said the government had sent a condolence letter to the UN after a massive truck bomb killed at least 17 people including Sergio Vieira de Mello, the top UN official in Iraq.

"This attack should be condemned, it was a very bad action. The UN office is neutral but even so it was attacked," he told reporters.

"This kind of action will not cease unless the US and its allies speed up their efforts to rehabilitate Iraq and return the rule of the country to Iraqis," he said.

Deputy Prime Minister Chavalit Yongchaiyudh said Thailand remained committed to its plan to send Thai troops to help in the reconstruction process.

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"We will send troops because this is a humanitarian mission," he said.

Thailand is to send more than 400 military personnel to Iraq in a deployment due to start later this month.

They will focus on humanitarian and rehabilitation projects in the vicinity of

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the central city of Karbala.

Thailand stayed neutral during the US-led invasion to remove the regime of president Saddam Hussein, but offered humanitarian support and medical supplies through the Red Cross.

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UN spokeswoman Marie Okabe said the death toll from Baghdad bomb blast had risen to 17, with 86 people hospitalized and 22 other wounded. The number could rise as victims are still trapped under the rubble of the buildings.

Staff at the United Nations centre in Bangkok, the organisation's Southeast Asian headquarters, gathered for a minute's silence in tribute to those killed in the attack.

"Today is a sad day for the United Nations," said Kim Hak-Su, chief of the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific.

"We can only express the hope that our dear friends and colleagues who perished in Baghdad did not die in vain and that stability will soon return to the Iraqi nation and its people."

Agence France-Presse

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08/20/2003 04:48:11

Thailand condemns Baghdad blast, urges rehabilitation to be speeded

Source: AFP English Wire Date: August 20, 2003

BANGKOK, Aug 20 (AFP) - Thailand on Wednesday condemned the attack on the UN headquarters in Baghdad, and warned the unrest would not cease until the country was rehabilitated and Iraqis were able to govern themselves.

Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra said the government had sent a condolence letter to the UN after a massive truck bomb killed at least 17 people including Sergio Vieira de Mello, the top UN official in Iraq.

"This attack should be condemned, it was a very bad action. The UN office is neutral but even so it was attacked," he told reporters.

"This kind of action will not cease unless the US and its allies speed up their efforts to rehabilitate Iraq and return the rule of the country to Iraqis," he said.

Deputy Prime Minister Chavalit Yongchaiyudh said Thailand remained committed to its plan to send Thai troops to help in the reconstruction process.

"We will send troops because this is a humanitarian mission," he said.

Thailand is to send more than 400 military personnel to Iraq in a deployment due to start later this month.

They will focus on humanitarian and rehabilitation projects in the vicinity of the central city of Karbala.

Thailand stayed neutral during the US-led invasion to remove the regime of president Saddam Hussein, but offered humanitarian support and medical supplies through the Red Cross.

UN spokeswoman Marie Okabe said the death toll from Baghdad bomb blast had risen to 17, with 86 people hospitalized and 22 other wounded. The number could rise as victims are still trapped under the rubble of the buildings.

Staff at the United Nations centre in Bangkok, the organisation's Southeast Asian headquarters, gathered for a minute's silence in tribute to those killed in the attack.

"Today is a sad day for the United Nations," said **Kim Hak-Su**, chief of the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific.

"We can only express the hope that our dear friends and colleagues who perished in Baghdad did not die in vain and that stability will soon return to the Iraqi nation and its people."

str-tp/sls/bjn

Iraq-UN-blast-Thailand

AFP 200845 GMT 08 03

08/20/2003 05:16:53

ROUNDUP: Thailand condemns attack on U.N. in Iraq

Eds: Updating with quotes from U.N. memorial in Bangkok

Bangkok (dpa) - Thai Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra on Wednesday condemned the bombing of the United Nations headquarters in Iraq, saying the killing of U.N. personnel was a blow to reconciliation efforts in the country.

``We condemn this attack on the U.N. office, which should be neutral,'' Thaksin told reporters at Government House.

``It's important for the U.S. and their allies to make the Iraqis understand what they are doing to reconstruct Iraq and return control of the country to the Iraqi people as soon as possible. Otherwise these incidents will never stop.''

Thaksin said his government had already sent an official condolence letter to the U.N., expressing regret for the truck-bombing of the world body's Baghdad headquarters Tuesday that left 17 people dead, including U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan's top envoy in Iraq, Sergio Vieiro de Mello.

At the U.N. headquarters in Bangkok, staffers observed a minute's silence in memory of their colleagues who died in Iraq.

Kim Hak-Su, executive secretary of the U.N.'s ESCAP (Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific) office in Bangkok, called the bombing a ``savage act of violence''.

``Today is a sad day for the United Nations,'' he said. ``I had the opportunity to meet with Mr. Vieira de Mello personally and found him to be a most engaging, conscientious and dedicated U.N. civil servant. We mourn his passing as well as those of our colleagues. We can only express the hope that our dear friends and colleagues who perished in Baghdad did not die in vain and that stability will soon return to the Iraqi nation and its people.''

Thaksin said Thai security forces were on full alert to prevent any terrorist action within Thailand.

Thailand did not give full support for the U.S. invasion of Iraq, but has agreed to take part in the country's reconstruction.

The first units of a 443-strong force of Thai soldiers, including army engineers and medical personnel, were scheduled to go to Iraq on August 28.

U.S. officials are reported to have agreed to pay most of the cost of the deployment, and have urged Thailand to commit more personnel to the international effort to bring peace and order to Iraq. dpa st jh blg

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Received by NewsEdge Insight: 08/20/2003 05:16:53

Press/Media: BANGKOK POST
Page(s): P. 3
Date: 21 August 2003

Summary

Call for tighter security at all UN offices worldwide

Bhanravee Tansubhapol
Manop Thip-osod

United Nations staff based in Bangkok yesterday called for tighter security after the truck bomb attack on UN headquarters in Baghdad on Tuesday.

UN spokesman in Bangkok David Lazarus said the UN had also called for tighter security at its offices worldwide, not only in Bangkok.

"We must not be complacent and must be on guard," Mr Lazarus said.

The UN is working closely with the Thai government on security matters.

UN staff in Bangkok yesterday observed a minute's silence in memory of their colleagues who were killed in Iraq.

Escap executive secretary Kim Hak-Su said at least 100 staff and other civilians were injured in the attack.

"Today is a sad day for the United Nations," he said.

Meanwhile, the US-owned Conrad hotel in Bangkok and the British embassy have sought special protection from police in the wake of the massive explosion at the UN Nations headquarters in Baghdad.

Pol Maj-Gen Nipon Pumarin, commander of the Special Patrol Police, said yesterday that four riot policemen and a sniffer dog have been assigned to guard the compound of the Conrad hotel on Wireless road around the clock.

Bomb searches are a regular feature inside the hotel. All visiting vehicles are also searched.

Pol Maj-Gen Nipon assured that police would do their best to protect the diplomatic missions of the US and Britain, as well as offices of other international organisations, around the clock.

Meanwhile, national police chief Pol Gen Sant Sarutanont said yesterday that immigration police were still in need of an online information system to screen out terrorist suspects trying to enter the country.

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Tributes pour in for slain UN envoy

Thursday, 21 August 2003, 9:11 pm

Press Release: United Nations

Tributes pour in for slain UN envoy as world body vows to pursue its mission

The United Nations system worldwide paid homage today to top UN envoy Sergio Vieira de Mello and other staffers killed in Tuesday's terrorist bombing in Baghdad, expressing sorrow at the grievous loss, voicing outrage at the savage attack and vowing to redouble the world body's humanitarian and peacekeeping work.

From Geneva to Gaza to Bangkok to Nairobi to Timor-Leste – a veritable world atlas of places Mr. Vieira de Mello had touched with his humanitarian and peacekeeping work during more than 30 years of service – UN agency chiefs echoed Secretary-General Kofi Annan's expressions yesterday of his own personal grief and the terrible loss the entire international community had suffered with the death of his Special Representative for Iraq and High Commissioner for Human Rights.

