

CHALLENGES GALORE AWAIT BAN

In this issue

No Bed of Roses for Ban
 He takes over a cash-strapped organisation, which has been described as mostly mismanaged, inefficient and overstuffed **1+6**

Asia's Rising 'Moon'
 'Mr. Landslide'. That is what U.S. President George Bush is supposed to have called Ban at a meeting soon after he clinched the post of SG **2+3**

Africa Trusts the New SG
 Ban is expected to continue the quest for the renewal of the continent and consolidation of the development agenda **3+4+5**

Who is Ban Ki-moon? **5**

Voices of the South on Globalization is a monthly newsletter intended to inspire a meaningful North-South Dialogue by raising awareness for global interdependences and by offering a forum for voices from the South in the globalization debate. Each edition will present short analyses or commentaries from a Southern perspective on one particular issue of the globalization process. Voices of the South on Globalization is published by IPS Europe with financial support from the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung.

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NO BED OF ROSES FOR BAN

Thalif Deen*

When South Korea's former Foreign Minister Ban Ki-Moon assumes duties as the new UN Secretary-General on January 1, he will succeed incumbent Kofi Annan of Ghana who spent nearly three decades in the UN system serving the last 10 years (1997-2006) as the chief administrative officer (CAO) of the 192-member world body.

Ban takes over a cash-strapped organisation which has been described -- rightly or wrongly -- as mostly mismanaged, inefficient and overstuffed. Still, the UN has had its moments of glory, as when it walked away with the 2001 Nobel Peace Prize under Annan's watch.

Unlike Annan, who rose from the middle ranks of the UN system to its upper echelons --- first, as Assistant Secretary-General, then as Under-Secretary-General, and finally Secretary-General -- Ban only had a short 12-month spell in the Organisation when he served as chief of staff to a former South Korean President of the UN General Assembly in 2001-2002.

But Ban is expected to make up for his lack of UN experience with his political acumen finessed with over 36 years of diplomatic service in his country.

Besides serving as Foreign Minister since January 2004, he has served as Vice Chairman of the South-North Joint Nuclear Control Commission in 1992 and Chairman of the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organisation in 1999.

A former First Secretary at the Permanent Observer Mission of the South Korea to the UN, he was posted twice to the Korean Embassy in Washington D.C. -- providing him with a mix of UN and U.S. politics.

But come January 1, Ban will be inheriting a long catalogue of unresolved and thorny political issues facing the United Nations, including a nuclear-armed North Korea and a potential nuclear power in Iran.

Equally daunting is the UN presence in a lethal environment in insurgent-ridden Iraq; the absence of a peacekeeping force in Darfur because of strong opposition by a defiant Sudanese government; the ongoing crisis in the world's longest running trouble spot Palestine; and the threat of renewed civil war in Lebanon, home to a recently-enhanced UN peacekeeping force.

At home, Ban will try to break the stalemate over attempts to reform and revitalize the 15-member Security Council, with newcomers India, Brazil, Japan and Germany unsuccessfully knocking at the door to gain entry as permanent members. **(Continued on page 6)**

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ASIA'S RISING 'MOON'

Satya Sivaraman*

'Mr Landslide'. That is what U.S. President George Bush Jr. is supposed to have called Ban Ki-Moon, former South Korean foreign minister at a meeting soon after he clinched the post of new Secretary-General at the United Nations.

Bush obviously was referring to the unanimous nature of Ban's election, winning as he did with full support from all the five permanent members of the UN Security Council -- a rare consensus in the divided times the world lives in these days.

The veteran South Korean diplomat won hands down against other Asian candidates that included India's Shashi Tharoor, a UN bureaucrat and Surakiat Sathirathai, the Thai foreign minister. By convention it was 'Asia's turn' to get the Secretary-General's post with the last Asian occupying the top UN job being Burma's U Thant almost 35 years ago.

Reactions to Ban's election have been quite positive all around Asia. The ten-member Association of South East Asian Nations or ASEAN, which had publicly endorsed the Thai Foreign Minister's candidature for the post, was quick to graciously congratulate Ban.

"We believe Mr. Ban Ki-Moon is well-equipped to handle the responsibilities of the job," said a Pakistani Foreign Office spokesman after the election. Making clear what Pakistan wants from the new SG he also added: "It is our expectation that the new Secretary-General will play his due role for the resolution of various disputes including the one in Jammu and Kashmir."

