



DO'STLIK



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Ambassador Norland Visits Muslim Board Library and Hazrati Imom Complex

On January 9, the U.S. Ambassador Richard Norland visited the Uzbekistan's Muslim Board Library, which houses the original of the Usmon Koran, perhaps the world's oldest Koran.

He was met by Mr. Obiddin Iltayev, Director of the Library who familiarized the Ambassador with the history of the Usmon Koran and the collection of other rare books kept in the Library.



Ambassador Norland also toured the Hazrati Imom complex with his family.

U.S. Ambassador Richard Norland learns the history of the Usmon Koran, perhaps the world's oldest, from Mr. Obiddin Iltayev, Director of the Uzbekistan's Muslim Board Library. (U.S. Embassy photo)

Deputy Assistant Secretary Feigenbaum Talks about Bilateral Issues in South and Central Asia

INTERVIEW

DAS Evan Feigenbaum with Navbahor Imamova of Voice of America

December 17, 2007
Washington, D.C.

QUESTION: Kyrgyzstan just held elections, parliamentary elections, and we know that just one party is going to be in the parliament. And, the OSCE (Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe) described the election as unfair. They think it didn't meet any international standards. What is the U.S. position?

DAS FEIGENBAUM: Well, I think we're still trying to digest what happened in the election. We're getting reports both from international observers but also from our embassy on the ground, so we're going to be digesting those reports overnight. We'll try to get a sense from people who actually were witness to the event, what happened. We've seen what the OSCE had to say and

we've seen the statements from the OSCE that it didn't meet international standards.

Clearly we're looking to Kyrgyzstan to make improvements in the election process, both in the areas that OSCE has identified, but also in some of the areas that we've talked to them about previously. So, I think I'll have a more complete answer for you in a day or so when we hear from our embassy.

QUESTION: Kazakhstan. What would it mean – what were the reasons for the U.S. to support Kazakhstan's bid to chair the OSCE in 2010?



Deputy Assistant Secretary Evan Feigenbaum. (State Department photo)

Continued on page 10

American Muslims Travel to Mecca for Annual Pilgrimage

More young professionals choose to perform the Hajj



Muslim pilgrims pray on a rocky hill named, mountain of forgiveness, near the holy city of Mecca. (© AP Images)

Young American Muslims, many professionals in their 20s, are traveling to the Middle East to perform the Hajj, according to travel industry experts in the United States.

This is a new trend, said Rita Zawaideh, a tour operator based in Seattle who specializes in educational travel to Jordan and other parts of the Middle East. Although Zawaideh handles airline reservations for her clients performing the Hajj, she refers land packages to Muslim

tour operators in the United States. "You need to be Muslim to understand the many aspects of booking this kind of trip," Zawaideh said.

The Hajj, one of the Five Pillars of Islam, is the annual pilgrimage to Mecca, in Saudi Arabia, which all able Muslims are expected to perform at least once in their lifetime. Because the journey is expensive and the logistics can be complicated, traditionally many Muslims wait until they are married and their children are grown to perform the ritual.

For American Muslims, however, it makes sense to make the journey when they are still young because they have the economic means and flexibility that may be more difficult to muster as they become married and need to balance their professional and family lives, said American documentary filmmaker Anisa Mehdi.

Mehdi is an Emmy Award-winning journalist whose National Geographic film *Inside Mecca* follows three Muslims from very different backgrounds as they embark on the five-day quest for salvation.

All Muslims have to factor the Hajj into their long-term plans because the trip may cost several thousand dollars, Mehdi said. Depending on a person's economic situation, people may need to save money up to 10 years before they are able to afford the trip, she said.

"The Hajj is an arduous undertaking that requires physical strength, endurance and stamina," Mehdi said. "Traditionally, older people do it because there is great motivation to complete the transcendental journey, but it is easier for people in good health and strong."

Logistical reasons require countries to impose quotas on visas during the Hajj, so people also need to be flexible in their plans.

Over 2.4 million pilgrims arrived in Saudi Arabia to perform the Hajj, which this year began on December 18, depending on moon sightings, and lasted for five days, according to the Embassy of Saudi Arabia in Washington. In 2006, more than 15,000 Americans were among the 2.5 million people making the annual pilgrimage, according to the embassy.

American mosques offer instructions for the Hajj, using PowerPoint presentations to explain the ritual steps of the pilgrimage and the requirements for making a successful Hajj.

Today, people usually spend between two weeks and three weeks making the journey, Mehdi said. "Back in the days when people didn't fly on airplanes, they would spend the better part of a year walking to Mecca or taking a boat or riding in a caravan."

The culmination of the Hajj, which occurs on the eighth to the 12th day of Dhu'l-Hijjah, the last month of the Islamic calendar, takes place outside the city of Mecca. Mehdi said Muslims visit Mecca throughout the year, but the only time



Hajj pilgrim Nadia Bazy is greeted by her family at Detroit Metropolitan Airport. The 20-year-old college student from the Detroit suburb of Canton Township, Michigan, returned from Saudi Arabia after 18 days of prayer and visiting holy sites. (© AP Images)

that Hajj takes place is during the last month of the year.

As elsewhere in the world, American Muslims not going on Hajj often mark the days leading up to the pilgrimage with acts of generosity. In the state of Maryland, for example, the Montgomery County Muslim Council distributes food baskets to needy families and toys to children before Christmas. The council also coordinates with the county to donate hundreds of kilograms of meat to the needy in December.

Interfaith Festival Joins Muslim, Jewish, Christian Communities

Annual dinner celebrates Hajj, Hanukah, Christmas

Religion is not a part of the conversation among her friends at school, but treating each other with respect is, says Jessica, 14, at an interfaith dinner organized by Jewish, Christian and Muslim leaders.

"I believe in God, but I am not a member of any particular church," the teenager said at the December 16 dinner outside Washington in Frederick, Maryland. She attended the event with a friend and his family, who are Jewish.

"It's all good," her friend, Sam, 14, said. "Younger people are open to new ideas and diverse communities."

More than 250 members of the Jewish, Islamic and Christian communities in Frederick shared a meal together at the second annual Hanukah, Christmas and Hajj Festival. Dinner was served potluck style -- families contributed their favorite dishes of the season and placed them side by side with those of their neighbors on long banquet tables. There was something for everyone -- from green bean casserole and homemade saffron bread to matzoh ball soup, keema kabob and vegetable pilaf.

Latifa Boutaleb came with her husband, Tewfik, an engineer in Frederick, and their three young children. She placed her pineapple upside-down cake on a table next to apple pie and crème brûlée custard. The couple emigrated from Algeria to the United States in 1999.

"I came [to the interfaith festival] to meet people in my community," said Latifa Boutaleb. Her husband attended the first interfaith dinner in 2006 and said he would not miss this year's event. The Boutalebs worship at the Islamic Society of Frederick, and Tewfik Boutaleb performed Hajj in 2006. The Hajj, one of the Five Pillars of Islam, is the annual pilgrimage to Mecca, in Saudi Arabia, which all able Muslims are expected to perform at least once in their lifetime.

"It is beautiful to be here with all the children playing together," Tewfik Boutaleb said. His son, Mohamed, 7, was spinning a dreidel, the traditional top played during the eight-day Jewish festival of Hanukah, with Nourjannah, 9, the daughter of Imam Yahya Hendi of the Islamic Society of Frederick.

"There are some people all over the world who misunderstand religions," Nourjannah said. "Maybe if we bring them all together, they can see there is another side to their religions."

Nourjannah, who wants to be a "speaker of peace who travels around the world" when she grows up, said she is glad she lives in America where "everybody can practice their faith." Nourjannah said her room at home has piles of books about different religions, and she enjoys reading about and listening to other people's stories. Both Nourjannah and Mohamed were paying close attention when representatives from the Jewish, Islamic and Christian communities gave presentations explaining stories and rituals of Hanukah, Christmas and Hajj.

Sadia Fayyaz, 17, said she hopes to be a teacher some day so she can encourage young people "to talk through" religious debates. Sadia's parents live in Pakistan; she lives in Frederick with her sister and brother-in-law and their four children.



Teens from the Islamic Society of Frederick, Maryland, use a skit and a slideshow to tell the story of Hajj at an interfaith dinner. (State Department photo)

"A lot of my friends at school are Jewish," Sadia added. "We are always questioning each other."

Sadia said there is much diversity at her secondary school, which has designated a special room for Muslim students to pray during the day. Her father has performed Hajj, said Sadia, who hopes to make the pilgrimage herself soon.

Hendi and fellow Frederick spiritual leaders Rabbi Dan Sikowitz of Congregation Kol Ami and the Reverend Gerald Hanberry of Glade United Church of Christ offered blessings before the meal. Hendi explained that although Eid-ul-Adha, which marks the end of Hajj, is celebrated by pilgrims making the annual journey to Mecca, it also is celebrated by Muslims elsewhere, including in the United States.

"It is important to come together to find out how much we share in our humanness," said Miriam Klements who was seated at the same table as the Boutalebs. "What we do to get to know each other at the human, family and community level is really important." Klements is a member of Frederick Interfaith, a sponsor of the event.