"This outrageous act of violence was aimed directly at those who are trying to help the people of Iraq to rebuild their damaged country. Our WHO and UN colleagues, from countries around the world, are completely committed to helping restore basic services and rebuild the health system in Iraq," World Health Organization (WHO) Director-General Lee Jong-wook declared.

"Throughout a long and impressive UN career, Sergio has served the people who needed him most with skill, compassion and good humour. This single act of terrorism deprives the Iraqi people, and people everywhere, of a great advocate and a fine man. He will be sorely missed," Dr. Lee said in a statement released in Geneva.

Noting that many other UN colleagues were killed or injured in "this cruel bombing," he added: "WHO's mission, in Iraq as elsewhere, is to provide the highest attainable standard of health for every human being. This work is vitally important and we must now work to ensure that it is not interrupted as a result of this brutal act of violence."

The Acting High Commissioner for Human Rights, Bertrand Ramcharan, who has been standing in for Mr. Vieira de Mello during his absence in Baghdad, likewise emphasized that the highest tribute that could be paid to the slain diplomat was a recommitment to carry out the UN's humanitarian mission.

"The United Nations, Iraq and the world have lost a tireless and selfless public servant who paid the ultimate price doing what he

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Israel Forces Cl
and Gaza Strip

believed in deeply: defending the inherent and inalienable dignity and rights of every human being," Mr. Ramcharan said in a statement.

"We believe the best tribute we could pay to Sergio and the other colleagues who lost their lives in this despicable attack is to carry on with their mission of assisting the people of Iraq to rebuild their country and build a solid foundation of human rights," he added.

Calling Mr. Vieira de Mello "an outstanding and charismatic diplomat," the Director-General of the UN's Geneva headquarters, Sergei Ordzhonikidze said the tragedy "will not break the will of the international community or undermine the vital role of the United Nations in Iraq. It will only double our determination to continue assisting the Iraqi people restore peace and stability to their country," he added.

In Gaza, the head of the main UN relief agency for Palestine refugees summoned staff to a special ceremony to observe a moment of silence.

"Yesterday's brutal killing of humanitarian workers, both Iraqi and international, is an especially cruel blow because the UN was committed to help rebuild the lives of the Iraqi people, which have been so devastated by war and sanctions," said Peter Hansen, Commissioner-General of UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA).

"This was a horrifying and senseless attack on the people engaged in the rebuilding effort," he added. "In the blast, we lost Sergio Vieira de Mello, a man I knew to be devoted to resolving conflicts and helping its victims, including refugees, recover their independence and well-being. He was in Iraq to do the same."

Mr. Hansen also paid tribute to another UN official killed in the blast, Rick Hooper, who had worked for UNRWA for over five years.

Half a world away in Bangkok, staffers at the headquarters of the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) also observed a minute's silence.

"We can only express the hope that our dear friends and colleagues who perished in Baghdad did not die in vain and that stability will soon return to the Iraqi nation and its people," ESCAP Executive Secretary Kim Hak-Su said.

In the new Pacific nation of Timor-Leste, which Mr. Vieira de Mello helped guide to independence as the Secretary-General's Special Representative, his successor reported "an outpouring of shock, outrage and mourning at the passing of this loved and admired compatriot of the Timorese people."

"With his memorable contribution, Sergio won the admiration and gratitude of the leaders as well as of the people of Timor-Leste of all ages," Special Representative Kamalesh Sharma said in a message. "All who knew him and of him will be distraught with sorrow."

In Nairobi, Kenya, some 600 staff attended a ceremony of solidarity with colleagues in Baghdad. Expressing the shock and sorrow of all

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staff in a letter to Mr. Annan, Klaus Toepfer, Director-General of the UN Office at Nairobi and Executive Director of the UN Environment Programme, suggested that the new UN library in Nairobi be named in Mr. Vieira de Mello's honour.

"The experience, commitment, compassion and diplomacy that he embodied in his long and distinguished career are the very qualities the United Nations, and indeed all humanity, needs more urgently today than ever before," Mr. Toepfer added.

The Executive Director of the UN Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT), Anna Tibaijuka, also addressed the Nairobi memorial meeting. "In losing Mr. Vieira de Mello, the Iraqi people have lost a friend and the world has lost a champion of justice and freedom," she said. "The only way we can pay tribute to the man is to continue the UN mission to establish peace and prosperity in Iraq."

In New York, the UN Population Fund (UNFPA) joined the long line of mourners. Expressing both sadness and horror, Executive Director Thoraya Ahmed Obaid echoed Mr. Annan's words in praising Mr. Vieira de Mello as "an outstanding servant of humanity, dedicated to relieving the suffering of his fellow men and women, helping them resolve their conflicts and rebuild their war-torn societies."

"It is tragic that he has now given his life in that cause, along with others who, like him, were devoted and much-valued servants of the United Nations," Ms. Obaid added.

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PRESS CLIPPINGS TOTAL PAGE(S): 1

Press/Media: BANGKOK POST Date: 22 August 2003

Page(s): P. 1

Summary

IRAQ / TERRORISM



Officials submit to security checks at the United Nations building for a seminar yesterday. Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra and Deputy Prime Minister Visanu Krue-ngarm were among the speakers. — SAROT MEKSOPHAWANNAKUL

Military to decide on deployment timing

Yuwadee Tunyasiri

The government has asked the military to evaluate the situation in Iraq before setting the date for sending troops to help rebuild the war-damaged country.

Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra said the government agreed in principle with sending soldiers to reconstruct Iraq, but the military would decide when.

The review comes in the wake of the bombing of the UN headquarters in Baghdad on Tuesday.

Mr Thaksin said the government would pay allowances to the 443-strong contingent, mainly engineers and medical personnel. The United States would cover other costs.

"The military will decide on the deployment. When they are ready, they will notify the US.

"We admit the situation in Baghdad following the bomb attack on the UN headquarters is not good," the prime minister said.

◆ *More reports* **page 7**
◆ *Editorial* **page 12**
◆ *Analysis* **page 13**

PRESS CLIPPINGS TOTAL PAGE(S): 2

Press/Media: **The Nation**	Date: 31 August 2003
Page(s): 6B (Profile)	



Kim Hak-Su believes the United Nations must look forward to keep pace with this rapidly changing world

Lekha J. Shankar

The Nation

The Nation

Page 6B (Profile)

AT A TIME when the terrorist attack on the United Nations headquarters in Baghdad has focused attention on the role of the peace-keeping organisation in today's dangerous world, it's inspiring to meet a frank, down-to-earth, no-holds barred person such as Kim Hak-Su.

The Bangkok-based Hak-Su is executive secretary of the UN's Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (Escap), and he wears no blinkers when viewing today's global scenario.

"(UN Representative) Sergio Vieira de Mello's death is an unbelievable and unthinkable shock which reminds us of totally unexpected things happening in the world today," Hak-Su says succinctly.

It is imperative for the future that the UN keeps pace with this rapidly changing world.

"I firmly believe that there is no substitute for the UN, particularly for the marginalised countries. But we must also think five to 10 years ahead."

According to the Korean-born economics wizard, who served at the highest levels of public and private enterprise before joining the UN, Escap must focus on managing globalisation, reducing poverty and addressing social issues.

All three topics are on the agenda for Escap's annual Commission Session, taking place this week in Bangkok. Ministers from at least 30 countries are expected to attend.

Among the subjects to be discussed are the Millennium Development Goals and the all-important issue of Aids.

On HIV-Aids, Hak-Su says, "Investing in Aids is the biggest investment today. If we don't control it now, it will be a tremendous social and economic loss."

Hak-Su says this is the essential role of Escap, forging important socio-economic links through the public-private partnerships it promotes.

"My role is to be the voice of Asia Pacific. My heart is with the marginalised countries of Asia, not the developed countries like Japan and Singapore. Korea can take care of itself," said the man who was born in a rural South Korean town and once had dreams of becoming his country's finance or planning minister.

He grew up soon after World War II when Korea had been devastated and he wanted to help in his nation's rehabilitation. His father, who had owned farmland but had lost all his property, wanted Hak-Su to pursue an academic career and become a professional.

Hak-Su followed his father's wishes.

"When I was 16 years old, I decided that I would become the best economist in Korea and then a minister!" laughs Hak-Su. His teenage ambitions were far exceeded over time, when he achieved grander, more global goals.

