



Weekly Special Report



Produced by the Public Affairs Section

INSIDE

President Obama Hosts a White House Iftar

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr.
Staff Writer

Washington — As America recognizes the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, President Obama says, “we also celebrate how much Muslims have enriched America and its culture.”

“The contributions of Muslims to the United States are too long to catalog because Muslims are so interwoven into the
(Continued on page 2)



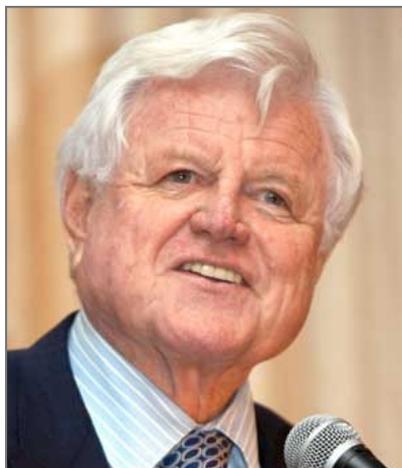
President Obama introduces Bilqis Abdul-Qadir, a college student, during a White House meal held September 1 to celebrate Ramadan.

Senator Edward Kennedy Dies at 77

By Bridget Hunter
Staff Writer

Washington — Edward M. Kennedy, a respected elder statesman known as the “lion of the Senate,” died in Massachusetts on August 25 at the age of 77 after a yearlong battle with brain cancer.

“An important chapter in our history has come to an end. Our country



Senator Edward Kennedy

has lost a great leader, who picked up the torch of his fallen brothers and became the greatest United States senator of our time,” President Obama said in a statement released by the White House August 26.

Although never elected to the U.S. presidency, Kennedy profoundly

(Continued on page 3)

INTERNATIONAL ISSUES

Grants from Millennium Challenge Corporation Spur Development (P 5)

Meaningful Mideast Peace Talks Needed (P 6)

AMERICAN NEWS

Obama Reappoints Bernanke as Federal Reserve Chairman (P 8)

Can Infrastructure Spending Lead the Way to Recovery? (P 9)

PEOPLE AND PLACE

Artists Use Images of the Veil to Explore Identity, Culture (P 10)

Michigan Hosts Large Muslim-American Sports Event (P 12)

Muslim Community Center Offers Spiritual Solace (P 13)

ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENT

Adaptation to Climate Change Focus of Meeting in Geneva (P 14)

Green Transport Means Fuel-Efficient Vehicles, Low-Carbon Fuels (P 15)

President Obama Hosts a White House Iftar . . .

(Continued from page 1)

fabric of our communities and our country," Obama said at a White House iftar meal September 1. Ramadan is a period of reflection and devotion that includes daily fasting from sunrise to sunset. The iftar is a meal that breaks the daily fast after sunset.

tablecloths featuring tall white tapers surrounding floral centerpieces. Outside the dining room in the Grand Foyer was a round table that held a raised platter of dates, a traditional feature of the iftar meal.

"For well over a billion Muslims, Ramadan is a time of intense devotion and reflection," the president said. "It's a time of service and sup-

"Together, we have a responsibility to foster engagement grounded in mutual interest and mutual respect," Obama said in his opening remarks at the White House iftar. "That is central to the new beginning that I've sought between the United States and Muslims around the world. And that is a commitment that we can renew once again during this holy season."

"Tonight, we celebrate a great religion and its commitment to justice and progress," Obama said.

A complete transcript of the president's remarks (<http://www.america.gov/st/texttrans-english/2009/September/20090902104335xjsnommis0.6466442.html>) is available on America.gov.

What foreign affairs decisions should President Obama consider? Comment on America.gov's blog Obama Today (<http://blogs.america.gov/obama/2009/01/21/day-2-what-should-obama%e2%80%99s-top-priorities-be/>).

(This is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://www.america.gov>) ♦



President Barack Obama speaks during a dinner celebrating Ramadan in the State Dining Room of the White House in Washington, Tuesday, Sept. 1, 2009. (AP Photo/Gerald Herbert)

Joining Obama were members of his Cabinet, members of the diplomatic corps in Washington and members of Congress, including Representatives Keith Ellison of Minnesota and André Carson of Indiana, who are the first two Muslims to serve in the U.S. Congress.

After the president spoke, he joined his guests at the dinner, which was held in the State Dining Room, whose tables were covered in green

port for those in need. And it is also a time for family and friends to come together in celebration of their faith, their communities and the common humanity that all of us share."

"It is in that spirit that I welcome each and every one of you to the White House," Obama added.

White House iftars have been held for the past eight years.

Senator Edward Kennedy Dies at 77 . . .

(Continued from page 1)

affected U.S. policy, domestic and international, and is widely regarded as one of the most effective legislators of the past three or four decades, with important roles in landmark laws such as the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act.

Kennedy's endorsement of Barack Obama early in 2008 was seen by many as a key factor in Obama's successful pursuit of the Democratic nomination for the presidency. In a passionate speech at the 2008 Democratic National Convention in Denver, Kennedy called on Americans to support Obama's bid for the highest U.S. office.

"For me this is a season of hope — new hope for a justice and fair prosperity for the many, and not just for the few — new hope," the senator told the crowd. "There is a new wave of change all around us, and if we set our compass true, we will reach our destination — not merely victory for our party, but renewal for our nation."

The youngest child in one of the nation's most powerful political families, Kennedy was raised to a life of public service. The deaths of his brothers — one shot down on a military mission in World War II and two others assassinated while serving in political office — seemed to

reinforce Edward Kennedy's commitment to serve his nation.

Kennedy first was elected in 1962 to complete the final two years of the Senate term of his brother, Senator John F. Kennedy, who was elected president in 1960. The young Kennedy, only 30 when he joined the Senate, was re-elected to eight full terms and was the second-longest-serving senator in Congress at the time of his death.



The funeral service of Senator Edward Kennedy at the Basilica of Our Lady of Perpetual Help in Boston, Saturday, Aug., 29, 2009. (AP Photo/Brian Snyder, Pool)

Throughout his career, Kennedy fought for health care, education, civil rights, immigration reform and protection of natural resources. During his Senate career, he authored more than 2,500 bills, several hundred of which became law.

