

T (Contd. from p. 1)

Saudi ...

"We cannot do anything before verifying the identity of the person, and so far the Saudi story is just a claim," he added.

Iranian Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki said late on Thursday that the Saudi Embassy announced "some time ago" that one of Bin Laden's daughters had taken refuge at the embassy.

However, Mottaki said the identity of the person has not yet been verified by the Iranian Foreign Ministry.

Talking on the Iranian TV show "Special Program", Mottaki said the Foreign Ministry has informed the Saudi Arabian Embassy that if the person's identity is verified, she can leave the country with a transit card.

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Ashura ...

In addition, millions of Pakistani Shias also participated in Ashura ceremonies on Sunday.

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Intl. ...

Q: Why most of the major international relations theories failed to predict the global economic crisis?

A: Because (i) they did not understand how the banking system works, and because (ii) life always holds surprises you cannot predict.

Q: Professor Christian Reus-Smit argues that there is no longer a great debate over international relations theories. Do you accept this view? If that is the case, which international relations theories can explain the current issues in the area of international relations?

A: I would disagree (see my answer to your first question). That said, I agree there now are many theories out there focusing on many different issues and they don't necessarily all participate in an overarching "great debate". Also, it is important to note that theories don't just explain, they also try to tell us what the "issues" in international politics are in the first place.

Q: Constructivism is one of the renowned theories in the field of international relations. What are the main advantages of this theory in comparison to other world-class international relations theories?

A: It focuses on the formation of (collective) identities and what effect this has on international politics. The other major IR theories fail to do that.

Q: Some scholars assert that international relations is an Anglo-American discipline, but others claim that international relations has some roots in continental countries. What is your viewpoint about this division? To what extent do developing countries contribute to the discipline of international relations?

A: Certainly IR as a discipline has until recently been dominated by American-based scholars, many of whom emigrated from Europe and/or built their ideas about international politics on European experiences. However, over the past decade or so new voices have made themselves heard. As a consequence, we now see much greater pluralism in perspectives. Interesting questions and approaches come from (and are applied to) many different parts in the world challenging the Western bias underpinning much IR scholarship of the first 50 years. This is a welcoming development.

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Hezbollah ...

"We call on the government in Egypt and the leadership to stop the wall and flooding the tunnels and to end the siege otherwise it should be condemned by all Arabs and the Muslims," he said.

Egyptian officials have said steel tubes were being placed at several points along the 14-km (8-mile)-long border, but they did not specify their purpose.

Palestinians fear a steel barrier, deep underground, would limit or end smuggling through hundreds of tunnels operating in defiance of a three-year-old Israeli-led blockade.

Tunnel-builders said some 3,000 tunnels were operational before Israel launched a three-week offensive in the Gaza Strip a year ago, but only 150 were still functional following the conflict and subsequent Israeli air raids.

"This unjust silence over besieging a whole people should not continue regardless of the excuses," Nasrallah said.

Shortly before Nasrallah's speech tens of thousands of Shi'ite Muslim Lebanese, chanting "Death to America, death to Israel," marched in Hezbollah's Beirut stronghold to commemorate the annual Ashura ritual.

A sea of men, women and children marched in the streets of Beirut's southern suburbs carrying Hezbollah's yellow and black flags and some carried religious slogans. They beat their chests in a sign of grief over the killing of the Prophet Mohammad's grandson, Imam Hussein and chanted "O Hussein" and "We will never be humiliated."

Ashura commemorates Imam Hussein, who was killed along with most of his family by authoritarian ruler Yazid, who Muslims remember as an oppressor and murderer. Imam Hussein's death at Karbala in Iraq in AD 680 is a defining moment in the history of Islam.

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Hamas ...

Attacks are rare in the Beirut stronghold of the Shiite Hezbollah -- an Islamic resistance movement now part of the Lebanese government of Prime Minister Saad Hariri -- as the resistance movement maintains tight security.

Lebanese President Michel Sleiman denounced the blast, blaming it on the "enemies" of Lebanon.

"This is a subversive act through which the enemies of the nation want to destabilize the country," Sleiman said in a statement, in which he also instructed the security services to bring the guilty parties to justice.

