

# Historic climate debate opens, with boost from US

AP, Copenhagen  
Delegates to a pivotal climate conference welcomed an Obama administration move Monday to regulate greenhouse gases under existing clean air law, but said they still expect more.  
The announcement came as the two-week meeting of 192 nations opened with emotional appeals from those countries endangered by rising seas and other damage from climate change.  
The finding by the US Environmental Protection Agency would supplement the cap on carbon dioxide emissions being considered in the US Congress, effectively raising the US offer on emissions reductions in two weeks of hard bargaining in

Copenhagen.  
"The executive branch is showing what it can do, even while legislation is pending," Rajendra Pachauri, chairman of the UN scientific network on climate change, said of the EPA action. "It also sends a powerful signal to Congress. It shows a degree of resolve on the part of the president."  
The conference climax will come when President Barack Obama and more than 100 other national leaders arrive for the final hours of talks next week. In preparation, Obama met with former Vice President Al Gore, a leading climate campaigner, at the White House on Monday.  
Earlier in the day, the European Union had called for a stronger "bid" by the Americans, who thus far have provisionally pledged emis-

sions cuts much less ambitious than Europe's.  
The endgame in Copenhagen "will mostly be on what will be delivered by the United States and China," the world's two biggest greenhouse-gas emitters, European Union environment spokesman Andreas Carlgren told reporters. He said he would be astonished if Obama did not put more on the table.  
Whether the prospect of EPA action will satisfy such demands and what China may now add to its earlier offer remains to be seen. And success in the long-running climate talks hinges on more than emissions reductions. Most important, it requires commitments of financial support by rich countries for poor as they cope with the impacts of a changing global climate.



US and Iraqi soldiers observe as rescue workers gather at the site of a bomb blast outside a criminal court building in west Baghdad yesterday, killing 127 people and wounding 207 in the third coordinated massacre to devastate the capital since August. PHOTO: AFP

# World's hottest decade adds to pressure for climate accord

AFP, Copenhagen  
The UN's top weather expert warned yesterday that the world is in its hottest decade on record as climate negotiators plunged into talks seeking a historic deal on cutting carbon emissions.  
The prediction by the World Meteorological Organisation underlined the pressure for an agreement at a summit in Copenhagen, which was boosted when the United States said it would start to regulate carbon dioxide as a dangerous pollutant.  
"The decade 2000-2009 is very likely to be the warmest on record, warmer than the 1990s, which were in turn warmer than the 1980s," World Meteorological Organisation Secretary General Michel Jarraud told a press conference.  
Jarraud also said that the year 2009 would probably rank as the fifth warmest since accurate records were started in 1850.

Britain's Met Office released data from hundreds of monitoring stations worldwide showing that the global surface temperature has risen significantly over the last 150 years, including a finding that the rise has averaged more than 0.15 degrees Celsius per decade since the middle of the 1970s.  
The Copenhagen talks, under the banner of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), are the boldest attempt in a 17-year odyssey to turn back the threat of climate change through consensus.  
If all goes well, the conference will yield an outline agreement that sets down pledges by major emitters of greenhouse gases to curb pollution.  
It will also set down the principles of long-term financing, possibly worth hundreds of billions of dollars, to help poor countries off "high-carbon" technology and beef up their defences against climate change.

# EU seeks joint stance on Jerusalem

AFP, Brussels  
EU foreign ministers were seeking common ground yesterday on the vexed issue of a future Palestinian state, after an initial proposal that east Jerusalem should be the capital angered Israel.  
Luxembourg's foreign minister Jean Asselborn was one of those stoking the controversy.  
East Jerusalem is "not part of Israel," he said after the Swedish EU presidency included the idea of east Jerusalem as the capital of a future Palestinian state in a draft text for European Union foreign ministers to agree.  
"I support the Swedish proposal very strongly. We should abide by our principles," Finnish Foreign Minister Alexander Stubb echoed as he arrived for a second day of talks with his EU counterparts in Brussels Tuesday.

