

**Editorial** Upon introducing its beverage to China in the fifties, Coca Cola asserted that the nation's tea ceremonies would soon give way to its beverage, uniform in quality and taste, efficiently distributed via vending machines. Since the fifties, we have experienced, enjoyed or suffered many such marketing campaigns, which contributed to the world's state of constant flux.

As for the newsletter, it is not averse to change. Quite on the contrary. Reactions to our new design which was introduced in the previous issue have been mainly positive and we also welcome your reactions to this issue. Whereas Tanja Chute has recently left as newsletter editor, looking to the future we are pleased that Thomas Lindblad will join us as Insular Southeast Asia editor per 1 October.

China's hosting of the 2008 Olympics, is a milestone event for commercial enterprise in China. As a topic for research, these Olympics and the Football World Cup earlier this year render this issue's theme 'Sports in Asia' quite timely. Theme editor, Wolfram Manzenreiter provides us with a collection of articles in a prismatic field of research. A field of research giving unique insights into the makings of society.

To return to beverages and tea, we are no staunch supporters of tea ceremonies and prefer a world with both beverages and tea. Proven by the scope of research, events, concerns, and insights which we continue to touch upon, the IIAS Newsletter wants to be a platform for Asian Studies in the broad sense and I hope that in this issue we have once again succeeded in that respect. < **Maurice Sistermans**

# ASEM 4: What may be expected?

In September 2002 the heads of state of ten Asian countries, and of the fifteen member states of the European Union, along with the president of the European Commission, will gather in Copenhagen, Denmark, for the fourth Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM). As the reader may remember, the ASEM process was set into motion in March 1996 in Bangkok at the instigation of Singapore and support of France. The official *raison d'être* given for this series of summits between Southeast and East Asian countries and the European Union was to 'launch a new and comprehensive partnership between these regions to complement Europe's strong ties with the United States and the growing web of relations between the latter and East Asia' (See: *ASEF: Connecting Asia and Europe 1997-2000; Singapore, 2000*).



Director's  
note >

By Wim Stokhof

In Bangkok, the meaning of ASEM 1 was embodied in the meeting. In the following years ASEM developed into an interregional platform for consultation and discussion between Asia and Europe. Although the momentum was nearly lost due to the Asian economic crisis, in London (1998) it became increasingly clear that ASEM remained useful to both regions as a forum to stimulate dialogue at a range of levels.

The aims of ASEM are, of course, necessarily vague and somewhat ostentatious. Moreover, there seems to be little connection between the measures taken or the instruments chosen by the heads of state to obtain these goals. Basically, the whole ASEM process is still waiting for a crucial idea or concept that will boost its development. Until now, it has lacked vision and been less than pro-active: in London it had to

cope with the Asian Crisis; in Seoul (2000) it was drowned in the quagmire of North and South Korean politics; and in Copenhagen it will, of course, discuss security issues arising out of 11 September.

ASEM is said to have three pillars: the economic domain, the political domain, and 'the rest', in which civil society issues, culture, education, and research are heaped together.

Needless to say, ASEM is first and foremost an economically driven forum. This can clearly be seen from the plethora of meetings concerning trade, investment, finance, and business, as well as from the activities developed within this first domain: the Asia-Europe Business Forum, Trade Facilities Action Plan, Investment Experts Group Meetings, Investment Promotion Active Plan, the ASEM trust fund,<sup>2</sup> and the European Financial Expertise Network, to mention a few.

In the political domain the situation is less concrete: the Asian partners appear to be apprehensive whenever such topics as human rights and good governance are suggested for the agenda. At the third summit in Seoul, however, commitments were made to strengthen the political dialogue, giving special attention to human rights issues, and to address the global implications of such problems as the illegal trades in weapons, drugs, and workers and of regional and interregional migration.

It is difficult to perceive what has actually been done about these issues in the ASEM framework, in the ASEAN +3, in the EU or in the individual ASEM member countries.

No report linking the Seoul statements and intentions with what actu-

ally has been accomplished, two years later, is likely to be forthcoming.