The explosion came on the eve of the climax of Ashura, when Shiites commemorate the martyrdom of Imam Hussein by forces of Yazid in 680 at the Battle of Karbala, in what is now Iraq.

Thousands of Lebanese Shiites gathered in the southern suburbs of Beirut on Sunday to mark the end of 10 days of rituals marking the Shiite holy day of Ashura.

Hezbollah chief Hassan Nasrallah addressed the crowd in a speech broadcast by videolink but did not mention Saturday's blast. However, he urged Lebanese people of all faiths to close ranks.

"We must close our ranks and unite because we now have a unity government which could lead the country toward progress," he said.

In November, the Lebanese unity government adopted a policy statement granting Hezbollah the right to use its arms against Israel, after forming a unity government which includes the group's political wing.

An AFP photographer said late on Saturday that the blast occurred in an alley in Harek Hreik, meters (yards) away from a community centre where Hezbollah was organizing a ceremony to commemorate Ashura.

Hezbollah security forces cor-

doned off the area, keeping journalists at a distance, the photographer said.

Witnesses said that local Hamas official Ali Baraka has an office in the area where the blast occurred.

Lebanon's official National News Agency said that the blast was caused by bombs placed under a car believed to belong to a Hamas member, while Hezbollah's Al-Manar TV channel said it occurred in a Hamas office.

The blast also came just hours before the first anniversary of Israel's 22-day offensive on the Gaza Strip during which some 1,400 Palestinians and 13 Israelis were killed.

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Embattled ...

Earlier in the day, the killing of a district official and five relatives in the northwest was a reminder of the immense challenges facing Zardari. Police said militants blew up the house of the official, Sarfraz Khan.

The attack in the Kurram region near the Afghan border appeared to be part of a campaign waged by al-Qaeda-linked militants who have spread their reach to cities.

Hundreds of people have been killed in attacks in retaliation for an offensive against a militant stronghold launched in October.

Security has been increased across the country for Ashura, the biggest event on Shi'ite Muslims' calendar and a flashpoint for attacks by militants in recent years.

Violence has intensified since July 2007, when the army cleared out militants from a radical mosque in Islamabad. Victims have included Bhutto, who was killed in a suicide bombing and gun attack after returning home from self-imposed exile.

Zardari is unpopular and militants show no signs of wavering in their bid to topple the government. But many Pakistanis and the military are united in the view that the insurgency must be crushed.

The International Monetary Fund last week gave a vote of confidence in Pakistan's economy, which is in virtual recession, by approving a \$1.2 billion loan payment. That could ease some of the pressure on Zardari.

The United States, grappling with an insurgency in Afghanistan, is pushing Pakistan hard to root out militants who plot attacks inside Afghanistan, and has also intensified pilotless drone attacks in northwest Pakistan.

The death toll in the latest drone raid, carried out on Saturday evening in the militant hub of North Waziristan, rose to 13 on Sunday, security officials said.

Pakistan officially objects to the drone strikes, saying they violate its sovereignty and the civilian casualties they sometimes inflict inflame public anger.

But U.S. officials say the strikes are carried out under an agreement with Pakistan that allows its leaders to decry them in public.

T (Contd. from p. 2)

Ahmadinejad ...

"The current regulations in the IAEA allow us to do so and we will make it ourselves. From our standpoint there is no problem for that."

The president also dismissed claims that Iran had kept its new nuclear enrichment facility secret, saying Tehran informed the International Atomic Energy Agency of the facility 18 months before the operation.

"According to the regulations in the IAEA six months before the beginning of enrichment activities we should have informed them. We did it one year before the activities but unfortunately they have misinterpreted our cooperation."

However, the president added Iran has been criticized rather than being lauded for declaring the site 12 months in advance.

"When we cooperate with them they show negative reactions - what does that mean? They said themselves - one that is not a member will remain immune from the investigations and verifications. When you cooperate the reactions are negative. What does that mean?"

"Does it mean we should not cooperate at all? Or course we do not do not accept this - this is not acceptable for us. But their attitudes are wrong. They want to say that a country which is not a member is free to do everything more than the member. And those countries enjoy more rights and any government who fulfills its obligations would be under pressure. Do they think they can run the world with this logic?"

