

Cauvery issue ^{controversy} hot up again

5-10 26/8
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

BANGALORE, Aug. 25. — The Karnataka chief minister's refusal to entertain Miss Jayalalitha's request for release of Cauvery water into the Mettur dam is all set to lead to a fresh controversy.

The severe drought situation has forced Mr SM Krishna to decline Miss Jayalalitha's request.

The Tamil Nadu chief minister had sought the immediate release of water to help farmers in the Cauvery delta. They need water for their Kuruvai crops.

However, Mr Krishna hasn't dismissed the possibility of a meeting with Tamil Nadu officials to discuss how best to solve the present situation.

Government officials here said that ultimately the chief minister would find it difficult to take a very hard line on the issue.

According to them, past experience has shown that Karnataka has quietly released limited water to meet the needs of the farmers in the neighbouring state while safeguarding its own interests. That is, in times of crisis.

Perhaps, Mr Krishna may have to try out a similar thing, more so because his party at the national level has a good rapport with the AIADMK.

Centre heeds TN demand: Determined to get what she feels is Tamil Nadu's due, Miss Jayalalitha had sent a letter to the Prime Minister for immediate intervention. Heeding her demand, the Centre has convened a meeting on 6 September of the committee set up to monitor the implementation of the interim award of the Cauvery Water Tribunal, adds SNS from Chennai. This was conveyed to the state government by the Union water resources department, Miss Jayalalitha said in the state Assembly today. She said she had written to the Centre thrice on the issue.

All steps would be taken to ensure that Karnataka released the mandatory quantum of Cauvery water, she said.

THE STATESMAN

25 AUG 1978

210-12
48

Concern over denial of visas to NBA's supporters

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, AUG. 3. With the Government reportedly denying visas to three foreigners who had expressed solidarity with the Narmada Bachao Andolan (NBA), human rights and anti-bomb activists in the country are once again up in arms over the efforts of the administration to contain the flow of information and suppress the freedom of expression.

According to NBA activists, three foreign nationals — who had wanted to participate in the monsoon satyagraha of the anti-dam movement — had been denied visas. One of them, Ms. Ali Sauer — a Canadian citizen who had visited the Narmada Valley last year — was deported from the country within an hour-and-a-half of landing here.

Apparently, Immigration officials indicated that her association with the NBA was the reason for packing her off. According to Mr. Prashant Bhushan, a lawyer for the NBA in the Narmada dam case, "she was told that they had instructions to cancel her visa

and she heard them mentioning NBA". Apart from Ms. Sauer's presence in the Narmada valley last year, her article on the environmental aspects of the Sardar Sarovar Dam in the Economic and Political Weekly, it is said, is being cited by the powers that be as evidence of her being a "threat to national security".

Two other foreign nationals were denied visas by India's diplomatic missions in their respective countries. While one of them — Ms. Nikki Warwick from Australia — took part in the satyagraha in 1999, the other never visited the Narmada Valley. Still, Ms. Annie Leonard, an American activist, is reported to have been quizzed about her links with Narmada during the visa interview before being denied permission to travel to India.

Unhappy at the way in which the foreign activists were being treated by the Government, several human rights and anti-bomb activists and writers have got together to raise a collective voice against such "paranoid"

measures. Apart from issuing statements articulating their angst, they are also using the Internet to mobilise support for their cause.

Among those who have already expressed solidarity with the cause are the member of Parliament, Mr. Kuldip Nayar; the social reformer, Mr. Asghar Ali Engineer; the former Chairman of the National Book Trust, Mr. Sukumar Azhikode; the eminent writer, Mr. U. R. Ananthamurthy; the documentary film-maker, Mr. Anand Patwardhan; and the anti-nuke activist, Mr. Praful Bidwai.

The signatories to the statement feel similar action was taken only during the Emergency when the Government did not want its "dubious human rights record" to be exposed to the outside world. Wary of democratic India being turned into a fascist regime, Mr. Bhushan said the denial of visas was in line with the campaign "orchestrated by the Gujarat Government to get the Centre to ban the NBA".

Climate change agreement

The agreement reached in Germany is a triumph for the scientific process, which should be recognised and extended to other areas, says Jeffrey D Sachs



DESPITE US opposition to the Kyoto Treaty on Climate Change, the world reached an historic agreement in Bonn, Germany, on implementing the treaty.

Although the major industrial countries must ratify the treaty, it looks likely that a majority of countries will do so and thus the process of controlling man-made climate change can begin. The agreement reached in Germany is a triumph for the scientific process, which should be recognised and extended to other areas.

Man-made climate change is not only of tremendous importance but of tremendous complexity. The basic theory of how human society is warming the environment by burning fossil fuels was first put forward more than 100 years ago. But theoretical models of the earth's environment are only a few decades old, and remain imperfect. At the same time, the climate itself is subject to long swings in temperature, rainfall, and other patterns, unrelated to human activity.

Separating the human factor from natural factors is daunting.

All the more remarkable, then, that the world reached an agreed approach to this issue. Not only is the science complex and uncertain, but individual countries have different interests. Tropical countries may be hurt by global warming, while colder countries like Canada and Russia could benefit. Coastal countries may be damaged by rising oceans, while inland countries may be relatively unaffected. Coal and oil producing countries may be hurt if the world cuts back on fossil fuels; producers of other kinds of energy, such as hydroelectric power, might benefit. In short, there are numerous interests and much uncertainty about the underlying process of climate change.

How, then, did the world reach an agreement, albeit on only a first step in a decades-long process of action? Diplomats deserve credit for making compromises or trade-offs. But enormous praise is also due to the scientific community, which operated with skill and objectivity despite aggressive lobbying by industries, environmen-

tal groups, and countries with different interests and points of view.

Scientists organised the process of analysing climate change in a way that put the evidence first, forcing politicians to confront reality. The details of this vast scientific effort are notable, because they provide lessons for addressing other global problems. In 1988, two UN Agencies established the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). The IPCC is a vast network of scientists devoted to assessing the scientific knowledge about climate change, and the links of climate change to human society. Every five years, the IPCC prepares a report for the global political leadership, known as Assessment Reports. The Third Assessment Report is now being finalised. Parts of the report have been

tain to guide policy. To the administration's credit, the President then asked for a special committee of America's National Academy of Sciences to review the work of the IPCC. The Academy reported that the IPCC had fairly and accurately represented the scientific evidence on climate change as it exists.

Because of the careful, thorough work of the IPCC, the world has been able to move beyond the usual name-calling and partisan debates to reach an understanding of the real stakes in man-made climate change. Even though some powerful business and regional interests may be affected adversely by global actions to limit man-made climate change, the credibility of science triumphed over vested interests. All of this depended on

scientists using their talents properly, and organising their effort in a transparent, professional manner.

It is too early to declare victory in the control of man-made climate change. That will require efforts over decades. But the world has made a start. Even though the US is not yet a party to the new agreement, the weight of science will push America to play a more constructive role in the future, even if American politicians continue to fight the process.

In our interconnected and technology-based global society, questions of scientific complexity will increasingly affect our lives. How should we fight AIDS? Should we pursue genetic modification of crops to improve agricultural systems? How should we manage the scarcity of fresh water in parts of the world? How can we preserve biological diversity? In each case, politicians and diplomats will be needed to bridge divergent interests in a cooperative manner. But we will also need to get the most accurate and objective scientific information to help us choose the best course of action. The IPCC demonstrates that scientists from rich and poor countries can work together in a systematic process to provide objective information, even on complex topics with widely divergent interests.

(The author is Galen L Stone Professor of Economics, and Director of the Center for International Development, Harvard University)

Copyright: Project Syndicate, July 2001



released and widely discussed, confirming the growing evidence of large man-made effects on climate.

Various industry groups with vested interests in the use of coal, oil, and other fossil fuels attacked the theory of climate change, seeking to undermine the scientific credibility of the IPCC. Some scientists, sometimes from outside the field of climate studies claimed that the evidence of man-made climate change did not really exist, or was exaggerated. Others accused the IPCC of political biases.

The stakes were high because the Kyoto Treaty promises to lead to significant long-term changes in the role of the energy sector and in the kinds of energy technologies adopted in the future. Without doubt there were, and remain, vast scientific uncertainties, so it was easy to make the public claim that little evidence exists upon which to take action.

When President George W Bush came into office, interest groups continued to fight the IPCC. The Bush administration initially claimed that the science of climate change was too uncer-

180-10

DEAL ON CLIMATE CHANGE

267

AGAINST ALL EXPECTATIONS, signatories to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change have been able to arrive at an agreement on how to operationalise the 1997 Kyoto Protocol; which is currently the only international instrument available to check the emission of the greenhouse gases (GHGs) that cause global warming. The agreement reached in Bonn after tortuous negotiations is not an ideal one since it contains many provisions that could water down the objectives of the Protocol. It is yet not a deal that should be faulted too much considering that it had to be reached against considerable odds, especially after the United States, which is responsible for the largest national emissions in the world, decided to withdraw from the Kyoto Protocol.

The developed countries had decided in 1997 that they would reduce emissions of GHGs to 5.2 per cent below 1990 levels by 2008-12. What all of them, other than the U.S., have now agreed on is how to achieve this reduction. The sticking point for years has been the degree of importance that should be given to domestic measures to reduce the burning of fossil fuels — the main source of carbon dioxide — and how much to instruments such as emissions trading, promotion of clean projects in the developing countries and, most controversially, the use of "sinks" (forests) that absorb carbon from the atmosphere. The price of bringing all countries on board has been that a bigger role than would have been advisable has had to be given to sinks and emissions trading. Unfortunately, a few countries — Japan, Canada and Australia — pushed for and obtained concessions on the use of carbon sinks, in spite of the fact that the science on this process is highly uncertain and few technologies are available for monitoring and measuring the process of absorption. The result is that a greater efficiency in the burning of fossil fuels will, it is estimated, reduce emissions by

less than 2 per cent, while the rest of the 5.2 per cent reduction by 2012 is to be brought about by use of the indirect instruments. Obviously, countries can continue to be less than careful about the burning of fossil fuels. If this is one problem with the Bonn agreement, a definite plus is the framing of rules for punishment of countries which do not meet their targets by 2012. Defaulting countries will have to make a larger reduction of GHGs in the next period of implementation (2013-17) and also pay financial penalties. The developing countries have left Bonn only with assurances of additional voluntary funding for introduction of clean technologies. But the statesmanship with which the G-77 and China group yet agreed to the final package has won them many friends, especially the European Union which used the occasion to announce new aid of over \$500 million a year from 2005 onwards for technology transfer and capacity building.

