

Miyazawa and ASEAN discuss 'real economy'

by Lydia Cherry

The rebuilding of war-torn Indochina was a major topic in Japanese Prime Minister Kiichi Miyazawa's tour of Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, and Brunei during the second week in January. And Japan wants to use the Association of South-east Asian Nations (ASEAN) as its "bridge" to Indochina, Miyazawa made clear, speaking in Bangkok. One point of discussion was that Japan and ASEAN cooperate in building the region's transportation network by constructing an infrastructure that stretches over more than one nation. Before leaving Bangkok for Brunei, Miyazawa also proposed an international forum on the development of Indochina for late this year.

During the visit, it was also reported in the Japanese press that Japan is considering offering \$100 billion in aid to developing nations over the next five years in a special fund.

In the weeks before the visit, Thai government leaders consulted with their Vietnamese and Laotian counterparts on possible land routes for roads. Following Miyazawa's departure, former Thai Prime Minister Chatichai Choonhavan, who as prime minister in 1990 worked closely with the Japanese on reconstruction plans for the region, immediately went to Laos, apparently for further discussions. According to Chatichai, the Japanese have set up an initial fund of \$2 billion for investment and infrastructure construction in the area. The construction of interlinking roads is an essential, though minor, part of an overall Mekong Delta water management and irrigation development project—the only real solution to develop this region—that has been on the drawing boards since the 1950s.

Although investors of all stripes are moving into Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos in droves to take advantage of low wages, Japan and its ASEAN partners are approaching the task somewhat differently. The agreed-upon plan is that Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos, when feasible, will join ASEAN, which, it is envisioned, will stabilize the entire region. Malaysian Prime Minister Dr. Mahathir Mohamad noted, in discussing the reconstruction plans that Malaysia was opting for, "in the belief that a prosperous and stable Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam closely linked to ASEAN, or even as members of ASEAN, would contribute to the peace, stability, and prosperity of the entire Southeast Asian region."

Debt strangling development

In Jakarta, discussion focused on the plight of poor countries and methods by which the North-South dialogue might be revived. These issues have been thrust upon Indonesian President Suharto since he picked up the reins as the new head of the Non-Aligned Movement. Responding to Miyazawa's commitment that Japan will represent ASEAN concerns at the Group of Seven meeting scheduled for Tokyo in July, Suharto requested that he be given the floor to address the plight of poor countries and the need for North-South dialogue. Miyazawa's response has not been reported. In the last two months, Suharto has voiced increased concern that debt problems are making development impossible. Japan is very much opposed to debt moratoria, though Japanese loans are not a big problem, as Tokyo has tended to give large, long-term (30-year) loans at 2-3% interest.

Japan offered Indonesia a grant of \$2.4 million to help finance Jakarta's programs for assisting poorer countries; \$1.7 million was allocated for acceptance of trainees from other developing countries, according to the Japanese news-service Kyodo. Suharto explained that Indonesian development is being slowed tremendously primarily because of the lack of infrastructural facilities. In response, the Japanese agreed to send in a team to study the bottlenecks. Following the talks, Miyazawa took a ride on an electric train from the Gambir station to the Kota station, both in Jakarta, a railway constructed with financial assistance from Japan.

While Miyazawa was still in Jakarta, the industrial newspaper *Nikkan Nogyo Shimbun* reported that Japan is considering offering \$100 billion in aid to developing nations in a special fund over five years from fiscal 1993, starting April 1. Details are reportedly still to be worked out, but the government is expected to officially disclose the plan at the annual economic G-7 meeting in Tokyo July 7-9. Kyodo reported that the increase is being considered in view of Japan's growing trade surplus, which it is estimated will reach a record \$135 billion in 1993.

'Miyazawa Doctrine' ambiguous

The English-language summary of the report, which forms the basis for the new "Miyazawa Doctrine," is highly propitiatory of the "free trade" General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) system and of U.N. supra-nationalism. Written by 18 of Japan's top ministry and corporate leaders, the "Round Table on Japan and the Asia-Pacific Region in the 21st Century" report begins with the patent lie that Asian nations developed economically because they "did not tread the facile path of public-run corporations and protection of domestic industry," but rather "exposed themselves to harsh competition and . . . free trade." While stating that Japan "should play a greater political role in Asia," the report also states, "In pragmatic terms, the organization currently best able to respond to those needs is the United Nations. . . . In the future, Japan should take part actively" in United Nations

global operations.

