Breaking news: Nuclear Reactor accident in Iran

A massive explosion in the nuclear plant rocked the region of the city of Bushehr, Iran yesterday. The newly built reactor of Iran’s highly controversial plant was completely destroyed causing huge radioactive contamination in the nearest area. Although there are no reports of any victims, the tragedy undermines the idea of switching to nuclear energy all over the world in the future.

Bushehr, city in on the southeastern coast of Iran, has been a home for Iran’s only nuclear plant for nearly half a century. Although main sources of energy in Iran are still gas and oil, Bushehr was important also because of other reasons. Most of Western politician suspect that Iran tried to built nuclear weapon using materials from the plant. Yesterday’s explosions spoils that plans.

There have been no statement about reasons of explosions yet but nuclear specialists think that there were some problems with reactor’s main engine. According to our sources, Russian designers, who worked on the reactor, might even knew that the engine was dangerous in some conditions but intentionally concealed this information. “The advanced technique used to build the reactor hadn’t been tested before” one of senior specialists in European Energy Agency said to “The Daily Compass”.

“The tragedy shows we should give up all nuclear programs and switch to green energy” said Greenpeace, a pro-environmental NGO, in a special statements. But world leaders were more reserved: “That’s only a proof that on such sensitive issues like nuclear energy with need to cooperate all together” said president of France, Nicolas Sarkozy. George Bush who spends his holiday on his rancho in Texas now said that “whole world must put the pressure on other countries, like North Korea, to stop their nuclear programs and prevent tragedies in the future”.

Analysts are sure that this accident may prove further destabilization in the whole Middle East regions. Iran’s neighbors have already expressed their concern about the issue. There is also high risk that due to the explosion waters of the Persian Gulf will be contaminated which might develop into the humanitarian crisis, as the gulf was the very important source of water for the region. “Politicians now will have to answer the question: how to prevent further accidents like this” the leaders of Saudi Arabia said in a statement. Everyone is still awaiting for the president of Iran, Mahmud Ahmadi-Nejad to give a speech.

“Nuclear is the only game in town if you are serious about cutting greenhouse gases” argues Ian Hore-Lacy, spokesman for the World Nuclear Association, an industry lobbying group.
Background

Iran’s interest in nuclear technology dates back to the U.S. Atoms for Peace program. In the 1950s, the Shah initiated Iran’s nuclear research program and developed an ambitious plan to produce 23,000MW from nuclear power by the end of the century.

Early progress was not steady, and the nuclear program was stalled by the Islamic revolution in 1979, then the eight-year war with Iraq through most of the 1980s. The program was developed during 90’s and in XXI century. Recently European Union imposed economic sanctions on Iran for developing its nuclear program.

EU politicians suspected that Iran tried to build nuclear bomb even though Iranian’s authorities claimed they developed it for “peaceful reasons”.

Vision and Action...

…was exactly what I have seen among us 145 representatives. For we are not only representing our own cultures and countries of origins successfully, but at the same time we demonstrate the perspective of the very different countries we are representing.

145 people that have been able to broaden their view here, have had a unique chance to through the eyes of other’s eyes and to learn how to actively defend perspectives which are very different from one’s own positions.

On the other hand, there have been some things less easy to get used to. The ‘informal’ settings is actual rather formal to some of us. Mr. Molina encouraged us in his speech on Wednesday to use the advantages of our youth and freedom from real political burdens behind the discussions. This excellent advice should have been listened to with more attention.

It has actually been remarkable as well, how this afternoon’s very credible role-playing and the way delegates tried to really stick to their country’s position. Still, we should remember to leave space for creative and innovative proposals.

Regina Martinez Enjuto, Vietnam
Breaking news: Nuclear Reactor Accident in Iran

Make a Comment, risk analysis.

The role of nuclear energy in Europe

Especially in recent times, nuclear power has been a swing topic for politicians in many European countries. Many politicians know that if they’re going against the stream on this issue, nuclear power can cost them the vote. Opinions on nuclear power vary hugely from country to country. And still, in Europe nuclear energy remains one of these issues which are controversial almost only in the political arena. Yet in fact, France as the largest nuclear power consumer receives 78% of its electricity through nuclear power, and spread across Europe there are 197 working nuclear reactors.