Kennedy remained active and politically engaged until his final days, pressing forward on health care reform and lobbying the Massachusetts Legislature to amend a state law providing for filling a vacant Senate seat because he did not want the post to remain empty for

months in the event of his death.

"We have lost Ted, but his life's work will shape our nation for years to come," Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton said in an August 26 statement. "His legacy will live on in the hearts and minds of millions of Americans who are freer, healthier, and more prosperous because of his efforts."

INTERNATIONAL ENGAGEMENT

Despite devoting much of his time and energy to the pursuit of domestic reforms, Kennedy was a leading voice for human rights, social justice and democracy throughout the world for nearly half a century and helped substantively shape U.S. foreign policy.

From 1970 onward, he lent his powerful voice to the cause of civil rights in Northern Ireland, working with leaders of the United Kingdom and Ireland to bring about a lasting peace. In 1998,

the senator met with Northern Irish leaders on both sides of the conflict in peace talks chaired by former Senator George Mitchell that led to the Good Friday Accords, which laid the groundwork for political power-sharing.

Kennedy also was active in U.S. relations with the Soviet Union, especially as a relentless advocate of free emigration. During his many visits to Russia in the 1970s and 1980s, he helped obtain exit visas for many high-profile artists and dissidents, including famed cellist

(Continued on page 4)

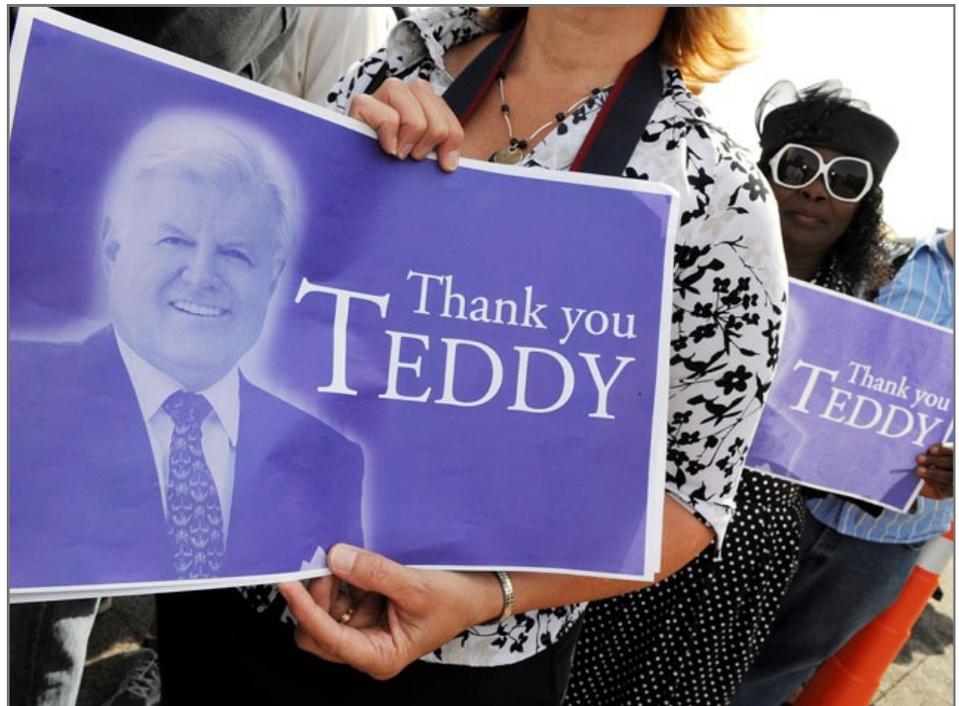
Senator Edward Kennedy Dies at 77 . . .

(Continued from page 3)

Mstislav Rostropovich, and helped secure the 1986 release of Anatoly Sharansky, imprisoned since 1977 for Jewish activism, and that of 25 other so-called “refuseniks.”

In the 1980s, Kennedy worked to end apartheid in South Africa, meeting with Bishop Desmond Tutu, Winnie Mandela (then the wife of the jailed Nelson Mandela) and the South African Cabinet. The senator’s proposed legislation to invoke sanctions against South Africa prompted President Ronald Reagan to impose sanctions by executive order instead. Nonetheless, Kennedy maintained political pressure and ensured continuing awareness of the plight of South Africans through a succession of bills, hearings and debates until apartheid was ended.

In Latin America, Senator Kennedy had been a tireless advocate for democracy and human rights since the early 1970s, when he opposed military dictatorships in Chile and Argentina. Reacting to President Richard Nixon’s isolation of the democratically elected Salvador Allende, Kennedy urged that the 1970 decision of Chileans in electing Allende, a Marxist socialist, be accepted. After the Chilean military overthrew Allende, Kennedy championed the Chilean people, fighting to condition U.S. aid on the restoration of democracy and protection of human rights. When Patricio Aylwin was elected Chile’s president in 1990, Kennedy introduced legislation to authorize \$50 million in assistance to Chile, urged restoration



Mourners hold signs as they wait in line outside the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library to pay their respects to Sen. Edward M. Kennedy, Friday morning, Aug. 28, 2009 in Boston. (AP Photo/Lisa Poole)

of trade and investment benefits and called for technical assistance to help Chile combat its environmental problems.

Kennedy’s engagement in international affairs continued throughout his service in the Senate. In 2007, he held the first congressional hearing on Iraqi refugees and led U.S. efforts to address what he described as a grave humanitarian crisis. He sponsored legislation that increased the number of special immigrant visas for Iraqi and Afghan translators and interpreters and mandated increased efforts to resettle Iraqi refugees.

“Senator Kennedy was a figure who inspired admiration, respect and

devotion, not just in America but around the world,” former British Prime Minister Tony Blair said August 26. “He was a true public servant committed to the values of fairness, justice and opportunity,” Blair said.

