

China unveils emissions cut targets after US

Obama to attend Copenhagen summit with 17 pc emission cut offer

AFP, Beijing/Washington

China announced its first targets for limiting carbon emissions on Thursday, joining the United States in revealing the stance it will take at next month's high-stakes climate summit.

On Wednesday, the White House said President Barack Obama would go to the December 7-18 climate change summit with an offer to cut US emissions by 17 percent from 2005 levels by 2020.

China will cut the intensity of carbon dioxide emissions per unit of gross domestic product in 2020 by 40 to 45 percent from 2005 levels, a statement from the State Council, or cabinet, said.

"This is a voluntary action taken by the

Chinese government based on its own national conditions and is a major contribution to the global effort in tackling climate change," the statement said.

It added that China would face "enormous pressure and special difficulty in controlling greenhouse gas emissions".

The announcement marks the first time China has put specific numbers on a September pledge by President Hu Jintao to reduce the intensity of its carbon emissions as a percentage of economic growth by 2020.

Hu said at the time only that carbon intensity would be reduced by a "notable margin". However, emissions would continue to grow under China's plan.

Carbon intensity refers to emissions per unit of economic activity.

China's announcement came a day after Washington said President Barack Obama would attend the December 7-18 meeting in Copenhagen with an offer to cut US emissions by 17 percent from 2005 levels by 2020.

"This is definitely a very positive step China is taking just one week before Copenhagen," Yang Ailun, Greenpeace China's climate and energy campaign manager, told AFP. "But we think China can do more than this."

China earlier Thursday announced that Premier Wen Jiabao would join dozens of other world leaders at the summit, which was called to seek a successor to the Kyoto Protocol on limiting greenhouse gas emissions.