With an uncanny memory for detail, the economics wizard runs through his career-graph, listing off days, dates, addresses, scenarios. He remembers it was in Room 1005 of 47 Street, Madison Avenue, New York City, where he had his first interview for his maiden UN assignment-more than 20 years ago.

He earned his postgraduate and doctoral degrees in record time from the universities of Edinburgh in Scotland and South Carolina in the US. He recalls he was commended for his originality, empirical viability and depth of research.

These qualities stood Hak-Su in good stead during a successful corporate career when he worked in the London office of Korea's central bank and the New York office of Daewoo.

But he broke his ties to private enterprise when, in Hak-Su's words, he realised "I'm a scholar not businessman" and applied for a UN Development Post.

He was the right person at the right time. "They were looking for a strange species," he laughs at the memory, "a person with a doctoral degree, with experience in private and governmental enterprises and who was non-Brit and non-French!"

His first post in the 1980s took him to the little-known Pacific nation of Vanuatu. He was determined to succeed. "I told them that I'd prove that Asians were better than Europeans", and proceeded to create Vanuatu's five year plan in a record three and a half months.

Hak-Su's next challenging post with the UN came in 1995 when he was named secretary-general of the Colombo Plan, a grouping of 24 member countries. He initiated many human resource development programmes there.

It was in 2000 that Hak-Su was chosen by Kofi Annan to become executive secretary of Unescap.

Hak-Su decided to revitalise the 62-member organisation. "I realised that the UN had been doing pretty much the same thing for 50 years and needed to change as the world had changed.

"My idea was that the UN must be more demand-driven," he says. He coined an acronym, Modd, to describe the Member-Owned Demand-Driven principle.

Early on, Hak-Su shook up the organisation by requiring daily meetings, reports and direct dialogue with the 700-strong staff.

"It's a challenge to effect change and it had never been done before in the UN," he recalls.

With tact and humour he told his staff that the only rule they needed to follow was that they could change everything – "except their spouse."

To generate a multi-sectoral discipline, he rotated the directors to different departments. It was a break from the past, when, he says, "They seemed to be into feudalistic empire-building!"

"The directors are not experts but managers" says Hak-Su. "They are people and programme managers and it's their managerial capabilities that are important."

He frankly confronts criticisms of UN staff performance. "I've often been told that the UN has a high degree of tolerance for non-performance," he said. He determined as head of Unescap to change this because he believes that "In 30 years Asia will become the chief producer of the world."

> "There is no substitute for the UN. But it must think ahead."
> KIM HAK-SU

With regard to East-West differences, Hak-Su states with characteristic candour: "My observations during my days of study and work in America showed that the West is more aggressive but this is not sustainable. The Asians on the other hand are slow but sustainable."

At 65, Hak-Su feels he still has a lot to contribute to the international organisation. He says his boundless energy comes from his lifestyle. He is, he says, a disciplined eater and a fitness freak. He gets up as early as 4.30am for his morning walk and visits a gym every evening after work. With his penchant for detail, Hak-Su calculates that step-climbing and walking around his spacious office amounts to some 9km a day.

How does he relax?

He plays golf on the weekends with his wife, Marguerite, and keeps in touch with his three adult children, who live abroad. He reads a chapter each day of an inspiring book – most recently "Re-Engineering at Work", which deals with workplace changes – and indulges his grand passion for classical music.

The key to his success? "Hard work and my faith in God," says the staunch Christian, citing a passage from Proverbs that states, "Man proposes, God disposes."

PRESS CLIPPINGS

TOTAL PAGE(S): 1

Press/Media: **Thai Rath**	Date: 17 September 2003
Page(s): 4	

Summary



สมเด็จพระเจ้าพี่นางเธอ เจ้าฟ้ากัลยาณิวัฒนา กรมหลวงนราธิวาสราชนครินทร์ เสด็จพร้อมด้วย เจ้าหญิงแอสทริดแห่งเบลเยียม และเจ้าชายลอเรนซ์ พระสวามี ทรงเปิดการประชุมรัฐภาคีอนุสัญญาออตตาวา ครั้งที่ 5 ณ ศูนย์การประชุมสหประชาชาติ

Princess Galyani Vadhana Krom Luang Naradhiwas Rajanagarindra of Thailand and Princess Astrid of Belgium and Prince Lawrence join to open the inaugural ceremony for the Fifth Meeting of states Parties to the Mine Ban Treaty at the United Nations Conference Centre, Bangkok

PRESS CLIPPINGS

TOTAL PAGE(S): 1

Press/Media: **Daily News**	Date: 17 September 2003
Page(s): 5	

Summary



สมเด็จพระเจ้าพี่นางเธอ เจ้าฟ้ากัลยาณิวัฒนา กรมหลวงนราธิวาส ราชนครินทร์ เสด็จพร้อมด้วย เจ้าหญิงแอสทริดแห่งเบลเยียม และลูเจ้าชายลอเรนซ์ พระสวามี ทรงเปิดการประชุมรัฐภาคีอนุสัญญาออตตาวา ครั้งที่ 5 ณ ศูนย์การประชุมสหประชาชาติ

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Press/Media: **Thai Raht** Date: 17 October 2003
Page(s): P. 21. 28

Summary

UN organizes the 21st International Run on Sunday, 26 October to celebrate UN Day, on Rajdamnern Road, Bangkok

ยูเอ็นจัดมโหฬารวิ่งนานาชาติ26ตค.

"ยูเอ็น" จัดวิ่งงานยักษ์นานาชาติ ฉลองวันสหประชาชาติ เป็นปีที่ 21 คาดมีนักวิ่งทุกเพศทุกวัยแห่เข้าร่วมการ ☆ *ปีต่อหน้า* 28

ยูเอ็นจัด ☆ *ต่อจากหน้า 21*

แข่งขันไม่ต่ำกว่า 1 หมื่นชีวิตอย่างแน่นอน ในเช้าตรู่วันอาทิตย์ที่ 26 ต.ค.นี้ บนถนนราชดำเนิน "ไนกี้" โดดเป็นสปอนเซอร์หลักอย่างเหนียวแน่น ล้นหน้าแชมป์ที่จะได้สวมเสื้อสามารถอันทรงเกียรติ พร้อมเงินรางวัลก้อนมากมาย

นพ.ไพรัตน์ สัมมัตยุ สัช ประธานจัดการแข่งขันวิ่งนานาชาติในสหประชาชาติ เล่าว่าเปิดแผนงานละเอียดการเตรียมการจัดการแข่งขันวิ่งประเพณีนานาชาติวันสหประชาชาติ ครั้งที่ 21 หรือ "ยูเอ็นเดย์รัน" ที่ปีนี้กำหนดเปิดขึ้นในเช้าตรู่วันอาทิตย์ที่ 26 ต.ค. เวลา 06.30 น. โดยแบ่งการแข่งขันวิ่งระยะทาง 10 กม.ชาย-หญิง ซึ่งใช้สนามหน้าอาคารสำนักงานสหประชาชาติเป็นที่จัดงาน สำหรับนักกีฬาชายจะเริ่มต้นที่ถนนราชดำเนินนอก ด้านหน้าพูเล่น ส่วนนักกีฬาหญิงจะเริ่มต้นการแข่งขันที่ถนนตรงข้ามกับด้านหน้า ร.ร.วัดมหาธาตุวรวิหาร ฯ

เส้นทางการแข่งขันจากจุดปล่อยตัวจะวิ่งขึ้นสะพานผ่านฟ้าลีลาศ ไปตรงบริเวณสี่แยกคอกวัวถนนราชดำเนินนอก ด้านหน้าอาคารวิทยาศาสตร์ จากนั้นวิ่งจะเลี้ยวขวาผ่านหน้าอนุสาวรีย์ประชาธิปไตย ไปตามถนนศรีอยุธยา ก่อนเข้าสู่ถนนพิชัยผ่านสุโพธิ์ ย้อนไปสู่สนามเสนานิคมวังสราญรมย์ เลี้ยวขวาเข้าสู่ถนนราชดำเนินนอก แล้วไปสิ้นสุดเข้าสู่เส้นชัยที่ด้านหน้าพูเล่นเช่นเดิม รวมระยะทาง 10 กม.