For more on Senator Kennedy (<http://blogs.america.gov/obama/2009/08/26/obama-nation-mourn-death-of-ted-kennedy/>), see America.gov’s blog Obama Today.

(This is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://www.america.gov>) ♦

Grants from Millennium Challenge Corporation Spur Development

By Jim Fisher-Thompson
Staff Writer

Washington — When Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton identified lack of good governance as a major obstacle to development during her recent trip to Africa, she also highlighted a global solution in use throughout the continent and South America, Asia and Europe: the compacts of the U.S. Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC).

In Cape Verde, the last stop in her August 4–14, seven-nation trip to sub-Saharan Africa, Clinton pointed to progress the island nation's government was making toward greater accountability and transparency, saying it was "music to my ears."

She said the country's economic progress is due, in part, to "its successful implementation of the Millennium Challenge Corporation compact."

Created by Congress in 2004, the MCC is an independent U.S. development agency that is helping lead the fight against global poverty with innovative infrastructure projects through five-year grants called "compacts." The MCC partners only with countries that can show measurable support for a free and open political system with access to open markets. Only countries with proven track records in anti-corruption, civil liberties and the rule of law may partner with the MCC in crafting a development program unique to their local conditions.

In March 2006, the MCC signed a five-year, \$235 million compact with the government of Armenia to improve its agricultural sector by



Secretary Clinton observes a weaver who is a beneficiary of the \$461 million MCC compact in El Salvador.

repairing and expanding roads and irrigation while providing technical and financial assistance to farmers and agribusinesses.

The agency is also making an impact in Central America, where in 2006 it signed a compact with El Salvador — a model of democracy in the region — worth \$461 million. The program funded construction of the Northern Transnational Highway and provided assistance to 3,000 local farmers, including 430 scholarships to technical and vocational schools.

Work has also begun on construction of 1,500 kilometers of new electric power lines and the installation of 450 solar panels in rural areas of the nation.

Secretary Clinton, who attended

the May 31 signing of the electrification project pact in San Salvador, said the MCC partnership is "a real-world example of what we hope to achieve throughout El Salvador and everywhere that the United States works in partnership, not only with governments, but with businesses."

For countries that do not yet meet the MCC's criteria for open political systems and markets, MCC works through its "threshold" process to partner on good governance programs emphasizing civil society, judicial reform and anti-corruption efforts.

Since 2005, the MCC has signed threshold agreements worth \$117 million to combat corruption and strengthen government institutions

(Continued on page 7)

Meaningful Mideast Peace Talks Needed

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr.
Staff Writer

Washington — Israeli and Palestinian leaders need to resume “meaningful” negotiations to revive stalled peace talks, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and U.S. Special Envoy George Mitchell said after a lengthy meeting in London.

The announcement that a meeting between the leaders may be held in several weeks to help resume the peace talks came after Netanyahu met with Mitchell for four hours August 26. Mitchell sought an agreement from Israel to halt settlement construction in the West Bank territories and east Jerusalem as a confidence-building measure to reassure the Palestinians, who have said they will not resume peace talks until construction in the settlements is ended.

A joint statement released in Washington said, “The Prime Minister and Senator Mitchell had a very productive meeting today where the full range of issues was discussed.”

“They agreed on the importance of restarting meaningful negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians and working toward a comprehensive peace, and that all sides need to take concrete steps toward peace,” the statement said. “The prime minister and the senator made good progress today, and an Israeli delegation will meet Senator Mitchell next week in the United

States to continue the conversation.”

President Obama has made resumption of the Middle East peace talks between the Israelis and Palestini-



Mideast envoy George Mitchell, right, and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu met in London August 26.

ans a major foreign policy priority of his administration. He has been working closely with a number of Middle East leaders, including Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, to get the stalled negotiations restarted.

Obama and Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton have said they are opposed to all construction of settlements in the West Bank territories and east Jerusalem. Approximately 300,000 Israelis live in West Bank settlements and another 180,000 live in neighborhoods in east Jerusalem. The Palestinians have claimed those areas as sections of a future Palestinian state.

“The prime minister and George Mitchell agreed that there is a need to begin meaningful negotiations

between Israel and Palestinians in order to move towards a regional peace agreement,” the Israelis said in a prepared statement.

While Mitchell is expected to meet next week with the Israelis, it has been suggested, but not confirmed, that Obama and Netanyahu may meet with Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas on the sidelines of the opening of the U.N. General Assembly in September in New York.

While in London, Netanyahu also met with British Prime Minister Gordon Brown on August 25, and he is expected to meet August 27 with German Chancellor Angela Merkel in Berlin.

OBAMA AND MUBARAK

Obama said at a recent White House meeting with Egyptian President Mubarak that they are working to jump-start the Palestinian-Israeli peace process. “We obviously have a lot of great challenges that have to be dealt with, and we are continuing to work together to find those areas where we can find common ground and to work in concert to bring peace and security to the region,” Obama said August 18.

“The Arab-Israeli situation is something that has been of ongoing interest, and we had an extensive conversation about how we could help to jump-start an effective process on all sides to move away from a status quo that is not working for the Israeli people, the Palestinian

(Continued on page 7)

Meaningful Mideast Peace Talks Needed . . .

(Continued from page 6)

people or, I think, the region as a whole," Obama said during the August 18 White House meeting.

"We have perhaps focused greatly on the Palestinian issue because it's the pivotal issue, and the Palestinian issue has impact on the world, on the region, whether for the West or also for the United States," Mubarak added.

Asked about reports that the Israeli government has not granted permits for building new settlements in the West Bank territories, Obama said that there has been movement in the right direction.

"I came in [to office] from the start saying that all parties concerned

had to take some concrete steps to restart serious negotiations, to resolve what has been a long-standing conflict that is not good for the Israeli people and is not good for its neighbors," Obama said. "And I think that the Israeli government has taken discussions with us very seriously."

Obama said he is encouraged by reports that some checkpoints in the West Bank area have been removed, that Palestinian Authority security forces have improved and have been able to deal with security concerns in the West Bank, and that there has been increased economic activity in the West Bank.