# 8 killed, 26 injured in China school stampede

AP, Beijing  
Eight youths were killed and 26 injured when students descending a crowded staircase after evening classes at a school in central China lost their footing amid a crush of bodies, state media and the local government reported yesterday.  
Students were rushing out of evening study sessions at 9:10 pm on Monday (13:10 GMT) at Xiangxiang city's private Yucai Middle School when some lost their footing and began to fall on top of one another in a stampede on the steps.  
More than 400 students had been exiting classrooms via an enclosed stairwell just 4 feet (1.2 meters) wide, according to state broadcaster CCTV.  
The dead were listed as seven boys and one girl, aged 11-14, while eight other students were hospitalized with serious injuries, according to a local government notice and the official Xinhua News Agency.  
CCTV footage shot five hours after the tragedy showed a puddle of blood in a corner of a landing in the darkened, tunnel-like stairwell.  
"I just can't describe how I feel," school guidance counselor Chen Xinwei told the station. "You see these students so full of life and then they're just gone in an instant. There's just no way to process it," Chen said.  
A notice on the local government Web site posted around noon yesterday (04:00 GMT) said three of the injured had already left hospital and the five others were in stable condition.  
Leaders of the city 720 miles (1,160 kilometers) south of Beijing immediately removed the head of the education bureau for bearing "leadership responsibility" for the accident, the government said.

The school's principal and chairman of its board of governors have been placed under a mild form of detention as part of the investigation, said a city government official reached by phone. Like many Chinese bureaucrats he refused to give his name.  
The official said the education bureau has taken direct charge of the school's administration and had frozen its bank account.  
Reports said some classes were in session yesterday, with students and teachers standing for a moment of silence for the dead and injured students. Photographs showed areas of the school roped off with crime scene tape, although it wasn't clear if that was due to the investigation or for the students' safety.

# Karzai condemns death of 6 civilians in Nato raid

AFP, Kabul  
President Hamid Karzai yesterday condemned the death of six civilians during a Nato raid as US Defence Secretary Robert Gates vowed US troop reinforcements would keep civilian deaths to a minimum.  
Karzai's office said six civilians, including a woman, died when troops from the Nato-led International Security Assistance Force (Isaf) conducted an operation in Armal village in the province of Laghman overnight.  
"Last night the international coalition forces in Afghanistan carried out an operation near the capital of Laghman province in Armal village.  
"As a result of which, six innocent civilians, including one woman, in this village were martyred," his office said in a statement.  
The Western-backed leader "condemned the killing of innocent civilians" and ordered his interior ministry to investigate the incident, it added.  
Dozens of people demonstrated in Mihtarlam, the capital of Laghman, accusing coalition forces of killing 12 civilians, witnesses said.  
"The interior minister, together with General (Stanley) McChrystal the Isaf commander, have commissioned a joint delegation to investigate this issue seriously," said interior ministry spokesman Zemarai Bashary.

The Marine Corps Air Station Futenma is a major US base on the southern Japanese island of Okinawa. The base's relocation is at the center of a dispute between Tokyo and Washington.  
Japan and the United States agreed in 2006 to relocate the base to a site farther north. But Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama has put the deal on hold and indicated the relocation site could be changed.

# Amnesty calls for end to Philippine martial law

AP, Shariff Aguak  
Amnesty International called on the Philippine government yesterday to revoke martial law in a southern province, where troops cracked down on a powerful clan and its armed supporters blamed for the massacre of 57 people.  
President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo last week declared military rule in Maguindanao province, allowing government forces to arrest members of the Ampatuan clan without court warrants and order some 2,400 loyalists to surrender their weapons.  
The Ampatians, who had forged a political alliance with Arroyo and ruled the impoverished province unopposed for years, are the main suspects in the Nov. 23 ambush on an election rival's convoy that included 30 journalists and their staff.

On the day martial law was announced Saturday, troops and police arrested Andal Ampatuan Sr, the family patriarch, and more than 20 others, including his sons and relatives. Beside murder, prosecutors plan to file rebellion charges against them for allegedly fomenting armed resistance a justification for martial law proclamation, Justice Secretary Agnes Devanadera said.  
A group of lawyers has challenged the proclamation, asking the Supreme Court on Monday to throw it out, arguing the law and order breakdown in Maguindanao did not amount to a rebellion. It was not clear when the high court will issue a ruling.  
Amnesty International urged authorities to "develop a quick and clear timetable" to end martial law and dismantle the country's armed paramilitary groups.