ผู้ชนะเลิศ ชาย-หญิง ในรุ่นทั่วไปและรุ่นอาวุโส, นอกจากจะได้รับรางวัลถ้วยเกียรติยศจากสหประชาชาติแล้ว ยังจะได้สวมเสื้อแชมเปี้ยนครั้งสัญลักษณ์ ประจำปีอันทรงเกียรติอีกด้วย โดยผู้เข้าร่วมการแข่งขันทุกคนจะได้รับเหรียญที่ระลึกคล้องคอที่เส้นชัย ที่พิเศษสุดในปีนี้จะมีรางวัลนักวิ่งแต่งแฟนซีที่เด่นและเหรียญรางวัล "คาราวุ่งพุ่งนี้" สำหรับนักวิ่งรุ่นจิ๋วอายุไม่เกิน 12 ปี ระยะทางวิ่งประมาณ 1,000 เมตร สามารถสมัครได้ฟรี ไม่มีค่าใช้จ่าย ส่วนนักวิ่งในประเภทอื่นที่สนใจสามารถสมัครได้ตั้งแต่บัดนี้เป็นต้นไป ที่กระเป๋าช่างฟิลด์ ถ.ทิพ โทร. 0-2277-8870-1 ค่าสมัครคนละ 300 บาท ผู้สมัคร 8,000 คนแรกจะได้รับเสื้อวิ่ง "ไนกี้" ที่เป็นสปอนเซอร์หลักของการแข่งขันรายการนี้ พร้อมกล่องอเนกประสงค์เป็นของที่ระลึก

Press/Media: BANGKOK POST
Page(s): P. 3 (Perspective)
Summary
Date: 19 October 2003

Empowering the powerless

Various UN-supported programmes touch the lives of the poor and the underprivileged in Thailand

The smiling young woman in the photo right is Miss Nooden Boonchompoo of Roi-et Province. Nooden was one of 20-plus poor rural girls chosen for job training under the Youth Career Development Programme (YCDP), one of the many projects assisted by the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (Unicef)'s office in Thailand.

Last year, the 20-year-old Nooden faced an uncertain future. She had just finished high school but did not have the money to go on to college. Coming from a poor family of eight children, Nooden realised she had to work to support her brothers and sisters.

Thanks to the YCDP, Nooden was trained at the Royal Orchid Sheraton Hotel in Bangkok from May to September last year. In November, she joined the Sheraton Krabi Beach Resort as a housekeeper, and is now working full-time as Chief Assistant in the hotel's bakery. She is also enrolled for a bachelor's degree at Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University.

A NEW LIFE

The YCDP has given many underprivileged women a new direction in life, and Nooden is but one of the many.

The Pan Pacific Hotel Bangkok started the programme in 1995. The programme provides five-month training in hotel services to selected young girls from the poorest families in some 20 provinces in the North and Northeast of Thailand, who are at high risk of exploitation.

Each year, one training course is held, hosted by 18 leading hotels in Bangkok. At the end of the training, each successful trainee is given a certificate and a job reference by the respective hotel.

Since its inception in 1995 with 10 girls, the number of trainees has increased each year to an accumulated total of 600 in 2003. And from the hotel industry, the YCDP has now expanded the training to include the hospital and banking industries.

This unique contribution from the private business sector is welcomed by the United Nations, which implements several poverty-reduction projects in Thailand.

As Mr Kim Hak-Su, Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (Unescap), puts it: "Poverty is not just about lack of income and basic services. It is about the failure to respond to the often neglected voice of the poor."

Unescap is the regional headquarters of the United Nations Secretariat.

ENABLING THE DISABLED

The United Nations Building on Rajadamnern Avenue in Bangkok houses numerous UN agencies that work to reduce poverty in Thailand and around the Asian and Pacific region. One part of this work is ending the discrimination and social exclusion felt by people with disabilities.

Poverty is linked to disabilities, and the problem is greater for disabled women than their male counterparts.

According to Ms Telma Kay, chief of Unescap Emerging Social Issues Division, women with disabilities are shunted aside in countries throughout the region.

"Far more than men, these women are ignored by the health care and educational systems, community activities, and even by their own families," she said.

It is fitting that under this year's theme, "Ray of Hope for the Disadvantaged Persons," the United Nations Day observance on 24 October in Bangkok will feature an exhibition and fair highlighting the work of Thailand's many groups founded by people with disabilities."

Of the estimated 600 million persons with disabilities in the world, two-thirds live in Asia and the Pacific.

The majority of the disabled are trapped in a vicious cycle of poverty and only a few have access to any form of education.



Thailand has set a good example by taking important steps to help people with disabilities to join society and live independent lives.

The Constitution of Thailand, promulgated in 1997, is one of the first that includes specific provisions for people with disabilities.

In 2001, Thailand was awarded the Franklin D. Roosevelt International Disability Award, in recognition of the Thai government's efforts to ensure that disabled people can participate fully in society.

The International Disability Award was presented to Her Royal Highness Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn by UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, a testimony to the close cooperation between Thailand and the UN on this issue.

Almost all UN agencies active in Thailand have a strong poverty reduction focus, based on achieving the Millennium Development Goals, a blueprint agreed on by world leaders in improving the lives of the world's poorest.

The United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (Unesco)'s Asia and Pacific Regional Bureau for Education plays a central role in reducing poverty through education, improved access to knowledge and information and the removal of social and cultural barriers to the integration of all people into the economic mainstream.

For many years, Unesco Bangkok's Asia and Pacific Programme of Education For All (APPEAL) has promoted Community Learning Centres (CLCs) in the region by providing literacy and non-formal education to communities.

There are currently 6,680 CLCs in Thailand. Unesco and the Office of Non-Formal Education Commission (Onec) and Her Royal Highness Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn's Project is expanding the development of CLCs and also exploring ways to promote mother-tongue literacy among ethnic minorities in northern Thailand.

Poverty is one of the reasons behind the drug problems, and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (Unodc) is launching alternative development efforts in opium growing communities here.

Community-based alternative development includes income generation, strengthening educational services, upgrading health care, improving infrastructure, gender mainstreaming and enhancing marketing skills.

In Mae Hong Son, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is supporting provincial authorities in gathering new data on poverty to ensure that development programmes target the needs of its poorest families.

Governor Supot Laowansiri offered to have Mae Hong Son undertake the project because its level of development is far below the national average; annual income per person is about 31,000 baht, the lowest in the northern region.

"This is one of the first provinces in the world that is undertaking a local self-assessment, and we are hoping that this example will lead other provinces to carry out similar self-assessments," said UNDP Resident Representative J.K. Robert England.

Poverty reduction requires cooperation from all sectors in society. In this respect, contributions from the private sector are significant.

As Miss Nooden Boonchompoo said upon the completion of her training course:

"Today is the proudest day of my life after the five months of training.

"I believe I can have a brighter future from the care and attention given to me by my very kind trainers. Their warmth and kindness have made me feel at home...

"Before this training, I never thought that anyone would care to give such kindness and generosity to those of us who are poor."

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Asia-Pacific economic commission to relocate to Fiji

BBC Monitoring Asia Pacific. London: Oct 22, 2003. pg. 1

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Abstract (Article Summary)

Cabinet has agreed to the relocation of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific [**ESCAP**] Pacific Operations Centre (EPOC) from Vanuatu to Fiji.

The decision was based on a submission by the minister for foreign affairs and external trade, Kaliopati Tavola, yesterday in Naduri, Macuata, on **ESCAP's** request for Fiji's endorsement on the intended relocation from Port Vila to Suva.

Full Text (226 words)

Fiji government web site, Suva, in English 22 Oct 03/BBC Monitoring/(c) BBC

Text of report by Fiji government web site on 22 October

Cabinet has agreed to the relocation of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific [ESCAP] Pacific Operations Centre (EPOC) from Vanuatu to Fiji.

The decision was based on a submission by the minister for foreign affairs and external trade, Kaliopati Tavola, yesterday in Naduri, Macuata, on ESCAP's request for Fiji's endorsement on the intended relocation from Port Vila to Suva.