The interfaith festival also was sponsored by the Islamic Society of Frederick, Glade United Church of Christ, United Church of Frederick, St. Katherine Drexel Roman Catholic Church, Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Frederick, Beth Sholom Congregation and Congregation Kol Ami of Frederick.

Religion-Based Employee Groups Enhance Culture of Inclusion



A view of an entrance to Texas Instruments complex in Dallas, Texas. Employees at Texas Instruments have formed Christian and Muslim employee networking groups. (© AP Images)

Employees at Texas Instruments in Dallas are proud of their company's culture of inclusion, which is marked by the presence of employee networking groups for Christians and Muslims that encourage mutual respect and understanding.

"Understanding and tolerance are the keys for success" in a multicultural workplace like Texas Instruments, according to Zafar Imam, chair of the Muslim Employees Initiative (MEI), one of the two religion-based employee groups at the company. "We think ignorance plays a big role in conflicts, in hostility, not only in the workplace but outside as well."

Kent Johnson, founder and head of the Christian Values Initiative (CVI), the other religion-based employee group at the company, believes the culture of Texas Instruments is "truly extraordinary" in its approach to religious diversity. He praises the "mutual trust, appreciation and affection that bridges spiritual divides here."

The two, along with another MEI member, Osama Elsafadi, shared recently about their experiences at Texas Instruments. They said MEI and CVI have held several events together, including visits to a mosque, a Baptist church and a Latter Day Saints (LDS) church; interfaith roundtables; and a fundraiser -- along with other company employee groups -- for Hurricane Katrina victims.

The visit to the LDS, or Mormon, church "was definitely an eye-opener for me," said Imam. "There was a lot I learned."

"We think education is very important," he said. Each year MEI holds six to eight roundtable discussions at lunchtime for non-Muslim employees. "The idea is to introduce what we think is the right definition about Islam" and to counter inaccuracies in the media, he explained.

Many Muslim employees "would like their managers to know about Islam and what issues of concern we have at the workplace," said Imam. He added that MEI appreciates the

"serenity rooms" at Texas Instruments where Muslims and others can take prayer breaks or mediate.

Johnson, senior counsel at Texas Instruments, praised the company's leaders for their "groundbreaking" decision to sanction religion-based employee groups. Many U.S. companies permit employees to form groups based on common concerns -- blacks, Hispanics, people with disabilities, and gay and lesbian employees, for example. But faith-based groups are less prevalent. There are none at General Motors, for example, and Ford Motor Company has only one officially recognized group, the Ford Interfaith Network.

"There was some natural apprehensiveness," he acknowledged. Some people feared "that Christians would get together and start condemning everyone who didn't believe the way we do. We, as a group from the very beginning, have wanted to dispel that notion."

Although CVI members may not agree with some other groups' beliefs or lifestyles, Johnson said, "Our feeling is that if you just put it under the table and pretend the differences aren't there, that's a mistake, because it prevents people from really relating to one another."

Having an inclusive workplace culture is "absolutely good business," he said. At Texas Instruments, which produces semiconductors and other high-tech products, "anything we do in such a complex production process requires collaboration and trust."

Elsafadi, a program manager for the company's automotive group, said he appreciated the positive atmosphere at Texas Instruments after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. "One of my co-workers came to me and offered her home for my family to come and stay," he said.

That particular co-worker is Jewish, said Elsafadi, who is Palestinian. "We did spend part of the night at her house, but then I decided to brave it and go home. And we were OK."

"Both Jews and Muslims, here in the U.S., care for each other in the most wonderful ways. I found this especially true at [Texas Instruments]," Elsafadi said.

Imam, a product engineering section manager at the company, had a similar experience. He is Pakistani. "My manager, on the day after [September 11], asked me about myself and my family, and if my wife was having any difficulty, his wife was willing to go out with her for groceries and such -- which I thought was very nice and touching."

For eight years, Texas Instruments has been on Fortune magazine's list of 100 Best Companies To Work For. In 2006, one of the reasons cited was the company's support for diversity through its employee-networking groups, including the Christian Values Initiative and Muslim Employees Initiative.

American Islamic Congress Launches Anti-Suicide Bombing Campaign

The American Islamic Congress (AIC) launched an anti-suicide bombing campaign to coincide with Eid al-Adha, "the Festival of Sacrifice," which marks the Muslim New Year and the end of the Hajj period (see the press release at http://www.earthtimes.org/articles/show/news_press_release,245313.shtml#)

AIC is marking Eid al-Adha with a new campaign to rally the Muslim community around a bold anti-suicide bombing initiative.

"Eid al-Adha celebrates the sanctity of human life by rejecting child sacrifice," said Nassar Weddady, the AIC outreach director, adding that there is a need to mobilize Muslim communities to "unequivocally denounce suicide attacks."

On December 21, a suicide attacker detonated a bomb packed with ball bearings and nails amid hundreds of worshipers in a mosque in Shergao, Pakistan on December 21, killing at least 50 people and injuring nearly 100.

The AIC campaign follows a November 30 fatwa issued by the Fiqh Council of North America (FCNA) against terrorists and those who associate with them.

The American Islamic Congress is a non-profit organization dedicated to building interfaith and interethnic understanding. Within the Muslim community, they are building a coalition around the agenda of unequivocal denunciation of terrorism, extremism, and hate speech.

For more information visit the AIC Website at <http://www.aicongress.org>.



© AP Images

It's a Wonderful New Year!



Alumni help to create a real New Year's spirit and celebrate with kids at a children's center in Tashkent. (U.S. Embassy photo)

It's been a very busy holiday season for the Uzbek alumni of U.S. government educational exchange programs. Over the years these alumni have conducted a number of social and outreach projects, and this time around they got together to implement a project for a very noble cause: to brighten up the New Year's holidays for some young people in need. How did they do it?

First, on December 28 they organized an Alumni Reunion at a local club. Together they bid farewell to 2007 and celebrated the successful projects that the alumni community had conducted during the last 12 months. The U.S. Embassy awarded the 10 most active alumni with Certificates of Appreciation for their outstanding contribution to bringing about positive change in their country and furthering mutual cooperation between the United States and Uzbekistan. The reunion was not only a chance to socialize and to celebrate, it was also a charity drive. In order to be admitted to the event, each guest had to buy a ticket and also bring a present – a children's toy, book or clothes – to donate. Monetary donations were also accepted. Almost all of the over 150 attendees contributed to the charity drive, and the alumni accumulated several boxes of presents by the end of event.

The next day, the alumni used the monetary donations to buy a Christmas tree and decorations that they took along with the donated gifts to a local children's center in Tashkent. Over 80 kids, ranging in age from two to 15, gathered eagerly to meet the guests, who were also accompanied by alumni dressed up as Father Frost and Snegurochka (which means Snow Girl in Russian). First the alumni set up the Christmas tree in the center of the center's hall, and then they decorated it along with the children. Then the kids gathered around the hosts and took turns reciting poems and receiving presents from Father Frost and Snegurochka. Afterwards, everyone stood around the Christmas tree, joined hands and enjoyed singing and dancing. At the end of the event, the staff of the center and the alumni distributed goody bags containing candy, cookies and fruit that they had assembled earlier. The director of the center summed up the impact of the

event, saying, "the kids were impatiently waiting for this day for almost a week. Creating a true New Year's spirit with all these games, presents and especially a Christmas tree, will definitely leave them with many fond memories." The positive energy that shone in the children's eyes and the smiles on their faces said more than any words could. The alumni made the holidays special for these children, and in return, the kids made this New Year holiday very special for alumni, as well.

Anyone who has participated in a U.S. government-sponsored exchange program is invited to join the alumni in their events. Find out more by contacting the Alumni Coordinator at Tashkent-Alumni@state.gov.

If you would like to learn more about educational exchange opportunities that the U.S. Embassy sponsors, please visit

<http://uzbekistan.usembassy.gov/exchanges>.



On December 20, the U.S. Marines stationed at the Embassy in Tashkent delivered toys to children at Orphanage #24 in the Karakamish region of Tashkent.

About 70 children, aged two to 14, received presents which were donated by the U.S. Embassy staff. The children expressed their gratitude for the gifts through a song and dance performance.

The Toys for Tots gift drive is an annual event organized by U.S. Marines wherever they serve – at U.S. Embassies around the globe and throughout the United States – spreading holiday cheer to less fortunate children. (U.S. Embassy photo)



USAID | UZBEKISTAN

FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

SUCCESS STORY

Brochure Inspires Better Childcare

Thousands of Uzbek mothers learn to take better care of their children's health from a USAID project



Zameera and her daughter from Termez, Uzbekistan are featured on the cover of the Healthy Family brochure on child health. (Project HOPE photo)

"If mothers and grandmothers know how to properly feed and care for children, they will use that knowledge in practice."

– Nafesa-hon, Zameera's mother in law.

Zameera Fazilova (names in the story have been changed) lives in Termez, rural Uzbekistan with her husband, mother-in-law, and her young baby Mamura. As the daughter-in-law of the household, Zameera is responsible for all household chores. She does all the laundry, cooks, and cleans for a large household and is also in charge of tending the family's vegetable garden and livestock. Because of this workload, and in keeping with tradition, Zameera's mother-in-law, Nafesa-hon, takes care of baby Mamura.