Ahmadinejad said the criteria for verifying the peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear activities are the documents endorsed by the IAEA rather than media speculation or political rhetoric.

"We have the official documents from the IAEA and it has endorsed all our activities. We do not regulate our relations based on rhetoric. We do it on the basis of the law and the documents. We cooperate with the agency."

However, the president warned that the agency must not confuse its purely technical job with politics under a pressure by the West, saying, "The agency has no right to express political opinions under the pressures of certain governments."

On a question why Iran does not withdraw the NPT, the president replied, "We stay in the treaty and according to NPT we have rights and obligations. We have fulfilled our obligations and we should also enjoy rights."

The president dismissed the argument that the international community is against Iran's nuclear program, saying the U.S. and some of its European allies should not consider themselves as international community.

"Shouldn't they adapt themselves with the votes of these 120 countries?" the president asked in an indirect reference to the 118-member Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) which has expressed support for Iran's nuclear program.

The president also refuted a view that President Barack Obama has extended a hand of friendship toward Iran.

"Which hand did he extend? His right hand or left hand?"

The president went on to say, "What has he done in practice? I sent a message to him and we participated in Geneva negotiations. We talked with them and we offered the proposals for a fuel exchange. And we have announced that we stand ready to have a debate in New York. Who has extended his hand in practice?"

The Obama administration has in fact "extended the sanctions against us," Ahmadinejad lamented.

U.S.: Winter weather leaves behind flooding concerns

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — Snow and rain storms that have battered much of the United States for days have started subsiding, leaving behind concerns about flooding in some areas.

Storms from Texas to the Upper Midwest dumped 23.9 inches of snow in Grand Forks, N.D., and 18 inches near Norfolk, Neb. In the East, higher temperatures and rains have started melting and washing away last week's record-setting snowfalls, threatening the region with flooding.

The National Weather Service also issued flood warnings for parts of the South and Midwest, and winter weather advisories were in effect in sections of Nebraska, Illinois Indiana and Michigan through Sunday.

A woman and her teenage daughter in Middletown, Pa., a suburb of Philadelphia, were rescued from a rain-swollen creek after their SUV went off the road Saturday. Rescue workers found the 14-year-old clinging to a log; her mother was trapped in the vehicle.

T PERSPECTIVE

Copenhagen has given us the chance to face climate change with honesty

By James Hansen

Last weekend's minimalist Copenhagen global climate accord provides a great opportunity. The old deceitful, ineffectual approach is severely wounded and must die. Now there is a chance for the world to get on to an honest, effective path to an agreement.

The centerpiece of the old approach was a "cap-and-trade" scheme, festooned with offsets and bribes -- bribes that purportedly, but hardly, reduced carbon emissions. It was analogous to the indulgences scheme of the Middle Ages, whereby sinners paid the Church for forgiveness.

In today's indulgences the sinners, developed countries, buy off developing countries by paying for "offsets" to their own emissions and providing reparation money for adaptation to climate change. But such hush money won't work. Yes, some developing country leaders salivated over the proffered \$100 billion per year. But by buying in, they would cheat their children and ours. Besides, even the \$100 billion hush money is fugacious. The U.S., based on its proportion of the fossil fuel carbon in the air today, would owe \$27 billion per year. Chance of Congress providing that: dead zero. Maybe the UK will cough up its \$6 billion per year and Germany its \$7 billion per year. But who will collect Russia's \$7 billion per year?

Most purchased "offsets" to fossil fuel carbon dioxide emissions are hokey. But there is no need to flagellate the details of this modern indulgences scheme. Science provides an unambiguous fact that our leaders continue to ignore: carbon dioxide from fossil fuel burning remains in the climate system for millennia. The only solution is to move promptly to a clean energy future.