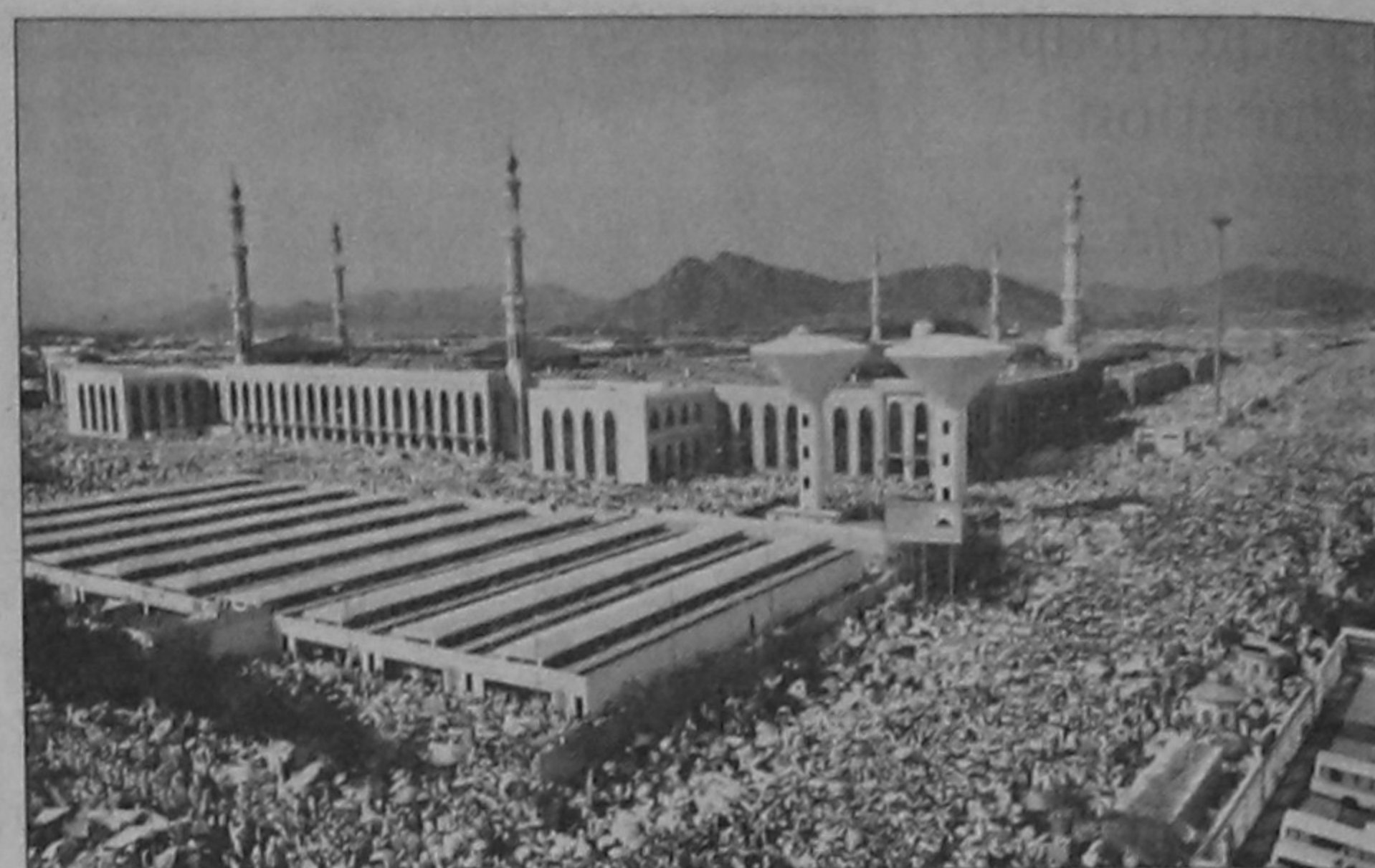
Flooding in Saudi kill 48 people

AFP, Jeddah

Flooding caused by heavy downpours in western Saudi Arabia have killed 48 people while another 900 were rescued from swirling waters, the civil defence authority said yesterday.

A 90-millimetre (3.5-inch) downpour which hit the Red Sea city of Jeddah and its surroundings flooded the roads and tunnels and even brought down a few old houses, it said in a statement carried by SPA state news agency.

The death toll in Jeddah reached 44, while four others died in the neighbouring province of Mecca, the authority said.



Muslim pilgrims gather outside Namira Mosque at Mount Arafat, southeast of the Saudi holy city of Makkah yesterday. Pilgrims flooded into the Arafat plain from Makkah and Mina before dawn for a key ritual around the site where Prophet Hazrat Mohammed (SM) gave his farewell sermon.



Palestinian children take part in a candle-light vigil in Gaza City on Wednesday to call for the release of Palestinian prisoners held in Israeli jails.

ME peace now depends on Palestinians: Israel

AP, Jerusalem

Israel's foreign minister said yesterday it is up to the Palestinians to decide whether to resume Middle East peace talks now that Israel has announced a settlement freeze.

Avigdor Lieberman told Israel's Army Radio that the "ball is in the Palestinian court."

His comments came a day after Israel proposed a 10-month halt in West Bank settlement construction, which the Palestinians swiftly rejected because it did not include east Jerusalem.

The Obama administration has been urging the sides to resume peace talks and said the Israeli move could help them do so. The Palestinians have refused to talk until all settlement construction ceases.

Lieberman, a settler himself, said Israel has gone as far as it

could in its gestures toward Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas.

"What we could have contributed, we did," Lieberman said. "The Palestinians will make their considerations based on internal considerations that don't need to concern us."

Chief Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erekat said Israel's move was insignificant because current West Bank construction is not being stopped. He said Wednesday's announcement by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was aimed more toward appeasing American pressure than truly trying to reconcile with Palestinians.

"At the end of the day Netanyahu needs to make peace with us, the Palestinians, he doesn't need to make peace with Americans," Erekat told

Army Radio. "If that is what he wants, that is his business. The last I know, Washington is 6,000 miles from Jerusalem, while Jericho is 67."

Netanyahu also faces fierce opposition at home from pro-settler groups and even within his own right-wing coalition.

Dani Dayan, leader of the West Bank settlers' council, accused Netanyahu of capitulating to American demands and getting nothing in return for his concessions.

He pledged to continue building as much as possible.

"We feel that he is going in a very slippery slope in which he is betraying his own beliefs," he told The Associated Press. "We will do everything in our capacity to keep building, to keep developing our communities, and I am optimistic that we will prevail."

Iran sentences leading reformist to six years

AFP, Tehran

Leading Iranian reformist, Behzad Nabavi, has been sentenced to six years in prison for his part in June demonstrations but was granted bail pending a possible appeal, his lawyer told AFP on Thursday.

