

UK Climate Delegation Arrives Next Week

Saturday, 29 August 2009

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The senior ministers will then travel to Kolkata and New Delhi, where they will meet Indian government representatives, before outlining in separate speeches the British government's position on climate change and how it will help developing countries make their voices heard at the Copenhagen conference.

The visit takes place less than 100 days before countries from around the world gather in Copenhagen, Denmark to negotiate a new international climate change deal.

Alexander and Miliband will also visit the char islands in Bangladesh to see the work being done to limit the impact of rising sea levels. The ministers will meet with government climate change negotiators and launch the British Council's climate change champions project.

Scientists say global warming may see a fifth of Bangladesh— an area almost twice the size of London—disappear if sea levels rise by one metre. It would destroy crops and livestock, spread disease and leave 30 million people homeless.

Experts predict that devastating natural disasters seen in the last three years such as Cyclone Sidr and tropical storm Aila—which saw millions lose their homes and thousands killed—will become more frequent in the future.

The UK has already committed £50 million to support the 'Chars Livelihood Programme', which will help one million people, who live on river islands in the Jamuna River, raise their homes above the flood level.

Work has already helped more than 300,000 people to raise their homes and provided livestock, seeds and other items to almost 50,000 families in the low-lying, flood-prone area.

Alexander, the Department for International Development minister, said in a statement before the tour: "It is essential that a fair and sustainable deal on climate change is struck in Copenhagen. We need all countries to sign up to an agreement that encourages global prosperity without putting our planet in further danger.

"Bangladesh is at the forefront of the battle against climate change and there is excellent work already taking place to mitigate the effects we are already seeing there.

"India has a pivotal role to play in climate negotiations. We are part of a generation that is facing unprecedented and daunting challenges which can only be solved by all countries coming together and working with each other to find solutions."

Miliband said, "People in Britain with families in India and Bangladesh know at first hand the devastating consequences that natural disasters such as floods and drought are already having on the region, but they also know that unchecked climate change will make this far worse.

"It's why Britain wants to get every country behind a climate change deal at the international summit in Copenhagen this December. And it's also why Douglas and I are going to India and Bangladesh — to see how we can make that deal happen.

"A climate change agreement in Copenhagen is not only about protecting communities in South Asia from the most devastating consequences of unchecked climate change. It's also about unlocking the economic and development opportunities and offering hope in terms of jobs, energy and food security for the region.

"I hope Britain's Indian and Bangladeshi communities can back the bid for a climate change deal in Copenhagen that's

good for South Asia and good for Britain."

While in India, Alexander and Miliband will visit a solar housing project in Kolkata.

The visit will end with a keynote speech from both ministers hosted by the British Council.

Source: bdnews24.com