China, India will play major roles in next decade: Patten

In India, the challenges he identified include the need to improve its poor infrastructure and introduce labour reforms to provide enough jobs for its booming population.

Mr Patten, who is chancellor of Oxford University, is in Singapore to publicise his fourth and latest book, What Next? Surviving The 21st Century. He leaves today for Beijing.

Despite the challenges ahead for the two Asian giants, he predicts that they will be key players on the world stage, and the United States and Europe should not take them lightly.

"India and China will play major roles in the next decade in shaping the world we live in. Unless the transatlantic community recognises that and adjusts to that, there's hardly a single problem that we will be able to tackle satisfactorily," he said.

These problems range from pandemics to climate change and transboundary crimes, such as arms trading or money laundering, he added.

"This is the dark side of globalisation which requires greater cooperation between nation-states, the sort of cooperation we're seeing now in trying to tackle the financial meltdown," said Mr Patten.

He hopes the US and Europe, in trying to fix the financial crisis, will not "turn to a protectionist direction and throw out all that is good about globalisation with some that is bad".

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