

## Asian, African leaders ink strategic partnership

Past revisited to rekindle alliance

AFP, Bandung

Asian and African leaders yesterday signed a new strategic alliance to boost trade and tackle poverty, but warned their attempt to revive an historic bond forged half a century ago would falter without firm action.

Under massive security, scores of heads of state gathered in the Indonesian spa city of Bandung for a ceremony to endorse the pact to improve the lives of almost three quarters of the world's people, including many of its poorest.

Indonesia's President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono and co-host Thabo Mbeki of South Africa were joined by China's Hu Jintao, Junichiro Koizumi of Japan and UN chief Kofi Annan on a symbolic stroll through the sealed-off city centre.

The leaders were attempting to recreate a walk in 1955 made by iconic statesmen including China's Zhou Enlai, India's Jawaharlal Nehru and Indonesia's Sukarno as they plotted the birth of the Non-Aligned Movement in Bandung.

But while their modern day successors hope the new friendship will match the "spirit" of the previous Bandung summit's epochal stand in the Cold War era, analysts say it is unlikely to reap long term benefits.

At the signing ceremony, Yudhoyono also warned that the alliance of almost 90 countries would falter unless Asian and African nations remained united in their commitment to broad pledges of cooperation and mutual support.

"History will judge us on the basis of what we do in the days, months and years ahead - whether we are

true to the Bandung spirit, or we fail it through failure of political nerve."

Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh said the two continents must strive to equal the original meeting and the Non-Aligned Movement, or Nam, it spawned, describing 1955 as the "high noon of internationalism and idealism."

"Just as the Nam played a central role in the struggle for political emancipation in the past, we need to revitalise this movement to make it a vehicle for rapid social and economic transformation and emancipation in our lives."

The leaders have agreed to meet again in South Africa in 2009, hoping to consolidate the work of a two-day summit in Jakarta by making it a regular fixture.

Observers, however, say although well-meaning, the alliance will

miss its goals.

Amitav Acharya, the deputy director of Singapore's Institute for Strategic Studies said the 2005 meeting may help formulate ways to tackle issues such as HIV/Aids but the long-term eradication of poverty would be beyond their grasp.

"The Bandung spirit is something of a myth, Bandung was a very successful meeting, it created the Non-Aligned Movement," he told AFP. "But it was a different time, I'm not sure this will have the same impact, the world has moved on."

Sunday's trip down memory lane ending in a minute of silence and ceremony to plant Asian and African trees was almost purely symbolic, lacking the mould-breaking gravitas of the original meeting, said Acharya.



PHOTO: AFP  
Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (C) leads Asian and African leaders along with Chinese Prime Minister Hu Jintao (L) and Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh during a historical walk in Bandung Sunday. The walk was part of the golden jubilee celebration of the 1955 Bandung summit that gave birth to the Non-Aligned Movement. Representatives from 85 countries, including almost 50 heads of state from two continents, attended the Asia-Africa Summit 2005.

## Sino-Japan ties still rocky despite talks

AFP, Jakarta

Despite crisis talks that brought together the top leaders from China and Japan amid an ongoing row between the Asian superpowers, analysts say little ground was given by either side and see no immediate end to their rocky relations.

Weeks of anger in China over Japan's war time atrocities forced Chinese President Hu Jintao and Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi together for talks on the sidelines of a summit in Jakarta on Saturday.

Although there were smiles and handshakes, it was clear there was no break in the impasse as resentment remained, despite a very public apology a day earlier from Koizumi for his country's brutal wartime record.

"Their disagreements are far from solved," said Shi Yinhong, international relations professor at Beijing's People's University.

"The high level of tensions have been remarkably reduced, that is positive, but real issues such as territory and energy have not been resolved."



PHOTO: AFP  
Pope Benedict XVI waves to the heads of states and government from his papal-mobile after celebrating his first mass in St. Peter's Square at the Vatican Sunday. Hundreds of thousands of pilgrims flocked to the Vatican early yesterday for the inaugural mass of Pope Benedict XVI, who was installed as the Roman Catholic Church's 265th pope.

## Pope Benedict installed

World leaders show respects

REUTERS, AFP, Vatican City

Pope Benedict XVI was installed as leader of the Roman Catholic Church yesterday, receiving the symbols of his authority at an inaugural outdoor Mass that mixed centuries-old pagantry with prayer.

Three weeks after the death of John Paul II, pilgrims and patri-archs, presidents and priests once again packed the cobbled expanse in front of St. Peter's Basilica for the solemn service - the final rite in the papal transition.

The former Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger was elected in a secret conclave of the Catholic Church's 115 voting cardinals last Tuesday.

At 78 the oldest pope for three centuries, he emerged onto the steps of the basilica behind a procession of cardinals and paused briefly to wave to a sea of onlookers estimated by city authorities at up to

half a million.

Applause echoed around the square, decked with 20,000 flowers in the white and yellow of the Vatican, and the crowd held aloft a multitude of national flags that shimmered in the spring sunlight.

