

## Blair wins support for G8 plans

Tony Blair and Silvio Berlusconi have agreed on plans to increase aid to Africa and tackle climate change, they said after holding talks in Rome.

The UK and Italian prime ministers met as Mr Blair began a diplomatic offensive ahead of July's G8 summit.

Mr Berlusconi said they had "common views" on the G8 agenda. Mr Blair said the talks had been "constructive".

Pressing for a joint world aid plan, he argued Africa was the only continent to "go backwards" over the last 30 years.

### **What's happening in Africa today is something that, if it happened in any other continent in the world, there would be outrage**

Tony Blair

This is the final phase of talks before the G8 industrialised nations meet at Gleneagles in Scotland. The UK is currently president of the G8 group and will chair the summit.

Mr Blair will also visit the US, Russia, France and Germany.

He will also hold talks via a video link with Canada and Japan.

The trip comes as environmentalists said an alleged leaked document showed real action on climate change was being blocked by the US.

### **'Sound plans'**

EU development ministers this week agreed to double aid to poorer nations. Under the deal, the EU's aid will be worth an extra £14bn annually in five years' time.

Some Italian opposition politicians question whether the country's financial problems will mean its target will be hit.

But Mr Berlusconi said: "I have assured Mr Blair of my personal support and my country's support in favour of what I know is going to be a very reasonable, sound and viable set of proposals."

Mr Blair said Africa's plight had been on the G8 agenda for a long time but the new plans combined aid and debt with governance and conflict.

Mr Blair later joined rock star campaigner Bob Geldof for a seminar on Africa.

He told the seminar: "What's happening in Africa today is something that, if it happened in any other continent in the world, there would be outrage.

"It would be on our television screens every night and there would be immense sustained pressure on world leaders to act."

### **Rebate reform?**

Mr Blair and Mr Berlusconi's talks also included Iraq, Afghanistan and the Middle East.

And the UK prime minister said the European economy had to modernise as it faced intense competition from countries like China and India.

The two leaders also discussed European Union funding - and are thought to have touched on the annual rebate the UK won for its contribution in 1984.

Mr Berlusconi said: "I think that at the end of the day one might also modify the current system with respect to rebates."

### **Climate change 'leak'**

Earlier this month BBC News learned that the US Government was unlikely to accept Mr Blair's three-point plan for a new deal on climate change.

A document purporting to be a draft communique for the G8's climate change talks has now been published on the Carroll.org.uk weblog.

Downing Street refused to say whether or not the leak was genuine.

But Friends of the Earth said it showed the G8 was relying on a "failed recipe" instead of using radical solutions.

The document says climate change is a "serious long-term threat" which could affect the whole world and calls for "urgent action".

But it does not include specific targets or timetables for reducing greenhouse gases.

Story from BBC NEWS:

[http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/uk\\_news/politics/4585273.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/uk_news/politics/4585273.stm)

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## Global Warming Will Increase World Hunger

*May 27, 2005 — By Philip Pullella, Reuters*

ROME — Global warming is likely to significantly diminish food production in many countries and greatly increase the number of hungry people, the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization said Thursday.

FAO said in a report that food distribution systems and their infrastructure would be disrupted and that the severest impact would likely be in sub-Saharan African countries.

"There is strong evidence that global climate is changing and that the social and economic costs of slowing down global warming and of responding to its impacts will be considerable," said the report by FAO's Committee on World Food Security.

Many scientists fear rising temperatures, blamed mainly on heat-trapping gases from burning fossil fuels, will melt ice caps, raise sea levels by almost a metre (three feet) by the end of this century and bring more floods, droughts and storms.

Global warming would increase the amount of land classified as being either arid or insufficiently moist in the developing world.

In Africa the amount of this type of harsh land could increase by as much as 90 million hectares by 2008, an area nearly four times the size of Britain.

Changes in temperature, rainfall as well as an increase in the number of so-called "extreme weather events" such as floods will bring with them potentially devastating effects.

The world suffered 600 floods in the past two and a half years, which claimed the lives of about 19,000 people and caused \$25 billion in damages, excluding December's devastating tsunami in southeast Asia that killed more than 180,000.

