

# Allies agree to work on African debt

## Blair stands firm on EU budget

Associated Press

LONDON, June 8. — Britain's EU budget rebate, which saves the country billions of pounds per year, was not negotiable, the Prime Minister said today. "The UK rebate will remain and we will not negotiate it away. Period."

Britain is under intense pressure from other EU member states to give up its cash-back guarantee, secured by Margaret Thatcher in 1984.

British officials say that, without the rebate, worth about £3 billion per year, Britain would have paid 15 times more than France and 12 times more than Italy into EU coffers between 1995 and 2003.

### Barroso survives



European Commission President Mr Jose Manuel Barroso today easily survived a no-trust vote after he was accused of misconduct for taking a vacation on a tycoon's luxury yacht, AP adds from Strasbourg.



Mr George W Bush speaks with Mr Tony Blair during a joint press conference in the White House on Tuesday. — AFP

### PTI & AP

WASHINGTON/LONDON, June 8. — The USA and Britain have announced that they were working on a plan to eliminate debt of African nations and provide more humanitarian assistance.

Addressing a joint press conference here yesterday, President Bush said African nations "should not be burdened with mountains of debt". He added: "Our countries are developing a proposal for the G-8 that will eliminate 100 per cent of that debt."

He said America now accounts for nearly a quarter of all the aid to sub-Saharan Africa. The USA will provide approximately \$674 million of additional

resources to respond to humanitarian emergencies in Africa. He added that \$414 million of those additional resources will be provided to avert famine in the Horn-of-Africa.

The British Prime Minister, who has called for cancellation of debt to poor nations in Africa, said: "I think we are well on the way." He said that help to Africa involved more than resources.

"Though it is important that we commit the resources to Africa that are necessary, it is not just about resources. It is also about trade, about making sure that we deal with these diseases — HIV/AIDS, malaria, TB, polio — that are killing so many people. It is about conflict resolution and having the proper

peacekeeping and peace enforcement mechanisms."

Mr Blair stressed that in return, the African countries will have to guarantee "proper governance, action against corruption, making sure that the aid and the resources that we are prepared to commit actually go to the people that need it and do the job that it is supposed to do".

### The other issue

Mr Blair today said it was vital that the USA was involved in international dialogue on climate change. "Climate change is, in my view, long term, the single biggest issue that we face," Mr Blair told the House of Commons, after returning from talks in Washington with Mr Bush.

"The brutal truth is, without America in a process of dialogue and action in the international community, we are not going to make progress on it," the Prime Minister added.

### Annan lauds aid pledge

Mr Kofi Annan has welcomed the US and British decision to respond to humanitarian emergencies in Africa, but warned that emergency assistance is no substitute for concrete action needed to break the cycle of poverty, adds a report from the UNHQ.

"Emergency aid is in no way a substitute for action to ensure that African economies overcome the obstacles which impede their participation in an expanding world economy."

## Bush harps on war justification

Press Trust of India

WASHINGTON, June 8. — The US President and the British Prime Minister have defended their decision to go to war against Iraq, with Mr Bush denying he had already made up his mind beforehand.

"Nothing was farther from the truth than to suggest that we had made up our mind to go to use military force to deal with Saddam," said Mr Bush, disagreeing that the decision to wage war was made in the summer of 2002.

"My conversation with the Prime Minister (Mr Blair) was, how could we do this peacefully, what could we do. And this meeting, evidently, that took place in London happened before we even went to the UN — or I went to the UN." Mr Bush said both the leaders "did not want to use our military. Nobody wants to commit military into combat. It is the last option".

Blaming Saddam Hussein for the war, Mr Bush said "He made the decision". He referred to Saddam "ignoring" UN resolutions passed against Iraq.

Supporting the US President's assertions, the British Prime Minister claimed military action was taken because Saddam "did not comply with international law".

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# Bush, Schroeder bury Iraq hatchet

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**Mainz (Germany), Feb. 23 (Reuters):** Putting their nasty row over Iraq behind them, President George W. Bush and German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder today vowed to foster a partnership they said was vital to the transatlantic alliance.

Side-by-side at a press conference in Mainz, where Bush's father once called on West Germany to play a bigger role in the world and become a "partner in leadership", the tone was warm although the talk of past division was frank.