The deal that has been struck is an extremely complex one. But it is still only the first step on a long road. The signatories to the Kyoto Protocol will now have to ratify the agreement before 2002, the deadline for the coming into force of the treaty. Subsequent measures will have to accelerate the process of emission reduction, because the latest assessments are that global warming is taking place at twice the speed estimated earlier. Deeper cuts in emissions will be possible only if the U.S. shows greater sensitivity to global climate concerns. The Bonn agreement has demonstrated that the U.S. stands isolated in the world on the approach to climate change. That by itself is not likely to change the view of the world's biggest polluter of the atmosphere. The U.S. will reverse its current approach only when domestic pressure forces the Government to join the international community in the cooperative effort to combat global warming.

USA seeks alternatives to Kyoto pact

REUTERS

TOKYO, July 24. - The US Secretary of State, Mr Colin Powell today defended America's record on environmental protection and said Washington was not denying its responsibilities by refusing to back the Kyoto pact on global warming.

Technological initiatives and reviews of the accord were under way, he said.

"We have our cabinet members deeply involved in this and hopefully we'll have new ideas that can be presented at COP 7, a follow-up meeting of environment ministers in Morocco in October or at other future meetings," Mr Powell added.

In talks with the Japanese Prime Minister, Mr Junichiro Koizumi, Mr Powell thanked Tokyo for its efforts to bridge the gap between USA and the European Union on the 1997 Kyoto pact, but added that Washington could not support the accord in its current form.

"We know that global warming is a challenge. USA is not running away from that challenge," he said after meeting Mr Koizumi.

"The President is committed to working with all the nations, involved in this process, to find ways so that we can join a consensus at some point in the future. But the Kyoto Protocol - even what came out at Bonn - still is not acceptable to USA," Mr Powell said.

Tokyo's consent has been crucial to bringing the accord into force since the US President rejected in March the 1997 pact, saying it would hurt the economy of USA.

In his attempt to keep USA in the discussion as well as not to put Japanese companies at a competitive disadvantage, Mr Koizumi has sought to lure Washington back to the Kyoto accord even as he promises Japan is committed to seeing it take effect in 2002. "We are making efforts so that America, the EU and Japan can achieve cooperation," he said.

A Japanese official said Mr Koizumi told Mr Powell he wanted Washington to participate in a "constructive way" in the future and that Japan was leaving the door open for US cooperation.

USA isolated as EU breaks deadlock on global warming

REUTERS

24/9 • 2nd time 5-5
BONN, July 23. — Ministers from about 200 countries clinched a historic deal today that should force most rich industrial nations to curb the air pollution blamed for global warming, but left the USA isolated.

An all-night bargaining marathon in Bonn saw European Union ministers finally break a deadlock with Japan over how the 1997 Kyoto Protocol on cutting greenhouse gas emissions would work, paving the way for the treaty to come into force.

Another failure, after the collapse of The Hague summit in November, could have killed it off following Mr George W Bush's withdrawal from the pact in March.

"It's a brilliant day for the environment," a weary but elated Mr Michael Meacher, the British environment minister, said. "It's a huge leap to have achieved a result on this very complex international negotiation." Environmentalists voiced some disappointment at what they called loopholes in the deal. Greenpeace dubbed it "Kyoto-Lite".

But they said any accord which made a start on curbing warming of the Earth's climate and the threat of rising sea levels because of melting ice was better than nothing.

Amid bleary smiles and standing ovations for the conference chairman, Jan Pronk, the Dutch environment minister, there was irritation that Mr Bush had rejected any deal in advance, saying Kyoto's mandatory emissions would hurt the US economy.

Mr Bush endorsed a general commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions at the G-8 summit in Genoa, but insisted Kyoto was "fatally flawed". That had left the EU's hopes of rallying a critical mass of the remaining industrial nations behind the pact dependent on getting Japan on board. Tokyo's reservations on technical issues and its desire to avoid leaving its US ally isolated kept the result of the negotiations in doubt till the last moment.

In the end, not one of the 180 or so states present voiced objections to the final compromise, not even the USA — though Washington repeated it'll not ratify the pact.

Only the 30-odd most developed nations would, if they ratify the treaty, have to cut emissions and their support was the key factor in meeting the criteria for the deal as a whole to survive.

Some delegates hailed a new, global diplomatic elan from the 15-nation EU, while others saw a triumph for UN "multi-lateralism" over the US "unilateralism".

THE STATESMAN

Kyoto Protocol rescued by agreement in Bonn

Environment
HD-14

29/7

By C. Rammanohar Reddy

BONN, JULY 23. The Kyoto Protocol, the 1997 agreement of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change that is intended to control global warming, was rescued this morning from an impasse that has lasted many years when delegates from 178 countries capped marathon all-night talks by agreeing on a flawed but potentially ground-breaking package of measures that would operationalise the treaty and meet the 2008-12 targets for cutting developed countries' emission of greenhouse gases (GHGs) to 5.2 per cent below 1990 levels.

It has taken many failed meetings since 1997 before agreement could be reached on the procedures for implementation, monitoring and enforcing the Kyoto Protocol, and everyone agrees that the Bonn package is not a perfect one. But everyone also agrees that yet another failure would have effectively killed the agreement and vindicated the U.S. President, Mr. George Bush's decision to withdraw from the Protocol because it was, in his words, "fatally flawed". Mr. Olivier Deleuze, chief negotiator of the European Union, said today that "an imperfect living deal was preferable to a perfect but dead deal" and hoped that the U.S. would now "come on board the boat we have constructed for the Protocol".

A final agreement, based on a compromise prepared over the weekend by Mr. Jan Pronk, Environment Minister of The Netherlands and chairman of the conference, had to await a legalistic deal on the consequences of non-compliance. Countries which do not meet their commitments by 2012 will have to subsequently (in 2013-17) make emission reductions of an additional 30 per cent on their unfulfilled targets and also pay an unspecified financial penalty. But the clinching agreement was about how far countries could count the carbon soaked from the atmosphere by new forestry ("carbon sinks") in meeting their targets for reducing GHGs, mainly carbon dioxide. An E.U. climb-down on its earlier opposition to this option brought endorsement of the package by Japan, Canada and Australia, countries which have been tantalisingly close to joining the U.S. in its walk-out. But initial assessments by environmental groups have pointed out that the permission to count the effect of sinks will mean that

the true reduction in emission of GHGs from the burning of fossil-fuels will be under 2 per cent, and not the 5.2 per cent target of the Protocol.

The E.U., which has assumed the moral leadership on dealing with global warming, today also made a political declaration promising developing countries additional funding, from 2002 onwards, of half a billion dollars a year for adoption of clean technologies. The developing countries, which are not required under the Protocol to lower GHG emissions, had been unhappy in the past few days that the final language of the Bonn agreement mentioned no numbers and spoke only about voluntary funding. The G-77 and China group approved the agreement but not before more than one hiccup caused by their oil-exporting country members, which have always been less than enthusiastic about greater efficiency in use of their primary resource, crude oil and natural gas.

The next step will be ratification of the Kyoto Protocol, which has been delayed because of the lack of agreement over the rules for implementation. The Protocol has to come into force by 2002 and it will do so only when countries accounting for 55 per cent of the industrial world's GHG emissions ratify it. So far, only one country, Romania, has ratified it. The withdrawal of the U.S. (which accounts for 25 per cent of global emissions), therefore, makes it imperative that most of the other industrial countries endorse the treaty. The first test of the new-found commitment to the Protocol will come in the speed with which the members of the European Union, Japan, Canada and Russia ratify this 1997 agreement.

The next question is if and when an isolated U.S. will rejoin the Kyoto Protocol. Mr. Bush has promised his own package of measures at the next meeting of the U.N. climate convention, which is to be held in Marrakesh in October. Many in Bonn agree that a deal here was made possible partly because many countries, the members of the E.U., in particular, were determined to signal that the Protocol could be made to work without U.S. participation. In a moment reflecting displeasure about the U.S. position, its chief delegate, Ms. Paula Dobriansky, was today booed for a few seconds when she expressed U.S. concern for global warming during her speech at the final plenary of the conference.

The Hindu

Changes in Bangla electoral laws

Dhaka, July 23

2A/7
THE BANGLADESH Election Commission (EC) has made sweeping changes in its electoral laws to ensure that the upcoming general election is free and fair, official sources said.

Under the new rules, civil and military officials would be barred from fighting elections for at least two years after their retirement so that they do not benefit from programmes they had implemented in their constituencies.

The draft of new electoral rules, finalised on Saturday, also bars a candidate from contesting in more than three seats, instead of the earlier five.

Fresh elections are likely to be held in the first week of October.

Chief Election Commissioner, Abu Sayed, will submit the draft to Bangladesh caretaker Government's Chief Advisor Latifur Rahman.

Rahman will in turn present

it at a meeting of the council of advisers Monday.

The new rules increase the election expenditure of candidates from 300,000 to 500,000 taka.

Those found guilty of disrupting polling by resorting to criminal acts like snatching of ballot boxes, rigging and intimidation of voters will face 10 years in prison, in place of the present two to seven years.

A high court division bench would be set up for the quick disposal of election disputes.

Reports say civil and military bureaucrats are vying to fight elections under the banner of either of the two major political parties — Awami League (AL) and Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP).

The election commission has said that ambitious bureaucrats, while in office, would sanction developmental programs to influence voters in their constituencies.

IANSS

G-8 summit fails on climate treaty

other nations when he announced that the Kyoto plan to cut greenhouse gas emissions that are believed to be a factor in global warming was "fatally flawed" and would not be implemented.

The leaders concluded their summit with a group photo at the 13th century Palazzo Ducale, where they had conferred for the past three days, protected by heavy security as militant demonstrators and police clashed outside the security perimeter. The final statement did not address Bush's plan to build National Missile Defence System, a

contentious issue that has divided the allies and has sparked tensions between the US and Russia, which says it would violate the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile (abm) Treaty.

The issue was on the agenda for a meeting between Bush and Russian President Vladimir Putin today. The statement also addressed the overall theme of the summit, tackling global poverty with the leaders' pledging to pursue number of initiatives from lowering trade barriers for poor nations to studying ways to deal with poverty in sub-Saharan Africa.

India sets up eye in the sky....

Talks continue on compromise to save Kyoto pact

By C. Rammanohar Reddy

BONN, JULY 22. A last-minute compromise package that would put the troubled Kyoto Protocol on climate change into effect had not been approved by delegates to the U.N. climate conference until late on Sunday, the last day of the high-level segment, but Ministers and officials affirmed that they would keep looking for an agreement even if the talks were to go on into the early hours of Monday.

The draft under discussion, put together late on Saturday by the chairman of the conference, Mr. Jan Pronk of the Netherlands, goes a long way to making it easier for the developed countries to meet their targets for lower emission of greenhouse gases (GHGs) that cause global warming, but these concessions are considered essential if the Kyoto Protocol, negotiated in 1997, is to have any hopes of survival.