Case Study – Comparing two opposite stances on nuclear energy in Europe:

Germany with its right winged government under chancellor Angela Merkel has tried to push the widely unpopular nuclear energy, and faced major difficulties pushing this agenda as there were several problems and accidents in nuclear reactors last year.

Nuclear power on the other hand ranks highest on France’s favorite energy sources. Despite re-occurring minor accidents, since the oil crisis of 1973 it remains relatively unquestioned by the public and politicians alike. “In France, unlike America, nuclear energy is accepted, even popular.” (Jon Palfreman). Then it is no surprise that it provides 87.5% of France’s power production.

This huge discrepancy between the approaches to nuclear power is not surprising when it comes down to the facts. Previously, nuclear energy was definitely seen as an environmentally unstable, not only because of the disposal of the highly radioactive waste, but also because of dwindling Uranium resources. Now, in 2006, it seemed as if Europe’s anti-nuclear tide was turning, as the construction of nuclear reactors began. The discussions on green energy have brought the positives of nuclear (practically no CO2 emissions) to the foreground. It is particularly safety, though, which remains a key issue. The accident in Iran will spark a totally new dimension to the normally more security related term “nuclear”. Until the Sustainable Development issue has reached a certain state of maturity sometime in the far future, we are dependent on nuclear power as the cleanest of the ‘dirty’ energy sources of today. Iran and Europe, the East and the West, are finally thrown in one melting pot over the dangers of mismanagement of nuclear plants. Looking at the accidents each country can possibly face while handling nuclear reactors, as demonstrated above in the cases of Germany and Czech Republic, we in the West have no reason to be pointing the accusatory finger at Iran for this, admittedly very dangerous, mishap. Iran should be observed at the way it handles this crisis internally. It would indeed be ironical if it were over this that the “Axis of Evil” could be overcome, but the world would welcome a high profile, competent and international discussion about making nuclear energy safer.

Helping Asia Fill the Energy Gap

1) Asia is the only region in the world where electricity generating capacity and specifically nuclear power is growing significantly.

2) In East and South Asia there are over 111 nuclear power reactors in operation, 21 under construction and plans to build about a further 150.

3) The greatest growth in nuclear generation is expected in China, Japan, South Korea and India.

------- World Nuclear Association, as at August, 2008

In last year’s ASEAN Summit (November 18-22, 2007), a declaration on safeguarding the environment and the use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes was agreed by all ASEAN members. As the rest of the world tries to ease off on consumption, with environmental concerns in mind, Asian electricity demand is growing rapidly. The continent could not have picked a tougher time to grow, but growth has put new requirements on infrastructure and services, including power. With the oil and gas prices hitting record highs, Asian nations have started looking towards nuclear power to fill the energy gap, with four countries leading the pack – China, India, Japan and South Korea. However, although categorized as ‘renewable’ resources, the supplies of uranium, on which nuclear power depends, are strictly limited. Rising worldwide demand for uranium can only rocket prices causing even more problems for Asian countries.

After billions of dollars invested worldwide, nuclear energy is still normally 20% to 50% more expensive to produce than energy from coal is. The latter might be followed by greenhouse gas taxes, which are likely to increase the price of coal closer to its ‘real’ costs, but nuclear also has its hidden expenses – often ignored when investment decisions are made. Invisible costs include decommissioning and waste disposal and the perennial safety and security fears that have not yet been fully addressed anywhere in the world. In Asia, particularly, many regions suffer from frequent earthquakes with the occasional tsunami.