EPOC was established in 1984 with the amalgamation of the ESCAP Liaison Office in Nauru and the UNDP Advisory Team for the Pacific in Fiji.

Mr Tavola said the main objective of the centre is to provide technical assistance in the timely manner to Pacific Island countries at the specific request of the their respective governments in a wide range of economic and social fields.

"The main purpose of the relocation is to enhance the planning of the centre to better collaborate with others in

addressing key issues of concern to Pacific Island countries and to engage key regional organizations at the intellectual and operational level on an on-going basis," he said.

Mr Tavola said the relocation among other things, would increase knowledge among governments, Pacific regional organisations and aid donors and financial institutions about EPOC and their activities and capability.

Credit: Fiji government web site, Suva, in English 22 Oct 03

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Summary



ภาพยนตร์เกาหลี ชอย เฮี้ยก เอกอัครราชทูตสาธารณรัฐเกาหลีประจำประเทศไทย, คิม ฮัก ซู เลขาธิการ เอสแคป ร่วมกับ อนวัช องค์วาสิฏฐ์ แห่ง บมจ.เมเจอร์ ซีนีเพล็กซ์ กรุ๊ป เป็นประธานเปิด เทศกาลภาพยนตร์เกาหลี 2003 ที่เมเจอร์ ซีนีเพล็กซ์ เซ็นทรัล เวิลด์ พลาซ่า วันก่อน

Korean movie – H.E. Mr. Choi Hyuck, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Korea to Thailand, H.E. Mr. Kim Hak-Su, Executive Secretary of ESCAP, and Mr. Anuwat Ongwasidh from the Major Ceneplex Group join to open the Korean Movie Festival 2003 at the Major Ceneplex Central World Plaza.

Peace comes from within

Inner harmony within an individual can help neutralise the mass hatred which is prevalent in the world

DITHAYA PUNYARATABHANDU



The writer receives a bouquet from Mr Kim Hak-Su, Executive Secretary of UNESCAP, after delivering her speech at the UN Conference Centre in Bangkok on Oct 24.

Non-violence has powerful potential for personal and collective action. In conflict prevention and resolution, it is the path of choice of the United Nations from the time of its foundation until the present.

Yet today, are we not being exhorted to fight a war, a war against "terrorism" which is seen to threaten many aspects of life?

But surely fear itself is a very bad taskmaster, being an almost paralysing disease.

In this respect, the non-violent approach accepts that we have the capacity to make choices, to decide on our attitude to events — attitudes being more important than the facts themselves.

We can search diligently to correct the root causes which breed these actions and fear and hatred: ignorance, poverty, exploitation, power play and above all, injustice.

PATH TO PEACE

The path to achieving non-violent peaceful solutions and outcomes lies within ourselves.

It is an individual decision to seek and establish first and foremost our own inner peace, as it is in the minds of man that peace begins.

Inner peace, a calm, clear and unconditioned mind, facilitates the solving of potential conflict situations and allows us to work in harmony for the common good.

Young people today have an even greater incentive to strive for a world based on values where injustice is a thing of the past.

We see the United Nations as having been conceived to bring together the people of the world, presently through their governments, on an equal footing.

Far from seeing the United Nations as irrelevant or weak, young people are well-placed to see the positive potential for enhancing and implementing the spirit of the charter and particularly the many laws and treaties and resolutions which have been painstakingly put together by member governments, though some remain unratified or ignored — of which some may not be mandatory, but have the moral authority of the United Nations behind them.

They embrace many if not most of the keys to improving the standard of living of the people of the world.

YOUNG OPPORTUNITIES

The United Nations has a youth agenda, an International Day of Youth (12th August) and a World Youth Report (latest 2003).

Among the concerns, which have also engaged Secretary-General Kofi Annan, is the question of employment opportunities.

The youth programme also works towards increasing awareness and understanding of the United Nations. There are a number of avenues for this, such as UN Youth groups, those associated with the World Federation of UN Associations, the Cyber school bus, and model UN programmes which are now held in many countries.

A group of young people is using IT to find ways for governments to include youth in their delegations to the United Nations General Assembly. And CONGO (the Co-ordinating Organisation for NGOs accredited to ECOSOC) has now set up a Youth Advisory Committee to facilitate some of these activities.

This will surely increase the opportunities for young people to participate in developing a world of peace and justice — one they wish to live in.

A SHORT TALE

In fact, perhaps the concept of peaceful resolution is too simple for us humans — fight first and find out later. A short tale will show how easy this is, in fact.

In past times, two kings reigning in adjoining territories, sent their cooks to find water, as there was a severe drought.

The two cooks went to the same well. Then the arguments started: Who should draw the water first, neither trusting the other not to empty the well?

Soon the villagers gathered, taking sides, the argument heated-up and spread, each side becoming more belligerent and self-righteous.

Finally word of the dispute reached the kings, both of whom felt affronted and decided to go to war.

However, a wise courtier suggested that perhaps the cause of the uproar should be investigated. So both kings went to consult the Buddha and asked for advice, to try and avoid bloodshed.

The Buddha inquired of the kings what the quarrel was about, but they did not actually know, so the ministers and then the courtiers and then the people were asked, until finally someone remembered that it had to do with water at the well.

The cooks were sent for and agreed that indeed they had started to quarrel over the use of the water.

"Is this really a cause to go to war for?" asked the Buddha.

Of course it was not. There was enough water to share.

LOOKING AHEAD

We have heard how recycling eyeglasses can help many older and possibly less well off people to use these and enjoy better sight.

But vision is not just a matter of physical sight. It has a wider meaning.

Vision for the future, imaginative and creative vision, as the saying goes: a nation without vision will surely perish.

Mahatma Gandhi put into practice his vision of the potential for non-violence in bringing about change. We can share in his vision for peace by applying his dictum that one powerful thought of love can neutralise millions of thoughts of hatred.

• *Miss Dithaya Punyaratabhandu is a second year student at Mahidol University's International College. This article is adapted from her address to the 58th UN Anniversary gathering on October 24 at the UN Conference Centre in Bangkok.*

BANGKOK POST ((Perspective)
Date: 2 November 2003

Press/Media: **BANGKOK POST**
Page(s): P. 2 **(Outlook)**
Date: 4 November 2003

Summary



Prof Krasae Chanawongse, chairman, board of trustees, Asian Disaster Preparedness Centre, and Dr Suvit Yodmanee, the centre's executive director, recently hosted a party at the Amari Atrium Hotel to bid farewell to the outgoing Bangladeshi ambassador, Hemayet Uddin. Photo shows (seated from left): Norwegian Ambassador Ragne Birte Lunde; Ambassador Uddin; Prof Krasae; Indian Ambassador Leela K. Ponappa; and ESCAP executive secretary Dr Hak-Su Kim; (standing from left) Earl Kessler, the centre's deputy executive director; British Ambassador David William Fall; Dr Suvit; UNDP Resident Representative John K. Robert; and Brian Ward, special adviser to the centre.



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Published by the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD)

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Monday, 10 November 2003

SAICM PREPCOM1 HIGHLIGHTS:

SUNDAY, 9 NOVEMBER 2003

On the inaugural day of the first session of the Preparatory Committee for the Development of a Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM PrepCom1), delegates heard opening statements, elected the Bureau, and addressed organizational matters, focusing on rules of procedure. Delegates were also briefed on existing work related to the SAICM, and began expressing their views on its further development.

OPENING OF THE SESSION

In his opening address, Prapat Panyachatraska, Thailand's Minister of Natural Resources and Environment, stressed that chemical safety requires cooperation among all stakeholders. He called for further action on the harmonization of classification and labeling of chemicals and on illegal traffic in toxic and dangerous products, and expressed hope that the SAICM will address gaps in these and other chemicals management priorities.

Kim Hak-Su, UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP), emphasized the need to link chemicals-related conventions to sustainable development, and highlighted initiatives undertaken by UNESCAP to this end.