Marking Benedict's elevation to the papacy, a cardinal placed around his neck a stole of white wool, embroidered with red crosses - the pallium which used to be worn by Roman emperors and now symbolises a pope's pastoral authority.

Benedict also received the Fisherman's Ring, which carries his papal seal and will be smashed following his death.

"O God... give your blessing to our Pope Benedict, whom you have placed at the top of the apostolic ministry," Italian Cardinal Angelo Sodano said in a Latin prayer.

Meanwhile, kings and queens, presidents and prime ministers paid

## North Korea vows to bolster N-deterrent

AFP, Seoul

North Korea's military chief vowed yesterday to "steadily bolster" the Stalinist nation's nuclear deterrent as a result of hostile moves by the United States.

Kim Yong-Chun, chief of the general staff of the North Korean People's Army, warned the United States that it would face an aggression head on.

"The army and the people of the DPRK (North Korea) will never remain a passive onlooker to the US moves to isolate and stifle the DPRK, but steadily bolster its nuclear deterrent for self-defence to cope with the enemies' reckless moves for military aggression," he said in a speech carried by the official Korean Central News Agency.

"Should the US start a war... the revolutionary armed forces of the DPRK will mobilise the military deterrent force built up for years

and... win a final victory in the stand-off with the US."

The remarks, made in a speech marking the 73rd anniversary of the North's military, came as Washington was hardening its position towards Pyongyang for boycotting six-way nuclear disarmament negotiations.

US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice warned Thursday of referring the issue to the UN Security Council for possible sanctions on North Korea in case the talks failed to deliver.

The talks, which involve the two Koreas, China, Russia, the United States and Japan, have stalled since three rounds ended inconclusively in June, 2004.

The North failed to show up for a fourth round scheduled for September 2004.

The Stalinist state declared in February that it had built nuclear weapons to use in self-defence against the United States.

## Syrian pullout from Lebanon almost complete

AP, Beirut

The last Syrian troops will leave Lebanon yesterday after 29 years, a senior Lebanese military officer said, as Damascus yields to fierce international and domestic pressure after the assassination of former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri. The announcement came as the largest number of Syrian troops to leave Lebanon in one batch vacated at least 10 positions in the northern part of the Bekaa Valley in eastern Lebanon Saturday night.

Under pouring rain, dozens of trucks carrying hundreds of soldiers and at least 150 armoured vehicles towing cannons and rocket launchers were seen heading to the Lebanese-Syrian Masnaa border point, witnesses said.

"Tomorrow everything will be over," the military officer told The Associated Press Saturday on condition of anonymity.

## Abbas asserts control over security services

AFP, Ramallah

Palestinian leader Mahmud Abbas moved to stamp his authority on the security services after a sweeping revamp of the top brass, which saw key allies of the late Yasser Arafat pushed upstairs.

Abbas was to travel to Gaza City Sunday to attend "retirement ceremonies" for 10 senior security officials whose places in a new streamlined security network are to be taken by younger men, untainted by accusations of corruption.

Among those who have been relieved of their duties as part of the reshuffle announced late Saturday was Musa Arafat, a cousin of Arafat, who was head of national security in Gaza.

Another member of the old guard, General Amin al-Hindi, was standing down as head of military intelligence in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Like Musa Arafat, Hindi is being given the title of military advisor to Abbas in a sign of the Palestinian Authority president's desire to avoid making unnecessary enemies.

Abbas issued a presidential decree earlier this month to reduce the number of security services from around a dozen to just three, a reform which Arafat had long spoken of but failed to implement before his death in November.

But Abbas, under pressure from the United States to deliver on his pledges of reform, finally sounded

the death knell for the old guard by announcing the names of the three new heads of services.

The post of head of national security in the West Bank and Gaza went to General Suleiman Heleif, while General Ahmed Abdel Karim was confirmed as military intelligence chief and General Husni Rabaya was named new national police chief.

Mandur Nawfal, a political analyst and one-time advisor to Arafat, said pressure from the Americans for security reform was instrumental in Abbas's decision.

Washington's newly-appointed security pointman for the region, General William Ward, has been holding regular talks with Abbas in recent weeks.



PHOTO: AFP  
A Palestinian woman holds up a torch and a picture of her jailed relative in Israeli prisons during a demonstration in support of the prisoners in the West Bank town of Bethlehem Saturday. Around 1,000 Palestinian prisoners detained in an Israeli prison have launched a hunger strike over a suspension of family visiting rights, the Bethlehem-based Prisoners Club said.

## Iraq, immigration to dominate UK polls

AFP, London

The run-up to Britain's May 5 general election campaign has been dominated by relatively few issues, the bulk of which, some opinion polls show, play little part in how people will actually vote.

In terms of national political debate and media fuss, one of the main sources of controversy has been immigration, something seized on by the main opposition Conservative Party as a potential vote-winner.