FAO said scientific studies showed that global warming would lead to an 11 percent decrease in rainfed land in developing countries and in turn a serious decline in cereal production.

"Sixty-five developing countries, representing more than half of the developing world's total population in 1995, will lose about 280 million tons of potential cereal production as a result of climate change," FAO said.

The effect of climate change on agriculture could increase the number of people at risk of hunger, particularly in countries already saddled with low economic growth and high malnourishment levels.

"In some 40 poor, developing countries, with a combined population of 2 billion ... production losses due to climate change may drastically increase the number of undernourished people, severely hindering progress in combating poverty and food insecurity," the report said.



from the May 27, 2005 edition - <http://www.csmonitor.com/2005/0527/p06s02-wosc.html>

## On India's coast, a plea for jobs

**Bill Clinton, the UN's special envoy for tsunami recovery, arrives Friday in south India where more than 6,000 died.**

**By Nachammai Raman** | Correspondent of The Christian Science Monitor

**NAGAPATTINAM, INDIA** - Notions on the street about who Bill Clinton is range from a prince to a curious white man coming to see the tsunami-affected region. For those abroad who are more familiar with the former US president, his visit here as the UN special envoy for tsunami recovery has refocused attention on India's worst-hit district.

Five months on, the major issues tsunami survivors grapple with are the lack of permanent housing and regular employment, elements crucial to rebuilding their lives. Most survivors are still staying in temporary shelters, eking out a living on the money and supplies doled out by the government and other nongovernmental agencies.

NGOs have brought \$103 million in relief to the region. And \$92 million of construction work is planned - an expected boon for local people looking for work.

But handouts are becoming scarce as the government and aid agencies move on to the recovery phase - a transition that has been hampered by poor planning, say aid workers and residents.

"The government was unprepared for such a disaster. Now, they're learning through trial and error," says R. Somasundaram of Avvai Village Welfare Society, an NGO working in Nagapattinam.

According to Mr. Somasundaram, Indian officials did not plan for the land they would need for permanent homes before they allocated land to temporary shelters, and now there is a land crunch. They also did not plan accurately for the length of the transition period which, he says, is why the subsistence money has stopped even though people's livelihoods have been ensured.

Until May, the government was giving out an allowance of Rs. 1,000, about \$23, per month to each affected family.

"We've been living on the tsunami relief that was given," says V. Vasantha, whose farming family owns two acres of agricultural land spoiled by seawater. "We don't know what we're going to do next month."

But, district collector J. Radhakrishnan, the highest government official in Nagapattinam district, says that the end to relief measures is not permanent. "There is a proposal to extend it for another month or two if needed."

He says relief measures have been stopped because the government wants to discourage dependency on handouts. "More and more people have to go back to their livelihoods."

Walter Gillis Peacock, a professor at Texas A&M University who is in Nagapattinam to develop a social vulnerability map, says that what looks like dependency on handouts might simply be the lack of capital resources. He says that people in the US can recover from disasters more quickly because they have insurance, savings, and other reserves. "It's a market-based recovery process. Here [in Nagapattinam] we're dealing with a different set of contingencies," he says.

Fisherman R. Harikrishnan is anxious because he has not been able to take out the boat loan he is eligible for. He now is a work hand on somebody else's boat, but he says he does not have sufficient sea skills because he has always been a boss on land.

Somasundaram says the government reneged on promises to replace fishing boats. "First they said they would replace all the boats," he says. "Then they said they would repair them. Then they said they would allow a subsidy of 35 percent."

The district collector notes however that the fish trade has picked up. "They're doing 50 percent of what they used to do," says Mr. Radhakrishnan.

Farmers, meanwhile, are strapped by the damage to their lands. With 1.3 million hectares of cultivable land, agriculture is the mainstay of the district.

M. Revathi, an agricultural activist, thinks farmers didn't get as much attention as the fishing community because they lost far fewer lives. "But there was twice as much loss to property," she says. Some 5,000 hectares of agricultural land has been spoiled by seawater.

Ranvir Prasad, additional collector in the district, says the government has earmarked \$287 worth of materials and reclamation work per hectare of agricultural land spoiled by the tsunami.