The Pronk text cedes considerable ground to Japan, Canada and Australia, who wanted a greater recognition of the role of forests in soaking carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. For the European Union, which has accepted the draft, it is "a hard compro-

mise" in the words of Mr. Jürgen Trittin, Environment Minister of Germany, as the package had hitherto been opposed to giving too much importance to these "carbon sinks". The use of sinks in national emission reduction programmes means that fossil fuel emissions will not have to be strictly controlled. In spite of these concessions, Japan, Canada and Australia were not ready to immediately endorse the compromise proposal.

Many Government delegates feel that failure to reach a deal in Bonn will effectively kill the Kyoto Protocol. But an agreement here would not make a difference to the U.S., which insists it is fundamentally opposed to the Kyoto Protocol. What a deal will mean, however, is that all the other developed countries will go ahead with their commitments to reduce the emission of GHGs by 2008-12.

Allowing countries to factor in the result of afforestation programmes in working out their Kyoto targets for GHG emissions is only one component of the package. A second element is that it outlines a compliance mechanism and penalties, under which countries that do not meet their targets by

2008-12 will be required to do so in the second period (2013-17) and in addition pay a small penalty by way of a larger reduction of emissions. Third, the advanced countries agree to provide new and additional finance to the developing countries to enable introduction of clean technologies, though funding for the proposed Climate Change Fund will be voluntary. And, fourth, a provision that has indirect implications for India is that any aid programmes by the industrialised countries that establish nuclear power stations in the developing countries will not be counted as part of reduction of GHG emissions. Nuclear power does not emit GHGs and is therefore advocated by some lobbies as a useful way to control global warming. There was some speculation earlier that programmes like the Russian package for the Koodankulam nuclear power project in Tamil Nadu could be counted by Russia as part of its contribution to emission reductions.

Most environmental groups pointed out a number of problems with the Pronk compromise package but still gave it a cautious welcome. The World Wildlife Fund said it believed the new package was "a step towards a strong architecture for the Kyoto

Protocol and, although it still contains a number of loopholes, provides a sound basis for countries to ratify and start reducing their greenhouse gas emissions". Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth accorded a similar cautious welcome to the Pronk compromise.

On a day when hectic negotiations were going on to save the Kyoto Protocol, the U.S. President, Mr. George W. Bush, was criticised here for offering, during the G-8 summit in Genoa, to come up with a new package when the next session of the climate talks is held in Morocco in October. This was seen as an attempt to sabotage the efforts to arrive at an agreement in Bonn. An eagerness to strike a compromise pact here itself is also seen — especially by the E.U. — as sending a message to the U.S. that the Kyoto Protocol cannot be held hostage to the whims of the U.S.

This is also why many of the environmental groups, who had strongly criticised much the same compromise package when it was offered in The Hague last November, are now endorsing it. But everyone agrees that as long as the world's largest emitter of carbon dioxide stays outside Kyoto, global efforts will have a limited impact on climate change.

G8 fails on climate treaty

ASSOCIATED PRESS
GENOA, JULY 22

95-1
23677

WORLD leaders closed out a protest-marred summit today, conceding that they were unable to resolve sharp differences between the US and the rest of the nations over global warming.

In their final statement, the Group of Eight countries said "there is currently disagreement on the Kyoto Protocol and its ratification."

Earlier this year, the US President George W Bush surprised

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Summit FACTBOX

The leaders, representing Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia and the United States, agreed on:

- Decisive global action to tackle poverty, especially in Africa, and to "make globalisation work".
- Committing \$1.3 billion to a new global health fund with the UN to help the fight against AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis.
- Launching a detailed development plan for Africa and create a joint forum with leaders from the world's poorest continent to implement it.
- "Continuing progress" on debt relief for the poorest countries.
- A Russian proposal to convene a global climate change conference in 2003.
- Next year's summit at the remote Canadian Rockies, with much smaller delegations, in a bid to avoid violent protests.

—Reuters

Summit squabble over global warming deal

Bonn, July 21

HC 11

DELEGATES AT a conference seeking to save the troubled Kyoto Protocol said on Saturday a conclusive deal looked increasingly unlikely, with new talks probably needed in the autumn to resolve differences.

Conference officials said they would present a broad compromise package to overcome squabbling over fine print that has bogged down proceedings. European Union officials also hoped a parallel conference of leaders from G-8 industrial nations in Genoa would give compromise efforts a boost.

With the ten-year-old negotiations in disarray because of the US pullout from the treaty, nations are seeking to flesh out a compromise but are finding they are divided even with Washington out of the picture.

On the third of four days of ministerial level talks, officials are increasingly looking to the next scheduled United Nations meeting on climate change, due to start in the Moroccan city of Marrakesh in late October.

"We are looking at the possibility of progress in a number of areas," said Baghir Asadi, chief Iranian delegate and chairman of the G77 group of developing nations. "The process will definitely continue in Marrakesh."

"It would be quite difficult to reach a deal here given the outstanding issues," he told. The head of the delegation from the former Soviet republic of Kyrgyzstan, Tilekbay Kyshtobayev, concurred.

"It is unrealistic to think a deal will be reached because the

countries are not coming together," he said. Many delegates were working intensively to keep the Kyoto process alive, worried that a failure in Bonn could kill it for good.

Dutch Environment Minister Jan Pronk, who is chairing the talks, gave a more positive spin to talks, saying negotiations were beginning to show promise.

"There is progress and I remain hopeful...that parties will be able to determine a compromise, not issue-by-issue, but on the package as a whole," Pronk said. Saturday's talks follow a week at which more than 180 countries have been trying to finalise rules on how to implement the 1997 U.N. pact on cutting greenhouse gas emissions. The ministerial-level talks are due to end on Sunday night.

"The Hague taught us you cannot rely on the last night," he said. German Environment Minister Juergen Trittin, a member of the Greens party, referring to last-minute talks at the global warming conference last year that failed. "We are trying to present a whole package today."

The Kyoto Protocol requires developed countries to cut their greenhouse gas emissions by an average of 5.2 per cent by 2012.

The United States, which signed the deal under President Bill Clinton, pulled out in March with President Bush saying it was "fatally flawed" and would damage the economy.

The other countries have decided to plough ahead — with varying levels of enthusiasm for keeping a treaty that will exclude the world's biggest polluter.

Reuters

01-10 Climate of Discord

How predictable is the weather? As predictable as human behaviour, aver some scientists, especially when the prediction in question involves the fate of the planet as a whole. Turning the theory of global warming on its head, MIT scientist and meteorologist Richard Lindzen has cast doubts over the dire predictions — based on simulated computer models — made by climatologists. His view directly contradicts the widely held belief that we are causing a greenhouse effect on the planet by our wasteful and excessive consumption of fossil fuels and by releasing CFCs and carbon emissions into the air. According to this view, the heating of the planet has already begun. Evidence of this is available in dissolving polar icecaps, rising sea levels, depleting ozone layer and changing behaviour of flora and fauna. In addition, coastal areas are getting flooded, ocean currents are undergoing temperature changes, summers are getting hotter and winters cooler. Skin and eye diseases, caused by exposure to Ultraviolet radiation, are on the rise especially in vulnerable areas like Australia. But Lindzen remains unconvinced by the evidence. Having studied the climate for more than 30 years, he believes that painting a gloomy picture is entirely unwarranted. Lindzen's contrary view stems from the difficulties and imponderables of modelling techniques, prompting him in turn to oppose international action to cut the emissions of heat-trapping gases. Ironically, Lindzen's voice of dissent on the subject of global warming is second only to that of US president George Bush Jr, though their motives for taking such a stand are poles apart. While the scientist questions the premise and tools of those predicting doom, the president is very clear that he's putting economics before the environment.

One thing is becoming abundantly clear: Regardless of the accuracy of climate predictions and the extent of influence of human actions on the environment, the atmosphere for dialogue and debate on the issue is becoming increasingly vitiated. On the one hand is the hardline position taken by the US government and on the other the shrill voice of 'green fundamentalists'. The ensuing polarisation has drowned out the voice of reason and sanity. The violent demonstrations by green activists, in collaboration with sundry other anti-globalisation protesters, at Genoa, the venue of the G-8 summit, did nothing to help us understand their point of view. A 'Friends of the Earth' spokesman explained the non-participation of his organisation in the demonstration by saying that 'Violence is counter-productive'. Future summiteers would do well to include representatives of these groups to enable them to present their case at the appropriate forum. This would not only ensure a more cordial atmosphere for talks, but also put a stop to stone-throwing and burning of vehicles by frustrated demonstrators. Coming back to the issue of global warming, Mr Bush's rejection of the 1997 Kyoto Protocol at the Bonn meet on climate control earlier this year has set back efforts by member-countries to implement Kyoto Protocol guidelines that spelt out the percentage cuts in emissions to be followed by various developed countries. While the debate rages over how soon and how high temperatures will rise, countries — whether developed or developing — would do well to act with caution, adopting environment-friendly practices to stave off a potential climate catastrophe.

Trickle-down lives

51-9
227

AS the garbage of the rich becomes more valuable, this permits the re-cyclers of plastic, glass and metal to become a little less poor. This process used to be called "trickle-down", which is, in effect the only means of lessening poverty which the global system finds acceptable.

But because trickle-down got a bad name, it was discarded as an idea (another aspect of the throw-away society), and re-packaged. It has since been called by a string of more fashionable names - income-generation, community development, empowerment, pro-poor initiatives, poverty alleviation.

All of this has been a vast public relations exercise, since these resounding terms amount to the same thing - the only

Kalinga Bagan is home to about 1,200 people; a long thread of a place, here for more than 50 years. Many of the people came from other parts of Kolkata, others were migrants from Bihar.... The collection, cleaning and recycling of plastic is the principal occupation

means whereby the poor may become a little less poor is by the rich becoming immensely, excessively richer.

Just how this works could not be clearer than in the Kalinga Bagan slum in Kolkata. This is a community that lives largely by the re-cycling of waste plastic; and as the wealthy throw out more and more that can be re-used, as packaging becomes more complex and elaborate, so junk can command a higher price in the market; and in this way, the intense misery of those who live off it is slightly alleviated.

It is a cumbersome, expensive and especially wasteful process: only by the overflow of waste from the rich may poverty be slightly ameliorated!

The Kalinga Bagan slum is set between the crumbling yellow plaster structures of the slaughterhouse, and the black glassy waters of the sluggish canal that carries the waste water of Kolkata. Along the roof of the slaughterhouse, the parapet has crumbled, and trees and small shrubs have taken root, producing meagre flowers; through the broken arches of the

windows, a scent of butchered animals wafts over the community.

The odours of offal rise up from the turbid waters, which produce bubbles of gas on the surface like the breath of drowning creatures. The desolation of the place is made worse by the remains of a fire which destroyed the community in December; so that pale ghosts of ash continually spiral through the roughly re-made huts, depositing a white film upon everywhere; and the taste of ashes permeates everything - a fitting symbol for people who live off the consumed lives of others.

