

tries reacted as sovereign nation states rather than as a bloc. National interests rather than regional solidarity dictated the postures taken towards Hanoi. Perhaps if the Secretariat in Jakarta had been better established, a better co-ordinated policy could have been arrived at, but that is questionable. ASEAN remains a loose federation at a time when a new Pacific economy is emerging. Japan and Australia,

two countries intensely interested in Southeast Asia, signed a Treaty of Friendship and Co-operation, and a rise in their economic relations is anticipated. Rich in natural resources but distracted by domestic instability and territorial disputes, the ASEAN countries may find themselves out-performed by more united and more determined competition in the Pacific region.

New ethics and politics of world food scarcity

By Nasir Islam

The past decade has witnessed many localized famines and food shortages that resulted in widespread human suffering. What lies ahead, however, is no localized, temporary disaster but a continuously creeping emergency of massive scale. As the galloping population growth in the Third World outstrips its technological capacity to produce more food and the "green revolution" grinds to a halt because of scarcity of fuel and fertilizers, the world faces a chronic food crisis.

Although there is some disagreement as to its causes, most experts tend to believe that the international food situation has undergone some fundamental changes and that food scarcity is becoming a permanent feature of the world economy. Historically, the demand for food rose because of the rising population. However, a striking element in the demand picture has been a tremendous increase in *per capita* consumption of cereals in developed countries where population has not been increasing. On the production side, the increase in the

early 1970s was modest compared to that of the early 1960s. Contrary to general belief, agriculture was far from stagnant in the Third World, but the upward trend in production and dynamism in agriculture were thwarted by the parallel trend in population increase. Many economists regard the government policies in major wheat-producing countries, leading to cut-backs in acreage, as the largest single factor in food scarcity.

Future prospects

The prospects for the future do not seem to be very bright, particularly for the less-developed countries. At best, there will probably be a precarious balance between supply and demand for the next decade. The exporting countries are no more committed to holding food reserves. In fact, recent legislation in the U.S. discourages the accumulation of wheat-stocks. Consequently, the world food market will be highly competitive and very little food will be available for aid. Continuing energy shortages and soaring prices of fertilizers, chemicals and other needed "inputs" will make it almost impossible for developing countries to become self-sufficient in food in the near future. According to the projections of the U.S. Agriculture Department, Japan will have a large food deficit by 1985 and the European Economic Community countries, as well as the Communist countries, will still need to import food during the next decade.

Food scarcity becoming permanent in world economy

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