The Indian government too welcomed the new UN SG but there was no doubt that by putting up its own candidate for the post India had made an embarrassing diplomatic blunder. Apart from the fact that the chances of a victory for Shashi Tharoor, seen as too close to the outgoing Kofi Annan, were very slim there was also the fact that India has been pushing for a permanent seat on a new, expanded UN Security Council for some time.

"By convention the Permanent Five of the Security Council don't put up their own candidates for the Secretary-General's post and India sent contradictory messages about its bid for seat by putting up a candidate," said Sukumar Muralidharan, a political analyst based in New Delhi.

During the campaign for the UN SGs' post South Korea had been worried about a potential intervention by Japan, which also wants to become a permanent member of the Security Council. However, Japan did not prove a big hurdle, as the chill felt between Japan and South Korea during the administration of former Premier Koizumi Juni-

chiro thawed somewhat with the ascendancy of Abe Shinzo, who has sought warmer ties with neighbours China and South Korea.

"Ban Ki-moon's election as the UN Secretary-General constitutes a major hallmark for Asia's growing importance," said an editorial in the Chinese People's Daily praising Ban's diplomatic experience and knowledge of Asian affairs. His appointment it said "will be very favorable to coordination and consultations on the affairs between Asia and other regions".

While an 'Asian' UN Secretary-General is obviously not supposed to focus just on Asian affairs, there is no doubt that the continent will engage a lot of Ban's attention all through his term. Apart from being home to two-thirds of humanity and also the world's fastest growing region economically this vast and diverse continent is also the site of the globe's hottest flash points for conflict - Palestine, Iraq, Kashmir and of course the Korean peninsula itself.

"My tenure will be marked by ceaseless efforts to build bridges and close divides. Leadership of harmony not division, by example not instruction has served me well so far," said Ban while delivering his acceptance speech at the UN General Assembly in New York.

The task of building bridges and closing divides may however not prove to be that easy even for this consummate diplomat.

A hint of the difficulties ahead came ominously enough, on October 9 itself, the day Ban's appointment was announced, when the North Korean exploded a nuclear device setting off alarm bells in South Korea as also many Western capitals. As the South Korean Foreign Minister, participating in the six nation talks to diplomatically ease tensions on the Korean peninsula Ban has intimate knowledge of how to deal with North Korea but as the new UN SG his background may prove to be a handicap.

"It will be difficult to convince the North Koreans that Ban has stopped being the South Korean Foreign Minister," says Jeong Moontae, senior journalist and columnist with the Seoul-based Hankyoreh newspaper.

(Continued on column 2, page 3)

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AFRICA TRUSTS NEW SG

Martin Kapende*

Africa's biggest economy South Africa as well as its most populous country Nigeria have both thrown their weight behind South Korean Foreign Minister, Ban Ki-moon, to succeed outgoing Secretary-General Kofi Annan whose finishes his second term end of December.

Ban and South Korean President Roh Moo-hyun paid strategic visits almost to each member of the Security Council and amassed support among most of its 15 members. Ban was elected designate UN Secretary-General on October 9.

However critics alleged, before the election, that soon after visits to some countries, a deal was reached benefiting the governments of those countries. Ban and South Korean Foreign Ministry of course deny any connection of foreign aid to the UN top job.

In Africa, media coverage of the election of Ban Ki-moon has largely been muted, if any at all. Tanzanian media made reference to the development agreement reached with South Korea as possibly having influenced the country's decision to back Ban -- a report Tanzania denied.

But as in most cases, Africa seems to have a united stand to back Ban, since he hails from Asia which supported Africa's candidates last time.

South African President Thabo Mbeki said in a message to the UN that his country joined the international community in conveying the warm congratulations of the government and people of South Africa to Ban on his election as UN Secretary-General designate.

President Mbeki said: "South Africa looked forward to working with (Ban) Ki-moon in the pursuance of the noble objectives of the UN. Mbeki said his election came at a time when the peoples of the world held high expectations of the UN. Accordingly, the people of the world expected a strong and reformed UN that was better able to deliver on its mandate."

Mbeki also expressed the hope that Ban would continue working with leaders of Africa in their quest for the renewal of the continent, the consolidation of the African Agenda and indeed the developmental agenda of the south in general. Tanzania, a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council, had expressed support for Ban when he visited the country in May.