Charred bamboo staves, blackened concrete, bricks melted by heat, tarpaulin charred by fire: efforts at reconstruction have been only half-hearted.

Who knows why the slum burned? Was it an accident? Was it carelessness? Was it that someone has an eye on a piece of potential real-estate? This is difficult to imagine, given the scene of wretchedness it presents.

One person died in the fire, I was told, "but he was drunk"; as though that both explained and diminished the death. There is a plan to drain the canal. The Asian Development Bank is said to have offered some money for the purpose. The slum is "unrecognised"; which means its future is precarious.

Kalinga Bagan is home to about 1,200 people; a long thread of a place, which has been here for more than 50 years. Many of the people came from other parts of Kolkata, others were migrants from Bihar - there are few newcomers, and some families have seen three generations born and raised here. The great majority are Muslim.

The collection, cleaning and re-cycling of plastic is the principal occupation. The Deputy Director of Cini-Asha (Child in Need Institute-Hope), which runs a school here, says, "Although job opportunities have decreased in West Bengal, nevertheless the standard of living of the poorest has risen."

NEW VISTAS

JEREMY SEABROOK

Some women work as domestic servants; some break batteries, separating and selling the metal.

Some cut strips for plastic slippers. In 1993, when Cini-Asha started work here, workers received only 20 paise for cutting 24 strips; now they get three rupees for the same quantity of work.

There are about 30 children inside the small school: a woven bamboo structure, with no window. The only light comes in

can steal her away from the needs of her own children.

Sobhara is 16. She is married to a van-puller, who earns between Rs 50 and Rs 60 a day (\$1.20). He gives her Rs 30 a day for food. They eat rice only once a day. Many men keep money back for drink; *bangla mod*, drink brewed in the slum. Families are large - four or five children are the norm, while some still have eight or nine; haunted by child mortality that remained high until only recently.

It is as though parents cannot trust death not to cheat them of their children, so for the sake of security, they maintain a family size more appropriate to another era.

Malnutrition is less prevalent than before; although many of the children are very small. The effects of hunger do not vanish with food: lack of vital nutrients haunts even the third generation by stunting their growth and delaying development.

In any case, malnutrition does not depend on the satisfaction of hunger: few in Kalinga Bagan eat fruit or a sufficient variety of vegetables.

An old woman is sitting in the shadow of her hut; close to her grandson, a disconsolate boy of about 18 who has been unable to work since the houses were burned in December.

His name is Mohan Das. He does not want to talk to anyone unless they can offer him work. The old woman came here at 15. Her parents died when she was a child, and she came with her grandmother. She married here and has 10 children. All are now grown up with their own families.

The men earn Rs 60 a day from recycling plastic, women get Rs 40. The plastic is sorted by colour and quality, and is sold to the buyers at Rs 4 a kilo. They then sell it on for Rs 8, and then to wholesalers for Rs 12. It goes for Rs 18 to a processing plant that renders it into plastic granules; and then to the factories which make plastic shoes or buckets or other goods, where the

price rises to Rs 24 a kilo.

Syed Bokal is 29. He is married with one boy and one girl. He collects and sells plastic which earns him Rs 200 to Rs 300 a month. He confirms that as the society grows richer, people throw away things of greater value; certain kinds of plastic - broken buckets or shoes - command a higher price than plastic bags.

For most workers, life is a constant journeying through the city, carrying a jute sack, into which they cram their daily findings. They are only a small and ill-rewarded part of a complex division of labour even in the recycling of rubbish.

Md Salim saw his business destroyed by the fire. He had a plastics godown which was burned with all the contents. He is from Sultanpur in Uttar Pradesh, where

This place is a shrine to conservation, to recycling, to the sparing re-use of resources; an example and model to a wasteful global system. There is only one thing with which it is prodigal; that is the energies and efforts of human beings, used up with abandon...

his wife and family remain. Now he has nothing to send home to them. The loss of labour in the city has repercussions elsewhere, since it cuts dependants off from subsistence, often in distant villages. He says maybe the government wants us out.

This place is a shrine to conservation, to recycling, to the sparing re-use of resources; an example and model to a wasteful global system. There is only one thing with which it is prodigal; and that is the energies and efforts of human beings, which are used up with such abandon because these are the cheapest commodities in the marketplace.

Human beings who survive on the rejected and cast-off garbage of those who have as little thought for them as they do for the plastic they throw each day into the trash-can.

(The author lives in Britain. He has written plays for stage, television and radio, made TV documentaries, published more than 30 books and contributes to leading journals around the world.)



A ragpicker sorts out plastic bags at a garbage dump in Kolkata. For most of these workers, life is a constant journeying through the city, carrying a jute sack, into which they cram their daily findings. They are only a small and ill-rewarded part of a complex division of labour even in the recycling of rubbish. - Rajib De

through the door, and as the eyes of the children turn their faces towards us, eyes in the darkness are a cascade of white and gold jewels, painful in their bright eagerness; yet another of the squandered treasures of India.

At a stone slab by the tubewell pump, a girl of seven is doing the family washing. Her small hands beat the shirts and trousers against the stone with all their tiny force: here, dirt is a constant enemy which can only be beaten by violence. The grey water from the garments trickles into the canal.

She has no father; her job is to look after the two younger children, while her mother works in a family whose wealth

Bonn talks may yield little without political will

By C. Rammanohar Reddy
BONN, JULY 21. In negotiations that have been going on in the former capital of Germany for the past week, Ministers and officials are trying to operationalise the Kyoto Protocol; but it is not just the U.S. decision to withdraw from the global treaty on climate change that threatens the future of the agreement, other and older contentious issues have returned to haunt the current talks.

A senior European Union official involved in the negotiations, Mr. Olivier Deleuze, told a press conference today that "the moment of truth" to save the Bonn talks had arrived. The Bonn negotiations were called to break the stalemate that wrecked the sixth session of the Conference of Parties (COP-6), which was held in The Hague last November. The issue then was about the mechanisms countries could use to meet their targets for greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in 2010, especially the role of forests in absorbing carbon from the atmosphere.

From the position that the developed countries have taken in the ongoing talks it looks like the differences among them on what are called "carbon sinks" have not

narrowed, and, with just a day left before the ministerial segment of the talks end, it seems unlikely that any agreement will be reached before Sunday night. And while negotiators bristle at questions that they are waiting for instructions from the Heads of State gathered in Genoa for the G-8 talks, it does seem that without a political intervention at the highest level the Kyoto Protocol talks are headed once again for the freezer.

There are four broad issues on which differences have to be resolved: compliance, finance, mechanisms and "land use, land-use change and forestry." The Kyoto Protocol, which was negotiated in 1997, laid down a target of a five per cent reduction in GHG by 38 developed countries by the year 2010. A plan of action drawn up at a meeting in Buenos Aires identified the broad mechanisms by which countries could reduce emissions. But the rules for compliance and the freedom countries have to choose mechanisms of their choice to lower emissions are proving the most difficult to find agreement on.

A variety of instruments, other than a lowering of emissions by the domestic economy, are available to countries to meet their 2010 targets. The one that has

evoked the most controversy is how far countries can use afforestation as their route to reducing net emission of GHGs. Since vegetation absorbs carbon dioxide (CO2) from the atmosphere, some countries — mainly Canada, Japan and Australia — assert that the role of their forests in sequestering this gas should be set off against the discharge of GHGs by their economies. This is opposed by the European Union, which wants a very low limit on the credit that can be given to these sinks.

If there is no cap on the role of carbon sinks, the more that countries place under vegetative cover, the more they can avoid taking measures to improve energy efficiency in the transportation, industry and power generation — the three sectors that are responsible for most of the emission of CO2. However, the scientific community is itself of two opinions about the importance of forests in sequestering carbon. The Royal Society of the U.K. recently put out a report arguing that since the processes underlying the absorption of the gas by vegetation are not fully known, carbon sinks should not be a substitute for cuts in emissions. But some scientists, who are members of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), yesterday put out

on their own a statement recognising the "transitional role" of sinks in removing CO2 from the atmosphere. But the one thing that all scientists agree on is that few countries currently have the operational monitoring systems to measure the contribution of sinks to reducing net emissions.

The developing countries are not involved in this stand-off over sinks, but they have been involved in discussions on finance and technology transfer.

A fund of \$1 billion as finance for technology transfer is being talked about. But with uncertainty even about whether this is an annual or total funding, this is far from being decided.

Signatories to the Kyoto Protocol have until 2002 to ratify the agreement. But a delay makes it more difficult to stabilise the build up of GHGs in the atmosphere. Yesterday, Dr. Bert Metz, a member of the IPCC, said here that since gas pumped into the atmosphere remains there for a decade, it was imperative to start acting immediately.

Dr. Metz's dire prediction was that even a delay of five years could take the GHG stabilisation in the atmosphere "beyond reach."

HP-10

SAVING KYOTO

2/7

THE PROSPECTS FOR arresting global warming could not be more bleak as Governments resume negotiations in Bonn on the troubled Kyoto Protocol of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the global treaty that was intended to control emission of greenhouse gases (GHGs). The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, a panel of some 3,000 scientists from around the world who have been tracking the issue since 1990, has in its latest assessment made extremely gloomy predictions of the extent of global warming during the course of this century. The new estimate is that global warming is taking place twice as fast as previously estimated, with the average temperature rising by as much as 1.4 to 5.8 degrees Celsius by 2080. At the same time, the reputed International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA) of Vienna has come to disturbing conclusions about what rising temperatures will mean to countries around the world. It was always known that global warming will flood coastal areas and literally drown small island states. But the new IIASA forecast, admittedly one of many that have been made, is that some of the poorest regions in the world will see their agriculture devastated by global warming. A number of countries including India and Brazil could, unless climate change is stopped in its tracks, see a loss of up to 280 million tonnes in food production in the 2080s. Ironically, a warmer climate will favour agricultural conditions in some countries, with half of the developed countries expected to benefit from this change.

Yet, none of these forecasts — all based on rigorous science even if not everyone agrees on the actual level of the impact — has persuaded

the developed countries to act before it is too late. Close to four years after the Kyoto Protocol was drawn up, the treaty, which calls for a 5 per cent reduction in emissions by 2008-12, has still not come into force. World-wide anger against the decision of the U.S. earlier this year, after Mr. George W. Bush became President, to withdraw from the Kyoto Protocol has not compelled a rethink by the American Government. Even the findings of a panel of scientists, appointed by Mr. Bush himself, that global warming could not be ignored have not made a difference. To make matters worse, Canada, Australia and Japan (which until now have sworn by the Kyoto Protocol) are showing signs of emulating the U.S. in refusing to ratify the treaty. If that happens, the agreement is effectively dead because these countries together account for more than 45 per cent of the industrial world's emission of GHGs and, according to current rules, the Protocol will come into force only when economies responsible for more than 55 per cent of the emissions ratify the pact. All these countries offer the argument that implementation of the Kyoto Protocol will hurt their economies. In this situation, the European Union, the only major grouping in favour of the agreement, is really fighting a losing battle.

