

# 10,000 Scientists To Attend AAAS Meeting

WASHINGTON, Feb. 13--Climate change, renewable energy and space exploration will be high on the agenda when scientists from around the world gather for the annual meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science this week, AFP said.

Some 10,000 scientists from 60 countries are expected at the five-day forum opening Thursday that aims to raise awareness among researchers, politicians and the public at large about crucial scientific and social issues, and showcase the latest scientific advances.

Global warming, its consequences and possible remedies will take center stage at the top US scientific gathering of its type, which this year revolves around the theme, "Science and Technology for Sustainable Well-Being."

AAAS President John Holdren, environmental science professor at Harvard University, Massachusetts, will deliver the opening speech Thursday.

The conference will comprise almost 200 scientific sessions on

diverse scientific papers, several focusing on the gradual melting of mountain glaciers around the world.

Research on alternative energy sources such as bio-fuels and solar energy, and on water conservation and irrigation technology to reverse desertification will also be presented.

In the medical field, there will be symposiums on the environment's role in obesity, the effect of drugs on the brain and new approaches in understanding how cancer develops.

Research on intelligent prosthetics that interact with the nervous system to restore eyesight or the movement of a limb will likely spark great interest, especially for the US military after thousands of soldiers lost limbs in the Iraq war.

In space science, the conference will delve into the possibility of life on Mars, exploring and mining for resources on the moon and the danger of an asteroid colliding with the Earth and how it can be deflected.

# Russia, Qatar Discuss Gas OPEC

DOHA, Qatar, Feb. 13--Leaders of natural gas-rich Russia and Qatar announced Monday they would explore the creation of a natural gas organization to represent the interests of producer countries in controlling the global market.

Russian President Vladimir Putin and Qatari Emir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani told reporters here that they wanted more cooperation among competing gas producers as a way to coordinate relations with countries that import gas, AP said.

"We do not reject the idea of creating a gas organization," Putin said. "But this initiative requires more study." European Union leaders have said they would stand against any effort by

Russia to create such an organization, fearing gas prices--and Russia's political clout--could rise dramatically as a result. Europe gets 44 percent of its natural gas imports from Russia.

Putin said he would send a team of experts to a natural gas conference being held in Doha in April, where they would discuss details of building a cartel resembling the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries. Qatar is an OPEC member but Russia is not.

"Some say Qatar and Russia are competitors but we're not, we have separate markets," Putin said just hours after arriving in the tiny Persian Gulf state after a two-day visit to neighboring Saudi Arabia. Sheikh Hamad said he

supported the discussions but was unsure whether a gas organization would be able to command the same market control as OPEC. Compared with spot oil sales, gas is sold on contracts arranged on much longer terms, as long as 25 years, and an organization would have little influence on such arrangements, Sheikh Hamad said in a press conference in his opulent residential palace.

Russia and Qatar are two of the world's largest producers of natural gas, and tiny Qatar sits atop the world's single largest gas field.

Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei proposed Iran and Russia create a gas organization in talks with the head of Russia's Security Council, Igor Ivanov.

## Malaysia Denies FTA Talks With US Stalled

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia, Feb. 13--Malaysia on Tuesday denied foreign investment inflows would be adversely affected if it failed to sign a free trade agreement with the United States after formal talks ground to a halt.

According to AFP, trade Minister Rafidah Aziz also insisted negotiations for the FTA were not deadlocked, although negotiators were mired in nearly 60 unresolved issues.

"The Americans have long been here before the FTA... To them the FTA is just another bonus, if it does happen," Rafidah told reporters, when asked about the impact of stalled talks on investment.

"It will not have any impact, negative or positive... The trend has been good even without an FTA," she said.

Washington has been racing to conclude the free trade agreement (FTA) by the end of March to give the US Congress the requisite time of three months to consider the deal.

Negotiations between the US and Malaysia faltered during a crucial fifth round of talks on Friday after US negotiators revealed that "difficult issues" had arisen.

Rafidah brushed off suggestions that talks were stalled, despite there being no formally-scheduled sixth round of negotiations.

"There is no deadlock... It's a very comprehensive negotiation ranging from goods to services and even economic collaboration," she said.

"At the moment, the talks are still on. Informal negotiations are still going on all the time."

However, the minister said there were 58 issues still unresolved and that both sides would not make the March deadline.

"It's difficult to achieve a conclusion. Of course, we would like to meet the deadline but we can't. What can we do?" Rafidah said.

## China Suffers From Worst Brain Drain

BEIJING, Feb. 13--China suffers the most severe brain drain of any country, raising fears there may not be enough talent and skill around to manage the world's fourth largest economy, state media said Tuesday.