Like many Uzbek grandmothers, until recently Zameera's mother-in-law took care of the baby the way she'd been taught in her youth. When Mamura turned six weeks old, Nafesa-hon began giving her high-calorie food to help her grow: pieces of fried mutton fat, plenty of bread, tea. If Mamura was sick, Nafesa-hon would wrap her in blankets and give her herbal remedies. She didn't take Mamura to the doctor because she didn't believe it was necessary.

Things started to change when USAID and Project HOPE's Healthy Family project developed a brochure on child health, called "If you want your child to be healthy," and began to disseminate it through project trained visiting health nurses. One of the newly trained nurses came to Zameera's house to talk about child health. Both Zameera and Nafesa-hon were eager to learn more

about caring for infants. They listened carefully to what the nurse had to say and studied the brochure in detail. A visiting nurse later learned that the two women had memorized the brochure text and followed its instructions on caring for Mamura to the letter, determined to give the baby the best care possible.

Next time baby Mamura was badly ill, the women took her immediately to a clinic. The doctor advised that they could look after Mamura at home, and this was when Zameera's knowledge began to show its true value. She fed Mamura more than normal, gave her extra liquids, and encouraged her to eat by coaxing her with her favorite foods. Mamura made a speedy recovery.

The Healthy Family project printed 35,000 brochures on child health. Visiting nurses, trained in patient education by the project, use these brochures to educate mothers of children under five and then leave them as a reference for the family.

USAID and Project HOPE's Healthy Family project worked to improve maternal and child health in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. As of September 2007, over two million people in the four countries were directly served by the project.



New York State - Empire State



Often when people think about New York they think of New York City, but there's another New York beyond the "Big Apple" – it's New York State and it offers an untold number of experiences.

Did you know that New York State is the third largest producer of wine in the United States? Its Adirondack Park is the largest state park in the continental U.S? There are spectacular



Morning sunlight reflects off the face of the United Nations building, second from left, in New York, United States. (© AP Images)

white sand beaches there? They have a chain of canals for cruising similar to those in Europe? New York State has more downhill ski areas than any other state? These are just a few of the surprises awaiting visitors' discovery!

New York City, which features Times Square and its famous lights, Broadway, the Statue of Liberty and excellent shopping, is the top destination for international visitors to the United States. However, international visitors are increasingly combining a visit to the city with side trips to other parts of the state.

HISTORY

New York harbor was visited by Verrazano in 1524, and the Hudson River was first explored by Henry Hudson in 1609. The Dutch settled here permanently in 1624 and for 40 years they ruled over the colony of New Netherland. It was conquered by the English in 1664 and was then named New York in honor of the Duke of York.

Existing as a colony of Great Britain for over a century, New York declared its independence on July 9, 1776, becoming one of the original 13 states of the Federal Union. The next year, on April 20, 1777, New York's first constitution was adopted.

In many ways, New York State was the principal battleground of the Revolutionary War. The Battle of Saratoga, one of the decisive battles of the world, was the turning point of the Revolution leading to the French alliance and thus to eventual victory. New York City, long occupied by British troops,

was evacuated on November 25, 1783. There, on December 4 at Fraunces Tavern, General George Washington bade farewell to his officers.

Alexander Hamilton was a leader in the movement which ended in the development of the Federal Constitution, and he was active in its ratification. New York City became the first capital of the new nation, where President George Washington was inaugurated on April 30, 1789.

In following years, New York's economic and industrial growth made appropriate the title "The Empire State," an expression possibly originated by George Washington in 1784. In 1809, Robert Fulton's "North River Steamboat," the first successful steam-propelled vessel, began a new era in transportation.

FAMOUS ATTRACTIONS

Statue Of Liberty

Located in New York harbor, the Statue of Liberty was formally presented to the U.S. Minister to France, Levi Parsons on July 4, 1884 by Ferdinand Lesseps, representing the



The Statue of Liberty stands in New York Harbor. (© AP Images)

Franco-American Union. The cornerstone was laid in August 1884 and the Statue of Liberty arrived in June 1885, in 214 packing crates. President Grover Cleveland dedicated the Statue of Liberty on October 28, 1886, when the last rivet was put into place.

During the nineteenth century, America became a haven for many of the oppressed people of Europe, and New York City became the “melting pot.” The Statue of Liberty (dedicated in 1886 in the harbor), with its famous inscription, “Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,” was the first symbol of America’s mission.

United Nations

The international character of New York City, the principal port for overseas commerce, and later for transcontinental and international airways, has been further enhanced by becoming the home of the United Nations, capital of the free world. Here the people of all nations and races come to discuss and try to solve the world’s problems in a free and democratic climate.

New York Stock Exchange

As one of the wealthiest states, New York made tremendous strides in industry and commerce. The New York Stock Exchange, founded in 1792, has become the center of world finance. Diversified and rich natural resources, together with unmatched facilities for transport, produced a phenomenal growth in manufacture and industry. Research and inventive genius have been extensive, especially in the field of electronics, power and the peaceful and productive use of atomic energy.

Center for Art, Music, and Literature

New York City also became a leading national center for art, music and literature, as exemplified by the Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Metropolitan Opera Company, and large publishing houses.

ECONOMY

New York State’s Gross State Product (GSP) is about \$822 billion a year, making it the eleventh largest economy in the world. It is ranked first in the nation in number of Fortune 500 companies headquarters at 57, according to Fortune Magazine, 2007.

New York is ranked first in the nation in number of first tier universities based on 70 criteria, according to Entrepreneur Magazine, 2004. It holds a third position in the nation in high technology employment (305,300), high-tech payroll (\$21.4 billion) and fourth in number of high-tech establishments (18,500). According to Forbes/Wolfe Nanotech Report (2003) predicted that “the state could become the Silicon Valley of nanotech.”

Sources: <http://www.ny.gov>,
<http://www.iloveny.com>,
<http://www.census.gov>



Buffalo Sabres goalie Ryan Miller, right, makes a save on Atlanta Thrashers right winger Marian Hossa, of Slovakia, during the third period of an NHL hockey game in Buffalo, New York on Friday, Jan. 18, 2008. Buffalo won 10-1. (© AP Images)



U.S. Map, courtesy of U.S. Census Bureau.

Quick Facts

Abbreviation: NY

Capital City: Albany.

Governor: Eliot Spitzer.

Date of Statehood: July 26, 1788 (11th)

Population: 19,306,183 (est. 2006, U.S. Census Bureau).

Land area: 47,224 sq.mi., 30th largest.

Origin of State’s Name: Named after England’s Duke of York.

Largest Cities: New York, Buffalo, Rochester, Yonkers, Syracuse.

Major industries: Professional and business services, financial activities, manufacturing, leisure and hospitality, trade, health care, printing and publishing.

Continued from front page

DAS FEIGENBAUM: Well, I have to say, first of all, this is a historic opportunity for Kazakhstan. There's never been a Chairman of the OSCE quite like Kazakhstan. And in the first instance that means there's never been a chairman "east of Vienna," as some people like to say. So it's a chance, as Kazakhstan itself has said, to really meld, they say, East and West within the organization. But what I would say is really to help create a -- help create a sustainable institution for the long term.

Now, Kazakhstan made some very important commitments in Madrid this year. And I would encourage everybody to read Foreign Minister Tazhin's statement to the assembled delegates in Madrid. And he spoke very specifically about two things. The first were Kazakhstan's commitments to the OSCE itself, and particularly to the mandate and role of the Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), which has a particular role in election monitoring around the OSCE space.

And that role has been very controversial. Foreign Minister Tazhin made a very clear and very robust endorsement both of ODIHR, that office, but also of its existing mandate. We consider that endorsement to be extremely important and will look to Kazakhstan, as Chairman in Office of the OSCE, to provide that full-throated support for ODIHR and its mandate.

Foreign Minister Tazhin also had a lot to say about Kazakhstan's reform trajectory. And he said some things that were very specific. He talked about election laws and media laws, introducing new laws with the assistance and through consultation with ODIHR and international experts. And he talked about doing those things by the end of 2008.

So we're all looking, I think, to see what Kazakhstan does, how it moves along on its reform trajectory. We want to be a partner to Kazakhstan in that effort. We thought these were, as Under Secretary Burns said in Madrid, very, very important commitments from Kazakhstan. And so, now we look to Kazakhstan to implement those commitments, and we look forward to working with them to that end.

QUESTION: Well, meanwhile in Uzbekistan the message from the country is that (President Islam) Karimov's win is almost guaranteed. Is the United States ready to accept the outcome?

DAS FEIGENBAUM: I don't have much to say about the election. I mean I'll just be frank with you. To be very candid, we have very modest expectations for the election, so we'll just have to see whether the Uzbek Government runs this electoral procedure in a way that broadens opportunities for civil society. But my -- I think our expectations are quite modest.

QUESTION: Well, does the U.S. agree with the Liberal Democratic Party in Tashkent, who says that this would actually be Karimov's second seven year term? Because there is a lot of question about the legality of these elections.

DAS FEIGENBAUM: My wife likes to joke that I'm not a lawyer so I shouldn't get into parsing laws. Since I'm not a lawyer, I don't even try to interpret American law, much less Uzbek law. So I think I'll leave it to the Uzbek lawyers to interpret Uzbek law.