The Bonn negotiations are therefore expected to see the tabling of compromise proposals that will permit a longer period for implementation or lay down more flexible targets. But the danger is that in formulating proposals that will be acceptable to all countries, the compromise that will be worked out will make for a very weak programme that will do little to halt climate change. Even this is a remote possibility.

Efforts on to save Kyoto climate pact without US

REUTERS
BONN, JULY 19

98-9 ref

ENVIRONMENT ministers fought on to try to save the Kyoto Pact in Germany on Thursday, but hopes of persuading the world's biggest polluter to modify its opposition to the global warming treaty were starting to fade.

While officials, notably from the pact's biggest backer, Europe, were talking up the chances of a deal that would wipe out last year's failed summit at The Hague, the refusal of the US, to act on any deal left some questioning whether they were wasting time in Bonn.

High-level arm-twisting on President George W. Bush, who has renounced undertakings given by his predecessor Bill Clinton to the 1997 Kyoto Protocol, is likely to happen elsewhere -- in London, where Bush

meets Prime Minister Tony Blair on Thursday and at the Group of Eight big power summit in Genoa from Friday.

That leaves a US delegation in Bonn, led by Under Secretary of State, Paula Dobriansky, participating in detailed negotiations on how the accord should be implemented, without have any intention of ratifying themselves. Round-table ministerial talks begin later on Thursday.

The European Union says it wants to rally a critical mass of big industrial powers--crucially including Japan, the second single biggest producer of greenhouse gases--behind a full accord so that it can be given legal force in much of the world next year. That, the EU says, could shame Bush into action.

To do that, states accounting for 55 percent of industrial countries' greenhouse gas emissions have to ratify it.

Japan, Canada seek concessions on greenhouse gases

40-16
18/7
BONN (GERMANY), JULY 17. Japan and Canada are pressing demands for more leeway in meeting anti-pollution targets under a climate change pact, putting them at odds with European countries in the latest round of talks, diplomats said on Tuesday.

The latest complications emerged as officials from 180 nations met for a second day as a 1997 treaty limiting emissions of "greenhouse gases" by rich countries hung in the balance. Canada, Japan and Australia were expected to present demands on getting more credit for forests and soil that absorb carbon dioxide than the 15-nation European Union wants to allow. Since the United States abandoned the Kyoto Protocol in March, Japan's participation has become crucial to getting the accord into force — possibly at the two-week Bonn meeting that began on Monday.

Even before the latest proposals were made public, they caused concern. "I view this quite sceptically," said a European diplomat, speaking on condition of anonymity. "It certainly appears that they want to increase the limits." But Japan's leverage has also made the E.U. ready to bargain as it seeks to push ahead with the Kyoto pact without the United States. Germany's Environment Minister, Mr. Juergen Trittin, said the accord could be salvaged with a compromise to keep Japan on board. The Japan might be won over if it were accorded credits against forests that absorb carbon

dioxide for a limited period, up to 2012, Mr. Trittin said in an interview in Tuesday's *Sueddeutsche Zeitung* newspaper. "I would find it acceptable — within very narrow limits — to move toward Japan on this point, but only on condition that Tokyo commits itself not to make an agreement in Bonn dependent on the United States," Mr. Trittin said.

More than 80 countries have signed the Kyoto pact, which requires industrialised countries to cut greenhouse gas emissions an average 5.2 per cent from 1990 by 2012. The accord can only enter into force if backed by 65 countries, representing 55 per cent of the industrialised world's emissions. If Japan pulls out, the second target can't be reached. "The conference in Bonn is our last chance if we really want to achieve substantial progress," Mr. Trittin insisted. "If it fails, climate protection will be put back by at least 10 years."

Adding to the pressure on Japan, the Brazilian President, Mr. Fernando Henrique Cardoso, wrote on Monday to the Japanese Prime Minister, Mr. Junichiro Koizumi, insisting that the text of the Kyoto accord shouldn't be reopened. Mr. Cardoso said Brazil — home to the Amazon rainforest — would "persevere in negotiations with all partners, and in particular with Japan, with a view to overcome the present difficulties and reach the common goal of reversing the global trend of climate change." — AP

FD-14
17/2

Global warming estimates double

LONDON, JULY 16. Global average temperatures could rise by between 1.4C and 5.8C over the next century, according to the most authoritative report yet produced by the U.N. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).

The predicted rises are without precedent in 10,000 years. It would mean more droughts, the disappearance of coral reefs, the melting of glaciers and the extinction of species. Sea level rises of up to 88cm are predicted, increasing the number of people likely to be killed in low-lying countries such as Bangladesh or Egypt during violent storms.

With a mid-range sea level rise of 40cm, the IPCC says, the number of people who would be killed by storm surges would increase by up to 200 million by 2080 depending on the preventative measures taken.

Before this year, the greatest likely temperature rise predicted over the next 100 years was 3C. The estimates have increased because

of the gradual removal of sulphate aerosols - pollution produced by industry - which reduce global warming by blocking sunlight.

The report concludes: "There is new and stronger evidence that most of the warming observed over the past 50 years is attributable to human activities." Computer reconstructions of climate for the past 1,000 years suggest that the warming of the past century is unusual and unlikely to be entirely natural in origin.

The evidence indicates that the 1990s were the warmest decade, and 1998 the warmest year, since instrument based recording of global temperatures began in 1861. Since 1750, when the Industrial Revolution was getting under way, the atmospheric concentration of carbon dioxide has increased by 31 per cent, from 289 parts per million to 367 parts per million today.

The effects of climate change:

-Glaciers, coral reefs and atolls, mangrove swamp, tropical forests, polar and alpine

grasslands are likely to undergo "significant damage".

- Rare and endangered species will generally move closer to extinction.

- There will be heavier rainfall across northern Europe - increasing the risk of floods - and lower rainfall over northern Africa and Australia.

- Water shortage, which affects approximately 1.7 billion people today, will affect 5.4 billion people in 25 years, the IPCC predicts.

- Food supplies are likely to be affected with grain yields falling across Africa and deserts spreading. Yields are likely to fall in Asia too and subsistence farming in Latin America will be damaged.

- There will be a greater risk from insect-borne diseases such as malaria and dengue fever and water borne diseases such as cholera.

- Heatwaves are likely to kill more people, particularly among the elderly and the urban population. — © Telegraph Group Limited, London, 2001

APD-14

Hopes fade for climate deal as talks start

BONN, JULY 16. Talks that some portray as a last chance to save much of the planet from drowning get under way in Germany today with little hope left that they can salvage an international deal to combat global warming.

With the U.S. and Europe at daggers drawn over implementing the U.N.-sponsored Kyoto Protocol, which would force the industrial powers to cut greenhouse gas emissions, Japan has emerged as a crucial swing voter.

But its Prime Minister said on Sunday he saw little chance of a quick accord.

European Union officials, who want to push on with the pact despite Washington's rejection of it, said some progress could still be made on narrowing differences during meetings due to last two weeks in the former West German capital on the Rhine.

But after a summit at The Hague in November failed to agree on how to implement the 1997 protocol and the U.S. President, Mr. George W. Bush, later renounced undertakings given by his predecessor Mr. Bill Clinton, many agreed with the Japanese Premier, Mr. Junichiro Koizumi, that more talks scheduled for Marrakesh, Morocco, in October now present a more realistic target for settling key issues.

"We will not be able to reach an agreement in Bonn but there will be another meeting in Morocco in October. Japan will do its utmost so the protocol can be enacted in 2002," Mr. Koizumi said.

Without Japanese support, the European Union has little chance of rallying the majority needed to

make the pact legally binding in those countries that ratify it — a move it hopes will increase pressure on the U.S., by far the biggest producer of the gases in question, to reconsider its rejection.

Environmental groups gathering in Bonn aimed their rhetoric at Japan which, they said, had the chance to save or kill Kyoto at Bonn.

"There is huge black cloud over the conference — it's caused by Japan not willing to go ahead without the U.S.," Mr. Bill Hare, Greenpeace's climate change campaign head, said.

"I think all the issues (on the agenda) are going to be held hostage by this."

German police are wary of the sort of violent protests that have marred international gatherings elsewhere and which are threatening next weekend's Group of Eight (G8) summit in Genoa, Italy. Elite anti-riot squads are on standby although few senior officials will be present until Ministers arrive on Thursday.

The only demonstration on Sunday was small and peaceful. "Bush Go Swimming!" ran one placard, from protesters who say global warming could melt polar ice and flood our coastlines.

Though the U.S. administration questions some of the scientific arguments, many environmental lobbyists say a build-up of carbon dioxide (CO2) and other gases produced by cars and industry is trapping the Sun's heat in the atmosphere, raising temperatures on Earth and threatening major climate change. — Reuters

Climate victims can sue rich nations

HF 10
11/7

London

STATES LIKE Bangladesh that are victims of climate change have a good case in law for suing polluters like the United States for billions of dollars, a law professor told a London conference on Tuesday.

With the US delaying action on climate change and President George Bush refusing to ratify the Kyoto protocol, the case for court action is becoming overwhelming, according to Andrew Strauss, of the school of law at Widener University, Delaware.

His prediction comes as the European Union and Japan try for a deal that will keep the climate negotiations from collapse. Talks resume next week in Bonn on legally binding emission reduction targets that the US has rejected. A deal could still be struck without the US, but Japan is reluctant to upset President Bush.

John Prescott, the Deputy

Prime Minister, is flying to Japan to try to find a compromise.

Professor Strauss was commissioned by the New Economics Foundation, a London based thinktank, to look at international law and the possibility of the poor countries demanding compensation from the rich polluting countries. With the science of global warming becoming better understood and accepted, and the blame more easily pinned on the big polluters, the legal case is becoming stronger, he told the conference.

Delegates will also be told that, in the UK, unless the government prepares the public for action to tackle global warming, the country could become ungovernable. The fuel protests last year showed how even a minor change in lifestyle enrages people — but this was nothing compared to the structural changes in the economy required in cutting greenhouse

gas emissions by between 60 per cent and 80 per cent, which the government accepts would be necessary soon.

In a booklet, *An Environmental War Economy*, the thinktank comments: "The planet's economy does not have to be run like the Titanic, with the masses locked away in steerage while the travellers in first class enjoy a last few minutes of luxury. The world's poor lose their lives and livelihoods when climate change strikes. In the north, by contrast, governments quail at the prospect of persuading people to switch from cars to the train.

"In the short term the toll of climate-related, man-made disaster will kill millions, leave large areas of the planet uninhabitable, widen the gap between rich and poor, turn frustration in the developing countries into anger, and fuel the growth of conflict, civil war and mass migrations.