# US envoy begins rare trip to N Korea

AP, Seoul  
President Barack Obama's envoy began a rare trip to North Korea yesterday for the highest-level talks with the communist nation in more than a year as a senior US official warned of strong sanctions against Pyongyang unless it rejoins international nuclear talks.  
Envoy Stephen Bosworth's mission is to find out whether North Korea will return to the stalled international talks on ending its nuclear programs after carrying out an atomic test blast in May and quitting the six-nation negotiations.



A father grieves beside his son who was killed during a stampede at a middle-school which occurred when students rushed down a flight of stairs in Xiangxiang, in central China's Hunan province yesterday. Eight teenagers were killed and 26 others injured in the stampede at the school, state media reported. PHOTO: AFP

# Japan says talks on US base suspended

AP, Tokyo  
A report said yesterday that the high-level talks between the United States and Japan on the relocation of an American military base have been suspended.  
Kyodo News agency quoted Japanese Foreign Minister Katsuya Okada yesterday as saying the US-Japan working group has been suspended. He did not elaborate.

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# Enamul fires hosts

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technique-wise against the strong Pakistanis.  
Sri Lanka rested six players from their previous game.  
The changes made by Bangladesh brought a positive approach; they played the game with a more fluid attacking brand of football that brought the 25,000-strong crowd to their feet on a cool evening at the Bangabandhu.  
And it took Bangladesh only eight minutes to go ahead when their two more skilful players, Mehdi Hasan Ujjal and Zahid Hasan Emily played a neat one-two between them in the Sri Lanka half before Ujjal provided a minus for Enamul Haque to tap in and give Bangladesh a deserved lead and bag his third goal in as many matches.  
Bangladesh came close to doubling their margin on the 20th minute after Emily had taken the ball brilliantly down the left and released a cross for advancing Zayed Parvez who put a first time volley just over the bar.  
Eleven minutes later, defender Rajani Kanta Barman found himself in an uncharted position in front of the Sri Lanka goal, but he fumbled and failed to get any contact on an inviting cross from Ujjal with just the keeper to beat.  
Bangladesh goalkeeper Aminul Haque was hardly called into action in the early exchanges of the match. But he could not stop Sri Lanka from finding an equaliser, however much against the run of play on the 39th minute, when Channa fired in a 25-yard free-kick that took a

deflection off the wall and evaded the diving Aminul to nest itself at the right corner of Bangladesh goal.  
Sri Lanka sat back a little and tried to reduce the pace of the game in the second half as Bangladesh grew more and more desperate for another goal. Bangladesh coach Shantoo brought on a Shatedul Alam taking off another midfielder Mehdi Hasan the 61st minute. And that proved to be a master trick as Shatedul made his presence felt no more than a minute later when he picked out Zayed Parvez on the right flank put in an inch-perfect cross over the keeper for the wary goalpoacher Enamul's who obliged with his fourth of the tournament.  
And Shantoo didn't let his charges sit back though on a 2-1 lead, as he followed with another substitution. Emily, who was a doubtful starter for the match and had a minimal impact on the game, made way for the other striker Mithun Chowdhury. Bangladesh's two-goal hero and the tournament's top-scorer Enamul Haque was also taken off with just a few minutes to go for the final whistle to keep him fit for the rest of the tournament. Bangladesh made a few more scoring opportunities towards the end, the substitute Mithun thought he scored a goal in the 85th minute after being set up by Zayed Parvez, but his effort was ruled as off-side.  
As the final whistle blew, the crowd burst a loud cheer and the players celebrated banishing their nightmare of Colombo one year ago.