Klaus Töpfer, UNEP Executive Director, said the SAICM is a truly multi-sectoral endeavor, which requires multi-stakeholder cooperation and leadership. Commending the achievement of the WSSD target concerning the ratification of the Rotterdam Convention and the progress made on the development of a globally harmonized system for the classification and labeling of chemicals, he said these successes reflect the feasibility of the WSSD chemicals-related goals. He said the SAICM should contribute to reaching the WSSD goal of achieving by 2020 the use and production of chemicals in ways that lead to the minimization of significant adverse effects on human health and the environment, and suggested that the SAICM address: issues that have received insufficient attention; new issues; and the life-cycle concept. Thanking the donors who

have made SAICM PrepCom1 possible, Töpfer urged provision of financial resources for the future and suggested the creation of a "SAICM Club" of donors. In closing, he said SAICM achievements could include: mobilization of resources; integration of chemicals management into the wider sustainable development agenda; and increased funding for capacity building, waste disposal, and clean-up operations.

Zoltan Csizer, IOMC Chair, emphasized the need for financial and technical support for the SAICM, and urged building upon existing international agreements and national actions and initiatives. He urged recognition of the contribution of the chemical industry, noting the need for corporate social responsibility, and called for approaches that reduce risks for all, rather than transferring risks to those least able to address them.

Suwit Wibulpolprasert, President of the Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety (IFCS), highlighted that the multi-stakeholder approach of the IFCS helps mobilize the political, financial, social and spiritual contribution of all stakeholders involved in chemicals management. He stressed the need to: involve stakeholders at all stages in efforts toward chemical safety; act collectively on issues that affect the most vulnerable groups, particularly children; and radically rethink current practices and behavior in both the public and private sectors.

China, UN sign agreement on meeting arrangements

www.chinaview.cn 2003-11-27 17:26:02

BEIJING, Nov. 27 (Xinhuanet) -- The Chinese government and the United Nations signed an agreement regarding the arrangements for the 60th Session of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and the 8th Session of the Special Body onPacific Island Developing Countries of the ESCAP here Thursday.

The agreement was signed by Chinese Assistant Foreign Minister Shen Guofang and Executive Secretary of ESCAP Kim Hak-Su after their meeting.

As the only comprehensive organization regarding economic and social development set up by the United Nations in the Asia-Pacific region, ESCAP plays an important role in strengthening cooperation between countries in the region.

The two sessions were scheduled to be held at Shanghai from April 20 to 28 in 2004. Enditem

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China, UN sign agreement on meeting arrangements

The Chinese government and the United Nations signed an agreement regard the arrangements for the 60th Session of the Economic and Social Commissic Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and the 8th Session of the Special Body on Pacif Island Developing Countries of the ESCAP in Beijing Thursday.

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UN officials: int'l community needs to strengthen its role

www.chinaview.cn 2003-12-16 17:40:48

BEIJING, Dec. 16 (Xinhuanet) -- The international community needs to strengthen its r Middle East peace process, said officials with the United Nations at the UN Meeting for A Pacific on the question of Palestine on Tuesday.

Kim Hak-Su, executive secretary of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia anc and representative of UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, said at the opening session tha was a manifestation of the international community's continuing commitment to the searc solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

He said the conflict in the last three years had led to deadly violence on both sides, wit death toll approaching 4,000.

The conflict will not be resolved militarily, he said, adding that only through a political p there be a solution in acomprehensive, just and lasting settlement based on the two side by-side in peace.

He welcomed the UN Security Council's unanimous endorsement of the Road Map in 1515. "It paved the way for a more vigorous involvement of the international community i theparties to implement their respective Road Map obligations", he added.

He said he will continue to work with all concerned for achieving a comprehensive, jus settlement to the question of Palestine, based on related UN Security Council resolutions principle of land for peace.

He urged the Government of Israel and the Palestinian Authorityto speed up efforts to negotiations. "It is critical for both sides at this stage to take good-faith, confidence-buildi as not to impair future negotiations," he said.

Concerning the Geneva Initiative, launched on Dec. 1, he said the efforts by civil socie demonstrated that the aspiration for peace was evident in the Palestinian and Israeli peo

This civil dialogue proves that it is possible to find imaginative solutions to thorny issue a detailed planto resolve the conflict in a comprehensive manner, he said.

Bruno Rodriguez Parrilla, head of the delegation of the Committee on the Exercise of I Rights of the Palestinian People, also called for encouragement of the civil society initiati

He said the voice of civil society provided alternative solutions to the Middle East peac and the two sides needto consider these civil voices and restart official negotiation for re conflict.

He reiterated the commission's long-held position that the United Nations should conti positive role in resolving the question of Palestine.

The meeting was scheduled to open from Dec. 16 to 18 in Beijing.The commission, wi countries, was established in accordance with the related resolutions of the UN General Assembly.Enditem

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UN meeting on Palestine issue opens

www.chinaview.cn 2003-12-16 16:01:10

BEIJING, Dec. 16 (Xinhuanet) -- Peaceful dialogue and political negotiations are the o ways to solve the Palestine question, said Chinese Vice-Foreign Minister Dai Bingguo he

Addressing the opening ceremony of the United Nations Meeting for Asia and the Pac Question of Palestine, Dai said that relevant UN resolutions and the "land-for-peace" prir basis of resolving the Palestine issue, should be earnestly implemented.

Dai said the international community should be fair and continue to urge Israel and Pa up violence, stick to peace talks, earnestly implement the "road map" plan and give full p important role of the United Nations.

China has always been committed to the Middle East peace and supported the UN rol Middle East issue, said Dai.

Along with the international community, China is ready to continue to push forward the peace process, he said.

Kim Hak-Su, executive secretary of the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia Pacific, conveyed the UN secretary-general Kofi Annan's message to the meeting.

Palestinian Minister of Labor Ghassan el-Khatib and Bruno Rodriguez Parrilla, vice pre UN Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and C ambassador to the UN, also addressed the opening ceremony.

The three-day meeting is co-sponsored by the UN and the Chinese Government with t "Arousing International Support for a Peaceful Solution of the Question of Palestine". The attended by 200 participants, including government representativesfrom 60 countries, rej of international organizations and non-governmental organizations and experts on the Mi issue. Enditem

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U.N. envoy appeals to Israelis, Palestinians to restart peace

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U.N. envoy appeals to Israelis, Palestinians to restart peace
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With BC-ME-GEN--Israel-Palestinians
By STEPHANIE HOO=
Associated Press Writer=
BEIJING (AP) _ An envoy of U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan

called Tuesday for Palestinians to stop attacks on Israelis and criticized Israel's construction of a security barrier, saying their conflict ``will not be resolved militarily.''

Kim Hak-Su, speaking at the start of a U.N. conference on the future of Palestinian statehood, appealed to both sides to resume long-stalled peace negotiations.

``The conflict between the Israelis and Palestinians will not be resolved militarily,'' Kim said, reading from a statement by Annan to the conference. ``Only through a political process can there be a solution resulting in a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement.''

The three-day conference in Beijing is aimed at encouraging international involvement in the peace process. Participants include Israeli and Palestinian lawmakers and diplomats from China, Russia and other nations.

``The determined effort of the international community is needed now more than ever,'' said Bruno Rodriguez Parrilla, Cuba's ambassador to the United Nations, who heads a U.N. committee on Palestinian issues.

The meeting opened as Egyptian mediators were headed to Gaza to restart talks among Palestinian factions about a halt to attacks against Israelis _ a step toward restarting peace talks.

``The new Palestinian Cabinet must act decisively to put an end to terrorist attacks. A solution will not be achieved through terrorism,'' Kim said. ``Terrorism is also harmful to the Palestinian cause.''

Kim also criticized Israel's security barrier, built largely on Palestinian land, saying it ``sows the seeds of mistrust and suspicion among Palestinians.''

Kim said Israel had a ``duty to protect its people,'' but appealed for Israeli leaders not to ``damage the longer-term prospects for peace by making more difficult the creation of an independent, viable and contiguous Palestinian state.''

A Chinese vice foreign minister speaking at the conference also called for other governments to help push the two sides toward peace.

Beijing has been stepping up its diplomatic presence in the Middle East, including sending an envoy to lobby Israeli and Arab governments to push forward the peace process.