The Guardian

THE GUARDIAN

Amte begins Narmada satyagraha

Ramesh Shankar
Choti Kasravad (Barwad),
July 10

THE USUALLY quiet 'Kutia Nij Bal Kunj' of renowned social worker Baba Amte here came to life yesterday as scores of Narmada Bachao Andolan (NBA) activists and supporters from across the country huddled together in the premises to give moral support to the octogenarian's Narmada *satyagraha*.

Baba Amte has been living in this Ashram on the banks of the river Narmada for the past 11 years. The ashram itself may be submerged by the Narmada waters, even if the monsoon is normal. In 1994, when the height of the dam was just 69 m, the river waters reached the ashram.

The 87-year-old Magsasay award winner will go on indefinite *satyagraha* till the end of monsoon to highlight the issue of rehabilitation of over 5,000 families facing the prospect of submergence this monsoon with the Sardar Sarovar Dam height reaching 93 m, including the 3-metre hump.

The Narmada *satyagraha*, which began here today, is part of a series of such *satyagrahas* by NBA, underway at Dhomkheddi, Jalsindhi and Mann project.

Earlier, talking to newsmen just before the *satyagraha*, Baba Amte said this is a good sign that even after the Supreme Court's verdict last year, there is



Baba Amte (left) and Medha Patkar with Narmada Bachao Andolan activists during a demonstration at Choti Kasravad on Monday.

a new awakening among the tribals about their rights. The slogan very often chanted by the tribals "Doobenge, lekin hatenge nahi", shows their determina-

tion to oppose the Supreme Court verdict, he said.

He said even President K R Narayanan had criticised the verdict in his speech while pre-

senting last year's Dr Ambedkar International Award for Social Work to him (Baba Amte). "It is an indirect indictment of the Supreme Court judgment."

20 hospitals face legal steps over waste disposal

97 SUBHENDU MAITI
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE HD-3

KOLKATA, July 7. - The state Pollution Control Board has threatened to take legal action against 20 hospitals, including two premier medical colleges in the city, for irregularities in disposing clinical waste.

The hospitals include Calcutta Medical College and Hospital, R G Kar Medical College and Hospital, Beliaghata I D Hospital, Islamia Hospital, Balananda Bhrmhachari Hospital, Patipukur TB Hospital, Bijoygarh State General Hospital, Baghajatin State General Hospital, Calcutta Homeopathic Medical College and Hospital.

The WBPCB's member secretary, Mr K S Ramasubban, had issued show cause notice to these hospitals several weeks ago. But the matter was kept under wraps.

WBPCB officials had also held a meeting with the state health secretary, Mr Ashok Mohan Chakraborty, to discuss the matter.

Speaking to **The Statesman**, the state environment minister, Mr Manab Mukherjee, said: "We have taken up the matter seriously. Several meetings have been held with the chief minister, health minister and Calcutta Municipal Corporation officials. Legal action would be tak-

en unless the hospital authorities follow the rules relating to disposal of bio-medical waste."

Some senior WBPCB officials said these hospitals didn't have necessary permission from the board regarding disposal of waste. Moreover, the hospitals weren't properly following the Bio-medical Wastes Rules 1988, the officials added.

Board officials said the civic body's vehicles remove amputated organs of patients, used syringes and other solid medical wastes and dump them in the same place although law says that these should be collected and disposed off separately.

Board officials also said there are rackets that deal in amputated organs and used syringes posing health hazards to patients as well as people in general.

A senior WBPCB official said: "How can the board force private establishments to follow the rules when state run hospitals are flouting them?"

The minister of state health department, Mr Pratyush Mukherjee, said: "We will solve the problem very soon. We will deploy private agencies to dump the wastes scientifically. We will also see whether syringes and saline bottles can be recycled scientifically."

Environment Ministry officials meet Prescott

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, JULY 4. ^{ND-1A} The issue of climate change formed the core of discussion between the British Deputy Prime Minister, Mr. John Prescott, and Environment Ministry officials here today. The Indian side was led by the Secretary (Environment and Forests), Mr. P.V. Jayakrishnan.

According to an official spokesman, the discussion covered various issues relating to climate change in connection with the ongoing negotiations under the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change. The talks are expected to strengthen the commitments of developed countries under the Convention for Green House Gases Reduction. Mechanisms such as the Clean Development Mechanism between developed and developing countries, joint implementation of mitigation projects and emission trading are seen as methods of cost-effective GHG reduction.

Representatives of both the countries also exchanged views on the setting up of a compliance mechanism and questions with regard to use of land and forestry.

110-11
278

Key pact to save crop diversity

ROME, JULY 1. The U.N. world food body reached a landmark agreement today to try to save the world's diversity of agricultural crops, officials said.

The pact followed an anguished debate pitting many poor countries and environmentalists against multinational corporations and wealthier nations.

After a week of touch-and-go talks, delegates said the United States had agreed for the first time in a public forum to mandatory payments by plant breeders and geneticists developing new crop varieties in return for access to public seed banks.

The seed banks lend out crop seeds at no charge, enabling research into new varieties of plants to increase resistance to disease and ameliorate some of the impact of global warming. In turn, this helps alleviate hunger in poorer nations.

"This international undertaking is a milestone — it will allow the conservation of genetic resources for future generations," Jose Esquinas-Alcazar, Secretary of the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, part of the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), told Reuters.

He said an international agreement to conserve plant genetic resources was needed because agricultural biodiversity was be-

ing lost at an alarming rate.

No consensus on patents

The biggest stumbling block was always the patents issue and after much agonised discussion, the meeting decided not to adopt a clause on Intellectual Property Rights that limit access to seeds. The issue will be tackled instead by an FAO conference in November. Environmental groups say the patenting of food and seeds by multinational companies threatens food security and access by farmers to genetic resources.— Reuters

Israel pounds Syrian posts in Lebanon

JERUSALEM, JULY 1. Israeli warplanes struck a Syrian anti-aircraft post in Lebanon and Hizbollah guerillas fired mortar bombs at Israeli positions today in tit-for-tat attacks which threatened to open a new West Asia warfront.

At least two Syrian troops and one Lebanese soldier were reported wounded in today's air raid on the strategic Bekaa Valley, where Syria has a large concentration of the more than 20,000 troops it keeps in Lebanon.

The Israeli Defence Minister, Mr. Binyamin Ben-eliezer, said the assault was in retaliation to a Hizbollah rocket attack on Friday.— Reuters

5/10 COTTONED ON 7/8/6 Government scared of fashionable green lobby

THE recent India visit by personable Greenpeace activists protesting genetically modified (GM) crops inevitably attracted some media attention. It seemed to have caught official attention, too. For, nearly coinciding with the visit was the environment ministry decision to postpone commercial clearance for a GM crop — trans-genic Bt cotton. The ministry committee on genetic engineering has asked for one more year of field trials, to be held under the guidance of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research. Just what the ICAR boffins will discover over and above the data collected by three years of trials is more difficult to understand than a primer on genetics. The environment ministry committee does not seem to have come up with anything beyond vague apprehensions. This almost certainly means the government is scared of the politics of GM crops, not their science. For, had Bt cotton been as demonically dangerous as green activists claim, three years of field trials in India and its commercial use in America and some Asian countries would have surely provided at least indicative evidence.

Ironically, farmers, whose interests green activists so passionately champion are in favour of Bt cotton. They know that thanks to the gene transfer from a soil bacteria, Bt cotton can kill a pest, boll worm, usually resistant to pesticides. Boll worm menace has been known to destroy an entire season's effort. Clearing the commercial use of a remedy, field tested for three years, should have been an official priority. More so since we don't eat cotton. Irrational caution in cases of genetically modified food crops may be understandable, given the high emotive connotations of food politics. But surely even the Indian government can show a little more courage when it comes to biotechnological advances in non-edible categories. No one is advocating rash and rushed introduction of GM crops. But they represent a technological advance, responding to commercial needs, and, green activism notwithstanding, their introduction at various stages is inevitable. Expectedly, Greenpeace activists in India showed tins and cans of processed food, which allegedly use GM crops as raw materials. The message was familiar: look what the big bad West does to poor countries. We hold no particular brief for the West. But radical conspiracy theories propagated by first world activists have a nasty way of harming victims more than "exploiters". Look, for example, at green labels on trade, which typically affect third world exports to the West. The tirade against GM crops need to be similarly understood. Especially since India has the scientific potential to emerge as an important player in biotechnology. Government help has been paltry. Now, fear of appearing insufficiently green may do further damage. Perhaps, there is a need for personable pro-biotechnology activists!

THE S...

India, China to resist US over Kyoto

BY SUBHASH NARAYAN

New Delhi, June 19: India and China would jointly resist any pressure from the US to include the two countries as parties to the Kyoto Protocol. Sources say informal negotiations between the two countries are going on at different levels to devise a strategy to resist US pressure. US President George W. Bush had recently stated that the Kyoto Protocol on global warming is

flawed because major polluters like India and China are not part of it.

The 1997 Kyoto Protocol, while putting the responsibility on the industrial nations to reduce emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases, has exempted developing countries, including India and China, from undertaking any responsibility on greenhouse emissions.

The scheduled meeting of Conference of Parties in Bonn from July 16 to July 27 (part of the Kyoto Protocol) is expected to see India and China and the rest of the G-77 countries opposing the latest US stand. The G-77, of which

India is a part, and China are formulating a separate interest group to argue their case strongly against any pressure from the developed nations.

"We are currently working on a joint strategy involving developing countries, including China, to ward off any pressure from the US on the issue of greenhouse emissions. Compared to the US, we are far behind in emissions of toxic gases and, if the US wants us to be more responsible, it should first put its own house in order and support developing nations by using the latest technology to reduce harmful emis-

■ Turn to Page 2

SPOTLIGHT

and knives from the spot.

Kyoto

■ Continued from Page 1

sions," said a senior government official of the ministry of non-conventional energy. The ministry is working with the environment ministry and its officials are expected to be part of the Indian delegation to Bonn.

Cooperation between India and China is being viewed with interest because the two countries have clashed over anti-dumping duties and other defence sector-related issues. The official added that US opposition to the protocol reveals the sharp division that exists between the industrial countries over harmful emissions. The US currently accounts for over 20 per cent of total man-made greenhouse emissions. Thus, as per the Kyoto Protocol, the maximum responsibility rests with the US.

According to the Kyoto Protocol, industrial nations were made responsible to bring down their emission levels and support any technological upgradation schemes in the field of environment in developing countries.

Sources say that apart from industrial nations, countries like China and India are one of the biggest emitters of harmful gases. At the current rapid rate of growth of emissions in these two countries, by 2015 India and China be among the top three greenhouse gas emitting countries of the world behind the US.