The Jan. 11 London *Financial Times* printed a full-page diatribe against this "Miyazawa Doctrine," titled "Japan Covets Lead in Asia." Says author Robert Thomson: "Mr. Miyazawa will show due deference to the U.S.—but, between the lines, the speech will suggest that Asians should settle their own disputes and that Japan will gradually move closer to center stage." Thomson hits Miyazawa's report for stating that "The Japanese people must assume a heavy responsibility" for leadership in Asia.

Western press speculation around Miyazawa's trip to Malaysia focused on whether the Japanese would take a clear stand on Dr. Mahathir's East Asia Economic Caucus (EAEC), which has been a "hot potato" since Mahathir first proposed the idea on Dec. 10, 1990. Japan has consistently punted on the subject, because the United States opposes it vehemently. The EAEC, as it was initially envisioned, was to include not only the six ASEAN countries and the three Indochinese countries, but also Japan, China, South Korea, Taiwan, and Hong Kong. According to Malaysian press reports, during the two-hour meeting he had with Miyazawa, Mahathir never brought up the subject, nor did Miyazawa. But, probably because Miyazawa, in a Jan. 17 interview with Malaysia's *Business Times*, had referred to the EAEC as a "trade bloc," Dr. Mahathir decided not to leave the matter unaddressed. During his dinner speech on Jan. 18, he noted that there was a tendency to think of regional groupings as trade blocs, but that ASEAN itself, one of the most successful regional groupings, had been around for 25 years without becoming a trade bloc. Mahathir said that, as had been the case in ASEAN, the wider grouping of countries belonging to the EAEC were bound to learn from each other the right approach to economic development.

The Malaysian prime minister welcomed the practice of Japanese prime ministers to consult with leaders of East Asian countries prior to attending G-7 meetings. But, he added, since the views were given without prior consultation between the East Asian countries themselves, it was likely that conflicting views would be expressed. To overcome this, he suggested that East Asian countries meet to identify the common problems and arrive at a common stand to enable more effective representation of the grouping by Japan.

Miyazawa, in his speech, avoided mentioning the EAEC. He spoke of Malaysia as an economic success under Mahathir, whom he described as dynamic and courageous.

Transcripts of a seminar on the EAEC held in Kuala Lumpur in September with representation from Japan, Hong Kong, and ASEAN nations, make clear that the "divisions" on this issue are not real. A political grouping is coming into being. The plan is not to "ice" out America. But it is recognized that the U.S. economy is collapsing. What must end, the participants agreed, was "America's divide and rule policy," not American involvement in the region, which is seen as essential.

Interview: Franck Mességué

We need systematic testing for AIDS

With a scandal raging in France over AIDS-contaminated blood and the irresponsibility of government and medical officials, individual citizens are beginning to take spectacular initiatives to force public health measures vis-à-vis AIDS. That is what Franck Mességué, a plant specialist and record-breaking diver, is doing. As of Christmas, he had spent more than two months in a hunger strike to demand that the authorities implement an AIDS testing policy.

Camping out in front of the European Parliament in Strasbourg, Mességué distributed a document to the public, explaining the reason for his action. He writes: "Prevention also means testing, which is frequently counseled, but would it not be objectively desirable . . . if this were systematically prescribed? The person who has the earliest understanding of his seropositivity could benefit early on from treatments that would assuredly retard the progression of the disease," and could act with "responsibility toward those close to him and his partners."

Mességué's hunger strike is taking place amid a brawl among government and medical institutions over systematic testing, and at a time when Social Affairs Minister Georgina Dufoix is drawing the lessons of the "contaminated blood affair" and publicly calling for testing. The scandal was exposed last summer when the head of France's National Center for Blood Transfusions (CNTS), Dr. Garretta, was tried for his 1984-85 decision not to withdraw untested blood products from circulation after testing became available. CNTS also refused to use a heat-disinfectant method on blood products that are used by hemophiliacs, which would protect them from blood-transmitted AIDS.

Ultimately, 1,200 people, mostly hemophiliacs, were infected, and by the time the case came to trial, 250 had died. To add to the horror, a special study was run on approximately 420 hemophiliacs without their knowledge: Half were treated with contaminated blood products and half with heat-treated blood products. CNTS's Dr. Garretta and his associates were convicted, receiving maximum sentences of four years. The highest compensation meted out to the victims and their survivors was only a few thousand dollars. *EIR* covered the case and interviewed one of the experimental victims—who has tested seropositive—in our Aug. 21, 1992