"When Mr Ban arrived in Tanzania he pledged US \$18 million for an educational programme and also promised to carry out a road and bridge project in western Tanzania. Between 1991 and 2003 South Korean grants to Tanzania totalled only \$4.7 million. **(Continued on p. 4)**

ASIA'S RISING 'MOON' (Continued from page 2)

Given South Korea's essential role as a key player in the disputes of the Korean peninsula he is critical of South Korea's decision to put up a candidate for the UN SG's post at all. Ban will also have to convince many around the world of his neutrality towards the United States, which apart from being a long time ally of South Korea is also known to dislike UN Secretary Generals who think for themselves.

On this front, Ban's own position may be as complex as that of the past few South Korean administrations -- which have quietly transformed the country from being a virtual US satellite to a more independent and almost 'non-aligned' position. On the North Korean nuclear issue in particular the South Korean government has been at loggerheads with the US regime of George Bush Jr. with the former advocating diplomacy and patience and the latter calling for aggressive sanctions and other punitive measures.

"The U.S. government is unhappy about South Korea emerging as a mediator in North-east Asia but I don't think the U.S. has the capacity to solve these problems on their own. There is a sore need for an honest broker in this region and South Korea is the best candidate," says Kim Bo-Geun, general secretary of the Hankyoreh Foundation for Reunification and Culture, a Seoul-based policy think tank. This changing profile of South Korea within Asia today will add to his credibility and in fact work to Ban's advantage in many of the tasks he will have to take up both within Asia and globally.

In recent years South Korea's makeover from being seen first as a poor, dependent country at the time of the Second World War to a U.S. sponsored 'tiger economy' during the Cold War to now a 'soft power' in the region has indeed been dramatic.

The 'soft power' status, which denotes influence that does not come from military or economic might alone, is thanks to South Korea's rise as one of Asia's most vibrant democracies and its growing cultural influence in the region.

How far Ban Ki-moon will be able to capitalize on all these advantages will depend on not just his own abilities but also the rapidly changing global situation.

If he is lucky Ban could well be the man to bring back peace and harmony to a battered world. If his stars are not right then the 'Mr Landslide' metaphor from George Bush Jr. could begin to take on disturbingly dark connotations. ☑

AFRICA TRUSTS NEW SG (Continued from column 1, page 3)

Seoul's generosity seems to have worked," wrote the Times in an opinion piece. Only recently, Elly Matango, the Tanzanian Ambassador to Tokyo and Seoul, said his Government fully supported Ban Ki-moon. Several African diplomats in Lusaka had also said they would have no problem supporting Ban's nomination.

Kamfut Umaru, Nigerian Counsellor and head of the Chancery in Lusaka said: "We have no objection to the nomination of Ban Ki Moon to head the United Nations. All African countries are in agreement with the nomination of Mr Ki Moon and therefore Nigeria has no objection and supports his nomination."

Namibian High Commissioner to Zambia Lieutenant General, Martin Shalli said: "Africa in general has no problem with supporting Ki-moon. We had our time with Boutros Ghali and also Kofi Annan. All we can hope for is that he (Ki-moon) does a good job."

From Geneva, Zambia's ambassador to Geneva, Love Mtesa, speaking on behalf of the Government said "we are not opposed to his appointment. In fact we have welcomed him. We cannot judge him yet because he has not yet taken up his position as Secretary-General. From what we have heard of him, he is a man of integrity and very committed to the purposes and objectives of the United Nations as enshrined in the Charter."

"What's important for Africa and generally for developing countries is that the UN SG should inspire the international community to work towards the upliftment of the poor." He said Ban can for instance, persuade the rich countries to ensure that more is done to fulfil the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). He should also be interested in the work of all the UN agencies and other international organisations like the World Trade Organisation, which is not a member of the United Nations.

The support Ban Ki-moon has got should be seen in Africa's increasing cooperation with Asian countries. Even more importantly Asia supported Boutros Ghali and Kofi Annan.

Dr Njungu Mulikita, senior lecture at the University of Zambia in the department of political science said: "Ki-moon is a good candidate, a career diplomat with 37 years in the foreign service and he also worked in the UN system as ambassador in Washington."

Dr Mulikita said Ban was favoured by John Bolton the U.S. Ambassador to the UN. Dr Mulikita who has worked with the United Nations Development Programme on several missions, with the last being senior governance

advisor with UNDP in South Sudan recently, also pointed out that the African group had agreed with Asia that this was Asia's time to head the UN considering that the last time an Asian headed the UN was from 1961 to 1971 when U Thant of Burma was SG.