THE ASIAN AGE

Karnataka, Centre may clash on Cauvery

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

BANGALORE, June 18. - Karnataka and the Centre are heading for a showdown over the desilting of tanks in the Cauvery river basin.

This follows a directive from Central Water Commission seeking to restrain the state from carrying out the Rs 996-crore desilting project, also aided by World Bank for storing rain water.

The state government, which rejected CWC's directive, has said it had the right to desilt tanks. It said that it will go ahead with the project with or without World Bank assistance.

Minister for major irrigation Mr HK Patil said today that "none can stop us from taking up desilting works in about 8000 age-old tanks in the Cauvery basin. We have the right to take up the project."

CWC's argument, however, is that the issue of sharing Cauvery river waters is before Cauvery Waters Disputes Tribunal and, therefore, no work relating to it can be taken up either by Karnataka or Tamil Nadu, the two main contending parties.

The chief minister, Mr SM Krishna, who has also taken exception to the CWC directive, is fuming. Senior state government officials said "he has even taken up the matter with the Prime Minister."

The chief minister said the state is only storing rainwater in tanks that feed the Cauvery. The desilting of tanks, he said, has been going on all over the state from the time of the Mysore Maharajas.

Mr Patil, on his part, said the tanks didn't fall under the ambit of the Cauvery river water sharing dispute; for that matter, he said, the neighbouring state had never objected to desilting.

THE STATESMAN

Asia and global warming

WIDE ANGLE

SALMAN HAIDAR

THE realisation that environmental issues require global cooperation has done little to unite the world behind an agreed plan of action. Successive international conferences have only emphasised the gap between developing and developed countries, between the major polluters and others, and between America and the rest of the world.

Different nations are driven by vastly different interests and though the dangers to the global environment are seen by all, it has not proved possible till now to devise a programme to which all can subscribe.

The developing countries see themselves as victims of the recklessness of the industrialised world which is chiefly responsible for polluting the earth but is unwilling to pay its proper share to try to set matters right.

The poorer countries need substantial help with technology and resources to avoid taking the pollution-ridden path of the rich but only a trickle is coming their way. Nor is the industrialised world of one view on the issues: differences between America and Europe are very much in focus as Mr Bush makes his first official visit to that continent.

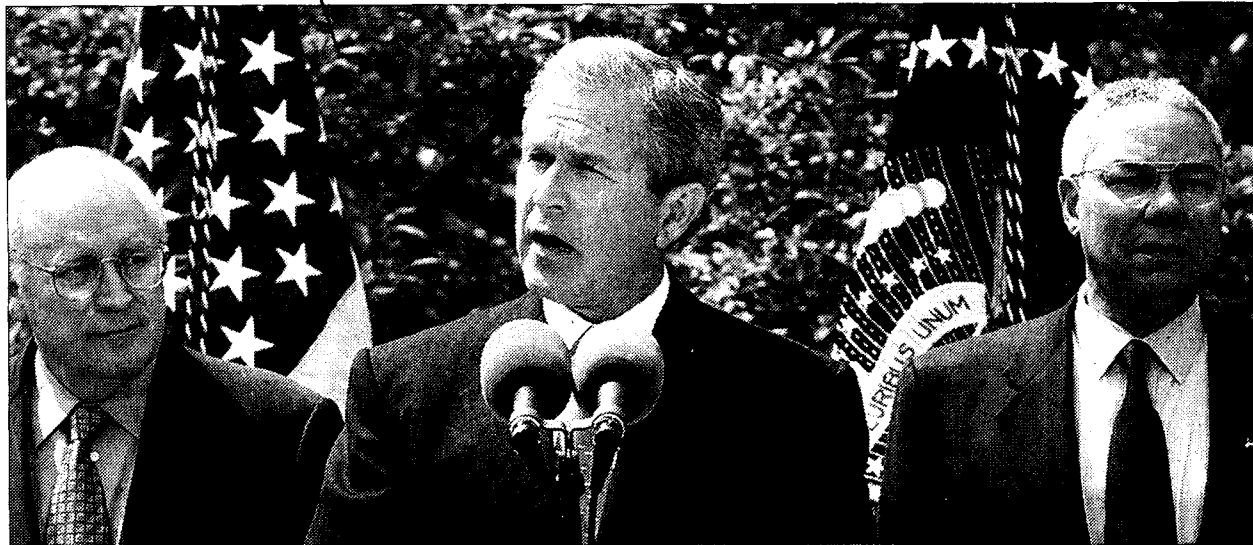
On environmental questions, as on so many others, America has proved the most recalcitrant and the most willing to ignore collective global effort. It refused to accept the 1997 Kyoto Protocol that the rest of the world supported. Initially, it even questioned the evidence confirming global warming, taking the view that there was not enough to indicate a firm trend or to suggest that human activity was the most significant cause of it.

Besides, the effluents in the atmosphere that could be held responsible for the phenomenon were not all of industrial origin. It was claimed that methane gas, no less a pollutant than the carbon dioxide discharged by the industrialised countries, was released in vast quantity by China and India as a result of their agricultural practices.

They, and other developing countries, should put their own houses in order before making demands upon others. These arguments have served to muddy the waters and confuse the issue.

Now, in the lead up to his European visit, President Bush has gone to considerable trouble to explain American thinking on this issue, which is one of the most divisive between Europe and America.

Not long after assuming the residency, Mr Bush had roundly



President George W Bush speaking on the global climate change, in the White House, as Vice-President Dick Cheney (left) and Secretary of State Colin Powell (right) look on, in Washington last Monday. Mr Bush announced new initiatives to study the rise in the earth's temperature and reasserted that the proposed Kyoto treaty on global warming is fatally flawed. — AP/PTI

rejected the Kyoto Protocol, to howls of protest from Europe. There is no resiling from that position but an effort has been made to present American policy as less arbitrary and more responsible than it is taken to be.

But unlike Europe, America is not ready to accept 1990 levels of

emission as the target to be achieved, for Mr Bush fears this would have too adverse an impact on the economy. So more research is promised to find better options.

And, in keeping with the familiar Western approach, the problem is expected to be solved by the market. America also shows greater

openness to the use of nuclear energy, which is anathema to Europe. Little wonder, then, that Europe remains deeply sceptical about American environmental policy.

The argument among the industrialised countries will pursue its own course. What is most

noteworthy as far as Asia is concerned is the way in which India and China have been drawn in.

These two of the largest developing countries of Asia are identified as a significant part of the problem. Their emissions of methane are tabulated among the principal dangers, alongside carbon dioxide and other industrial effluents. The release of soot into the atmosphere, much of it apparently from these two, is another hazard.

There is a hint that reducing these activities should have priority; one can guess that this is because it would require less high technology input, hence less external support.

Seen from Asia, this looks like a highly self-serving approach which tries to shift the burden away from those who created the problem in the first instance.

Some US think-tanks have been pulled in to bolster the effort.

The Naval War College recently conducted an exercise on the theme of Asia's part in environmental concerns like global warming. This dramatised the future role of India and China. In the present century, growth of consumption of oil and natural gas is projected to take place mainly in Asia, in particular in these two countries.

By contrast, growth is expected to taper off in the industrialised countries. So India and China will come under closer scrutiny as polluters of the environment. On this subject, the available figures can be read in very different ways. Per capita emissions in metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent are: USA 24.3; UK 10.5; China 4.0; India 2.2.

However, aggregates measured in millions of metric tons are: USA 6,503.8; UK 618.7; China 4,964.8; India 2,081.7. So where should the maximum pressure be exerted, on the per capita or the aggregate polluter? And how reliable are these figures, which are derived from US sources?

What seems evident is that India and China are being jointly targeted by the industrialised countries. This should serve as an important incentive for them to get together and coordinate their strategy. They have the scientific capacity to do their own research on at least some relevant issues, like that of methane emission, and can therefore question judgments that may be deliberately loaded against them.

They also have the diplomatic reach to make their point effectively at the international level. What is needed is a closer alignment of their strategy in the face of a shared predicament.

(The author is a former Foreign Secretary.)

100 YEARS AGO

TODAY

JUNE 15, 1901

THE BLACKMAILING CASE

THE case in which a constable of the Reserve Force, doing special duty at the carriage stand, Dalhousie Square, North, was charged with blackmailing drivers was resumed today. Babu Kisto Lall Dutt appeared for the prosecution and Babu Ganendro Nath Ghose for the defence. The boy who picked up the pice was examined, and deposed to the accused having dropped the coin. The driver, recalled, said he was afraid to refuse the pice to the accused, otherwise he would not have paid him. One of the passengers who had engaged the carriage deposed to the driver having given a pice to the constable, but for what he did not know. A Jew (identifies the complainant) came up and laid hold of the hand of the accused. Inspector Mulcahy deposed to having inquired into the case under instructions from Superintendent Millard and the Commissioner of Police on a charge of receiving an illegal gratification. A Lance Corporal of Police produced the book in which the names of men on duty were entered. This closed the case for the prosecution, and his Worship framed charges against the accused under Sections 384 and 161 of the Indian Penal Code. The complainant was cross-examined, and said that he was the owner of

several hackney carriages, but the driver who gave the pice was not in his employ, nor did this conveyance belong to him. The case was then adjourned to the 26th instant.

THE MARWARI ASSOCIATION CASE

THE case in which four Marwari dealers are charged with causing hurt to a gomasta of the Marwari Association by assaulting him, using abusive language and criminal intimidation, was resumed today. Mr Jackson and Mr Bonnaud, instructed by Mr Manuel, appeared for the prosecution; and Mr Sinha, instructed by Babu Kalli Nath Mitter, Mr Cranenbergh and Babu Kisto Lall Dutt, for the defence. Some further evidence was recorded, and the case was adjourned to the 2nd of July.

EURASIAN AND ANGLO-INDIAN FAMILY BENEFIT FUND

THE Annual General Meeting of the Fund, which was to have been held yesterday, had to be adjourned for a fortnight owing to the want of a quorum, only nine out of ten members required, being present.

18/6 IMPASSE ON CLIMATE CHANGE 19/12

THE PROSPECTS FOR operationalising the Kyoto Protocol on climate change remain as dim as they were prior to the U.S. President, Mr. George Bush's recent meetings with the heads of government of the European Union. All that the world is left with is gratitude that the U.S. Government has at least abandoned one extreme, and absurd, argument it made when it announced in March that it was not going to ratify the Protocol. Mr. Bush had claimed then that science was still not certain that global warming was a real phenomenon. Now, following the findings — if indeed reconfirmation was needed — by a panel of U.S. scientists that there can no longer be any uncertainty about the process, the U.S. Government has at least acknowledged that global warming is indeed a real issue: However, what the world needs now is not more funding for research into global warming — as announced by Mr. Bush on the eve of his visit to Europe — but action by the world's largest emitter of greenhouse gases (GHGs) on reducing these emissions.

