

God did not create universe

Says Stephen Hawking

BBC ONLINE

There is no place for God in theories on the creation of the Universe, Professor Stephen Hawking has said.

He had previously argued belief in a creator was not incompatible with science but in a new book, he concludes the Big Bang was an inevitable consequence of the laws of physics.

The Grand Design, part serialised in the Times, says there is no need to invoke God to set the Universe going.

"Spontaneous creation is the reason there is something," he concluded.

In his new book, an extract of which appears in the Times, Britain's most famous physicist sets out to contest Sir Isaac Newton's belief that the universe must have been designed by God as it could not have sprung out of chaos.

Citing the 1992 discovery of a planet orbiting a star other than our Sun, he said: "That makes the coincidences of our planetary conditions - the single Sun, the lucky combination of Earth-Sun distance and solar mass - far less remarkable, and far less compelling as evidence that the Earth was carefully designed just to please us human beings."

He adds: "Because there is a law such as gravity, the universe can and will create itself from nothing."

"Spontaneous creation is the reason there is something rather than nothing, why the universe exists, why we exist.

"It is not necessary to invoke God to light the blue touch paper and set the universe going."

The book was co-written by US physicist Leonard Mlodinow and is published on 9 September.

In his 1988 bestseller, A Brief History of Time, Prof Hawking appeared to accept the role of God in the creation of the Universe.

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Pakistan mourns triple blasts as toll rises to 31

AFP, Lahore

The death toll from suicide attacks that targeted a busy procession in Pakistan's eastern city of Lahore rose to 31 yesterday as six people succumbed to their injuries, officials said.

Three suicide bombers targeted a Shiite mourning procession made up of thousands of people on Wednesday at the moment of the breaking of the fast in the holy month of Ramadan, wounding hundreds.

It was the first major attack in Pakistan since devastating floods engulfed a fifth of the volatile country over the past month in its worst disaster yet.

"Thirty-one people have died and a total of 281 were injured," Fahim Jehanzeb, a spokesman for Lahore's rescue agency told AFP, adding that he feared more would die from their injuries.

Sajjad Bhutta, a senior local administration official, confirmed the new death toll. Head of police investigations for Lahore, Zulfikar Hamid, told AFP that investigations were ongoing and no arrest had yet been made.

Prayers were held for seven of the dead on Thursday, with police and paramilitary providing tight security, while local authorities announced a day of mourning with all public and private institutions closed.

Later hundreds of Shiite Muslims clad in black took to the streets to denounce the attack and said they would later hold a meeting to discuss a strategy in response.

Stalled funding hits Pak flood aid effort: UN

AFP, Thatta

Relief efforts in flood-ravaged Pakistan are being stretched by the "unprecedented scale" of the disaster, with the flow of international aid almost at a standstill, the UN said yesterday.

Thousands remain trapped by floodwaters in the hardest-hit southern province of Sindh, while others are complaining of going without food or water for days and some are being forced to live in the rubble of their ruined homes.

Although the initially slow pace of aid had improved since a visit by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in mid-August, the UN said it had "almost stalled" since the beginning of last week, rising from 274 million dollars to 291 million dollars -- about two thirds of funding needs.

The deluge has engulfed an area the size of England, affecting more than 18 million people, including eight million who are dependent on aid hand-outs to survive.

"Given the number of those in need, this is a humanitarian operation of unprecedented scale," Manuel Bessler, head of the UN's coordination agency OCHA, said in a statement.

"We need to reach at least eight million people, from the Karakoram Mountain Range in the north to the Arabian Sea in the south."

The floods have ruined 3.6 million hectares (8.9 million acres) of rich farmland and the UN's Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) said farmers urgently needed seeds to plant for next year's crops.

The World Food Programme has warned that Pakistan faces a triple threat to food supplies -- with seeds, crops and incomes hit.

Pakistan's ambassador to the UN Abdullah Hussain Haroon Thursday called for an investigation into claims that wealthy landowners diverted flood waters towards villages to protect their crops.

"It is suggested in some areas, those to be protected were allowed, had allowed, levies to be burst on opposite sides to take the water away. If that is happening the government should be enquiring," Haroon told the BBC's HardTalk programme.

In southern Pakistan, hundreds of hungry and desperate families from a relief camp in the city of Thatta blocked the highway to Karachi for three hours Wednesday, demanding the government provide more food and shelter.

"No food or water has been provided to us for the past two days," Mohammad Qasim, a 60-year-old resident of the flooded town of Sujawal, told AFP.

Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani, whose government has come under fire for its handling of the country's worst ever humanitarian crisis, said Wednesday the flooding had caused economic losses of 43 billion dollars.

He said Pakistan faced inflation of up to 20 percent and slower economic growth, warning of job losses and social unrest.

World Bank chief Robert Zoellick announced an extra 100 million dollars to add to an existing 900 million dollar loan as he met Pakistan's Finance Minister Hafeez Shaikh in Washington on Wednesday.

Zoellick said he and Shaikh discussed plans for institutional and governance reforms in Pakistan in the wake of the disaster.

The World Bank pledged to help Pakistan set up systems for tracking aid flows and monitoring the process to tackle waste and corruption.

Floodwaters moving south through Sindh province are now 28 kilometres (17 miles) from the Arabian Sea, officials said, and will likely take another week to flow away.



Internally displaced Pakistani woman Nurbano from Jacobabad cradles her malnourished one and half year-old infant at a temporary tent in Sukkur yesterday. Relief efforts in flood-ravaged Pakistan are being stretched by the "unprecedented scale" of the disaster, while funding has almost stalled, the UN said.

Director Finance General Manager
Head of Internal Audit Sr. Manager, Administration

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