It was the latest in a string of tough jail terms handed down against prominent critics of hardline President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad over the mass protests that broke out after his disputed re-election.

UN atomic watchdog chief 'disappointed' by Iran

Nuclear fuel swap inside country 'not an option'

AFP, Vienna

UN atomic watchdog chief Mohamed ElBaradei said yesterday he was "disappointed" by Iran's lack of response to a compromise nuclear fuel deal.

"I am disappointed that Iran has not so far agreed to the original proposal or the alternative modalities, both of which I believe are balanced and fair and would greatly help to alleviate the concerns relating to Iran's nuclear programme," he told the

International Atomic Energy Agency's governing board.

A nuclear fuel swap inside Iran, as proposed by the Islamic Republic, is "not an option", the head of the UN atomic watchdog Mohamed ElBaradei said here Wednesday.

"I don't think that is an option. The whole purpose of the deal is to defuse the crisis," ElBaradei told reporters, referring to a deal he had brokered on the supply of nuclear fuel to a research reactor in Tehran.

Iran and world powers have been at loggerheads for weeks, failing to reach a nuclear fuel deal aimed at allaying Western concerns over Tehran's nuclear programme.

It was ElBaradei, who steps down as the IAEA's director general next Monday after 12 years in office, who brokered the deal, which would see Russia enrich the uranium needed to fuel a nuclear research reactor in Tehran in return for key confidence-building gestures by the Islamic Republic.

Nasa plans robotic rocket plane to explore Mars

ANI, London

Nasa is proposing to build a robotic rocket-plane to explore Mars from the air, and has advertised for help building it.

According to a report in the Telegraph, Nasa scientists are proposing to build the Aerial Regional-scale Environmental Surveyor (ARES).

Around the size of a small plane, ARES will be folded into a rocket and launched to the red planet. It would be the first aircraft ever to fly over another world.



A burnt out car is pictured at the scene of a blaze in Peckham, in south east London yesterday. Around 310 people had to be evacuated on Thursday after a fire at a building site spread to nearby flats in south London.

UN chief to push C'wealth on climate deal

AFP, Port of Spain

UN chief Ban Ki-moon is to lead a charge in a Commonwealth summit starting today toward a global climate deal that will be discussed in Copenhagen in two weeks' time.

The gathering of leaders from the 53-nation body in Trinidad is the last major international meeting before the December 7-18 talks in Copenhagen.

Although to be opened by Queen Elizabeth II -- in defer-

ence to the Commonwealth's origins in what used to be the British empire -- the shift towards focusing the summit on global warming was plain with the inclusion of Ban and two other non-Commonwealth leaders.

French President Nicolas Sarkozy, who is at the vanguard of EU efforts to cut greenhouse gases, and Danish Prime Minister Lars Loeke Rasmussen, who will host the UN talks in Copenhagen, will also address the meeting on Friday.

Sarkozy will be flying in from a meeting in Manaus, Brazil, of presidents of countries that encompass the Amazon rainforest -- a group that includes French Guiana, a South American territory administratively considered part of France.

What added momentum they might extract from the event remains to be seen, though the Commonwealth's potential weight is enticing in the efforts to draw up a successor treaty to the Kyoto Protocol.

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- **Admission Test:** Date: January 29, 2010 (Friday)
Time: 3:00 PM - 5:30 PM
Venue: (1) Teachers Training College, Dhaka and (2) Chittagong RRC
- List of Selected Applicants will be published in the 'The Daily Star' within February 01-03, 2010
- Mention your preferred admission test venue in the application form
- Tutorial service shall be provided only at Dhaka RRC and Chittagong RRC



Admission Test will be held at Dhaka and Chittagong only. Applicants are advised to collect and submit their filled-up application form in any of the above mentioned Regional Resource Centres. The application form shall be submitted along with bank deposit slip of Tk.300.00 (three hundred), attested copies of all academic certificates, working experience certificates and two recent passport size photographs. Applicants are also advised to collect their Admit Card from the concerned RRC on submission of the application. No applicant would be allowed to appear at the Admission Test without Admit Card.

In case of any query, you can contact:
Dean, School of Business, BOU (Phone: 02-9291106)

Further Information on the Commonwealth of Learning and the Programme be viewed at www.col.org

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