I think the point is, as we've said many times, that we look to all governments around the world to broaden opportunities for civil society, for independent media and others, so we'll just have to see what kind of electoral procedure the Uzbek Government runs.

QUESTION: Human rights activists in Uzbekistan think that the United States chose not to pressure Tashkent to help them get registered, to help them get recognized, using the moment, you know, the election campaign. How would you respond to that criticism?

DAS FEIGENBAUM: Well, I think we talk to the Uzbek Government a lot about the registration of non-governmental organizations, and that includes non-governmental organizations, both international groups and domestic groups, in all of the dimensions of NGO activity. So, yes, in the human rights area, but in other areas too. There used to be a lot more NGOs operating inside Uzbekistan than there are today. We think it would be very much to Uzbekistan's benefit to have more of a non-governmental sector operating.

QUESTION: In his recent speeches, Islam Karimov said that his government is very interested in reconnecting with the West, specifically with the United States and Europe. How do you see that?

DAS FEIGENBAUM: Well, you know, we saw that speech, and I think we noted that speech. What's interesting is that the United States and Uzbekistan have a very complicated history together. It goes back 16 years. We were really one of the first countries to recognize Uzbekistan's independence, to open an embassy in Tashkent. We've spent millions and millions of dollars in cooperation with the people of Uzbekistan, and we have really the vision of a true partnership with Uzbekistan. The question is not the vision, it's can we realize that vision?

And I often say, and I said this when I went to Tashkent in March, that in some relationships we have to search around for a vision, but in this one we have one really handy. In 2002 our two countries signed a Framework Agreement on Strategic Partnership and Cooperation. And it's a very interesting Framework Agreement, because it's truly a vision of a multi-dimensional relationship. It talks about security, it talks about economics and trade. Yes, it talks about political development and democracy and human rights. It talks about regional cooperation and legal cooperation. So the vision is there.

The question is how can we, the United States and Uzbekistan, our governments, our peoples, our private sectors, our businesses, our NGOs, work to realize that vision. I think it's not a secret that the last couple of years have been very, very difficult in this relationship, but I think the potential is there; and we look to the government of Uzbekistan, frankly, to work with us and to adopt policies and make choices that

Evan A. Feigenbaum

Deputy Assistant Secretary, South and Central Asian Affairs, responsible for Central Asia

Before joining the Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs in July 2006, Mr. Feigenbaum served for five years as a Member of the Secretary of State's Policy Planning Staff, with principal responsibility for East Asian and Pacific Affairs. Prior to government service, he was a Lecturer on Government at Harvard University, Executive Director of the Asia-Pacific Security Initiative, and Program Chair of the Chinese Security Studies Program at Harvard's John F. Kennedy School of Government (1997-2001). His publications include *China's Techno-Warriors: National Security and Strategic Competition from the Nuclear to the Information Age* (2003) and *Change in Taiwan and Potential Adversity in the Strait* (1995) and numerous articles appearing in *International Security*, *The New York Times*, *Washington Quarterly*, *China Quarterly*, *Far Eastern Economic Review*, and elsewhere.

Dr. Feigenbaum received a Ph.D. and A.M. in political science from Stanford University and an A.B. in history from the University of Michigan. A recipient of several awards and fellowships, including Olin and Belfer fellowships at Harvard University, he was a fellow of Stanford University's Center for International Security and Cooperation.

As of January 2008 DAS Feigenbaum changed his portfolio and is responsible for India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bhutan, and the Maldives, as well as Regional Affairs.

make it possible to realize that vision that President Karimov himself endorsed in 2002.

QUESTION: Would the United States have any preconditions to engage the Uzbek Government after the elections? Would you have any conditions if you want to start discussions, or –

DAS FEIGENBAUM: I'm not somebody who really likes to talk about preconditions and things like that. We have an embassy in Tashkent so we look to engage the government and people of Uzbekistan every day. It's something that we've done since 1991. It's something that we continue to do even today as we speak, and that we'll look to do after the first of the year as well. The question is going to be, what's possible? What is the Uzbek government willing to do, prepared to do? What are we willing to do? What are we prepared to do? So, I don't want to think about it that way. I want to try to realize the vision of the relationship that's out there.

QUESTION: So continue talking to the government and try to find a common ground?

DAS FEIGENBAUM: Well, we always talk to the government. I mean, we have an Ambassador in Tashkent, Ambassador Norland. He's a new Ambassador, and he talks to his counterparts in the government every day. So, I think the issue isn't to talk or not to talk. It's what do we talk about and how do we talk about it but, more importantly, not just talking but doing. What can we do individually, jointly, and with other partners to make Central Asia a more prosperous, democratic, and secure region?

QUESTION: Could you give any examples of success in U.S. cooperation with the countries of Central Asia in a way to show the countries to Uzbekistan, that there are ways to work with –

DAS FEIGENBAUM: We work with all of the countries in Central Asia, even Uzbekistan. And, as I said, we try to have multidimensional relationships with all of these countries. We don't have a one- or two-dimensional policy. And that means we can't have one- or two-dimensional relationships. And by

that I mean we don't have, some people say we have a defense policy, we have a democracy policy, we have a trade policy. No. We have a foreign policy, and we want to do all of these things simultaneously. So as I said in Tashkent, and as I say in Bishkek and in Dushanbe -- wherever I go -- we want to move forward in our relationships with these countries in every basket simultaneously.

Now I personally don't expect that the speed of progress will necessarily be the same in terms of our cooperation in every basket. It wouldn't be realistic. But we do think it's important to be moving forward in every basket. So I think with each government and with each country the pace has varied a little bit from country to country.

And as I said, it's not a secret that we've had a lot of difficulties in the U.S.-Uzbek relationship over the last two years. But I can give you plenty of examples across the region, whether it's educational cooperation or high school programs -- for instance the Future Leaders Exchange Program -- our university programs, our Fulbright programs in that basket. We have examples of programs in the security area. We have an airbase in Kyrgyzstan that provides very important logistical support for the war in Afghanistan. We run training and equipment programs across the region. We helped to build the national drug control agencies of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. We work with Kazakhstan in all kinds of ways. For instance, not all of that is government: we're the number one foreign investor in Kazakhstan today [Note: The United States as a nation, and not the United States Government, is the number one foreign investor]

And what's interesting, coming back to your question about Uzbekistan, is at a time when U.S. trade with each of the Central Asian countries individually is rising very, very rapidly, our trade with Uzbekistan is falling quite rapidly. And that's really a tragedy in many ways, because Uzbekistan has a lot of potential. It has good infrastructure. Why should that be the case?

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So in all of these areas we look to the Government of Uzbekistan to adopt the kinds of policies and to make the kinds of choices that would enable us to realize the vision of that Strategic Framework Agreement, and that included in the area of democracy and human rights as well.

QUESTION: Alisher Saipov, a VOA reporter, was killed in Kyrgyzstan, an Uzbek reporter was killed in Kyrgyzstan almost two months ago and we still don't know who killed him, and why. There are many theories. The most prominent seems to be that Uzbek agents who had been following him for a long time killed him. Is his death a concern to the State Department?

DAS FEIGENBAUM: Well, his death was clearly a very -- He was a -- he was a journalist. He was a very famous individual. It was clearly a tragic event. And I'm not really in a position to speculate on all the theories. I don't like to do that. I think, my understanding is that the Kyrgyz Government is engaging in an investigation so we'll look to see the results of the Kyrgyz investigation.

QUESTION: What are the major goals for Central Asia in 2008?

DAS FEIGENBAUM: I think I would cite a few. The first is to try to develop these multidimensional relationships, as I said. We want to find a way to push forward with each of the countries bilaterally, but across the spectrum of the baskets. We don't want one- or two-dimensional relationships. We want to move forward with each country individually in all of these baskets.

The second thing I'd highlight for you is really regional cooperation. And I talk about this a lot because this is a region where cooperation in many ways has been lacking, both among the countries of the region but also with the neighbors. For 200 years -- well, once upon a time Central Asia really was a crossroads, and we see the potential for Central Asia to be a crossroads again. So it's a region that was oriented to the north and to the west for 200 years, but really is very close to a lot of economic dynamism in the Asian region to the east and to the south. So, we intend also to advance our agenda on regional cooperation among Central Asian countries, but also with the neighbors, and that includes on these north-south electricity corridors that we've talked about in previous conversations.

QUESTION: So, specifically with Afghanistan --

DAS FEIGENBAUM: Well, I think it's Afghanistan, but I think --

QUESTION: -- going south?

DAS FEIGENBAUM: Well, I think the vision is broader. I mean what I often say is that -- you know, some people often say, they caricature American policy and they say you're promoting connections to the south at the expense -- at the expense of connections to the north. No. We think that countries

should have connections in every direction on the compass -- north, west, east and south.

You may know we reorganized the State Department a couple of years ago to help promote this vision [Note: In February 2006, the Bureau of South Asian Affairs absorbed the Office of Central Asian Affairs, and was renamed the Bureau for South and Central Asian Affairs. The Office for Central Asian Affairs had been part of the Bureau for European Affairs]. So, I'm the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs. And not everybody was so enthusiastic about this; let's just be candid. We heard a lot of voices from within the region, including even --

QUESTION: Saying that Afghanistan is not a peaceful place or it's not a country yet ready to work with or to benefit from? Those are --

DAS FEIGENBAUM: That's one thing we've heard. But we've also heard people who I think make very curious -- they use very curious analytical frames of reference.