Encouraged by tabloid newspapers - which regularly label the government's immigration and asylum policy "chaos" - Conservative leader Michael Howard has pledged to put an absolute cap on immigrants.

Prime Minister Tony Blair, whose period in government has seen a gradual rise in immigrants entering Britain, has accused his opponent of exploiting voters' fears over the issue.

## Twin car bombs kill 7

US sailor, soldier and AP cameraman slain in separate attacks

REUTERS, AFP, Tikrit

Two suicide car bombs exploded inside a police academy compound in the town of Tikrit yesterday, killing at least seven people and wounding dozens, Iraqi police and doctors said.

Earlier bombs have killed a US sailor and soldier west of Baghdad, the US military said.

The sailor was killed by a bomb during combat operations on Saturday in Falluja, about 45km west of Baghdad, the military said yesterday.

The soldier was killed Saturday when a bomb exploded near a military convoy near al Haswah, west of Baghdad, the military said in a statement late Saturday.

"A soldier assigned to the 155th Brigade Combat Team, II Marine Expeditionary Force (Forward), was killed today when an improvised explosive device detonated near the convoy in which he was travelling," a statement said.

Both were assigned to the 2nd Marine Expeditionary Force.

A suicide bomber drove into the compound and blew up his

vehicle among a crowd of policemen, killing several, according to accounts provided by witnesses to a reporter working for Reuters.

As police and passers-by rushed to help those hit in the blast, a second car bomber entered the compound and detonated his vehicle, the witnesses said.

A doctor at Tikrit's hospital, Mohammed Ayash, said seven bodies had been brought in and as many as 26 people were wounded. All those killed were police, while both civilians and police were among the wounded.

In other violence, Associated Press Television News cameraman Saleh Ibrahim was shot and killed when gunfire broke out after an explosion in the northern city of Mosul, 360km northwest of Baghdad.

AP photographer Mohammed Ibrahim, no relation to the dead man, suffered shrapnel wounds in the same incident. While at the hospital, Mohammed Ibrahim was escorted away by US forces along with his brother and their whereabouts could not immedi-

ately be determined. The US military said it was investigating the incident.

Tikrit, 144km north of Baghdad, is the hometown of ousted dictator Saddam Hussein. It has seen frequent outbreaks of violence, including a car bomb blast outside the US military's headquarters in the town last week.

The bombings come amid a new wave of violence in Iraq, with a marked increase in bombings, suicide attacks, ambushes and assassinations this month.

Many of the attacks have targeted Iraqi police and soldiers, who are in the front line of the fight against the two-year-old insurgency.

More than 400 Iraqi police and soldiers have been killed over the past six weeks, according to figures from icasualties.org, a Web site that tracks deaths in Iraq.

The increase in violence threatens to overshadow the country's attempts to form a government nearly three months after its first post-Saddam elections were held.

## Ousted Ecuadoran president Gutierrez goes into exile

AFP, AP, Quito

Ousted Ecuadoran president Lucio Gutierrez left the country early yesterday for exile in Brazil on a Brazilian Air Force plane, television reported.

Ecuadoran Interior Minister Mauricio Gandara said Gutierrez left the Brazilian Embassy compound in a heavily-guarded van at about 0900 GMT.

The television report said the van took him to a military airbase in the capital, from which he was taken by helicopter to an airport in Latacunga about 80 kilometers south of the capital. The Brazilian plane was waiting for him there, the report said.

Beating drums and waving flags, about two dozen protesters outside the building chanted "Lucio, out!" facing off against a similar number of police in riot gear. Dozens of onlookers crowded around, while drunken young men clutching rum bottles shouted insults.

A Brazilian air force plane took off early Sunday from the city of Porto Velho in northwestern Brazil en route to Quito, foreign ministry spokesman Paulo Gustavo said.

"If everything goes as planned, Gutierrez will arrive in Brazil sometime tomorrow," Gustavo said late Saturday, declining to give more information because of security reasons.

"We cannot say when or where Brazil's plane will arrive in Quito," Gustavo said. "I also cannot say whether safe passage was granted by the new Ecuadorian government or if any additional security measures were taken."

Ecuador's new government said Friday that it would let Gutierrez go to Brazil, where he has been granted political asylum, but the Brazilian government said it would only fly Gutierrez out after his safe passage from the ambassador's residence to the airport was guaranteed.

Ecuador had been dragging its feet on granting permission, apparently fearing the reaction of Ecuadorians outraged that Gutierrez will not be tried for alleged abuse of power, corruption and repression of peaceful protests.

"We aren't going to let him go," Ricardo Jines, a 56-year-old plumber said outside the ambassador's residence. "He has to be tried."

Gutierrez sought refuge in the walled compound after Congress voted to remove him on Wednesday.

The crisis was the latest in a long line of them in this politically unstable South American country of 12.5 million people. Since 1997, three presidents have been driven from office in Ecuador before completing their terms.