"People came and took soil samples. They said the soil was saline, but they haven't done anything yet," says S. Subbulakshmi, a farmer's wife. According to her, the yields are bad for the time and money invested because the soil is no longer fertile. "We planted cucumber, but the crop isn't good," she says.

Her family, however, will plant rice in the coming monsoon season to try their luck. "We would have preferred for the government to have helped with our land than to give us handouts. Our land is what we can live on forever," she says.

[Full HTML version of this story which may include photos, graphics, and related links](#)

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## **BBC NEWS**

### **UK 'crippling Africa healthcare'**

**The UK is crippling sub-Saharan Africa's healthcare system by poaching its staff, UK doctors have warned.**

With the UK taking over the chair of the G8 in July, there is an ideal opportunity to stop the brain drain from poor to rich countries, they said.

The UK should encourage more home-grown doctors and limit the time period that overseas recruits can train and work in the country, they told the Lancet.

Financially compensating nations for lost staff will not work, they warned.

#### **Brain drain**

Nor will strategies that split the training of healthcare staff between developed and developing countries, according to Dr John Eastwood and his colleagues from St George's Medical School in London.

#### **Industrialised countries like America and Britain must recognise that they have some responsibility for this crisis**

Dr Edwin Borman of the British Medical Association

He said: "One basic measure would be an agreement in consultation, with the World Health Organization, to establish a basis in developed countries for minimum annual numbers of health professionals in training.

"This would help to reduce developed country reliance on the investment in training made by developing countries."

#### **Ethics**

The UK does have an ethical code which means it will not actively recruit from certain developing countries, which includes sub-Saharan Africa.

However, healthcare professionals from these countries are free to apply for jobs in the UK.

In 2003, 5,880 UK work permits were approved for health and medical personnel from South Africa, 2,825 from Zimbabwe, 1,510 from Nigeria and 850 from Ghana.

### **Push and pull factors**

#### **PUSH AWAY FROM AFRICA**

Lack of postgraduate training opportunities

Poorly funded work facilities

Lack of work posts

Low pay

Civil unrest

#### **PULL TOWARDS UK**

Training and career opportunities

Attraction of centres of medical excellence

Better pay and working conditions

Availability of posts

Although the UK government says it is working to create more home-grown doctors to staff the NHS and bring down waiting times after decades of under-resourcing, it still relies heavily on healthcare professionals from overseas.

Nearly a third of the doctors practising in the UK were trained overseas.

In comparison, only 5% of doctors in Germany and France are not home grown.

Dr Edwin Borman, chairman of the BMA's International Committee, said: "Shortages of doctors and nurses are having a devastating effect in the developing world.

"Sub-Saharan Africa alone needs around a million more healthcare workers, and unless the situation improves drastically rates of HIV will spiral, disability from childhood disease will rise, and thousands more lives will be lost.

"Industrialised countries like America and Britain must recognise that they have some responsibility for this crisis.

"At least the UK now has an ethical recruitment code, and we hope other countries will follow suit - but we also need to remove the financial barriers we have imposed on developing countries which are preventing them from investing in basic healthcare and training."

These calls were echoed by the World Medical Association.

### **Progress**

#### **Number of physicians per 100,000 patients in 2004**

France - 329

UK - 166

South Africa - 69

Nigeria - 27

Ghana - 9

Zimbabwe - 5.7

Source: World Health Organization

Health Minister Lord Warner acknowledged that Britain had in the past relied too much on overseas doctors but said the government was now expanding the numbers of medical school places so it could train more.

"We are probably the most advanced developed country in this area," he told the BBC Radio 4 Today programme.

"We have got a code of ethical recruitment for the NHS to try to stop recruiting people from countries that have scarce specialties and can't afford to lose staff and includes very much sub-Saharan Africa.

"Through our International Development Department we are putting investment into these countries themselves to help them train and to pay more to their doctors and nurses to keep them there."

The Conservatives said they would use Aid budgets to support health systems in developing countries to help solve the problem.

The Liberal Democrats said the G8 countries should be working towards an international agreement to limit the number of nurses and doctors being recruited from vulnerable countries.