Out of about one million Chinese that have studied abroad since the 1980s, two thirds have chosen to stay overseas after graduation, the highest ratio in the world, the China Daily said, citing official data, AFP said.

"It has been a great loss for China," said Li Xiaoli, a researcher at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences and the co-author of a new report on the problem.

"(China) is now in dire need of people of expertise; (it has seen) well-educated professionals leave after the country has invested a lot in them."

Since 2002, more than 100,000 students have gone abroad to study each year, but in the same period, the number of returnees has hovered between 20,000 and 30,000 a year, the newspaper said, citing Ministry of Education figures.

To a certain degree, the trend is unavoidable as it reflects China's growing integration with the outside world, it noted.

But some experts have called on the government to at least stem the tide by making the domestic job market more attractive to professionals overseas and set up incentives to facilitate their return.

## Eurozone Growth Projected at 2.3%

BRUSSELS, Belgium, Feb. 13--The 13 nations sharing the euro will achieve growth this year of 2.0-2.3 percent, slowing from 2.6 percent in 2006, the head of the informal Eurogroup of eurozone finance ministers said in an interview, AFP said.

"We had eurozone growth of 2.6 percent in 2006. For this year we are expecting 2.0-2.3 percent," said Luxembourg Prime and Finance Minister Jean-Claude Juncker in an interview with Luxembourg newspaper d'Wort.

The European Commission has forecast growth this year of 2.1 percent, although EU Economic and Monetary Affairs Commissioner Joaquin Almunia has said that the estimate needed to be updated.

Almunia is to publish new estimates on

Friday. Recapitulating on a meeting of G7 finance ministers last week, Juncker said that the "biggest danger" facing the international financial system was a possible collapse of the so-called carry trade.

The carry trade consists of investors borrowing funds in low-interest rate currencies like the yen and the Swiss franc and buying securities in higher yielding currencies.

"If this bubble blows up one day, then we will have a catastrophe in the international currency system as we already did in 1998. That worries us," said Juncker.

Some economists worry that as interest rates rise from historic lows in Japan that some investors could be get caught short, destabilising the global financial system.

You, blossoms of benevolence and beneficence, shall be our constant companion in the 21st draw of Bank Refah's non-profit accounts

Prizes include



**500** Peugeot Pars cars

110,000,000,000 rials

In deposit-free housing loans for 1,100 people

And tens of billions of rials in other prizes



www.bankrefah.ir

### Venezuela Will Continue Oil Export to America

CARACAS, Venezuela, Feb. 13--The Venezuelan government insisted Monday it did not intend to halt oil sales to the United States, despite Washington's stated goal to cut its dependence on fuel from the South American country, AFP reported.

"We will continue selling oil to the United States because we are a serious country," Foreign Minister Nicolas Maduro told journalists.

But he added that "if they say they don't need it, then they shouldn't buy it any more."

Maduro spoke in response to comments by Nicholas Burns, the US under secretary of state for political affairs, who said last week that biofuels would eventually lessen US dependence on "countries that have a distorted impact in the world, like Iran and Venezuela."

The United States is the main importer of Venezuelan oil and buys 1.5 million barrels a day, while several US companies have major investments in Venezuela's oil and gas sector. Maduro also ridiculed US President George W. Bush's upcoming trip to Latin America, which a number of analysts view as an attempt to counter the regional influence of Venezuela's firebrand President Hugo Chavez, a staunch US foe.

Americans, Maduro said, "are trying to position themselves in South America, Bush is going there. For what? To try to divide. They will not achieve this, he is going to waste his time," the minister said.

Bush is scheduled to travel to Brazil, Uruguay, Colombia, Guatemala and Mexico from March 8 to 14.

**Eurozone Entry** NICOSIA--Cyprus said Monday it would formerly apply for eurozone entry within the next couple of days so it can meet its targeted euro adoption date of January 1, 2008.

**Tariff Removal** BRUSSELS--The European Union's member states have adopted an international deal to remove customs duties on new pharmaceuticals, the European Commission said on Monday.

In the Name of God

Ports and Shipping Organization Of I.R. of Iran

Announcement No.1

Subject: Wreckage Removal in Kour-e Musa (north of the Persian Gulf)

Attention of the owner(s) of sunken vessel in Kour-e Musa (mentioned below) is drawn to the issue that appropriate action should be taken for removing the vessel within one month from the date of publishing the third announcement, otherwise Ports and Shipping Organization will remove the wreckage itself and relevant expenses will be collected either from the owner(s) or from the proceeds of the sale of the wreckage.

No.	Name of ship	Type	Year built	GT	L(m)	B	Position
1	Unknown	Tugboat	-----	-----	30	-----	29 56/25 N 049 03/87 E

Bandar Imam Khomeini Port Complex