"Europe is America's closest ally," Bush said on the second stop of a European tour. "In order for us to have good relations with Europe we have to have good relations with Germany."

It was a flat rejection of his administration's jibe about "old Europe", when Washington ignored objections from Berlin and Paris and invaded Iraq with help from smaller European states.

"No one is denying there were differences in the past. But that is the past," insisted Schroeder, who angered the White House by tapping anti-Bush sentiment to win re-election in 2002.

Bush offered some of his most conciliatory remarks of a trip that he noted was deliberately given priority as he starts his own second term. He flew in from Brussels after two days with European and Nato leaders and will reach Slovakia for a summit tomorrow



**Bush with Schroeder in Mainz, Germany.** (Reuters)

with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Among areas of cooperation Bush stressed were efforts to prevent Iran developing nuclear weapons. And he thanked Germany for helping Iraqis by training police and forgiving debts.

Schroeder, too, highlighted the positive, praising a new commitment he perceived in Bush's efforts to help resolve the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians.

Ahead of Bush's visit there were concerns in Europe that differences over how to handle Iran's nuclear programme would strain ties further.

But comments in Brussels and Mainz seemed to suggest at least a softening of Washington's tone. Bush continues to say he cannot rule out military options against Tehran,

but he has repeatedly expressed a preference for diplomacy in recent days.

"Iran is not Iraq," Bush said today. "We just started the diplomatic efforts and I want to thank our friends for taking the lead. We will work with them to convince the mullahs that they need to give up their nuclear ambitions."

Britain, France and Germany are offering Tehran economic incentives in exchange for limitations on its nuclear programme, which Tehran denies has a military purpose. While endorsing those talks, Bush has refused European requests to join them.

Bush today also reiterated demands that Syria withdraw from Lebanon, but said he would wait for their response before possibly seeking UN sanctions.

## Angry Germans protest

**Mainz (Germany), Feb. 23 (Reuters):** Some 7,000 protesters, some carrying banners saying "Bush go home", "War Monger" and "No. 1 Terrorist", marched through the Mainz today but were kept away from the visiting the US President.

The largely peaceful rally never got within a kilometre of President George W. Bush, who is on his first German visit since the 2003 Iraq war, which was deeply unpopular in Germany.

"I'm disgusted by the war in Iraq Bush started that has cost thousands of civilian lives," said Thomas Odenweller, 49, a computer technician. "Now he's trying to normalise relations with Europe. It must be stopped."

Ignoring snow and freezing temperatures, the demonstrators held banners chastising Bush in English with slogans such as: "You can bomb the world to pieces but not into peace."

Many had pre-printed posters reading: "Bush, No. 1 Terrorist".

German police confiscated one poster that read: "We had our Hitler, now you have yours."

# USA says no to one-on-one with N Korea



Mr Kim Jong Il

WASHINGTON, Feb. 11. — The USA said today that it was not interested in one-on-one talks with North Korea about its nuclear programmes outside the six-party negotiations in-

volving the Communist nation's neighbours. "It's not an issue between North Korea and the USA. It's a regional issue," White House press secretary Mr Scott McClellan said. "And it's an issue that impacts all of its neighbours." North Korea has plenty of opportunity to talk to the USA within the six-party talks framework, he said.

Earlier today, in an interview with Seoul's *Hankyoreh* newspaper, North Korea's UN envoy demanded bilateral talks with the USA. "We will return to the six-nation talks when we see a reason to do so," Mr Han Sung Ryol said. "If the USA moves to have direct dialogue, we can take that as a signal that they are changing their hostile policy towards us."

Also today, US Vice-President Mr Dick Cheney and South Korean foreign minister Mr Ban Ki-moon held a previously scheduled meeting at the White House, in which they "reaffirmed" their shared view that North Korea must end its nuclear weapons programme, Mr McClellan said. Mr Ban is in Washington and is scheduled to meet US secretary of state Ms Condoleezza Rice next week.

Planners at the Pentagon have warned against any military action on Iran or North Korea. The Pentagon has noted that there are few good options if North Korea continues to remain a nuclear-state. They said North might have already turned its plutonium into several nuclear weapons and even its conventional forces could obliterate Seoul, the *Wall Street Journal* said today. — AP

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