``China will continue to back the U.N.'s role in addressing the Middle East issue,'' said Vice Foreign Minister Dai Bingguo. ``We have seen that international mediation and peace-making efforts have helped secure every major opportunity for peace in the Middle East.'' (PROFILE (COUNTRY:China; ISOCOUNTRY3:CHN; UNTOP:142; UN2ND:030; APGROUP:Asia;) (COUNTRY:Cuba; ISOCOUNTRY3:CUB; UNTOP:419; UN2ND:029; APGROUP:LatinAmerica;) (COUNTRY:Egypt; ISOCOUNTRY3:EGY; UNTOP:002; UN2ND:015; APGROUP:MiddleEast; APGROUP:Africa;) (COUNTRY:Israel; ISOCOUNTRY3:ISR; UNTOP:142; UN2ND:145; APGROUP:MiddleEast; APGROUP:Asia;) (COUNTRY:Russia; ISOCOUNTRY3:RUS; UNTOP:150; UN2ND:151; APGROUP:Europe;) (CAT:Business;) (CAT:Defense;) (CAT:Wiesen;) (CAT:Terrorism;)

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UN fordern Wiederaufnahme der Nahost Friedensgespräche Erste Zusammenfassung

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dda

UN fordern Wiederaufnahme der Nahost-Friedensgespräche
Erste Zusammenfassung
(neue Einzelheiten, korrigiert Schreibweise Kim **Hak Su**)

Utl: Dreitägige Nahost-Konferenz in Peking eröffnet =

ap_topic:Ausland;ap_topic:Politik;

Peking (AP) Die Vereinten Nationen haben erneut an Israel und die Palästinenser appelliert, die festgefahrenen Friedensgespräche wieder aufzunehmen. Der Konflikt im Nahen Osten könne nicht militärisch gelöst werden, erklärte UN-Generalsekretär Kofi Annan am Dienstag in einer Botschaft zum Auftakt einer dreitägigen UN-Konferenz in Peking über die Zukunft der Palästinenser.

«Nur ein politischer Prozess kann eine umfassende, gerechte und dauerhafte Lösung herbeiführen», hieß es in der Erklärung, die von einem Gesandten Annans, Kim **Hak Su**, verlesen wurde. Die Palästinenser wurden aufgefordert, die Anschläge gegen Israelis zu beenden. Außerdem kritisierten die UN erneut Israel wegen des Baus der umstrittenen Sperranlagen im Westjordanland.

Mit der Konferenz wollen die Organisatoren die internationale Beteiligung am Friedensprozess im Nahen Osten fördern. Teilnehmer sind unter anderem israelische und palästinensische Abgeordnete sowie Diplomaten aus China, Russland und anderen Staaten.

Der kubanische UN-Botschafter Bruno Rodriguez Parrilla, der einen Ausschuss der Vereinten Nationen über Angelegenheiten der Palästinenser leitet, forderte entschlossene Bemühungen der Staatengemeinschaft zur Beilegung des Nahost-Konflikts. Dies sei heute mehr denn je nötig, sagte der Botschafter.

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12/16/2003 05:21:55
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Vermittlungsbemühungen im Nahost-Konflikt verstärkt
Zweite Zusammenfassung
(Bild:XAN101;XAN102;XHG101)
(überwiegend neu)

Utl: UN fordern Wiederaufnahme der Friedensgespräche - Fischer trifft Mubarak - Ägyptische Delegation reist nach Gaza-Stadt =

ap_topic:Ausland;ap_topic:Politik;

Jerusalem/Peking (AP) Vor einer mit Spannung erwarteten Rede des israelischen Ministerpräsidenten Ariel Scharon über seine neuen Pläne im Nahost-Konflikt hat die internationale Gemeinschaft ihre Vermittlungsbemühungen weiter verstärkt. Die UN appellierten an Israel und die Palästinenser, die festgefahrenen Friedensgespräche wieder aufzunehmen. Eine ägyptische Delegation brach am Dienstag zu Vermittlungsgesprächen auf. Auch Bundesaußenminister Joschka Fischer reiste zur Erkundung neuer Friedenschancen in die Region.

UN-Generalsekretär Kofi Annan erklärte, der Konflikt im Nahen Osten könne nicht militärisch gelöst werden. «Nur ein politischer Prozess kann eine umfassende, gerechte und dauerhafte Lösung herbeiführen», hieß es in einer Botschaft Annans zum Auftakt einer dreitägigen UN-Konferenz in Peking über die Zukunft der Palästinenser.

Die Palästinenser wurden aufgefordert, die Anschläge auf Israelis zu beenden. Außerdem kritisierten die Vereinten Nationen erneut Israel wegen des Baus der umstrittenen Sperranlagen im Westjordanland. Annans Erklärung wurde von seinem Gesandten Kim **Hak Su** verlesen.

Mit der Konferenz wollen die Organisatoren die internationale Beteiligung am Friedensprozess im Nahen Osten fördern. Teilnehmer sind unter anderem israelische und palästinensische Abgeordnete sowie Diplomaten aus China, Russland und anderen Staaten.

Zwtl: Treffen Fischers mit Kureia geplant

Die ägyptische Delegation wurde am Dienstag zu Gesprächen mit militanten palästinensischen Organisationen in Gaza-Stadt erwartet. Die Vermittler wollten mit der Hamas, dem Islamischen Dschihad und der Fatah-Bewegung des palästinensischen Präsidenten Jassir Arafat über ein Ende der Anschläge auf Israel beraten.

Fischer traf am Dienstag in Kairo mit dem ägyptischen Präsidenten Husni Mubarak zusammen. Anschließend wollte der Außenminister nach Jordanien und dann nach Israel weiterfliegen, wo unter anderem ein Treffen mit Scharon geplant ist. In den palästinensischen Autonomiegebieten will Fischer am Mittwoch den neuen Ministerpräsidenten Ahmed Kureia treffen. Eine Begegnung mit Arafat ist nicht vorgesehen.

Der israelische Außenminister Silvan Schalom sicherte unterdessen den USA zu, alle unilateralen Entscheidungen im Westjordanland und im Gazastreifen mit Washington abzustimmen. Das berichtete der israelische Rundfunk. Schalom war am Montag in den USA mit Vizepräsident Dick Cheney und Sicherheitsberaterin Condoleezza Rice zusammengetroffen. Israelischen Berichten zufolge forderten beide Israel auf, von unilateralen Schritten abzusehen.

Scharon will noch in dieser Woche in einer Rede seine Pläne für den Fall vorstellen, dass es keine Fortschritte bei der Umsetzung des internationalen Nahost-Friedensplans gibt. Laut Medienberichten plant Scharon innerhalb der kommenden sechs Monate die Fertigstellung der umstrittenen Sperranlage im Westjordanland sowie den Abbau mehrerer jüdischer Siedlungen. Die Tageszeitung «Haaretz» berichtete unter Berufung auf Abgeordnetenkreise, unter anderem sollten die Siedlungen Netzarim und Morak im Gazastreifen geräumt werden. Im Gazastreifen leben insgesamt rund 7.000 israelische Siedler.

Ende##
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17 December 2003

UN meeting in Asia examines situation in occupied Palestinian territories

16 December – As a United Nations meeting opened in Beijing today on the question of Palestine, Secretary-General Kofi Annan urged Israel and the Palestinians to intensify efforts to restart talks and stressed that the international community must bolster its role in the peace process.

"It is critical for both sides at this stage to take good-faith, confidence-building steps so as not to impair future negotiations," Mr. Annan said in a message to the UN Asian Meeting on the Questions of Palestine.

He added that Israel's construction of a barrier in the West Bank "is seen as counterproductive" in this regard. "It deepens economic and humanitarian problems facing the Palestinians, runs contrary to the letter and the spirit of the Road Map, and sows the seeds of mistrust and suspicion among Palestinians."

While underscoring Israel's right to protect its people against terrorist attacks, he pointed out that this duty should not be carried out in a way that violates international law, damages prospects for the creation of a Palestinian State, or increases suffering among the Palestinian people. "The practice of collective punishment and extrajudicial killings further diminishes trust and further raises levels of frustration and anger," he added.

At the same time, he urged the Palestinian Cabinet to "decisively put an end to terrorist attacks." He voiced his repugnance at "morally reprehensible" suicide bombings against innocent Israelis and stressed that terrorism harms the Palestinian cause. "The Palestinian side should live up to its Road Map obligations as regards security and take immediate and practical steps to rein in extremists committing terrorist acts," he said.