# BNP chief lays out 19-pt programme

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The programmes also include establishing good governance and rule of law, expediting national development by "turning the population into manpower", ensuring people's basic needs, taking measures to expand the science, technology and ICT sector to make Bangladesh fit for the 21st century, re-opening of closed down industries, and providing all-out support to local industries for their survival.  
Political analysts say the programmes aim at making the party more pro-people and restore people's support keeping in mind the next general elections.  
Amid slogans and clapping of grassroots leaders from across the country, Khaleda said the party council aimed to bring qualitative changes within the party to make it a competent mechanism in implementing those programmes.  
She urged all patriotic people, political parties, students, youths, workers and all professional and cultural organisations to unite and work together for the people's welfare and establish the rule of law.  
Lambasting the present Awami League-led government's rule, Khaleda, also leader of the opposition in parliament, called upon the ruling party to work for the people and the country.  
In her 70-minute speech at the opening session of the council at Bangabandhu International Convention Centre, Khaleda asked the government to work to implement its election manifesto. "We will extend constructive cooperation," she said.  
The BNP chief accused the ruling

party of not behaving properly with the opposition in parliament and asked the government to pay due respect to the opposition party to get its cooperation.  
"Let the opposition talk for the people and stay away from bringing false allegations against it. Discuss any issues related to people and the country in parliament before making any decision. We will help make parliament effective," she said.  
Khaleda said the government's "go alone" policy on holding trial of the killing of army officers, demarcation of maritime boundary, Tipaimukh Dam issue, Asian Highway and withdrawal of army camps from Chittagong Hill Tracts has aroused suspicion among the people about its sincerity.  
The BNP will protest if the government does anything that goes against the people, she said, adding, "If necessary, we will launch movements and resistance taking people with us."  
She said people are not safe now in and outside home and frustration and grievances are increasing among them. "People are saying that the government has not been able to bring changes, rather it has increased their sufferings. The government is busy with making the country volatile instead of building a digital Bangladesh," she said.  
Khaleda, who has been leading the BNP since 1983, described various achievements in different sectors during her party's 1991-1996 and 2001-2006 tenures. She also portrayed the last caretaker government's tenure as marked by misrule. She blasted the caretaker government for its effort to exclude her and Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina from politics.

"Like politicians, businessmen and other people, my family members were also tortured and I had been confined to my house before my detention," she said.  
Describing the 9/11 as a guerrilla attack, Khaleda said it "hit America in the heart". "Similarly, the conspirators of 1/11 also hit Bangladesh in the heart," she said.  
Khaleda said with the current government misrule has been established again. "Therefore, we will have to prepare for a tough struggle, for which unity among ourselves and having people beside us are required."  
Earlier in the morning, Khaleda inaugurated the council by hoisting the national and party flags.  
Around 20,000 grassroots level leaders, councillors, and delegates of BNP gathered at the council venue.  
Leaders of business and professional bodies, intellectuals, cultural personalities, envoys of different countries, and social elites attended the inaugural ceremony.  
The council was held to elect BNP's new leadership and bring changes in the party charter by ratifying the provisional changes brought in it to meet the registration criteria before the last parliamentary polls.  
Sri Lanka Tourism Minister Milinda Moragoda, UK's House of Commons member George Galloway, Chairman of international liaison committee of Pakistan People's Party Prof Ezzul Hasan, Canada's National Democratic Party chief's special envoy Daniel Breton and former mayor of a province of Canada Jau Mark Pelety also addressed the council.

# Virgin spaceship to take visitors into sub orbital space

AFP, Mojave, California  
British billionaire Richard Branson unveiled a commercial rocket plane here that will allow tourists a chance to view the Earth and experience weightlessness from sub orbital space.  
Branson said Monday that he hopes to offer tickets aboard his Virgin Galactic space liner for 200,000 dollars each, giving adventurous, well-heeled travellers a chance to experience space for a fraction of the cost of a seat on a NASA shuttle or Russian spaceship.  
Branson, who is spending between 250 million and 400 million dollars on the space venture, also said he planned to be on the craft's first passenger flight some 18 months from now, accompanied by his family and the US designer of the spaceship, Burt Rutan.

The futuristic-looking craft is composed of two parts -- the SpaceShipTwo and the WhiteKnightTwo, the prototype of which has been dubbed Virgin MotherShip Eve in a tribute to Branson's mother.  
The craft, emblazoned with the image of a young woman that represents Branson's mother Eve diving through space, resembles two jet aircraft joined together at their wingtips.  
The White Knight will transport the two-pilot, six-passenger SpaceShipTwo high above the Earth where the space pod will break away and propel beyond the atmosphere.  
SpaceShipTwo "is attached to the mother ship in the middle and when the mother ship gets up to 60,000 feet, the spaceship will drop away," Branson said.