The support is also seen as payback to Asia for having supported two African candidates consecutively first with Boutros-Ghali and then with Kofi Annan which made Africa head the UN for 15 years.

Bust whilst Africa's support for Ban Ki-moon has remained unwavering, his election has not been without controversy. In March, South Korea announced it would treble its foreign aid budget by 2008. The coincidence in increased South Korea's foreign aid and Ban's bid for the top UN job prompted some observers to probe which countries were recipients of South Korean handouts.

Unproven allegation abound that the development agreements and aid money were used to oil some Security Council members into voting for Ban. Some of the money went to Tanzania and Ghana, both members of the Security Council whose support was crucial for Ki-moon's success.

Besides this, the Times of London reported that South Korea "contributed tens of thousands of pounds to sponsor this year's African Union summit in the Gambia in July, when Mr Ki-moon declared 2006 to be 'the Year of Africa' for South Korea."

But some UN experts worldwide told The Korea Times that such a negative view lacks persuasiveness. "This is not a powerful argument," said Danilo Turk of Slovenia, a former assistant Secretary-General for political affairs at the United Nations. "South Korea has been exercising development assistance before and will do so in the future, and it would be inappropriate to stop because of Ki-moon."

Sam Jameson, an American journalist who worked as bureau chief in Tokyo for the Chicago Tribune from 1963 to 1971 and the Los Angeles Times from 1971 to 1996, also said such charges have "always been made."

"Increasing foreign aid to specific recipients whose vote South Korea is seeking is not bribery," he said. A retrospective of Kofi Annan performance by Africa, which is not keen to publicly condemn their own, as can be attested to on Zimbabwe intransigence, show that the continent is proud of the Annan's performance. **(Continued on p. 5)**

AFRICA TRUSTS NEW SG**(Continued from page 4)**

"Africans are proud of the performance of Secretary-General Kofi Anan. He performed to our entire satisfaction and in fact he has been one of the most effective Secretaries General of the UN. This should make Africa proud. It is now a fact that the world has been made aware that even Africa has some of the best brains and can perform to the satisfaction of the world once given an opportunity," wrote Zambia's Geneva ambassador Mtesa in responding to an e-mail press query.

Meanwhile South Africa's Thabo Mbeki had this to say: "The G77 and China as well as my own country, South Africa, sincerely thank the Secretary-General for the selfless and dedicated work he carried out during one of the most challenging periods of this organisation.

"In the midst of increasing poverty and underdevelopment during an era of unprecedented wealth accumulation and technological advances and, as the river that divides the rich and the poor zones of the metaphorical global village ever widens, the Secretary-General never lost focus on the imperatives of our time."

"We thank him for never losing sight of the fact that poverty and under development remain the biggest threat to the progress that has been achieved, and that equality among the nations, big and small, is central to the survival, relevance and credibility of this global organisation," wrote Thabo Mbeki.

Dr Mulikita, senior university lecture in good governance and a keen observer of the UN system, having worked with UNDP said, Annan did well in putting Human Rights at the centre of the international agenda.

He also set up a department that looks at political issues which made the Organisation of African Union and the UN system look at African politics keenly.

Dr Mulikita said Annan also set up deputy secretary general position while he also raised the status of Africa by establishing a UN office in Nairobi as an official regional headquarter.

He also argues that the Head of UN agencies are employed more transparently now than was the case before.

But they are also bones that would haunt Annan. The UN peacekeeping operation in Congo DR has been implicated in child prostitution. In the Middle East, the UN failed to either authorize or prevent Iraqi's invasion by the US showing how toothless it was.

Then worse still, there was the UN Oil-for-Food Programme, a scandal that implicated senior UN officials including Annan's son, Kojo. The failure of the UN mission in Somalia is another issue which probably caused major powers' failure to respond to the crisis in Rwanda while more than 800,000 people were killed despite pleas from Belgium forces who were in that country earlier.

Coming back to Ban Ki-moon, Dr Mulikita says, the U.S. needed someone with low key profile and someone who would be in the background and not a high profile candidate. They needed a bureaucrat.

Whatever the arguments, Ban has been elected and what remains is to see his performance when he takes his mantle. ☑

WHO IS BAN KI-MOON?