Story from BBC NEWS:

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/health/4582283.stm>

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## UN health agency concerned over rising cost of vaccines for poor

Wed May 25, 12:28 PM ET

The UN health agency expressed concern about the rising cost of vaccines for developing countries as new vaccines appear on the market.

New vaccines are already being authorized in a number of countries against diseases such as Japanese encephalitis, pneumonia, meningitis and rotavirus; said the World Health Organization's (WHO) director of vaccination research, Marie-Paule Kieny.

But such vaccines "will be too expensive in the beginning to have developing countries buying them with their own governmental funds," Kieny said Wednesday.

Kieny's comments came on the last day of the WHO's annual assembly which adopted a worldwide strategy for the distribution of vaccines from 2006 to 2015.

"But there is a renewed commitment from the international community to help," said Kieny, "so we hope it will be possible to introduce them."

Kieny played up the importance of government partnerships with the pharmaceutical industry as a way of guaranteeing access to vaccines.

According to the WHO, 2.1 million people worldwide -- two-thirds of them children -- die each year from diseases against which vaccines already exist, principally measles, hepatitis B, whooping cough and tetanus.

In 2003 some 27 million infants and 40 million pregnant women were still unprotected from such diseases.

At the same time, two million deaths are prevented each year thanks to vaccines.

Worldwide vaccination programs cost one billion dollars (800 million euros) in 2000.

According to the WHO, these costs are likely to double by 2006 because of new vaccines and the better distribution of existing vaccines.

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## **Bush Says New EPA Chief will Put Science at Heart of Environmental Policy**

*May 24, 2005 — By John Heilprin, Associated Press*

WASHINGTON — President Bush, in a rare visit to the Environmental Protection Agency, pledged Monday that science would be at the heart of the nation's air, water and land policies.

Bush attended a ceremonial swearing-in ceremony for Stephen Johnson, the first career employee to take over the agency's reins. Johnson, a 24-year EPA veteran, also is the first administrator with a science background.

"With this background, Steve will help us continue to place sound scientific analysis at the heart of all major environmental decisions," Bush said at a 15-minute ceremony in which White House chief of staff Andy Card administered the oath of office.

Johnson had already been sworn in and taken over as EPA administrator on May 2.

Environmentalists and some federal scientists have complained that the Bush administration often puts politics ahead of science on issues such as global warming, toxic chemicals, forest and energy policies and protections for imperiled species. Some of Bush's core beliefs are that nature requires intervention, market forces trump regulations, and environmental protections are not possible without economic growth.

With the visit, Bush became the first president to visit EPA headquarters. Bush, often at odds with environmentalists, used the occasion to plug his agenda while calling Johnson "the right man" for the job.

"As Steve leads the EPA, he will maintain our common-sense approach of collaborating with leaders and volunteers at the local level to find the best solutions to meet our national goals," Bush said.

"We'll continue to vigorously enforce our environmental laws," the president continued. "We'll encourage good stewardship of natural resources, and we will focus on results."

Bush said one of Johnson's first big tasks was to persuade Congress to pass the "Clear Skies" air pollution plan. In March, a Senate committee rejected the bill. Opponents want limits on carbon dioxide, the chief "greenhouse" gas scientists blame for global warming, but which Bush says is too costly to regulate.

Johnson said he felt "great enthusiasm and profound optimism" for his agency's work, but admitted being at a loss for words to express what his new job felt like.

"As I prepared for today, I thought about how I felt when the president asked me to lead EPA," he recounted. "Even after years of Latin, German, scientific training, the only word I could think of was 'wow.' Wow."

## Preparing for the worst

May 22, 2005

WHEN FLU vaccine was in short supply last year, U.S. authorities took pains to ensure that the drug was given to the people who needed it the most. Unfortunately, the world is not acting quite so judiciously when it comes to the far deadlier threat posed by avian influenza. While there is no vaccine yet developed that can protect humans against the H5N1 virus, there are two antiviral drugs that could help treat avian flu in its early stages and prevent its spread. The best-known of these is oseltamavir, or Tamiflu.

But here's the problem. Outbreaks of this deadly strain of flu have occurred primarily in eight Asian countries over the last two years. Where are the stockpiles of Tamiflu? Almost entirely in Western countries such as Great Britain, France and the United States. Some of these hot-spot Asian countries have only a few hundred doses, while the British are sitting on 14.6 million.