I'll give you an example. I was in Kazakhstan a couple of years ago. And somebody said, "Well, you've done this reorganization in the State Department. Who do you think we're more like: Russians, Ukrainians and Armenians or Bangladeshis, Nepalese, and Sri Lankans?" And I said you know, that's really the wrong way to frame the question. You shouldn't be asking: Are you more like them? Or more like them? You should be looking for economic opportunity in every direction on the compass.

So, there already are these very strong connections to the north. There are strong connections to the west. There are increasingly strong connections, particularly to the Chinese economy in the east and to the dynamic economies of the Pacific Rim. So we, the United States, what we want to promote are connections in every direction on the compass, but particularly to the south first, because it's the least developed direction; but second, because given our role in Afghanistan we think we have a unique role to play. But the vision doesn't stop in Afghanistan. It's to give these countries access to more markets, more infrastructure, more trading partners, and to deep water ports to the south as well. So I think in addition to the bilateral issues, I'd say that moving forward our regional integration agenda is important.

And I do think I'd like to see more robust trade relationships between the United States and the countries of the region. It shouldn't be that American trade with Uzbekistan is falling. And we'd like to see human rights and democratic development advance as well. And so we look forward to working with all of the governments of the region on a process of both political and economic reform.

QUESTION: Thank you. Thank you, I know my time is up, so (inaudible).

DAS FEIGENBAUM: Thanks very much.

Libraries of Love Enriching Lives in Uganda with Donated Books

Texas-based nonprofit group also helps build libraries



First lady Laura Bush, right, reads to Ugandan school children, July 11, 2003, Entebbe, Uganda. (AP Photo/Karel Prinsloo)

Austin, Texas — Libraries of Love, a nongovernmental organization based in Austin, Texas, continues to expand its work with public schools in Uganda, opening four libraries this summer and establishing a support group of Ugandan school librarians.

“Many people send items to Uganda, but very few bring them here so that we can meet face-to-face, and begin to know the donors. Fewer still take the time to train us as to how to use the gifts, and how to become proficient with them,” the Mengo senior school Parent Teacher Association (PTA) president said at the grand opening of Mengo Laurel Library in Kampala in June.

“The library is truly a gift that gives hope and not just a gift that will get consumed,” the PTA president added.

Mengo Laurel Library is one of six libraries that have been provided for public schools in Uganda since 2004. Libraries of Love hired a Ugandan teacher, Henry Ketandwe, to act as coordinator of the libraries, which serve more than 9,000 students. He recently held the first librarians’ meeting, sharing successes and talking about how to make improvements.

The nonprofit group ships books prepared with cards for library checkout to Uganda each January. In 2007, about 20,700 books were shipped.

In June, 19 volunteers from Texas, Kansas and Illinois, including three Libraries of Love board members, traveled to Uganda to provide libraries for two schools in Kampala, and two in Mbale. The volunteers built bookshelves; arranged books in correct library order; set up computers; decorated; and trained students, teachers, and administration in how to use their library to its fullest potential.

At a meeting with the administration and staff of the first Library of Love at Namirembe Infant School in Kampala, Jane

Semugoma, the head of the school, said students’ scores have

risen each year in reading and writing since the library was built in 2005. She attributed the success to the students having access to reading materials and various types of writing.

Books also are touching the lives of extended families. A mother and son smiled widely as the mother spoke with volunteers about the books her son brings home to read to her. Another student standing in front of her small mud home, which she shares with nine siblings and her mother, said her favorite book in the library is *Good Luck – Bad Luck*. When asked what her good luck is, she said, “Learning.” She said she does not have any bad luck.

Each summer, volunteers and board members visit all the libraries. After the volunteers return to the United States, Libraries of Love Executive Director Trudy Marshall stays behind to spend time in each library working with the students and librarians as they learn the process of borrowing and returning books. She also works with teachers in coordinating curriculum with library resources.

Libraries of Love started as a way for students at the elementary school where Marshall is head librarian to reach out to children their age in Uganda. In 2008, the nonprofit plans to nearly double its student reach by providing libraries to two schools in Mbale. Mbale Secondary School and North Road School have a combined enrollment of about 7,000 students.

“It has been amazing to watch this school project grow into a year-round effort supported by the whole community,” Marshall said. “The children in Uganda are our inspiration. It is a privilege to be able to give to those who have so little, but deserve so much.”



“It’s about enriching the lives of deserving children,” Libraries of Love says. (Photo Courtesy of Libraries of Love)

Digital Video Conference Connects Advocates for the Disabled in the U.S. and Uzbekistan



Ambassador Richard Norland addresses guests at a digital video conference organized by the U.S. Embassy in December 2007. (U.S. Embassy photo)

The U.S. Embassy hosted a Digital Video Conference (DVC) entitled "Disability and Ability" on December 18 to commemorate the International Day of Disabled Persons, which is celebrated around the world every year on December 3. The DVC featured Ms. Deborah Leuchovius, Ms. Shauna McDonald and Ms. Sue Folger who work at the PACER Center in Minneapolis, a nonprofit organization that strives to expand opportunities and enhance the quality of life of children and young adults with disabilities and their families, based on the concept of parents helping parents. The speakers discussed U.S. practices and experience protecting the interests of and creating equal opportunities for the disabled.

U.S. Ambassador to Uzbekistan Richard Norland opened the event with welcoming remarks, underscoring the many positive changes that have taken place in the United States recently in regard to those with disabilities. He explained some of the protections for the disabled extended by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), which President George Bush signed into law in 1990.

The Ambassador also mentioned the challenges that people with disabilities face in Uzbekistan and recognized the assistance that the Uzbek government, NGOs, and international organizations provide to accommodate the needs of disabled persons. After the Ambassador spoke, a recent alumnus of Post's Advocacy for the Disabled International Visitor Program shared highlights of her experience in the U.S., including her visit to the PACER Center.

Next, the representatives of the PACER Center gave an overview of the center's development, talked about their roles at the Center and also shared their personal life experience raising children with disabilities. They explained that the trend in the U.S. is towards inclusive education, which prompted an NGO representa-

tive to ask how to introduce such inclusive education in a society in which the families of the disabled and the public may not be ready to accept such changes. The speakers responded that the government may need to lay the groundwork with legislation that will require schools to accept and accommodate students with disabilities, and which also requires families to send their children to regular schools. The speakers stressed that people in Uzbekistan should not expect these changes to occur overnight and that the parents of disabled children should take an active role in the entire process as they are the true experts on their children's needs.

The DVC was attended by over 30 people from six different regions of Uzbekistan who represent disabled people's NGOs, community leaders, the government, doctors, psychologists, and social workers who address issues related to disabilities. The audience - made up of both Uzbek and Russian disabled persons and those who work with the disabled - was impressed by the work that the PACER Center does to promote equal access to education, employment, and information. The participants were also interested to learn about the wealth of information available on different websites for researchers and practitioners in the field of disabled services.

For additional information on the PACER Center's work, visit www.pacer.org.

This DVC was the sixth such video conference that the U.S. Embassy has held during the past year. Past topics included Alternative Energy, Islam in the United States, and Women's and Minority Issues.



One of participants asks a question to representatives of the PACER Center at the Embassy-sponsored digital video conference entitled "Disability and Ability." (U.S. Embassy photo)

Book Sorting Extravaganza – Putting Books to Good Use

After the American Corners were unfortunately closed, the U.S. Embassy had a large collection of new and used English-language books in its old warehouse. Thanks to the help of 50 some volunteers over two Saturdays (December 22 and January 5), these resources will be put to good use by over 30 Uzbek NGOs, youth organizations, and educational centers throughout the country.

It was a huge effort to empty the U.S. Embassy warehouse. Despite chilly and dusty conditions, former U.S. exchange students and visitors of the U.S. Embassy's Information Resource Center donated their Saturdays to label each of the 7,000+ books with a donation book plate and sort them for appropriate delivery. There were various sorts of books: children's fairy tales, encyclopedias, dictionaries, test preparation materials, and fiction books. The task was onerous, but the group of volunteers succeeded in divvying up the thousands of books which are now being delivered to their new homes throughout Uzbekistan.

We sincerely hope that these donations will bolster information sharing in Uzbekistan, help Uzbeks improve their English-language skills, and strengthen the goodwill of Uzbeks towards the United States.



Former U.S. exchange students and members of the Information Resource Center help sort books before they are donated to organizations in Uzbekistan. (U.S. Embassy photo)

A BIG THANK YOU to all who helped with this important project!

Embassy Donates Collection of Elvis Posters to the Elvis Presley Art Café in Tashkent



Owner of the Elvis Presley Art Café Karen Gafurdjanov accepts posters from Public Affairs Officer of the U.S. Embassy in Tashkent Carol Fajardo. (U.S. Embassy photo)

On January 10 the owner of the Elvis Presley Art Café in Tashkent and Uzbek pop singer, Karen Gafurdjanov, ac-

cepted a collection of Elvis posters from the U.S. Embassy's Public Affairs Officer Carol Fajardo.