Nuclear stations will also form a prime terrorist target, with either hardware or software attacks. It is true that nuclear energy has positive advantages for Asian countries, to some extent fill the energy gap. But nuclear shouldn’t be the only choice for clean renewable energy. It would be interesting to see how far the plans for nuclear power generation fructify on this continent.
Voices of the People

It’s all about Kimchi

안녕하세요 dear Daily Compass,

you posted really interesting letter written by the man of a unique name (Günther Gratiss), and a unique brain, yesterday. I fully agree with his wise words about the deadly impact of the terrible habit of ethanol consummation. Boozing, you know. At the end, Gunter recommends that: “We have to put a stop to this cult of the poisonous golden nectar! I call for an Oktoberfest boycott.”

But is it really necessary?

The answer is: NO!

Definitely not from the perspective that often stays neglected, the Asian one. If European listened to our wise advices more often, their live could have been much better. We have the solution, just keep reading!

How is it possible then that our nation’s liver still survives? How is it possible that even though we all drink like hell, we have become one the world largest economies?

Let me introduce you Kimchi!

Unique recipe passed from the generation to generation. Its great powers not only allow us to neglect the impact of drinking, but also prevented the outburst of Bird Flu in our country. You, people, you really don’t need to boycott this Oktoberfest. Such an inspiring event it is, as well as all the others.

All you have to do is to plant cabbage! Build Kimchi factories! And listen to us from time to time! Live will be much easier, believe me!

All the best

Park Chung-hee
Soul, South Korea

The Forgotten Country...

Emotionally hitting the computer keys to type this (“I type with conviction”), Frederik Ponjac gave us an exclusive briefing on his countries reaction to being forgotten by its big neighbor:

“The delegation from Japan has been quite impressed by the smooth organization, and thankful for the warm welcome our gracious hosts have shown us. It is therefore with a sad heart that we were confronted with a troubling incident that has sown doubt and worries amongst our delegation and probably beyond. The chair’s apparent “oversight” of Japan during the opening session is a major breach of decorum. Fearing being silenced our worried head of delegation was forced to resort to waving his hands and flag to attract the chair’s attention.

Having to fight for the right to speak in such a fashion is a very worrisome precedent in a forum founded upon open debate amongst peers. A struggle to ensure that one’s voice is heard can only but weakens by the foundations of any future condition to the detriment of the ASEM process as a whole. The Japan delegation will consequently remain vigilant that the chair plays its moderating role with equity and that all sovereign delegations are given equal space. “

Finally, to illustrate this story adequately, we incited the Japanese PM to temporarily remove his flag from the plenary room. All legal issues on this matter should please be discussed with the Daily Compass.

Korean Delicacy

Kimchi, also spelled gimchi or kimchee, is a traditional Korean fermented dish made of vegetables with varied seasonings, most commonly referring to the spicy baechu variety. Kimchi is the most common banchan, or side dish eaten at every Korean meal with rice. Kimchi is also a common ingredient and combined with other ingredients to make dishes such as kimchi stew (kimchi jjigae) and kimchi fried rice (kimchi bokkeumbap). Kimchi is so common in Korea cuisine that the Korea Aerospace Research Institute (KARI) developed space kimchi to accompany the first Korean astronaut to the Russian-manned space ship Soyuz.
The Pillars

Opening Ceremony

After months of expectations, the FUN – Model ASEM 2008 finally started in Beijing on 25th September, 2008. More than 140 youth leaders from Asia and Europe gathered at the report hall located in Guidu Hotel, addressing their concerns towards this year’s Summit theme – Vision and Action: towards a Win-Win Solution. Mr. Liu Jieyi, Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs, P.R.C.; Mr. Nicolas Chapuis, Deputy Head of Mission, French Embassy in Beijing; Amb. Nguyen Guoc Khanh, Deputy Executive Director of Asia-Europe Foundation; Mr. Lu Yongzheng, head of All-China Youth Federation and Mr. Wei Shen, President of ASEFUAN attend the opening ceremony and delivered their speeches. The official Model ASEM Conference was opened by Chairman from People’s Republic of China, followed by country statement session where heads of delegations indicated their awareness upon the topical issues on the global agenda, i.e., climate change, human rights, security cooperation, etc.