It's not hard to figure out why. The drug is expensive and countries such as Cambodia and Laos simply don't have the resources to create a stockpile. But if it's difficult now, what would happen if the threat of a global pandemic emerged?

Public health officials believe the world's best chance to head off a worldwide outbreak of avian flu would be to treat it aggressively at its source. Imagine a multinational medical team mobilized within days of a large-scale outbreak, flown into Asia, and providing technical assistance and millions of doses of antiviral drugs to the region. Scientists believe they might nip the disaster in the bud.

It's not uncommon for organizations such as the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and its counterparts in Canada and Europe to assist foreign governments in times of public health crises. But no such civilian SWAT team or drug stockpile has been assembled to specifically combat avian flu. Admittedly, there are political obstacles to overcome, but the stakes are too high to be ignored. A flu pandemic could kill tens of millions. Preventing such an event is not an act of humanitarian aid; it should be regarded as a matter of national security.

The United States has time to prepare, but authorities need to act quickly. The H5N1 virus has been spread mostly by poultry-to-human contact. But in the most recent human infections, the death rate has been a staggering 70 percent. If the virus mutates to a form that could pass from one person to another, the outlook would be grave, indeed.

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## FINANCIAL REVIEW

### Nuclear energy taboo tackled

Felicity Barringer | The New York Times | Washington  
2005/05/18

Several of the most prominent environmentalists in the US have gone public with the message that nuclear power, long taboo among environmental advocates, should be reconsidered as a remedy for global warming.

Their numbers are still small, but they represent growing cracks in what had been a virtually solid wall of opposition to nuclear power among most mainstream environmental groups.

In the past few months, articles in publications such as *Technology Review*, published by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and *Wired* magazine have openly espoused nuclear power, angering other environmental advocates.

Stewart Brand, a founder of the Whole Earth Catalogue and the author of "Environmental Heresies", an article in the May issue of *Technology Review*, explained the shift as a direct consequence of the growing anxiety about global warming and its links to the use of fossil fuels.

"It's not that something new and important and good has happened with nuclear, it's that something new and important and bad has happened with climate change," MrBrand said.

For many long-time advocates of environmental causes, such talk is nothing short of betrayal.

Safety fears, which reached a peak during the United States' Three Mile Island accident in 1979, and unresolved questions of how to dispose of nuclear waste have led environmentalists to wage unrelenting campaigns against plants from Shoreham on Long Island to Diablo Canyon near the California coast.

Yet as mounting scientific evidence points to a direct connection between increasing carbon emissions and climate change, Mr Brand and others have come to see conventional fuels like oil and coal as a greater threat.

In his article, Mr Brand argued, "Everything must be done to increase energy efficiency and decarbonise energy production." He mentioned alternative technologies, like solar and wind energy, that emit no heat-trapping gases. "But add them all up," he wrote, "and it's just a fraction of enough."

His conclusion: "The only technology ready to fill the gap and stop the carbon-dioxide loading is nuclear power."

In recent statements, three top environmental experts - Fred Krupp, the executive director of Environmental Defence, Jonathan Lash, the president of the World Resources Institute, and James Gustave Speth, the dean of Yale's School of Forestry and Environmental Studies - have stopped well short of embracing nuclear power, but they emphasised that it was worth trying to find solutions to the economic, safety and security, waste-storage and proliferation issues rather than rejecting the technology.

Those environmentalists who are newly outspoken in favour of nuclear power lace their views with qualifiers.

Mr Krupp said, "There are still very serious questions that have not been answered and Environmental Defence is not going to be supporting nuclear power until we get good answers."

But, he added, "We are taking a fresh look and we want to pursue the answers...because the global warming problem is so serious."

Mr Speth, the author of *Red Sky at Morning*, a book painting global warming as a crisis, said that if there were a US-wide program to control the emission of heat-trapping gases, "I think we would want nuclear to be one of the technologies that is out there, competing on a level playing field with the others."

This story was found at: <http://www.afr.com/articles/2005/05/17/1116095960744.html>