Soon the donated pictures of the "King of Rock 'n' Roll" will liven up this Elvis-lovers' cafe, which also features many artifacts of the golden age of rock and roll and a room dedicated to the Beatles' "Yellow Submarine." Had he lived, Elvis Presley would have turned 73 years old on January 8, 2008.



Interior design of the Elvis Presley Art Café in Tashkent. (U.S. Embassy photo)

Martin Luther King's Dream of Racial Equality

A dream fulfilled?

It was a march and a speech that the world cannot forget. August 28, 1963, an estimated 250,000 people marched to the Lincoln Memorial in Washington where they heard Martin Luther King Jr. give a speech of unsurpassable eloquence. Known ever since from its "I Have a Dream" passages, the speech gave impassioned voice to the demands of the U.S. civil rights movement -- equal rights for all citizens, including those who were born black and brown.

The speech particularly, coming near the close of the then, largest demonstration in U.S. history, created a new spirit of hope across the land. It was one of those rare moments in history that changed a nation -- paving the way for a transformation of American law and life.

"It was a very peaceful day. A sea of white as well as black faces enveloped the Mall," recalls Dorothy Height, president emeritus of the National Council of Negro Women (NCNW). She was one of the march organizers and sat behind King on the platform. "I think it was a decisive moment not only in U.S. civil rights history, but also in American history. It resulted in a new determination to move toward equality, freedom and greater employment for people of color," she adds.

Height -- still an activist and the author of a memoir, *Open Wide the Freedom Gates* -- says, "The real significance of the march, and the speech, was that it changed attitudes. Righteous indignation against racial discrimination became widespread after the march. It led to a time so full of promise and achievement. You could feel it." Congressman John Lewis (a Democrat from Georgia), the youngest speaker, at age 23 at the 1963 march, agrees. "Because of the march, because of the involvement of hundreds and thousands of ordinary citizens, we experienced what I like to call a nonviolent revolution under the rule of law -- a revolution of values, a revolution of ideas."

The tangible manifestation of the change that Height and Lewis describe was quick in coming. Less than a year after the march, President Lyndon Johnson signed into law the 1964 Civil Rights Act, which banned discrimination in public facilities, such as hotels and restaurants, and also prohibited employment discrimination. The following year, the Voting Rights Act was enacted to ensure that African Americans had the right to vote in reality as well as on paper. In 1968, Congress passed the Fair Housing Act to remove discrimination in buying and renting of housing. This landmark legislation was complemented by new policies, such as affirmative action, designed to counter the legacy of discrimination and to promote African American advancement.

The 1960s legislation is considered to be the crowning achievement of the civil rights movement. The Civil Rights Act swept away the more blatant forms of segregation and discrimination, banishing centuries-old indignities. The Voting Rights Act empowered millions of African Americans politically, leading to a surge in black officeholders.

The new laws took effect immediately. More evolutionary was a change in attitudes. In a 1963 Newsweek poll, 74 percent of whites said racial integration was "moving too fast," a viewpoint that seems shocking today when attitudes are very different. In a 2000 New York Times poll, for example, 93 percent of whites said they would vote for a qualified black presidential candidate. More than 60 percent approved of interracial marriage. And 80 percent said they did not care whether their neighbors were white or black.



Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. acknowledges the crowd at the Lincoln Memorial for his "I Have a Dream" speech. (© AP Images)

If King were alive today, he would likely applaud the achievement of most of the aims of the 1963 march, while stressing that his dream still has not been fully realized, particularly as relates to equality of economic opportunity. It is a view also stressed by civil rights leaders, such as Height and Lewis. "We have made much of Dr. King's dream come true," says Lewis. But, he adds, "we still have a distance to go." Closing lingering economic and educational disparities among the races, however, is a much more complex task than ending legally sanctioned segregation and mandating voting rights.

As for King, his dream at the March on Washington is now part of the political mainstream, his birthday a national holiday during which Americans honor his ideas and his memory. Political leaders from both major parties supported a memorial to be built in his honor in the nation's capital alongside three giants of American history -- Presidents Abraham Lincoln, Thomas Jefferson and Franklin Delano Roosevelt. It is a measure perhaps of how much a nation can grow and change that King's dream now is accepted as irrefutable truth by the overwhelming majority of Americans.

And not just Americans. Throughout his short life of just 39 years, King fought for racial justice everywhere, not just in the United States. To that end, he traveled the world proclaiming his vision of the "beloved community," and defining racism as a worldwide evil. "Among the moral imperatives of our time, we are challenged to work all over the world with unshakable determination to wipe out the last vestiges of racism," he remarked. "It is no mere American phenomenon. Its vicious grasp knows no national boundaries."

Barack Obama's U.S. Presidential Bid Bridges Racial Divisions But "Obamamania" may not put first black person in White House



Democratic presidential hopeful Senator Barack Obama answers a reporter's question during a news conference in Johnson, Iowa. (© AP Images)

The candidacy of Barack Obama for U.S. president is galvanizing the American people, several students of the U.S. political scene tell America.gov.

With his stirring oratory sparking "Obamamania," the Illinois Democratic senator connects to people of all different racial and ethnic backgrounds, said William Jelani Cobb, associate professor of history at Spelman College in Georgia.

Americans are attracted to Obama's message of bringing people together and the fact that he is African American is "icing on the top," said Cobb, also an author who specializes in 20th-century American politics. Cobb said Obama's candidacy is "not driven by race."

Cobb said endorsements by several prominent African Americans for Obama's Democratic rival, Hillary Clinton, will not entice a majority of the U.S. black community to vote for the New York senator and former first lady.

Clinton may get a "substantial number of black votes, but it will not be because of the endorsements," said Cobb. He said early endorsements by the black leaders for Clinton were prompted by the fact that she seemed "low-risk" and a "safe bet" as a strong Democratic candidate for the White House. But no one foresaw that Obama would enjoy such large voter backing in the Democratic primaries and caucuses, Cobb said.

Black leaders who endorsed Clinton "are on the defensive now and having to explain to the people they purportedly lead why they are so far out of step," said Cobb.

The professor said the chances of Obama capturing the White House, if he wins the Democratic nomination, depend on which Republican candidate opposes him in the general election. Obama's strongest Republican rival would be Arizona Senator John McCain, said Cobb.

Support for another Republican candidate, former Arkansas Governor Mike Huckabee, is "pretty narrow," while the "personality" of Republican candidate Mitt Romney, the former governor of Massachusetts, "does not draw people to him," Cobb said.

Arizona State University history professor Thomas Davis says: "I am not sure blacks in the United States collectively

see Senator Obama any differently than whites collectively see him. The range of views is probably the same across race."

Davis, the author of *Race Relations in America*, among other books, said that "for almost every perspective some white person has of Senator Obama, there is some black person who probably has an almost indistinguishable perspective."

Davis said the difference between the views of blacks and whites of Obama "arises primarily in where the views cluster." A greater percentage of blacks, said Davis, see Obama as a "sign and symbol of their hopes for improved race relations, which more pointedly in their views means improved circumstances and conditions in their lives." In that regard, added Davis, more blacks appear likely to "invest unreasonable expectations" in Obama.

"The more influence he appears to have, the more blacks will want from him," said Davis.

Meanwhile, whites on the whole are less demanding of Obama, the professor said, and "tend to see him more simply as a signal of a new moment in U.S. history and life."

Any concerns by voters that Obama, because of his relative youth (he was born in 1961), was not involved in America's civil rights struggle of the mid-20th century are unfounded, Davis said.

"The civil rights struggle is ongoing. It is not something past ... it is something present. And it is something in which Senator Obama is actively engaged," said Davis.

Davis said that despite all of Obama's cross-racial appeal, he does not see the senator winning the White House.

"I am not yet convinced that this is the right time for a black candidate to have a realistic chance to become president," Davis said.

He explained that "in the closed confines of the hearts and minds of a majority of Americans, to say nothing of the privacy of voting booths, Senator Obama will be an attractive candidate, but he will be too few voters' actual choice for president."



Republican presidential hopeful Senator John McCain speaks during a fund raising event in New York. (© AP Images)

Practice Your English at the Chay Chat Club

The U.S. Embassy in Tashkent holds a weekly English conversation club called the Chay Chat Club. The group gathers each Friday afternoon for a discussion led by a native English speaker. Topics vary, but tend to focus on American culture, policies and society or on issues of global importance.

Past topics have included Visas, Study in the U.S., Healthy Lifestyles, the Fourth of July, American Presidential Elections, the UN and NATO, Environmental Concerns, and Trafficking in Persons. The Embassy also provides current English-language articles that relate to each week's topic, so that participants can read more about the issue and practice their English even after the event is over.

Several Chay Chat presentations stick out vividly in participants' memories. Renowned expert Professor Philip Micklin spoke to Chay Chat participants about the shrinking Aral Sea while he was on a research visit to Uzbekistan in October.

In September President of DAVIS Communications Yvonne Davis helped audience members understand how they can



Felicia Wright shares with Uzbek students her experiences as an American teenager. (U.S. Embassy photo).

achieve their dreams by leading them through a group activity that challenged them to identify their fears and the most important goals in their lives. She then offered ideas on concrete steps they can take to overcome their fears and achieve their goals.

In December Returned Peace Corps Volunteers and U.S.



