

CLIMATE CHANGE

Are we doing enough to help?

CLIMATE CHANGE! GLOBAL WARMING! THESE DAYS YOU HEAR ALL KINDS OF NEWS AND OPINIONS ABOUT HOW THE ENVIRONMENT IS CHANGING. SCARY TV SHOWS PREDICT MASSIVE FLOODS, EARTHQUAKES AND FAMINES; POLITICAL LEADERS FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD DISCUSS WHAT STEPS TO TAKE – EVERYONE IS FINALLY PAYING ATTENTION TO THIS GLOBAL PHENOMENON.



The effects on people

Is global warming really affecting people now? And where can we see these effects? The answers to these questions are “yes” and “all over the world”.

The year 2007 was the sixth hottest in Australian (recorded) history. People there had to **endure** bushfires, floods, intense storms and **droughts**. The European **heat wave** of 2003 killed 22,000 – 35,000 people. The Arctic region has experienced a **temperature rise** of 1°C to 3°C over the last 50 years, and Canada, Alaska and Russia are experiencing **melting of permafrost**.

Hurricanes in the Atlantic Ocean were thought to be an **entirely** North Atlantic phenomenon. In late March 2004, the first Atlantic **cyclone to form south of the equator** hit Brazil with 144 km/h winds.

In Tanzania, there used to be a drought about every 10 years. Now droughts are more frequent and so is the flooding. Areas which were never affected by **mosquitoes** now are. The rains come at the wrong time for farmers, causing many problems.

Climate change may be one of the causes of the Darfur

conflict (crisis in western Sudan). The **reduction in rainfall has turned** millions of hectares **of grazing land into desert, forcing** the Arab nomads to move south to fight over land already occupied by other people.

Predictions

Predictions for the future include extreme weather, an **expansion of tropical diseases**, and drastic economic impact. What does this all mean? **There is likely to be** less food as droughts and rising temperatures can create deserts in some areas. Forest fires may occur more regularly. People may fight more over food and land. There could be an increase in diseases carried by insects such as **tick encephalitis** and malaria as regions become warmer. Higher temperatures will also increase the demand for water. Some researchers predict that over 50 % of animal and plant species may die out.

Many of the world’s largest and most prosperous cities are on the coast, and it will be difficult to protect them against the rising **sea levels**. Low-lying countries

such as Bangladesh and the Netherlands would be worst hit.

Hotter temperatures are expected to have a direct impact on your health. They can increase the number of people who die for many reasons because the heart has to work harder to keep the body cool. Doctors warn that global warming could mean more **cardiovascular disease**.

With all these scary predictions, it is no wonder more and more people are trying to support efforts to reduce global warming.



If global warming continues, extreme droughts can turn some areas into deserts.

Kyoto – yes or no?

Do you remember the **fuss** created when the United States government decided not to sign the Kyoto Agreement? This international plan is supposed to **reduce greenhouse gases** (that is, to reduce putting polluting gases into the air, which causes the atmosphere to **heat up** abnormally) and help the environment.

At the meeting in Kyoto, Japan, in 1997, many countries signed an agreement, now called the Kyoto Agreement, which **committed** the countries to reduce their emissions from 2008 to 2012, and to prove it with statistics.

However, only developed countries were required to reduce emissions. The largest, fastest-growing countries in the world – China, India, and Brazil – did not have to do anything; they could continue polluting as usual. At the same time, the US, which was responsible for 25 % of all greenhouse gas emissions, **was assigned to cut far too much fuel usage** in a very short time, according to the government administration of President

George Bush. Nonetheless, many people believe that after Bush leaves office at the end of 2008, the new president may **be willing** to sign, too.

People say – yes!

Politicians are often not very eager to **implement** expensive measures to cut emissions. In spite of this, ordinary people have been working on their own for decades to reduce pollution.

One program that helps the environment in the US is called Best Workplaces for Commuters. In this program, employers help employees find better ways to get to work, rather than just **hopping into** the car and driving alone to the job. It encourages companies to offer **benefits** such as:

- free **bus passes** (or reduced price ones)
- the ability to telework (to use the Internet to work at home)
- **matching up** people who can carpool to work together (take turns driving each other to and from work)
- funds to help pay for a van to bring workers to the job
- a cash payment to workers who **give up** their parking place at work

Businesses like the Best Workplaces plan because it helps them save money in unexpected ways. For example, large companies which have problems finding enough parking spaces for



Rainfalls cause disastrous flooding in Bangladesh.

their employees find that some drivers gladly give up their parking place in exchange for cash. Even smaller businesses discover that allowing employees to work at home makes their workers more productive and happier.