"This is creating a climate in which it's possible for us to see some positive steps and hopefully negoti-

ate toward a final resolution of these long-standing issues," Obama said.

"Everybody's going to have to take steps. Everybody's going to have to take some risks," he added.

What foreign affairs decisions should President Obama consider? Comment on America.gov's blog Obama Today (<http://blogs.america.gov/obama/2009/01/21/day-2-what-should-obama%e2%80%99s-top-priorities-be/>).

(This is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://www.america.gov>) ♦

Grants from Millennium Challenge Corporation Spur Development . . .

(Continued from page 5)

in Albania, Malawi, Moldova, Paraguay and the Philippines.

The development agency has a threshold agreement with Kyrgyzstan designed to help its government fight corruption and improve the rule of law through judicial, criminal justice and law enforcement reforms.

The \$16 million program focuses on the important role civil society plays in government's reform efforts and includes funding for a civilian oversight board of the police and a public education program on corruption.

Indonesia has a similar threshold

partnership with the MCC and is the recipient of a two-year, \$55 million grant aimed at reducing public corruption through education programs for judges and court officers. Money laundering is also targeted through funding to improve the functioning of the nation's Financial Transaction Reports and Analysis Center.

Recovering from years of civil war, Liberia is also not in a position to be a full MCC compact partner, but it has become eligible for threshold assistance aimed at improving its civil and governing institutions.

Some critics claim that the MCC's good-governance requirements are too stringent, slowing down the

grant process. Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf disagrees.

Africa's first woman head of state recently said, "MCC has had a transformative effect across the developing world. Responsible, reform-minded governments have set their sights on the MCC benchmarks, and this has accelerated the pace of reform while empowering governments to make decisions on their own path of development and the direction of their future."

(This is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://www.america.gov>) ♦

Obama Reappoints Bernanke as Federal Reserve Chairman

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr.
Staff Writer

Washington — Amid the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression of the 1930s, President Obama has reappointed economist Ben Bernanke to a second term as chairman of the U.S. Federal Reserve, the nation's central bank.

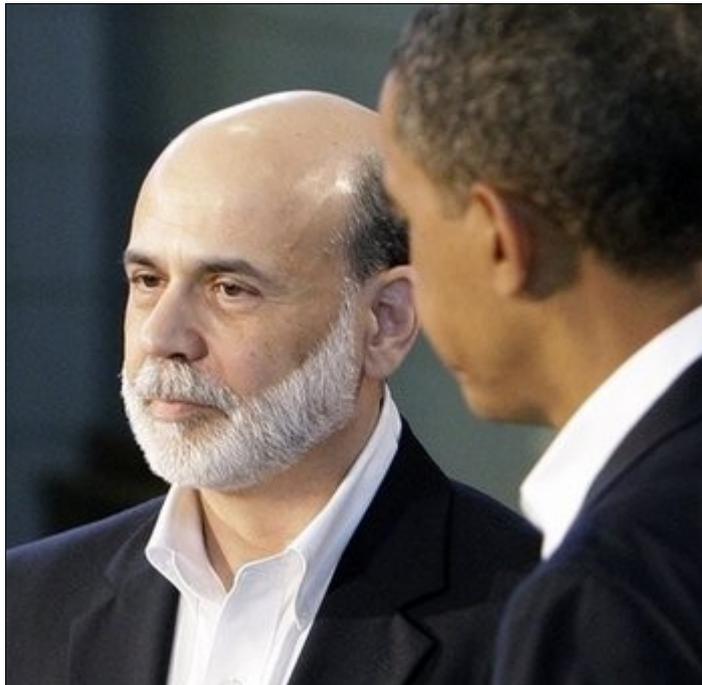
At a press conference August 25, Obama said, "Ben approached a financial system on the verge of collapse with calm and wisdom, with bold action and out-of-the-box thinking that has helped put the brakes on our economic freefall." Bernanke's reappointment will have to be approved by the U.S. Senate.

"The actions we've taken to stabilize our financial system, to repair our credit markets, restructure our auto industry, and pass a recovery package have all been steps of necessity, not choice," the president added.

Obama, appearing with Bernanke on the island of Martha's Vineyard off the Massachusetts coast where the president is vacationing, acknowledged to reporters that the U.S. economy is a long way from being completely healthy or having a full recovery under way. But he pledged to keep working within government to reduce unemployment and help businesses obtain the capital they need to expand as the recovery begins.

Bernanke's reappointment reassured

financial markets and foreign central banks that the United States will continue on the course first charted by Obama and the Federal Reserve to bolster a collapsing financial sector and provide monetary policies to halt a rapidly declining economy. Bernanke led recovery efforts by stabilizing the nation's



Federal Reserve Board Chairman Ben Bernanke, left, takes the podium as President Barack Obama steps aside during a news conference in Oak Bluffs, Mass., Tuesday, Aug. 25, 2009. (AP Photo/Alex Brandon)

largest banks, often with unconventional methods, restoring credit lending, which is central to business growth, and spearheading efforts to alleviate bad debts and loans held by banks that all but halted lending across the United States.

Bernanke expressed his gratitude to Obama for having enough confidence in his decisionmaking to reappoint him to a second term at the Fed, and for his support for a strong and independent Federal Reserve.

"The Federal Reserve, like other economic policymakers, has been challenged by the unprecedented events of the past few years," he said. "We have been bold or deliberate as circumstances demanded, but our objective remains constant: to restore a more stable financial and economic environment in which opportunity can again flourish and in which Americans' hard work and creativity can receive their proper rewards."

He pledged that if reconfirmed by the Senate he would work with the president and Congress to restore the American economy and "provide a solid foundation for growth and prosperity in an environment of price stability."

Bernanke was appointed as Fed chairman by President George W. Bush and sworn in on February 1, 2006, following Alan Greenspan's 18-year chairmanship.

Speaking before bankers and economists at the Federal Reserve Bank of Kan-

sas City's annual economic symposium earlier, Bernanke said that "one very clear lesson of the past year — no surprise, of course, to any student of economic history, but worth noting nonetheless — is that a full-blown financial crisis can exact an enormous toll in both human and economic terms. A second lesson — once again, familiar to economic historians — is that financial disruptions do not respect borders. The crisis has been global, with no major country having been

(Continued on page 11)

Can Infrastructure Spending Lead the Way to Recovery?