Ban Ki-moon (born June 13 1944) has served as Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Republic of Korea since January 2004. He received his Bachelor's degree in International Relations from Seoul National University in 1970. He earned a Master of Public Administration from the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University in 1985. His first overseas posting was to New Delhi. After working in the United Nations Division at headquarters, he served as First Secretary at the Permanent Observer Mission of the ROK to the UN in New York. He subsequently assumed the post of Director of the United Nations Division. He has been posted twice to the ROK Embassy in Washington D.C. Between these two assignments he served as Director-General for American Affairs in 1990-1992. He was promoted to the position of Deputy Minister for Policy Planning and International Organizations in 1995. He was then appointed National Security Advisor to the President in 1996, and assumed the office of Vice Minister in 2000. His most recent post was as Foreign Policy Advisor to the President Roh Moo-hyun. ☑



NO BED OF ROSES FOR BAN

(Continued from page 1)

Plagued by charges of fraud and corruption over the UN-supervised, multi-billion dollar Oil-for-Food programme in Iraq, the world body that Ban takes over is also suffering from a crisis of conscience.

Also awaiting his support is an attempt to reform the management of the world body, including the creation of new Ethics Office promoting a set of values that the UN preaches to the outside world but rarely practices in its own backyard: transparency and accountability.

In an interview just before his election as Secretary-General, Ban said: "The most serious issue facing the UN is the credibility gap resulting from the Organisation's inability to handle the complexities of the issues it faces." He also pointed out that the initiatives currently being debated demand not only the creation of new organisational structures within the UN, but also a general improvement in services through reform of the operational methods of its various agencies.

The 'Reform Challenge'

"The greatest challenge facing the UN at this juncture is reform, which is essential to cope more effectively with today's global challenges. Scandals such as the Oil-for-Food Program make such reform all the more necessary. And the most immediate task in reform efforts is to overcome the crisis of confidence permeating the UN," he declared. Still, one of the biggest political challenges facing Ban would be his relations with the five veto-wielding permanent members of the Security Council -- the U.S., UK, France, China and Russia -- who collectively ensured his election as Secretary-General.

The truism in UN politics is if you do not play the game by the rules set by the five big powers -- and specifically the U.S. -- you lose. A former UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali of Egypt lost his second term (despite 14 of the 15 members voting for him in the Security Council) because of a single veto exercised by the U.S. The right wing neo-conservatives in the administration of U.S. President George W. Bush carried out a vicious vendetta against Annan immediately following his statement that the U.S. war on Iraq was "illegal".

The international community will be closely watching Ban's five year tenure as Secretary-General. How vulnerable will he be to U.S. manipulation? And will he cave in to pressure from the big powers who have continued to claim their collective intellectual birthright to the topmost senior jobs in the UN system? And how outspoken will he be in expressing his views in public -- however unpalatable to the big powers? Only time will tell. ☑

Ban's Agenda – Excerpts from an address to the Council on Foreign Relations May 31 in New York

Reform of the UN: The United Nations family must stay the course of reform. In particular, on management reforms the secretary-general is the chief administrative officer of the United Nations. He or she must make most of the powers given by the charter and the member states. Bold leadership should be taken. Measures must be promptly introduced for enhancing the integrity, professionalism and morals of the secretariat.

Combat Terrorism: Terrorism continues to be the greatest security challenge of our times. The possibility of linkage with WMDs amplifies the potential dangers many times. The United Nations can lose no time in presenting to the world a comprehensive convention against international terrorism. We should muster the resolve and solidarity that enables the General Assembly to promptly adopt a resolution condemning the terrorism immediately after the September 11th.

The work of the Peacebuilding Commission should produce real value on the ground. The first cases will be pivotal for the future shape and scope of the United Nations peace-building work. All stakeholders are urged to embark upon the task with a strong sense of mission and dedication. The UN' work in peacekeeping and complex emergencies should be more firmly grounded in humanitarian principles. Human sufferings should be alleviated and human dignity should be safeguarded at all times. The moral authority of the United Nations depends on its ability to help people most in need, and it must do so with the highest ethical standards and professionalism.

MDGs: One of the most important things is the Millennium Development Goals. This MDG should be advanced. When the target year of 2015 arrives, I hope that the United Nations will be able to credibly claim that the mission is accomplished on the most heralded goals it has promised for the world. The Korean experience in this regard shows that the development goes hand in hand with security and human rights, that development is the key to preserving peace and security and human rights. Political will must be mobilized to increase developmental assistance, including for capacity building for good governance. Tangible progress in MDG's implementation will also help bridge the South-North divide. ☑

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