The difficulty is that fossil fuels are the cheapest energy, if the price does not include the damage they do to human health, the planet, and the future of our children. "Goals" for future emission reductions, whether "legally binding" or not, are utter nonsense as long as fossil fuels are the cheapest energy. The Kyoto Protocol illustrates the deceit of our governments, which have not screwed up their courage to face down the fossil fuel industry. As the graph here shows, global fossil fuel emissions were increasing 1.5 percent per year prior to the 1997 Kyoto accord. After "Kyoto" emission growth accelerated to 3 percent per year. A few developed countries reduced their fossil fuel use. The only important effect of that was to slightly reduce demand for fuel, helping to keep its price down. The fuel was burned in other places, and products made were shipped back to developed countries.

As far as the planet is concerned, agreements to "cap" emissions, such as the Kyoto Protocol and the imagined Copenhagen Protocol, are worthless scraps of paper. As long as fossil fuels are the cheapest energy, they will be burned somewhere. This fact helps define a solution to the climate problem. Yes, people must make changes in the way they live. Countries must cooperate. Matters as intractable as population must be included. Technology improvements are required. Changes must be economically efficient. The climate solution necessarily will increase the price of fossil fuel energy. We must admit that. But in the end, energy efficiency and carbon-free energy can be made less expensive than fossil fuels, if fossil fuels' cost to society is included. The solution must have honesty, backbone and a fair international framework. We need a rising price on carbon applied at the source (the mine, wellhead, or port of entry). The fee will affect all activities that use fossil fuels, directly or indirectly. The entire fee collected from fossil fuel companies should be distributed to the public. In this fee-and-dividend approach people maintaining a carbon footprint smaller than average will receive more in the dividend than they pay via increased energy costs. The monthly dividend, deposited electronically in their bank account or on their debit card, will stimulate the economy and provide people with the means to increase their carbon efficiency. All that governments need do is divide the collected revenue by the number of shares, with half-shares for children, up to two children per family.

Some economists prefer a payroll tax deduction over a dividend, because taxes depress the economy. The problem is that about half of the public are not on payrolls, because of retirement or involuntary unemployment. I suggest that at most 50 percent of the collected carbon fee should be used for payroll tax deduction.

Cap-and-trade is the antithesis of this simple system. Cap-and-trade is a hidden tax, increasing energy costs, but with no public dividend. Its infrastructure costs the public, who also fund the profits of the resulting big banks and speculators. Cap-and-trade is advantageous only to energy companies with strong lobbyists and government officials who dole out proceeds from pollution certificates to favored industries.

Fee-and-dividend, in contrast, is a non-tax -- on average it is revenue-neutral. The public will probably accept a rise in the carbon fee rate, because their monthly dividend will increase correspondingly. As fee-and-dividend causes fossil fuel energy prices to rise, a series of points will be reached at which various carbon-free energies and carbon-saving technologies are cheaper than fossil fuels plus the fee. The market place will choose the best technology. As time goes on, fossil fuel use will collapse, coal will be left in the ground, and we will have arrived at a clean energy future. A rising carbon fee is essential for a climate solution. But how to achieve a fair international framework?

The critical requirement is that the United States and China agree to apply across-the-board carbon fees, at a relative rate to be negotiated. Why would China agree to a carbon fee? China does not want to be saddled with the problems that attend fossil fuel addiction such as those that plague the United States. Besides, China would be hit extraordinarily hard by climate change. A uniform rising carbon fee is the most economically efficient way for China to limit its fossil fuel dependence.

Copenhagen discussions showed that China and the United States can work together. Europe, Japan, and most developed countries would very probably agree to a similar status to that of the United States. Countries refusing to levy an across-the-board carbon fee can be dealt with via an import duty collected on products from that nation in accord with the amount of fossil fuel that goes into producing the product. The World Trade Organization already has rules permitting such duties.

The international framework must define how proceeds from import duties are used to assure fairness. Duties on products from developing countries will probably dwarf present foreign aid to those countries. These funds should be returned to developing countries, but distributed so as to encourage best practices, for example, improved women's rights and education that helps control population growth. Fairness also requires that distribution of the funds takes account of the ongoing impacts of climate change. Successful efforts in limiting deforestation and other best practices could also be rewarded.

James Hansen was the first scientist to warn the US Congress of the dangers of climate change. The ideas discussed in this article are expanded on in his new book "Storms of My Grandchildren".

(Source: The Observer)