By Katherine Lewis
Special Correspondent

Washington — U.S. government officials believe that modernizing the country's transportation infrastructure not only will make travel and shipping goods easier and safer, but also will stimulate the economy.

Many analysts agree. "Infrastructure spending has very high returns and it's very worthwhile for governments to invest in," said Mark Zandi, chief economist at Moody's Economy.com. "Because we've underinvested, a lot of our infrastructure is old and [constitutes] a threat; some of it is crumbling."

Economic stimulus legislation implemented in 2009 provides \$135 billion in government funds for infrastructure projects. Every dollar of infrastructure spending adds between \$1.50 and \$1.75 to the gross domestic product a year later, according to Zandi. Construction projects create jobs, and construction workers funnel their earnings into the broader economy. Money also flows to material and equipment suppliers, who in turn create more jobs.

Every \$1 billion in nonresidential construction creates 28,500 jobs, of which one-third are direct construction positions, one-sixth are supplier positions and the rest are positions created through spending by business owners and workers filling those positions, according to a study by George Mason University professor Stephen Fuller.

The largest chunk of the 2009 stimulus funds dedicated to infrastructure goes to transportation

projects. The rest goes in descending amounts to buildings, energy and technology, water and other environmental projects, according to Ken Simonson, chief economist for the Associated General Contractors of America, the trade group that commissioned Fuller's study.

"This is a great time to do construction because materials costs are substantially lower than they were a year ago" and contractors are more available, Simonson said. "The biggest reason to be putting stimulus money into infrastructure instead of other uses is the long-term benefit it provides to the economy." He cited other long-term benefits, including pollution reduction and improvements in productivity, quality of life and safety. Better roads, for instance, mean fewer traffic bottlenecks, which are costly to shippers.

Tony Dorsey, of the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials, said that a Washington-area project to widen a bridge from six to 12 lanes has made it dramatically easier to travel up and down the Eastern Seaboard. Furthermore, Dorsey said, safety will improve when future roadways communicate information about driving conditions to vehicles and when vehicles communicate with each other to avoid collisions.

Some economists caution that massive infrastructure spending failed to pull Japan out of recession in the 1980s. But Zandi counters that the Japanese had already invested heavily in their infrastructure, so they experienced diminished returns. In the United States, he said, there is a clear need for more investment.

The United States has woefully underfunded its national infrastructure, according to a bipartisan congressional commission, the National Surface Transportation Infrastructure Financing Commission. "Our surface transportation system has deteriorated to such a degree that our safety, economic competitiveness and quality of life are at risk," a commission report says.

Between 1980 and 2006, traffic roughly doubled, while the number of highway miles grew by less than 5 percent, the report says. Real highway spending per mile traveled has fallen by nearly 50 percent since the late 1950s.

The needs are so great that the stimulus spending can be seen only as a down payment, according to the commission. The gap between available and needed infrastructure funding will total nearly \$400 billion from 2010 to 2015 and will grow to \$2.3 trillion through 2035, according to the commission. Mobilizing funds of this magnitude will be a challenge at a time when the government is running deep budget deficits and the cost of guaranteed social benefits looms larger and larger.

In the long run, the U.S. needs a more efficient and better coordinated process for infrastructure financing and development, the report says.

Traditionally, the country has relied on a gas tax to pay for highway repairs, but the tax has not been increased since 1993. Options on the table include a national infrastructure bank, greater use of bonds, public-private partnerships and increased use of toll roads. ♦

Artists Use Images of the Veil to Explore Identity, Culture

By Carolee Walker
Staff Writer

New York — The veil is the most visible icon of contemporary Islam, says the producer of an exhibition featuring works by artists from North America, the Middle East and Europe. “If you see a veil, you automatically think about Islam,” said Andreas Stadler, director of the Austrian Cultural Forum, which hosted *The Seen and the Hidden: [Dis]covering the Veil*. The exhibition was part of *Muslim Voices: Arts and Ideas*, a 10-day festival in New York City celebrating Islamic culture.

For some artists, including Adriana Czernin, who was born in Bulgaria but lives and works in Vienna, Austria, depicting images of the veil comes easily because she believes that the veil connects women with each other and unites them. In Czernin’s self-portraits, the artist conceals part of her face with shapes resembling flower petals or leaves, recalling the lattice-work of the traditional Arabic *mashrabiya*, a common type of covered window used throughout the Muslim world to hide from public view the domestic lives of women.

Yet the topic of the veil is complex, according to Stadler. This is so even in the United States and in Austria, where veiled women do not provoke much controversy. In Austria, Islam has been an officially recognized religion since 1912, said Stadler, and “in the United States, the biggest nation of immigrants in the world, there are so many different ethnicities, languages and cloth-

ing styles that we could hardly seriously discuss a rejection of this piece of clothing.”

In Turkey, the followers of the secularist ideology of the country’s first president, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, are opposed to the headscarf, according to Stadler, but in recent years the Muslim democratic movement has gained ground by



By showing a veiled figure with a kitchen glove substituting for a face, Shadi Ghadirian explores the idea of “woman as object.”

advocating wearing the scarf. A growing number of young women in Turkey and around the world are consciously and actively in favor of covering their necks, heads and faces.

Artist Asma Ahmed Shikoh, who is of Pakistani heritage and lives and works in New York, collected hijabs, or headscarves, from 100 Muslim women across the United States to create *Beehive* in 2007. As “honeybees bear special men-

tion in the Quran for their healing powers,” writes the artist, each opening is meant to represent one of the participating women by holding her scarf and therefore part of her identity. Unlike her mother and aunt who gave up wearing the veil 30 years ago in Pakistan, Shikoh, who lives in New York, wears a headscarf. “I wear the veil as an act of faith,” she said.