Political Pillar

The first political pillar was really fruitful, delegations came up with many new ideas and plans for strengthening the activities of ASEM. Although few delegations were missing, level of the debate was pretty high. During the opening statements a very clear division between European and Asian countries turned up. Countries from Europe stressed the security and terrorism matters while Asian countries emphasized environmental issues rather, especially the global warming, which in further debate developed into a “real hot” discussion. Although the debate was very interesting few delegates found other activities to pass the time. Some were eating, others exchange small letters. Even tough few of them managed to come up with very interesting idea. Pakistan proposed having a “faith day” which would allow people to better understand other religions. Singapore and Brunei proposed to pass more power and money to Asia-Europe Foundation dealing for instance with multicultural issues and education. According to those delegates it’s better to focus on organizations already existing than creating another one. Few countries referred to recent conflict in Georgia condemning Russia’s policy in Caucasus.

Cultural Pillar

The discussions of the Cultural Pillar yesterday at the ASEM 2008 in Beijing was, and there is no better way to put it, dragging and unnecessarily formal. The ball did get rolling though, if only very slowly and with the help of some attentive Ministers actually genuinely interested in reaching informed and grounded conclusions. The topics themselves, educational exchanges, cultural preservation and the infamous SD (Sustainable Development). It seems some of the country representatives suffer from memory loss as to what they themselves, or their predecessor, they had already signed at previous ASEM summits. Fortunately the Mongolian and Philippine delegations knew their facts thoroughly and were able to point out these embarrassing errors. The most noticeable lack of a reality check was when details of a possible ASEM exchange programme were discussed, something admittedly very interesting to us at this year’s ASEM. Sadly though it was pointed out in the last 25 minutes of the first round of discussions that such a programme already exists. More logical would have been to talk about ways of enhancing its visibility for prospective exchange students, or to discuss ways of innovating this idea. The excellent idea brought forward by Belgium, to start a Teacher to Teacher exchange in order to a Teacher to Teacher exchange in order to increase intercultural awareness, sadly fell under the table more or less unnoticed.

Quotes of the Day

“This time I’m meditating on consciousness…” – Dominik Holter, Mongolia

“Where’s your veil? It’s not all about freedom, there are also rules.” Gregor Novak, Malaysia, to his fellow (female) delegate Zsuzsanna Varı-Kovacs

“Prepare your smiles!” – member of the organizing staff while taking the group photo

“I’m looking for Romain, and not just because he’s pretty.” – anonymous delegate

“And next, we have Myanmar” … “the UNION of Myanmar” – Arthur “stripy” Minsat

“My friends call me sleeping beauty”, Frederik Ponjack (Japan), the sleepy guy from yesterday – can we please all be your friends?

Cultural Pillar

“Let’s tell the Economic Pillar to develop the economies.” – this advice given Wan Ruoying is worth its weight in gold in terms of originality.

“But we can discuss this privately!” – the emotional Indonesian delegate Jaime Reis is not sure anymore who exactly he is representing...

Economic Pillar

“Copyright is overused by its owners!” – Aruas Grazulis during the discussion on intellectual property

“Malta is not a great power, but it is a great partner.” – Cao Shiyu makes Malta’s assets clear

“A book on the ASEM member states’ culture. Now that would be very sustainable.” – (Cambodia). We identify a slight over usage of this word which’s meaning is becoming increasingly unclear as the ASEM progresses.
“We were really dissatisfied with the weather during the opening day of the ASEM. Don’t tell anyone, but we fired two clouds disintegrating missiles to improve the environment for the participants of ASEM. Our sky should stay clear ever since,” admitted Chinese official who doesn’t want to be named.

United we stand

At 7:00, (almost) all participants of the ASEM gathered on the pitch for a decent warm-up! “If you have this pencil on the table, the blue part symbolises the flag of the European Union, the red one stands for the Chinese colour of happiness and luck,” said Ramon Molina during his opening speech. It is sad to see that the “lucky” ones broke the pattern.

Breaking news

Anybody seen my teddy-bear?

Miss ASEM

Sometimes wisdom isn’t everything. In that case you have to follow your instincts. That’s where the true wisdom manifests itself. The title for the Miss ASEM goes to (see for yourself).