

Atomic power can help fight global warming

Says British minister

REUTERS, London

Britain must build new nuclear power stations, generate more electricity from wind and waves and curb domestic demand in the battle against global warming, Trade Secretary Alistair Darling said yesterday.

He also stressed the need to guarantee security of supplies and reduce rising dependence on imported oil and gas as supplies from the North Sea dwindle.

"There are two big challenges we have got to face. One is climate change because we can't go on pumping carbon into the atmosphere. The second is security of supply. If we don't do anything we will be importing more gas from sometimes pretty unstable parts of the world," Darling told BBC radio.

"In relation to nuclear, which ... has been part of the energy mix in this country and should remain so, if we don't do anything it will reduce from producing about 20 percent of our electricity today to six percent in about 20 years," he added.

He was speaking ahead of presenting to parliament the eagerly awaited Energy Review setting out the structure of Britain's electricity network for future generations.

The decision to back a new generation of nuclear power plants as all but one of Britain's ageing reactors will close within two decades will boost the global

nuclear industry as it starts to recover from the Chernobyl explosion in 1986.

Nuclear power, seen by some as a weapon in the fight against global warming because it emits no climate changing carbon gases, and energy security will also dominate the agenda at this weekend's summit in Russia of the Group of Eight rich nations.

Darling said renewables, that supply only four percent of Britain's electricity, should do far more but would not be able to plug the gap as the old nuclear and coal plants close. Continued...

"I don't think they can fill the whole gap. I think we can do an awful lot more," he said.

"My fear is that if you don't do anything else you are going to get more gas-fired power stations which is not good for the atmosphere and it is not good because you tend to import."

WIND TURBINES

The government wants power companies get more of their supplies from renewables and to boost local generation like rooftop wind turbines and solar panels.

It also wants to streamline the planning process to avoid lengthy and costly delays.

But it has a dilemma in that it has also repeatedly ruled out any public subsidies for new nuclear power stations in view of the 70 billion pounds it will cost to clean up the lethal waste from the existing fleet.

Sudan world's most dangerous place for children

REUTERS, London

Sudan, Uganda and Congo are the world's three most dangerous places for children due to wars that have brought death, disease and displacement to millions, a Reuters AlertNet poll showed yesterday.

Around half of respondents picked Sudan as one of their three choices, with many singling out the troubled western region of Darfur. The UN Children's Fund (UNICEF)

says 1.8 million children have been affected by a three-year conflict in Darfur, where they risk being recruited to fight and are especially vulnerable to disease and malnutrition.

"It is a traumatised population and you can see it in the children's faces," said Hollywood actress and UNICEF goodwill ambassador Mia Farrow, who last month visited camps for some of the 2.5 million displaced by Darfur's war.

"Everyone has lost family, seen villages burn, seen relatives raped, been raped."

UN High Commissioner for Refugees Antonio Guterres - who selected Congo, Uganda and the Sudan/Chad border, where some 200,000 refugees from Darfur eke out an existence - pointed to the physical and psychological consequences of living in crowded, underfunded camps "which are not conducive for a healthy child development".

In southern Sudan, children also suffer the effects of low-level violence, poverty and a lack of basic services. The region is struggling to recover from a 21-year civil war with the north that killed 2 million people, as 600,000 refugees forced to flee the country trickle home.

AlertNet, a humanitarian news website run by Reuters Foundation, asked 112 aid experts and journalists to highlight the world's most dangerous places for children.

After Sudan, they chose northern Uganda, Democratic Republic of Congo, Iraq, Somalia, India, the Palestinian territories, Afghanistan, Chechnya and Myanmar - with the top three clearly ahead.

More than 2 million children worldwide have died as a direct result of armed conflict in the past decade, and about 20 million have been forced to flee their homes, according to UNICEF. More than a million have been orphaned or separated from their families.

CHILD SOLDIERS

"The most dangerous places are those conflict zones where children are actively recruited into the fighting forces, and the current worst offender... is Uganda's Lord's Resistance Army," said Gareth Evans, head of the International Crisis Group think tank.

"Its recruiting, indoctrination and battle tactics have left countless children either dead, or dreadfully physically or mentally scarred."

During its brutal, two-decade insurgency, the cult-like rebel group has kidnapped up to 25,000 children to serve as soldiers and sex slaves. Each evening about the same number of child "night commuters" trudge into towns to avoid abduction.



Population Science department of Dhaka University takes out a procession on the campus yesterday marking the World Population Day.

PHOTO: STAR