Some artists, including Ayad Alkadhi, who was born in Iraq and spent his childhood in England, the United Arab Emirates and Baghdad, use the veil as a tool to explore tensions between what can be seen and what is hidden by the scarf. In *Structure*, Alkadhi “veils” himself with texts only to reveal parts of his body with an X-ray. Typically, the artist mixes layers of Arabic and American newspapers with traditional calligraphic techniques and painting to create cloaked figures, using the veil as an integral part of what he calls the “skeletal elements assembled to create a whole being.”

In other works, artists use images of the veil to explore identity, women’s role in society and cultural heritage. In *Endless*

Tether, a three-channel video, by Canadian artist Farheen HaQ, of South Asian–Muslim descent, two arms hold a long piece of red cloth and help to wrap it around a woman and then unwrap it. HaQ said that the “tension in the fabric oscillates between being a protective veil and a restrictive rope.”

In her series of collages, *Unknown Sports*, Vienna, Austria–based artist Nilbar Güres depicts women enclosed by curtains, but behind the

(Continued on page 11)

Artists Use Images of the Veil to Explore Identity, Culture . . .

(Continued from page 10)

curtains are private spaces transformed into sporting arenas: "high jumpers instead of window cleaners," the artist writes. While in public or in the presence of males, female athletes in some Muslim countries cover their heads with scarves. During practice and competition, when only females are present in the arena, female athletes wear their team uniforms without covering their heads.

Male stereotypes of women as objects are explored in the witty works of Iranian photographer Shadi Ghadirian, whose series Like

Everyday (Domestic Life) presents veiled women with kitchen utensils substituted for the faces. Juxtaposing traditionally patterned fabrics for a veil and a rubber kitchen glove as a face, for example, is meant to depict conflicts between tradition and modernity, said Stadler.

The Seen and the Hidden was organized by curators Mark Harper and Martha Kirszenbaum in New York and Karin Meisel in Vienna, who selected contemporary works from young artists, or emerging artists. "It's not just an issue in Europe and America," Harper said at a panel discussion in New York. The issue of the veil, he said, is a global

issue.

See also the photo gallery Images of the Veil in Muslim Life (<http://photos.america.gov/galleries/amgov/4110/veil/>).

Additional information on the exhibition can be found on the Muslim Voices Festival (<http://muslimvoicesfestival.org>) Web site.

(This is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://www.america.gov>) ♦

Obama Reappoints Bernanke as Federal Reserve Chairman . . .

(Continued from page 8)

immune."

One of the Federal Reserve responses was to provide special facilities for lending with the goal of restoring basic functioning in critical financial markets, he said. To take pressure off the U.S. dollar and to keep credit lending from stalling, the Federal Reserve and 12 major foreign central banks created lines of credit, called temporary swap lines, to make funds available to commercial banks, he said.

These measures and efforts by the Group of Seven (G7) finance ministers and central bank governors late last year stabilized the global financial system by preventing the systematic failure of major banking institutions, by making funding and

capital available, and by providing necessary deposit insurance and other guarantees to restore the confidence of depositors, Bernanke said.

"This strong and unprecedented international policy response proved broadly effective. Critically, it averted the imminent collapse of the global financial system, an outcome that seemed all too possible to the finance ministers and central bankers that gathered in Washington," he said.

"The world has been through the most severe financial crisis since the Great Depression. The crisis in turn sparked a deep global recession, from which we are only now beginning to emerge," Bernanke added.

A transcript of Obama's and Bernanke's remarks (<http://www.america.gov/st/texttrans-english/2009/August/20090825121621xjsnommis05658533.html>) is available on America.gov.

What foreign affairs decisions should President Obama consider? Comment on America.gov's blog Obama Today (<http://blogs.america.gov/obama/2009/01/21/day-2-what-should-obama%e2%80%99s-top-priorities-be/>).

(This is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://www.america.gov>) ♦

Michigan Hosts Large Muslim-American Sports Event

By Ahmed Mohamed
Staff Writer

Washington — The first Islamic Games Midwest, held in Ypsilanti, Michigan, July 25–26, were part of the largest Muslim-American sports and athletic event in the United States — the Islamic Games.

The American Midwest is home to more than 2 million Muslims, many involved in sports and other facets of the community in which they live. The games, however, are open to all athletes from the region, whether Muslim or not, because “it is critically important that Muslims see themselves as Americans ... and that other Americans see Muslims as Americans too, and to promote sports and athletics to the Muslim communities and to highlight athletes, [both] Muslims and non-Muslims,” said Salaudeen Nausrudeen, national chairman of the overall Islamic Games.

The games hosted both male and female athletes as well as spectators. They were treated to more than 200 sports and athletic events, which included basketball, volleyball, soccer, cricket, softball, flag football, track and field, swimming, archery, a marathon, martial arts, arm wrestling, tennis and table tennis. Each event was held for multiple age categories, from children under 12 years to adults older than 30.

Elaborating on the unique Muslim-American identity, Nasrudeen told America.gov that one of the goals of the Islamic Games is to make Muslims more receptive to the con-

cept of their identity as Muslim Americans, and not Muslims in America.

“We are constantly being asked to take it across the country, and this is because it offers a lot to American Muslims. Not only is it offering a professional atmosphere for



Fatima Kobeissi, left, and teammate Hyatt Bakri (32) of Fordson High School get ready for the opening tip-off in their game against Willow Run in Dearborn, Michigan. More and more covered Muslim girls are taking up competitive sports.

sports competition, but an unprecedented opportunity for unity among various Muslim cultures and types of Muslims.”

When the third Islamic Games Northeast were held May 22–24 in New Jersey, more than 1,900 athletes on 176 teams and about 5,000 spectators attended. They came from schools, organizations, youth groups and communities; from New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, Delaware, Pennsylvania and as far as Canada to compete. Another distinct feature of the

games is diversity. The games have attracted sports celebrities such as former National Basketball Association player Zaid Abdul Aziz; Marcio Barboza, the world’s Number One arm wrestler; Kevin Young, the current world record holder in the 400-meter hurdles; and Rami Ibrahim, a world-ranked kickboxer. An online Islamic Games poll of participants in the 2009 Northeast Games indicated that unity and diversity are the most liked features of the games.