Recalling that the Palestinian Cabinet had declared its intention to establish law and order and to curb violence, the Secretary-General also noted that there were prospects of another ceasefire, and that moves were underway for a meeting between the two Prime Ministers.

In the message, delivered by Kim Hak-Su, chief of the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), Mr. Annan also pledged his continued efforts to achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement and said the UN and its agencies would remain engaged in development and humanitarian work on the ground.

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UN meeting on Palestine issue opens in Beijing ( )

BEIJING, Dec 16, 2003 (Xinhua via COMTEX) – Peaceful dialogue and political negotiations are the only effective ways to solve the Palestine question, said Chinese Vice-Foreign Minister Dai Bingguo here Tuesday.

Addressing the opening ceremony of the United Nations Meeting for Asia and the Pacific on the Question of Palestine, Dai said that relevant UN resolutions and the "land-for-peace" principle, as a basis of resolving the Palestine issue, should be earnestly implemented.

Dai said the international community should be fair and continue to urge Israel and Palestine to give up violence, stick to peace talks, earnestly implement the "road map" plan and give full play to the important role of the United Nations.

China has always been committed to the Middle East peace and supported the UN role on the Middle East issue, said Dai.

Along with the international community, China is ready to continue to push forward the Middle East peace process, he said.

Kim Hak-Su, executive secretary of the UN Economic and Social Commission for A Pacific, conveyed the UN secretary- general Kofi Annan's message to the meeting.

Palestinian Minister of Labor Ghassan el-Khatib and Bruno Rodriguez Parrilla, vice the UN Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian Peop Cuba's ambassador to the UN, also addressed the opening ceremony.

The three-day meeting is co-sponsored by the UN and the Chinese Government wi of "Arousing International Support for a Peaceful Solution of the Question of Palesti meeting is attended by 200 participants, including government representatives from countries, representatives of international organizations and non-governmental orga and experts on the Middle East issue.

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China stresses UN's role to end violence

(2003-12-17 01:06) (China Daily)

China yesterday called on the international community to show greater courage, wisdom and resolve in helping Palestinians and Israelis abandon violence and continue peace talks.

Addressing the opening session of the United Nations Meeting for Asia and the Pacific on the Question of Palestine, Chinese Vice-Foreign Minister Dai Bingguo made three proposals to advance stalled peace talks between Israel and the Palestinians.

First, efforts should be continued to ensure the United Nations plays its due role in this conflict, he said, adding that no peace or harmony would ever be sustained in the Middle East in the absence of the United Nations.

Dai said the relevant Security Council resolutions and the principle of "Land for Peace" constituted the basis for a political settlement of the Middle East issue.

Second, to uphold neutrality and justice in international mediation, it is imperative for the international community to strictly observe the principle of neutrality, objectivity and justice without favouring either party.

Meanwhile, the reasonable concerns and requirements of Palestine and Israel must be taken seriously with equal attention and care, he stressed.

Third, the role of civil society must be brought into full play. Dai said that the academic and business communities, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other members of civil society have their unique role to play in appealing for peace and facilitating dialogue.

This is evident in the Geneva Accord agreed upon earlier this month, thanks to the creative efforts by civil society in both Israel and Palestine.

In mid-October, 2003, a group of Israelis and Palestinians proposed a "virtual" final status peace agreement in Geneva called the "Geneva Accord," which is regarded widely as an

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important development, though it is unofficial.

"The Accord represents a positive and useful endeavour, as it echoes the appeal for peace from both parties and casts fresh light on the problem," said Dai.

Kim Hak-su, executive secretary of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific and representative of UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, echoed Dai yesterday, saying that this civil dialogue proves that it is possible to find imaginative solutions to thorny issues, and offers a detailed plan to resolve the conflict in a comprehensive manner.

He welcomed the UN Security Council's unanimous endorsement of the "roadmap" in Resolution 1515.

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Headline: Pakistan calls for judicious approach p forward Middle East Roadmap -- Detail Story

BEIJING: Pakistan has called for adopting judicious and fair approach in pushing forward the Middle East peace process.

Addressing a three-day United Nations sponsored meeting on the Question of Palestine here, Pakistan Representative, Ambassador Riaz Mohammad Khan hoped that the sponsors of the Roadmap will fulfill their responsibility towards a just and lasting solution to the Middle East dispute.

The meeting was arranged under the auspices of the UN committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable rights of Palestine People. It was aimed at seeking international support for a just settlement of long-standing Palestine issue.

The meeting was being attended by 200 participants, including government representatives from 60 countries, representatives of international organizations and non-governmental organizations and experts on the Middle East issue.

Pakistan Ambassador emphasized that indiscriminate use of force by Israel and its illegal activities in the Occupied Territories must come to an end for success of the peace process.

"We continue to believe that comprehensive peace can only come through a "two state solution" based on the relevant UN Security Council Resolutions. A sovereign Palestine State with Al-Quds as its capital living side by side with Israel side by side in peace and security can alone ensure peace in the Middle East ".

Pakistan also believes that the sponsors of the Road Map have a special responsibility to be judicious in their approach and fair in pushing forward the process.

He said, success of their efforts will depend on their ability to stop Israel's coercive policies and measures in the occupied territories in the particular collective punishment of Palestinians, target killings, destruction of Palestinian homes, incessant threats against the person of Chairman Arafat, continuing settlement activity and now the building of the so called separation wall.

The Secretary General has described the settlements and the wall as "serious obstacles to the achievement of a two state solution",

the Ambassador added. Riaz Mohammad Khan said the indiscriminate use of force by Israel and its illegal activities in the Occupied Territories feed the spiral of violence, which must be arrested and reversed. This is vital for meaningful Palestinian-Israeli negotiations, for progress on the road map and eventually towards a just and lasting solution, he added.

The lack of progress towards this objective, he added "is no reflection on the protracted endeavours of this committee as it is an evidence of the glaring failure of international community to address this issue, which has caused so much pain and conflict in the Middle East posing a growing and pervasive threat to world peace and security".

At the heart of this conflict and tragedy lies the fact of occupation. Denial of liberty and occupation are antitheses to fundamental rights and human dignity. Continuation of occupation in Palestine for over half century has spawned hopelessness, desperation and violence. Accordingly, hope for justice and peace in Palestine lies with the end of Israeli occupation.

He said the Security Council Resolution 242 and 338 and the principle of "Land for Peace" provide the basis for such a settlement and remain the touchstone and sincere approach in that direction. The Arab League Peace Plan and the Quartet's "Road Map" are part of such efforts which are supported by Pakistan, Ambassador Riaz added.

Addressing the opening ceremony, Chinese Vice-Foreign Minister Dai Bingguo said peaceful dialogue and political negotiations are the only effective ways to solve the Palestine question.

Dai said that relevant UN resolutions and the "land-for-peace" principle, as a basis of resolving the Palestine issue, should be earnestly implemented. The international community should be fair and continue to urge Israel and Palestine to give up violence, stick to peace talks, earnestly implement the "road map" plan and give full play to the important role of the United Nations, he added.

China has always been committed to the Middle East peace and supported the UN role on the Middle East issue, Dai said adding, "Along with the international community, China is ready to continue to push forward the Middle East peace process".

Kim Hak-Su, executive secretary of the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, conveyed the UN secretary-general Kofi Annan's message to the meeting.

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Pakistan Calls For Judicious Approach Pushing Forward Middle East Roadmap

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Israel's coercive policies. Riaz Mohammad Khan said the indiscriminate use of force by Israel and its illegal activities in the Occupied Territories feed the spiral of violence, which must be arrested and reversed.

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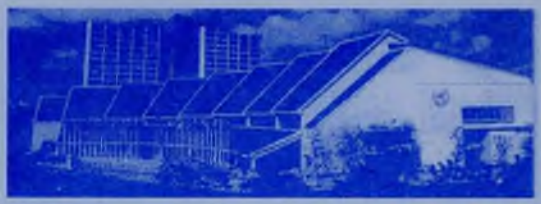
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