Former Peace Corps volunteers Stephanie and Richard Fitzmaurice speak to Chay Chat guests at a presentation devoted to International Volunteer Day in December. (U.S. Embassy photo)

Foreign Service Officers Stephanie and Richard Fitzmaurice celebrated International Volunteer Day with a presentation for the Chay Chat audience about the value of volunteering. They then split the audience members into groups and challenged them to make their own plans to volunteer in their communities. After loud and enthusiastic preparation, representatives of each group presented their projects, which included teaching at local orphanages, supporting the elderly, and providing job-search services and professional orientation for young professionals and new college graduates.

Once a month, usually on the last Friday of the month, the Chay Chat Club meets earlier in the afternoon in order to watch an American movie. Recent movies have included Philadelphia, It's a Wonderful Life, and A Beautiful Mind.

Not only do Chay Chat participants get to watch the movie, but they also get to learn more about the subject or issue that the movie highlights. Before they show each movie, members of the Embassy staff always hold a short quiz. They ask the audience questions that relate to the topic of the movie, and the audience member that answers the question correctly wins an English language book.

At the November showing of Philadelphia, which commemorated World AIDS Day, audience members learned about the new group of drugs that can effectively treat HIV and AIDS, ways that HIV can be transmitted and how to prevent themselves from becoming infected, and also how HIV or AIDS can be diagnosed.

The Chay Chat Club is held every Friday at the American Embassy at 16:00. If you would like to attend, you should call the Embassy at 120-5450 or email your full name and passport number to Tashkent-IRC@state.gov at least two days in advance to sign up. Movies are usually shown on the last Friday of the month at 1500. The procedure for reserving a spot for the movie is the same. In April, the Embassy will be showing the animated feature "Ice Age" to commemorate Earth Day, which falls on April 22.

New Educational Advising Center Workshops Available for Students



A group of students watch a video clip on U.S. college application process as a part of the presentation at the Educational Advising Center of the U.S. Embassy in Tashkent. (U.S. Embassy photo)

In October 2007, the Educational Advising Center (EAC) at the U.S. Embassy began providing consultation services to students who are interested in studying in the United States. Since it opened its doors, the EAC has already provided individual advising sessions to more than 120 students. By meeting one-on-one with the educational advisor, students can learn in detail about the university application process, the availability of financial aid, and other resources that provide information about various U.S. universities and their academic programs.

In addition to these individual advising sessions, the EAC recently began offering a variety of new workshops, seminars and presentations. Current workshop topics include Writing an Undergraduate Application Essay and Writing a Graduate Statement of Purpose. Additionally both graduate and undergraduate students are invited to attend a series of presentations on the process of applying to and being admitted to a U.S. university.

The EAC also offers a variety of other services. During a visit to the EAC, students can utilize many print resources that provide information about universities in the U.S. The advisor also shows students how to search for information on the internet using computers at the Information Resource Center (IRC), which is located next door to the EAC. The IRC also has the latest preparation books for numerous exams, including the TOEFL, GMAT, GRE, SAT, LSAT, and MCAT. For students that live far from Tashkent, the EAC periodically offers webchats or digital video conferences with American speakers, such as professors from U.S. universities or consuls at U.S. Embassies around the world. Most activities are held on a weekly basis.

Individuals that are interested in studying in the U.S. can also begin their research from any computer that has access to

the Internet by visiting the EducationUSA webpage at <http://www.educationusa.state.gov/>. This website offers numerous helpful resources that address a wide range of common questions about educational opportunities in the U.S., including undergraduate, graduate, specialized professional study, and short-term study. The website explains admissions processes, common standardized tests, the typical academic calendar, and the American grading system. The EducationUSA website also offers a useful feature called "Find a School" that allows a user to quickly search academic programs at thousands of colleges and universities to find those that match the individual's specific criteria. Finally, the website includes information and links to other websites on related topics, including living in the U.S., financial assistance, and visa information.

If you would like to visit the EAC, your first step should be to attend a presentation on "Applying to a U.S. University." To find out when presentations and workshops are offered, visit

<http://uzbekistan.usembassy.gov/advising>.

To register for presentations and workshops or to make an individual appointment to meet with the advisor, you should call the Embassy or e-mail Tashkent-Advising@state.gov. Advising appointments are available between 13:00 and 17:00, Monday through Thursday. Even if you are not in Tashkent, you can still take advantage of the EAC by calling the educational advisor by phone or sending an email with your questions. Send emails to Tashkent-Advising@state.gov, and the advisor will respond to your questions.

The Embassy's EAC is part of the worldwide network of EducationUSA centers that provide up-to-date information on the full spectrum of United States higher education opportunities for citizens of Uzbekistan. The EducationUSA center in Tashkent actively promotes United States higher education abroad by offering accurate, comprehensive, objective and timely information about educational opportunities in the United States and guidance to qualified individuals on how best to access those opportunities.

If you would like to receive weekly emails from the EAC with information about the center's services and other U.S. educational opportunities, please send an email with your name and email address to the educational advisor at

Tashkent-Advising@state.gov.

International Graduate Enrollment Increases at U.S. Universities



Sebastian Wickenburg, of Germany, left, and Pui-Wa Li, of Hong Kong, walk out of the International House of the University of California at Berkeley, California, Nov. 29, 2007. A recent report from the U.S. State Department said nearly 583,000 international students were enrolled during the 2006-2007 academic year, the second-highest total ever and the first significant increase since 2001-2002. (© AP Images)

International graduate enrollment at U.S. universities has grown substantially, increasing 7 percent from 2006 to 2007 -- the largest gain since 2002 -- according to a new study released November 5 by the Council of Graduate Schools (CGS).

Under the U.S. educational system, graduate students work toward master's, doctoral or other advanced degrees. The November 6 CGS study also reported that 87 percent of U.S. graduate school deans have participated in some sort of international outreach activity in the past two years, with almost half visiting foreign universities to build partnerships.

CGS President Debra Stewart said it is "encouraging to see graduate school deans taking such an active role to recruit highly qualified international students."

Total enrollment of students from India and China -- the countries with the greatest number of students in the United States -- rose 14 percent and 15 percent respectively, according to the CGS study.

First-time enrollment of students from the Middle East rose 12 percent, while total enrollment of students from the Middle East rose 5 percent. Because graduate degrees can take a long time to complete, increases in first-time enrollment can take several years to be fully reflected in total enrollment figures.

Enrollment figures for international graduate students increased 1 percent in 2006, while first-time enrollment figures were up 12 percent. The 7 percent gain reported in 2007 was accompanied by a 4 percent increase in first-time enrollment.

The State Department has taken a number of steps to expedite the processing of student visa applications, including adding new consular positions, negotiating extended reciprocity

agreements so that students are not required to apply for visas as frequently, and directing U.S. embassies and consulates to put student and exchange visitors at the head of the queue when scheduling visa interviews.

The number of student and exchange visitor visas issued in fiscal year 2006 rose 15 percent to an all-time high of 591,050, according to the State Department.

The United States is eager to welcome more international students and wants to provide more opportunities for financially disadvantaged students to attend U.S. colleges and universities, a State Department official told a congressional hearing in June.

Rather than visas, the biggest challenge for international students is the cost of higher education, said Thomas Farrell, deputy assistant secretary for academic programs in the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. Currently, 78 percent of international students rely on their families and personal resources, he said. Another problem is lack of English language ability, particularly among disadvantaged populations, Farrell told a House of Representatives subcommittee hearing June 29.

It is "an important strategic priority ... to provide educational opportunities to a broad and diverse segment of young people overseas, including women, minorities and those from financially disadvantaged backgrounds," he said.

In the 20th century, the United States became an educator of the world, according to a 2006 report by the National Science Foundation (NSF). Although international students earned less than 10 percent of all doctorates awarded in the United States in 1960, by 1999 they were earning more than one-third of all doctorates in the fields of science and engineering and 17 percent of doctorates in other fields, according to the report *U.S. Doctorates in the 20th Century*.

As for the fields of study in which international students enroll at the graduate level, total enrollment in business rose 10 percent, engineering 8 percent, life sciences and agriculture 3 percent, and arts and humanities 1 percent. There was no enrollment growth in physical and earth sciences, and in education enrollment fell 2 percent, according to CGS.

The CGS data are based on the responses of 172 graduate schools, including 76 percent of the 25 institutions with the largest international student enrollments.

The 2007 CGS International Graduate Admissions Survey (PDF, 12 pages) is available on the CGS Web site at http://www.cgsnet.org/portals/0/pdf/r_intlenr107_III.pdf.

Only Best Foreign Students Get U.S. Scholarships, Educator Says

But U.S. colleges and universities remain desirable place to study

One of the greatest challenges for foreign students wishing to study in the United States is cost, but unless a student has excellent qualifications, proficiency in English and an original, honest and thoughtful application essay, he or she will likely not get a scholarship from a U.S. university, says educator Philip G. Altbach.

Scholarship funds are limited -- not just for international students but for U.S. students as well -- and hard to get, Altbach said in a November 7 Webchat.

Altbach is the director of Boston College's Center for International Higher Education and professor of higher education at the college's Lynch School of Education.

He said he agrees that the English language proficiency test -- known as TOEFL (test of English as a foreign language) -- is too expensive and often not conveniently located in some countries, but added that such a test is necessary for all students from abroad, even for short or summer courses of study.