Another focus of the games is health. “The Islamic Games’ mission is to create a society that is strong in the inside and strong on the outside and [promotes] the development of the mind, body and soul through sports and healthy lifestyles,” Nausrudeen said.

He also described how the Islamic Games will expand: “There will be Islamic Games Southeast, which will be held in Orlando, Florida, on November 29, 2009. ... The near-term plan is to host the games in many major cities across the USA while building its infrastructure to host the World Islamic Games.”

The 2009 Islamic Games Midwest Committee included organizations such as Seven Shades, the Muslim American Society Youth-Detroit and the Muslim Interscholastic Tournament and was supported by the Ypsilanti Convention and Visitors Bureau and the Chicago 2016 Olympic Bid Committee.

(This is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://www.america.gov>) ♦

Muslim Community Center Offers Spiritual Solace

By Steve Holgate
Special Correspondent

Portland, Oregon — Most religious communities judge themselves not on whether the wealthy and powerful wish to join, but on whether they themselves have reached out to the poor and unwanted. By this measure, the Muslim Community Center of Portland, Oregon, like other faiths, is honoring an important tenet.

As imam of the center and its associated mosque, Shaheed Hamid has committed himself to one of the most important aspects of his community's efforts. In fact, he has taken his commitment to the gates of prison, and then entered through them, establishing prison outreach to serve the small population of Muslims in the county jail.

A stocky man of 60-odd years with a warm, gravelly voice, Hamid points to the hadith (written traditions of the Prophet Muhammad) as encouraging this type of prison outreach. "Allah orders us to be just and to work toward bettering humanity," he said, adding he believes his prison work does exactly that.

According to Hamid, the center and its mosque have a long history of offering spiritual solace to those in prison, going back to its days as part of the Nation of Islam, whose most famous preacher, Malcolm X, converted to Islam while in prison.

Hamid adds that his own experience intensified his willingness to undertake his outreach efforts. While a young man living in New York during the 1960s, Hamid had a minor brush with the law that landed him in the country jail for a few days. Those few days, he says

now, made a great difference in his life. "Looking around the prison," Hamid says, "I saw all these people in really bad shape in their lives. It woke me up." Though he had already converted to Islam, he says, those few days in jail led him to take up his faith in a more active way.

A few years later he moved to Portland, where he became active at the Muslim Community Center and in its mosque. At that time, the mosque no longer was associated with the Nation of Islam, and had also let its prison outreach lapse. Eventually, the mosque took on new leadership, and Hamid expressed his interest in resurrecting its outreach program. He applied to jail authorities and was accepted by them as one of their authorized ministers. Since that time, four years ago, he has been volunteering his time ministering to the jail's Muslim population.

Kyle Lewis, who works with the county jail's Chaplain's Unit, says that his office is committed to meeting the spiritual needs of all its inmates. In a nation as religiously diverse as the United States, this results in a highly heterogeneous program. In addition to offering the services of various Christian denominations, the Chaplain's Unit has ministers for the jail's Buddhists



Imam Shaheed Hamid in front of the Muslim Community Center in Portland, Oregon

and Hindus, rabbis for its Jewish prisoners, and Hamid's Muslim outreach.

At any given moment, the jail's Muslim population is small, Hamid says, ranging from about 15 to as few as half a dozen. Hamid talks to inmates individually as well as offering monthly Islamic study services at one of the county's jails and Friday prayers at another. He also advises the jails on how to prepare halal meals for Muslim inmates.

Though he feels that he helps many of the inmates, Hamid says that the work can be discouraging at times. Many prisoners gain their freedom only to return to crime and jail. A majority of them, Hamid says, including some Muslims, have drug problems. A drug counselor by profession, Hamid tries to help.

"There's an ocean of troubles," he says, "an ocean of problems. Sometimes it feels like my contribution is just a drop in that ocean." Whatever the challenges he faces, though, Hamid says, "It makes me feel good to contribute."

"Getting out of prison is more than being free out here," Hamid often says to the inmates, while making a gesture to the world outside the prison walls, "The important thing is being free in your thinking." He sums up by saying, "My hope is that they will start to see Islam as a complement to what's good in humanity. If that can be accomplished, well, 'Al Hamdu Lil-lah.' [Thanks be to God.]" ♦

Adaptation to Climate Change Focus of Meeting in Geneva

By Cheryl Pellerin
Science Writer

Washington — For the first time since scientists determined unequivocally that the planet is warming, experts who collect and analyze climate data and those who manage the world's land and water resources will meet to decide how to help each other adapt to a changing climate.

At the third World Climate Conference (WCC-3) in Geneva, August 31-September 4, some 1,500 policymakers and resource managers — the end users of climate forecasts — from more than 150 countries will join with scientific experts to begin the hard work of translating science into practical steps that people can use to adapt to a changing climate.

"Part of what we're doing at the meeting is thinking about what end users need," Jane Lubchenco, administrator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and head of the U.S. delegation to WCC-3, told America.gov. "Is it data, is it technical assistance, is it analysis and prediction, is it better communication of what's known, is it decision-support tools? It's probably all of that ... but what are the priorities, what are the most urgent needs?"

The problem is that climate data is often highly technical. Data that come in from satellites, ocean buoys and other devices are not routinely processed into an understandable format that resource managers or city planners can use to decide how high to build bridges or where to place a water treatment plant. The WCC-3 is addressing the need to help data collectors and



Woolly Hollow State Park — Faulkner County, Arkansas, USA

information users talk to each other about climate services.

The World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and its international partners organized the conference to define climate services. The focus will be on climate predictions on a time scale of days to 50 years in the future? seasonal to multidecadal? for adapting to climate variability and change.

"It's not enough for scientists to say, 'What do we think the users need?'" Lubchenco said. "It's critically important for the users to help define what they need and how they need it."

