

Australia to launch global carbon capture scheme

AFP, Sydney

Australia will launch a multi-million dollar international carbon capture and storage institute to fight global warming, Prime Minister Kevin Rudd announced yesterday.

Rudd said the plan would be the centrepiece of his address to the United Nations General Assembly in New York next week, adding that British Prime Minister Gordon Brown had already offered his support.

The institute would promote research and investment to help meet a G8 commitment to have at least 20 industrial scale carbon capture and storage (CCS) projects in operation by 2020.

CCS involves capturing carbon dioxide as it is released into the atmosphere, compressing it and then pumping it into depleted oil

and gas fields or other safe underground chambers.

Carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases blamed for global warming are produced by burning fossil fuels and Rudd noted that Australia is the world's largest exporter of coal.

Any effective solution to climate change must deal with clean coal and CCS could be a large part of the solution, he told a news conference.

"We the government want this global carbon and storage institute in Australia to be the global go-to place across the board for clean coal technologies and their application. That is the ambition."

"Rather than simply put an idea out there, we have decided that we need to have some skin in the game (make a significant investment)," he said.



Guests hold copies of a book titled 'Shaheed Buddhijibi Prof Dr Fazle Rabbi' by Meherunnesa Merry at its publication ceremony at the Liberation War Museum in the city yesterday. From left are Prof Syed Modassir Ali, Md Shahidul Islam, Zinnat Ara Rahman, Air Vice Marshal (ret'd) AK Khandaker, Dr Sarwar Ali, Prof AAMS Arefin Siddique and Meherunnesa Merry.

Heavy fighting kills 70 in Lanka

AP, Colombo

Tamil Tiger separatists and government forces fought intense battles across Sri Lanka's embattled northern region, killing at least 62 rebels and eight soldiers, the military said yesterday.

Deadly infantry clashes raged throughout the day Thursday along the front lines separating government-controlled territory and the rebels' de facto state in the north, military spokesman Brig. Udaya Nanayakkara said.

Clashes in Kilinochchi district,

home to the rebels' de facto capital, killed 17 rebels and five soldiers, he said. Another 14 soldiers were wounded.

Other battles killed 20 insurgents and three soldiers, he said.

The Tamil Tigers, meanwhile, said they repelled a government offensive in Kilinochchi on Thursday, killing 25 soldiers. The report was seen on the rebel-affiliated TamilNet Web site.

A ferocious sea battle off the island's northwest coast on Thursday killed 25 rebel sailors and wounded two government sailors,

Nanayakkara said.

He said the four-hour battle off the coast near Nachchikuda resulted in the sinking of seven small rebel boats and three medium-sized ones.

With most communication with the northern areas cut, rebel military spokesman Rasiyah Ilanthirayan could not be reached for comment.

Both sides often offer contradictory versions of fighting that takes place deep in the northern jungles and routinely exaggerate enemy casualties and underreport their own.

Independent verification of the fighting and casualties is difficult to obtain because most journalists are banned from the war zone.

Fighting has escalated on the Indian Ocean island in recent weeks with the government promising to crush the rebels by the end of the year.

The rebels have been fighting for an independent state in the north and east since 1983.



Dhakabasi and the National Press Club jointly organise a Mehendi Festival on the club premises in Dhaka yesterday on the occasion of Eid-ul-Fitr.

Malaria kills a million as Africa bears the brunt

AFP, Geneva

Malaria killed nearly one million people worldwide in 2006 with children under five and African countries bearing the brunt, the World Health Organisation said Thursday.

"There were an estimated 247 million malaria cases among 3.3 billion people at risk in 2006, causing nearly a million deaths, mostly of children under 5 years," the WHO said in its Annual Malaria Report.

A total of 109 countries were endemic for malaria in 2006, nearly half (45) in Africa, it noted.

Countries still lack sufficient resources to tackle the disease and even though public health services are procuring more anti-malaria medicines, access to treatment is still inadequate in all countries surveyed, the WHO said.

However, WHO Director-

General Margaret Chan told journalists that more progress had been made in the two years since the data had been collected.

"I am personally confident that we will have even better news next year. Right now, the momentum continues to build," she said.

She called on pharmaceutical companies to increase research and development into new artemisinin-based combination therapies (ACTs) amid reports some patients are beginning to show signs of resistance to this WHO-recommended treatment.

"We are down to pretty well the last effective medicine, artemisinin, and the old anti-malarials have developed resistance to a different extent," Chan said.

"We are now beginning to hear reports about possible tolerance to artemisinin, and we are working with partners... to find out exactly

what is happening on the ground," she added.

The report said that most African countries are way off meeting the 80 percent coverage target for the four main treatments -- mosquito nets, drugs, indoor insecticide spray and treatment during pregnancy -- set by the WHO in 2005.

For example, the survey found that supplies of insecticide-treated nets to national malaria control programmes were only sufficient to protect a quarter (26 percent) of people in 37 African countries.

More than half of the African cases in 2006 occurred in Nigeria, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Tanzania and Kenya, the WHO said.

Deaths due to the mosquito-borne disease are estimated to sap more than a full percentage point from the annual economic growth of the most affected nations.

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Complete Neolithic skeletons found in Malaysia

AFP, Kuala Lumpur

Archaeologists have found two groups of complete Neolithic human remains in peninsular Malaysia and on Borneo island that may better explain prehistoric human life, reports said yesterday.

Archaeologists say the remains are more than 3,000 years old and were found within two months of each other, in prehistoric burial grounds surrounded by ceremonial beads, pottery, shells and animal bones, the Sun daily reported.

"These remains are very important as the skeletons are almost fully complete," Mokhtar Saidin, head of the Malaysian Centre for Archaeological Research told the paper.

The first set of remains found in a mangrove swamp on the island of Pulau Kalumpang off northern Perak state consists of three Mongoloid males aged between 15 and 35 years old, the Sun reported.

The second set were of seven males and a female found in the back of the Niah caves complex in Sarawak state on Borneo, bearing Austro-Melanosoid features similar to Australian Aborigines, it reported.

Mokhtar told the paper the remains reveal details about early indigenous societies that lived in the country with ancient paintings also found on the walls of the cave in Sarawak.

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