Perhaps best of all, the environment benefits from the program. For example, the energy saved by the Best Workplaces program in just one year is enough to provide over 200,000 **households** with electricity over that period. Furthermore, the program has achieved other beneficial results: Saved almost 13,000 acres of forest from **deforestation**, and saved almost 8,000 **railcars** of coal.

Similar programs are popular elsewhere in the world as well. The United

Nations has a program (called Clean Development Mechanism) that acts like Robin Hood. This program **raises** billions of dollars from rich countries and gives them to poor countries to lower their production of greenhouse gases. For example, wind turbines have been built in Inner Mongolia with money from this program.

The future

In the meantime, countries continue to meet and discuss plans for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The latest meeting, held in Bali, lasted two weeks in December 2007. The result? Participants agreed to continue negotiating during 2008-09 in order to come up with an international agreement on what should happen next, after the original Kyoto Agreement “dies” in 2012. **Hana Škrdlová** (Canada), **Mary Matz** (USA)

DISCUSS:

- Do you consider climate change a serious problem? Do you think governments are doing enough to deal with the problem?
- What parts of the Best Workplaces for Commuters program do you find most interesting? Which would work best in your area?
- What do you, personally, do to help the environment?

→ Vocabulary

- flood** [flʌd] - záplava
earthquake [ˈɜːθkweɪk] - zemětřesení
famine [ˈfæmɪn] - hladomor
phenomenon [fɪˈnɒmɪnən] - jev
to endure [ɪnˈdjʊə] - přetřpět, snést
drought [draʊt] - sucho
heat wave - vlna horka
temperature rise [ˈtɛmp(ə)rətʃə] - zvýšení teploty o
melting of permafrost [ˈpɜːməfrɒst] - tání trvale zmrzlé půdy
entirely [ɪnˈtaɪəli] - výlučně, pouze
cyclone to form south of the equator [saɪklɒn ɪˈkwetə] - cyklon, který se vytvořil jižně od rovníku
mosquito [mɒˈskiːtəʊ] - moskyt, komár
reduction in rainfall [rɪˈdʌkʃ(ə)n] - snížení srážek
has turned... of grazing land into desert, forcing [greɪzɪŋ dɪˈzəːt fɔːsɪŋ] - změnil... pastviny v poušť, což donutilo
expansion of tropical diseases [ɪkˈspænz(ə)n dɪˈtɹɔːpɪkəl] - rozšíření tropických nemocí
there is likely to be - je pravděpodobné, že bude
tick encephalitis [tɪk ɛnˌsefəˈlaɪtɪs] - klíšťová encefalitida
sea level [ˈsiːləvəl] - hladina moře
cardiovascular disease [ˈkɑːdɪəvˈvæskjələ] - kardiovaskulární onemocnění
fuss [fʌs] - poprask
to reduce greenhouse gases [gæsiːz] - snížit emise skleníkových plynů
to heat up - ohřívát se
to commit [kəˈmɪt] - zavázat (někoho k něčemu)
was assigned to cut far too much fuel usage [əˈsaɪnd fjuːl ˈjuːsɪdʒ] - dostaly za úkol příliš výrazně omezit používání (fosilních) paliv
to be willing [ˈwɪlɪŋ] - být ochotný
to implement - zavést
to hop into - naskočit do
benefit [ˈbenɪfɪt] - výhoda
bus pass [pɑːs] - legitimace (“tramvajenka”)
to match up [mætʃ] - dát dohromady
to give up - vzdát se, zřít se (něčeho)
household [ˈhaʊshəʊld] - domácnost
deforestation [diːˈfɒrɪsteɪʃ(ə)n] - odlesnění, kácení lesů
railcar [ˈreɪlkɑː] - vagon
to raise [reɪz] - získat (peníze)

SOLAR-POWERED TAXI
a trailer loaded with [ˈtreɪlə ˈləʊdɪd] - přívěs naložený
is then fed into a battery [ˈbætəri] - napájí baterii

••• Glossary

nomad - a member of a community that moves with its animals from place to place
commuter - someone who regularly travels between work and home
wind turbine - a tall structure with blades (= wide flat parts on a machine) that are blown round by the wind and produce energy

SOLAR-POWERED TAXI

Many people dream about electric cars, but a Swiss teacher actually built one. And then he drove it all the way from Switzerland to the climate change conference in Bali, Indonesia, just to prove it could work.

The car pulls **a trailer loaded with** six square meters of solar panels. The panels absorb sunlight and produce electricity. The power **is then fed into a battery** which drives the car. It took Palmer three years to build his car, with the assistance of scientists at four universities and financial help from 15 Swiss companies. The car can cover 100 km a day.

Mary Matz (USA)