BUILDING CONSENSUS

The first World Climate Conference, sponsored by WMO, was held in Geneva in 1979. Three international climate organizations arose from this scientific meeting. One of

these, formed in 1988 by WMO and the United Nations Environment Programme, was the Nobel-Prize-winning Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, which convenes scientists from around the world every five years or six years to assess the state of the climate.

The Second Climate Conference was held in Geneva in 1990. Meeting participants issued a strong statement highlighting the risk from climate change. Developments here also led to the creation of the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change, an international environmental treaty created in 1992, and the Global Climate Observing System, a network of climate and related observations.

Now, from the third meeting in Geneva, expected outcomes include a better understanding of the scientific and practical issues involved in developing climate services and

(Continued on page 16)

Green Transport Means Fuel-Efficient Vehicles, Low-Carbon Fuels

By Megan Neff
Staff Writer

Washington — Improvements to conventional cars and advanced vehicle technologies are bringing the prospects of greener transportation closer to the streets, according to a U.S. scientist.

Steve Plotkin, a staff scientist with the Argonne National Laboratory's Center for Transportation Research, said fuel-efficient cars and other vehicles as well as low-carbon and renewable fuels are crucial components in any strategy to slow greenhouse gas and other emissions from the transport sector.

"Because vehicles are responsible for 20 [percent] to 30 percent of greenhouse emissions, and transport emissions are growing fast, it is vitally important to find ways to slow down this growth, or we will never fully address climate change," he said. Plotkin participated in an August 19 America.gov Webchat on advanced vehicles.

There is no clear definition for what constitutes a fuel-efficient vehicle, Plotkin said, but advanced fuel-efficient technologies are generally understood as allowing at least a 10 percent reduction in fuel use compared to conventional technologies.

"That's only for one technology. ... A truly efficient car would use several technologies simultaneously," he said. Additional technologies that improve fuel efficiency include better tires, improved aerodynamics and lightweight materials. Hybrid gasoline-electric cars have been promoted as fuel efficient.

Alternative fuels such as ethanol and biodiesel have been gaining ground in recent years. Although almost all ethanol is sold as blends, with 10 percent or less ethanol blended with gasoline, automakers are producing many new vehicles that can run on blends that have higher ethanol content.

some developed and developing countries, alternative-fuel and fuel-efficient cars are increasing their market presence at even faster rates.

The more technologically advanced options are hydrogen-based and fully electric vehicles. Both offer an



Fritz Henderson, the head of General Motors, announces that the Chevy Volt is expected to reach 230 miles per gallon of fuel.

The general public's interest in alternative-fuel technologies and fuel-efficient vehicles has grown in recent years due to concerns about global warming and continued U.S. dependence on petroleum imports. The number of hybrids sold in the United States rose 37 times to 352,274 cars in 2007 and that of flexible-fuel vehicles by more than 50 percent to 974,095 vehicles in the same period. When U.S. petrol prices hit record levels in 2008, sales of hybrid autos spiked up. In

alternative that is almost entirely emission-free, but they are still in development and as such are costly.

"Many technologies and fuels are expensive, especially at first," Plotkin said. "Research must be greatly expanded to find costs savings. Otherwise, not much will happen."

But the research and development process is fraught with unexpected difficulties and surprises, he cau-

(Continued on page 16)

**PUBLIC AFFAIRS
SECTION
AMERICAN EMBASSY**

P.O.Box 1014
Addis Ababa
Ethiopia

Phone: 251-11-5174007
251-11-5174000
Fax: 251-11-1242454
Email: pasaddis@state.gov



See also

<http://www.america.gov/>

Telling America's story

Green Transport Means Fuel-Efficient Vehicles, . . .

(Continued from page 15)

tioned, so some technologies may not pan out as policymakers and researchers hope they do.

"Remember that lots of promising technologies have disappeared along the path of development," Plotkin said. "Not from conspiracy, but just lack of successes."

Electric vehicles, for example, offer a very promising alternative to conventional autos. However, they will become a viable option only if researchers meet the challenge of developing smaller, lighter, longer-lasting and more powerful batteries. Those currently available cost at least \$10,000 and must be replaced every three to five years, according to Plotkin.

In the near future, much can be done to improve the fuel efficiency, safety and performance of conventional vehicles.

"The best solution for the next 10 to 20 years will be greatly improved conventional cars," Plotkin said.

"Downsized engines, better transmissions, lighter-weight bodies, better aerodynamics, better tires."

The transcript of the webchat (<http://www.america.gov/st/webchat-english/2009/August/20090826170548xjsnommis0.0661236.html>) is available on America.gov.

(This is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://www.america.gov>) ♦

Adaptation to Climate Change Focus of Meeting in Geneva . . .

(Continued from page 14)

agreement on a way to create a new global framework for climate services.

Such a framework would include a renewed commitment to maintaining and improving networks of satellites, buoys and other Earth-observation devices that monitor conditions in the oceans and atmosphere. It would also promote the open availability of climate data to anyone who wants it.

"We've been fortunate in the weather world that the [international] exchange of vital weather information, which is coordinated by the WMO, has worked pretty well," Richard Rosin, senior adviser for climate research at NOAA's Climate Program Office, told America.gov.

"We need to make sure that's also the case with climate data," he added. "The United States has always urged the full and open exchange of weather data, and we'll be making a strong case in Geneva for the free and open exchange of climate data."

GLOBAL FRAMEWORK

Through these and other components, the framework will seek to build capacity in developing countries that will be hardest hit by climate change, helping them apply climate data to the sectors that climate change most seriously affects – water, agriculture, health, transportation, tourism and energy. WMO, NOAA and similar agencies already offer training to scientists who staff international meteorological services. At the NOAA National Weather Service

Hydrometeorological Prediction Center in Maryland, for example, several "international desks" train visiting scientists on a range of computer models, weather products and analysis and forecasting techniques. The center has trained 90 meteorologists from more than 33 African nations, Rosin said.

WMO regional climate outlook forums are active in several parts of the world and routinely provide real-time regional climate forecasts and training to help reduce climate risks.

"The United States will be an active partner in this," Lubchenco said. "We have a lot to share but we also have a lot to learn. We're viewing this very much as a partnership with the international community." ♦