In the third domain, a lot of fine work is being done by the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) in Singapore. Its mission and financial means, however, are limited. Indeed, ASEF cannot possibly handle all the activities which have sprung from the ASEM initiative. Starting as a dialogue between heads of state, it triggered actions and reactions from various groups within various civil societies in Asia and Europe (NGOs, unions, academics, parliamentarians, artists, etc.).

Pointing to the free exchange of views between European and Asian heads of government, the EC is quick to proclaim the ASEM process a success. Still, sceptics might point out that economic relations between Asia and Europe would have prospered without ASEM. In the second domain, less progress can be demonstrated. In the third domain - the most important dimension to my mind - many opportunities have neither been seen nor seized.

I believe in fact, that ASEM should concentrate on the third pillar. Indeed, there is a tremendous disparity of emphasis between the first and the third pillars in terms of activity. ASEM is in want of a common concrete goal: this goal can be found in the third domain. It is from this very diverse and varied storehouse that new joint activities are to be expected. Right now, the existence of ASEM is barely noticed by the people of ASEM member states.

If we would like to improve this situation and make our 'ASEM people' more aware of each other and of ASEM, we should not concentrate solely on

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Attention! >

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Your subscriber's information has been included in our database. As this database needs to be updated regularly, a print-out of your information accompanies this issue. We kindly request you to check these data and fill in any alterations and/or additions on the enclosed mutation form. Thank you in advance for your cooperation. < **Kind regards, IIAS**

The International Institute for Asian Studies is a postdoctoral research centre based in Leiden and Amsterdam. The main objective of the IIAS is to encourage Asian Studies in the Humanities and the Social Sciences (ranging from linguistics and anthropology to political science, law, environment and development studies) and to promote national and international cooperation in these fields. The IIAS was established in 1993 on the initiative of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences, Universiteit Leiden, Universiteit Amsterdam, and the Free University Amsterdam. It is financed mainly by the Netherlands Ministry of Education, Culture, and Sciences.

Based in the Netherlands, the Institute acts as an (inter)national mediator, bringing various parties together for the enhancement of Asian Studies. In keeping with the Netherlands' tradition of transferring goods and ideas, the IIAS works as a clearing-house of knowledge and information. This entails activities such as providing information services, constructing an international network, and setting up international cooperative projects and research programmes. In this way, the IIAS functions as a window on Europe for non-Europeans and contributes to the cultural rapprochement between Asia and Europe.

Research fellows at a post-PhD level are temporarily employed by or affiliated to the Institute, either within the framework of a collaborative research programme, or on an individual basis. The IIAS organizes seminars, workshops, and conferences, publishes a newsletter (circulation approximately 22,000 copies), and has established a database which contains information about researchers and current research in the field of Asian Studies within Europe and worldwide. A *Guide to Asian Studies in Europe*, a printed version of parts of this database, was published in 1998. The Institute also has its own server and Internet site to which a growing number of Institutes related to Asian Studies is linked.

Since 1994 the IIAS has been appointed to run the secretariat of the European Science Foundation Asia Committee (Strasbourg). Together with the Committee, the IIAS shares the objective of improving the international cooperation in the field of Asian Studies (additional information can be acquired at the IIAS).

In 1997 the Strategic Alliance for Asian Studies was established: an international cooperation between the Nordic Institute of Asian Studies (NIAS), Copenhagen, and the IIAS. The Institute of Asian Affairs (IfA), Hamburg, the European Institute for Asian Studies (EIAS), Brussels, and the Asia-Europe Centre (AEC) have since joined the Alliance. The Asia Alliance was set up to enhance research on (contemporary) Asia and to create networks in Asia and Europe with academic and non-academic institutions and actors.

Upon the initiative of the IIAS, and in close cooperation with NIAS, the Programme for Europe-Asia Research Links (PEARL) was established in Seoul in October 1998. It is a network of researchers from Asia and Europe, i.e. from the ASEM (Asia-Europe Meetings) member countries, representing leading Asian and European Studies institutes. PEARL believes that promotion of Asia-Europe research cooperation ought to be an integral part of the ASEM dynamics. The IIAS provides the secretariat for PEARL.