Nearly 600,000 international students are studying in U.S. universities, and although there are students from other nations in all fields of study in the United States, the largest numbers are in business management and engineering programs, Altbach said. Most foreign students in the United States are studying at the graduate level -- for master's or doctorate degrees, but there are some undergraduates working toward a bachelor's degree, he added.

Despite the challenges to studying in the United States, the number of foreign students will continue to rise because the United States "is a destination that is desired by many in other countries," according to Altbach.

The United States welcomes increasing numbers of international students and is working to find new opportunities for first-rate but financially disadvantaged students to attend U.S. colleges and universities, a State Department official told a congressional hearing in June.

Thomas Farrell, deputy assistant secretary for academic programs in the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, told a House of Representatives subcommittee June 29 that 78 percent of international students rely on their families and personal resources to attend schools in the United States.

Although the U.S. higher education system is stable and institutions tend to change slowly, Altbach said in the webchat, there have been some important changes that continue to make studying in the United States desirable for many people. For example, because universities report on the effectiveness of their various

programs, they are paying greater attention to teaching and student learning outcomes.

Altbach said distance learning is a small but growing part of U.S. education that might be an alternative for foreign students unable to travel to the United States. Many universities offer online degrees, particularly in such fields as information technology and business management, he said.

But he cautioned that one needs to check the credentials of a particular provider of the distance degree program because "there is no really good monitoring of quality of such programs." He said that distance learning programs are expanding rapidly, but "it is buyer beware."

Altbach said students also should check that a university they wish to enroll in is an accredited institution of learning, which means a school whose standards have been certified by one of the recognized accrediting institutions. "A degree from an unaccredited university is not worth anything," he said.

A database of accredited postsecondary institutions and programs is available on the U.S. Department of Education Web site at <http://www.ope.ed.gov/accreditation>.

More information on resources for students interested in studying in the United States is available on the State Department's EducationUSA Web site at <http://educationusa.state.gov/>.

A transcript of Altbach's discussion and information on previous and upcoming webchats are available on America.gov's Webchat Station at <http://www.america.gov/st/washfile-english/2007/November/20071107134623xjsnommis0.402981.html>.



Exchange student Miroo Kim, center, of South Korea, is seen with other students at the Harrisburg Academy in Wormleysburg, Pennsylvania. In 2007, the United States issued a record number of student and exchange visitor visas, reversing a drop in student and other visa applications after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. (© AP Images)

U.S. Economy Ranks as World's Most Competitive

Innovation, market efficiency contribute most to U.S. standing



In this photo provided by TechNet, Microsoft chairman Bill Gates answers audience questions during the third annual TechNet Innovation Summit at Stanford University, Nov. 15, 2006 in Stanford, CA. The TechNet Innovation Summit brings together America's top business leaders to discuss the state of innovation and public policies needed to sustain U.S. competitiveness in the global economy. (© AP Images)

The U.S. economy has regained its ranking as the world's most competitive, largely as a result of its efficient markets and corporate innovation, according to a major report.

Following the United States were Switzerland, Denmark, Sweden and Germany in the 2007 edition of The Global Competitiveness Report, published by the World Economic Forum (WEF), an international research and policy-support group. In 2006, the U.S. economy ranked Number 6 in overall competitiveness.

"The efficiency of the country's markets, the sophistication of its business community, the impressive capacity for technological innovation that exists within a first-rate system of universities and research centers, all contribute to making the United States a highly competitive economy," said economist Xavier Sala-i-Martin, a co-editor of the report.

However, the report warns that macroeconomic imbalances, including current account deficit, and some weaknesses of U.S. institutions "pose a risk to the country's overall competitiveness potential."

In the 2007 edition, 131 countries were ranked on the quality of institutions, infrastructure, macroeconomic stability, health and primary education, higher education and training, goods and labor market efficiency, financial market sophistication, technological development, market size, and business sophistication and innovation.

The United States scored high on innovation, labor market efficiency, and higher education and training. The ranking

was based on publicly available data and a survey of more than 11,000 business leaders around the world. The poll pinpointed tax rates and tax regulations as the most problematic areas of the U.S. business environment.

Economist Michael Porter, another co-author of the report, said the index helps governments identify policy areas ripe for improvements and provides motivation for reforms.

Many private-sector and government economists said the resilience the U.S. economy has shown in recent years in the face of many shocks such as the 2001 terrorist attacks, corporate scandals and high oil prices can be attributed to its competitiveness, particularly the openness and flexibility of its financial markets.

In October, U.S. Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson said he believes that with these qualities the U.S. economy will be able to weather another crisis -- the slump in the housing and mortgage markets and the related credit crunch.

His optimism was supported by an October 31 Commerce Department report that said the U.S. economy grew 3.9 percent in the third quarter. The news surprised many market observers, who expected a slower growth rate.

The chairman of the President's Council of Economic Advisers, Edward Lazear, called the growth rate "quite remarkable," in view of the fact that the housing market problems had begun to affect the economy during the third quarter.



Container ships are loaded and unloaded at a port in Bayonne, N.J. The Global Competitiveness Report 2007-2008 ranks the U.S. economy as the world's most competitive, largely as a result of its efficient markets and corporate innovation. (© AP Images)

Trade Spurs Economic Growth Among Poorest Countries

World Bank experts see correlation between trade liberalization and GDP growth

Developing countries participating in liberal trade have enjoyed an average annual economic growth rate of 5 percent during the most recent wave of globalization from the 1990s to present.

“China and Vietnam are two good examples of countries whose growth rates accelerated after they joined the WTO (World Trade Organization) and further liberalized their trade regimes,” said David Dollar in an e-mail to America.gov. Dollar is a World Bank country director for China and co-author of the book *Globalization, Growth and Poverty*. Dollar’s World Bank colleague, Paul Collier, is the other co-author.

Dollar said that, as those countries became more open to trade, they created confidence and attracted foreign investment and technology.



A man opens the back door to a Chery vehicle on a car lot of a Chery auto dealer in Beijing, China, July 4, 2007. Chrysler Group signed a deal with China’s biggest automaker, Chery, to produce cars for export to the United States and elsewhere in the first attempt by a major automaker to use China as a manufacturing base for world markets. (© AP Images)



Vietnamese workers fold and prepare men’s shirts for export to the United States. (© AP Images)

The *Economist* magazine predicts real GDP growth to average almost 8 percent for Vietnam and 9 percent for China annually over the coming five years.

Dollar’s and Collier’s book focuses on what happened during the 1990s in what the authors call the “new globalizing” developing countries. The book states that during the 1990s, the rate of growth in per capita gross domestic product (GDP) for those countries increased by 5 percent annually. It is a trend that has continued during the early 2000s.

The authors attribute recent economic success in many large, developing countries to advances in transportation and communications and to the fact that these countries opened up to foreign trade and investment. One result: manufactured goods rose from less than 25 percent of developing country exports in 1980 to more than 80 percent by 1998.

Dollar and Collier name Brazil, Hungary, India, Malaysia, Mexico, the Philippines and Thailand, as well as China, among the countries taking the strongest pro-trade measures

in recent years and point out that 24 developing countries doubled their trade levels from 1980 to 2000. Countries with liberal trade policies have seen faster GDP growth than countries not participating in globalization, according to the authors.

The book notes that the more globalized developing countries are not drawn from those that were higher-income developing countries to begin with, whose economies tended to rely on export of natural resources. In fact, the more globalized developing countries were among the poorer countries.

The new globalizers cut import tariffs significantly. They also established reliable property rights, liberal investment climates and strong rule of law. Since 1980, they have made strides in basic education. The average years of primary schooling for adults increased from 2.4 years to 3.8 years in the fast-growth developing countries.

“The spread of basic education tends to reduce inequality and raise health standards, as well as being complementary to the process of raising productivity,” Dollar and Collier conclude. This is important, the authors say, because while there is economic pressure for migration among countries, “compared to 100 years ago, the world is much less globalized when it comes to labor flows.”

New Educational Advising Center Opens at the U.S. Embassy in Tashkent



The Educational Advising Center offers the following services free of charge:

- general information about U.S. Education
- individual advising in areas of study and course descriptions
- test preparation materials for SAT, TOEFL, GRE and GMAT that can be used during consultation hours
- U.S. college selection database
- supporting reference materials
- financial aid resources
- application guides
- guides to Distance Learning

The center is supported by an educational advisor, a reference library, and educational software, all of which are geared to meeting the various needs of students that want to study in the United States.

Advising hours are by appointment from 13:00-17:00, Monday to Thursday. To schedule an appointment, please call 120-5450 between 9:30 to 12:00 Monday through Friday or e-mail

Tashkent-Advising@state.gov.



A sample of the materials offered by the newly-opened Educational Advising Center at the U.S. Embassy in Tashkent. (U.S. Embassy photo)



Embassy of the United States of America

3 Moyqorqon Street
5th Block, Yunusobod District
Tashkent, 700093
Republic of Uzbekistan

Phone: (371) 120-5450
Consular Section: (371) 120-4718, 120-4719
Fax: (371) 120-6335

Website: <http://uzbekistan.usembassy.gov>
Email: dostlik@usembassy.uz