In the many arguments that off and on have been cited by the U.S. in support of its refusal to ratify the Kyoto Protocol, the one constant argument is that unless the larger developing countries — China and India have been commonly mentioned — also make commitments to lower their output of GHGs the U.S. will not do so. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) negotiated in the early 1990s and signed by the U.S. during the presidency of Mr. George Bush senior, did not call on the developing countries to lower their emission of GHGs. The rationale for the "common but differentiated responsibilities," as contained in that treaty, was that since it was the developed countries which accounted for by far to the build-up of GHGs in the atmosphere since the industrial revolution, it was these economies which had the responsibility for stabilising and slowing emissions. The subsidiary argument was that in the

process of development the developing countries would have to increase their emissions — especially from the burning of solid fuels — if they were to provide their citizens with even a reasonable level of goods and services that required energy inputs. Yet, the U.S. has had no qualms about turning its back on some of the core principles of the 1992 Convention and arguing now that with some of the developing countries emerging among the world's largest emitters of GHGs, a global agreement without their participation was meaningless. In addition to everything else that is wrong with this position the fact is that even if China and India emit large amounts of GHGs, the differences in per capita terms are huge. Every year, each U.S. citizen currently emits 20 times as much carbon dioxide as an Indian and 10 times as much as a Chinese citizen. More telling is the fact that both China and India have been showing a decline in annual emissions of this gas on a unit GDP basis even as these levels remain far below that of the U.S. And recent statistics compiled in the U.S. show that China's total emissions in the 1990s grew at a much slower rate than those of the U.S. in spite of the fact that its economy grew much more rapidly in the previous decade.

The E.U., while continuing to demonstrate its unhappiness about the U.S. position, has expressed its intention of ratifying the Kyoto Protocol which had set a somewhat weak target for 38 industrialised countries of a 5.4 per cent reduction in annual emission of GHG by 2008-12, compared to the levels in 1990. Such action will show that the U.S. is alone in the industrialised world, but it will not do much for the cause of halting global warming since the U.S. accounts for more than 20 per cent of the annual world-wide discharge of carbon dioxide. It will require intense public pressure from its own citizens and the rest of the world for the U.S. Government to change its position.

Superiority and

THE HINDU

18 JUN 2001

EU sets 2001 as deadline for Kyoto ratification paper

Gothenburg (Sweden), June 16 — European Union leaders on Saturday provisionally agreed to have a Kyoto ratification document ready before the end of 2001 so members could rapidly sign up to the landmark treaty on limiting greenhouse gas emissions.

According to draft conclusions of an EU summit, the leaders decided to ensure the widest participation of industrialised nations in the 1997 treaty.

"The commission will prepare a proposal for ratification before the end of 2001 making it possible for the union and its member states to fulfil their commitment to rapidly ratify the Kyoto Protocol," the document said. "The European Union will work to ensure the widest possible participation of industrialised countries in an effort to ensure the entry into force of the protocol by 2002."

Meanwhile the European Union leaders on Saturday set the end of 2002 as their target date for closing negotiations with leading candidates seeking membership of the wealthy bloc, according to draft conclusions of an EU summit. (Reuters)

THE ASIAN AGE

17 JUN 2001

17 JUN 2001

KYOTO ACCORD / WE MUST WORK TOGETHER, SAYS BUSH

E.U., U.S. to seek new channels

By Batuk Gathani

BRUSSELS, JUNE 15. The European Union and the Bush administration have "agreed to disagree" and part company on the strategy to control global climate but vowed to seek "new channels of co-operation" to contain challenges posed by global warming.

The 15-nation European Union last night reaffirmed its members' determination to ratify the 1997 Kyoto protocol. The U.S. reiterated its rejection of the protocol and the scientific evidence supporting it. But ironically both sides said they were committed to provide "strong leadership on climate change".

There is much speculation on the contours of the proposed "strong leadership".

However, the more positive outcome of the Euro-American dialogue in Sweden is the American commitment to take part in the conference on global climate change to be held in July in Bonn. Mr. Romano Prodi, President of the European Commission, said he was pleased that despite its opposition, the U.S. would take part.

Earlier, Mr. Bush said: "We don't agree on the Kyoto treaty, but we do agree that climate change is a serious issue and we must work together." Mr. Bush's

main objection to the Kyoto accord is focused on the fact that it exempts developing countries like India and China but commits industrialised nations to reduce greenhouse gas emissions below 1990 levels by 2020.

The U.S. with five per cent of the global population is responsible for some 25 per cent of the pollution through gases, followed by major European industrial countries led by Germany. The Swedish Prime Minister, Mr. Goran Persson, said the E.U. would stick to the Kyoto treaty — which is yet to be ratified by the industrialised countries — and that the U.S. would "go on with their pol-

icy". Mr. Persson added: "Climate change is not isolated to Europe or to America. It is a global effect. If you are in favour or against the Kyoto protocol you have to take action."

The practical aspect of the Kyoto protocol that the E.U. countries are committed to is making eight per cent cut in greenhouse gas emissions. The U.S. is not prepared to make such firm commitment except that Mr. Bush promised to spend "money and time" on scientific solutions.

Mr. Bush pointed out that his administration's programme, with emphasis on conservation, nuclear energy and natural gas would help to deal with global warming.

The environmental lobby activists — represented by some 12,000 protesters outside the conference venue — are bitterly critical of the Bush administration's approach accusing Mr. Bush of failing the American people.

A panel on climate change, made up of world's top climate scientists, concluded that man's actions "contributed substantially" to the climate warming in the past five decades and that warming process may be accelerating.

The more positive outcome of the Euro-U.S. summit is that the world's two trading giants have committed themselves to launching an "ambitious" world trade round this year and to abide by the rulings of the World Trade Organisation (WTO). The U.S. and the European leaders also agreed to work together on issues ranging from establishing peace in the Balkans to economically helping Russia to attain the status of a democratic free-market state and fight international crime and terrorism.



Front (left to right): The Spanish Prime Minister, Mr. Jose Maria Aznar, the President of the European Commission, Mr. Romano Prodi, the Finnish President, Ms. Tarja Halonen, the U.S. President, Mr. George Bush and the Swedish Prime Minister, Mr. Goran Persson, pose for a group photo before their dinner at Goteborg town hall, Sweden, on Thursday. Background (left to right): The British Prime Minister, Mr. Tony Blair, the Portuguese Prime Minister, Mr. Antonio Guterres, the Chancellor, Mr. Gerard Schroeder, (hidden), the Italian Prime Minister, Mr. Silvio Berlusconi and Luxembourg Prime Minister, Mr. Jean Claude Juncker. — AP

... cynicism of it all.

Blow Hot, Blow Cold

President Bush's attitude to global warming is disingenuous to put it mildly. He's been finding ever new ways to wriggle out of his campaign promise to take a more sympathetic view of the Kyoto Protocol agreement. This agreement seeks to improve global air quality by member-countries progressively cutting down on harmful emissions. The dangers of not doing so have been recounted repeatedly in these columns: Widening of the ozone hole that lets in harmful radiation, aggravation of the greenhouse effect with its attendant stock of problems, and irreparable damage to the earth's biodiversity. Of course using up too much energy also means an energy crisis. But just try telling all this to the most powerful man in the world. Mr Bush doesn't want the US to cut back on emissions. Period. First, he refused to acknowledge that there is such a thing as global warming. Thereafter, he declared that the US will not participate in the Kyoto process, even going so far as giving a free hand to industry and power generating units in respect of emissions. Then in an apparent volte-face on the eve of his European visit, he suddenly acknowledged the severity of the problem. But no, he wasn't going to cut back, instead the US would solve the problem by "leading the way, advancing the science on climate change".

A report released by the Environmental Protection Agency makes clear just why the US is wary of the Kyoto agreement. The US leads in heat-trapping gas emissions. However, because the US is followed by China and India, Mr Bush insists that they too drastically cut down on their emissions. Impeccable logic, except India and China, indeed the second and third largest emitters, have among the lowest per capita emissions. Per capita, the US emits six times that of China and twelve times that of India. Little wonder then that Dubya has been dubbed the 'toxic Texan' by the European Community who have been going out of their way to conform to the Kyoto treaty. They point out, in fact, that had the US only done so, by now, we would have achieved the emission levels targeted by them to rein in the greenhouse effect. It is common knowledge that global temperatures have risen one degree fahrenheit in the last 50 years, as compared to the 9-degree rise since the last Ice Age. Hence, say scientists, global warming risks are clear enough to justify investment in emission controls. Since the biggest culprit is the US, Mr Bush would rather attention was deflected from his country's energy-gobbling and polluting policies to the mechanism of the market and US contribution in terms of scientific studies into this matter. But this has only widened the trans-Atlantic rift. To be sure, this is not an issue that can be solved by market forces. Till date, Mr Bush has not come up with any concrete proposal to deal with the global problem of warming and energy-depletion. He is clear, however, that he will not agree to any environmental limits that will slow down the US economy or impose any restrictions on the voracious appetite of the US consumer. Mr Bush must remember a basic rule that applies to all picnickers: Pick up more litter than you leave behind, or you will not be able to return.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

BUSH FIRE ^{yr/b}

Will Kyoto survive White House? ^{15/10}

ENVIRONMENT DAY celebrations were, or should have been, tempered with news that George Bush is planning to replace the Kyoto protocol with something cooked up by his own advisors. The Bush plan, to be unveiled during his maiden Europe tour, is no doubt aimed at calming green-conscious European leaders. One of the key features of the Bush plan apparently is that it asks developing countries to control their greenhouse gas emissions, unlike the Kyoto protocol which exempted the third world. Bush advisers have seen this omission as typical liberal flummery. First, developing countries like India or China may be big emitters of greenhouse gases, but they come nowhere near Western, especially US, levels. The difference is large enough to warrant the bigger polluter to start taking action without quibbling about others.

In fact, precisely that principle, known as common but differentiated responsibility in greenspeak, was established in Rio, the city that preceded Kyoto is hosting a global environment meet. An American president attended and put his signature on the principle. The president was George Bush, senior. And the most troubling aspect of his son's attitude towards Kyoto is the possibility that he does not agree with the principle of differentiated responsibility. That could seriously damage any global effort to rescue an environmental protocol. Even Europeans, who, like the US, have heavy commitments under the Kyoto protocol, are unlikely to agree. This is not to say the Kyoto protocol cannot and should not be modified in terms of commitment distribution, or indeed any other aspect like costs of compliance. Developing countries can be asked to sign for later commitments. As for other changes, many have persuasively argued that to Kyoto's system of capping emissions must be added provisions that will allow some slack for sudden, episodic rise in compliance costs. These modifications may be feasible. But they require mature compromise. The question is whether an American president who is keen to open Alaska to oil exploration, is mature enough on this count.

THE STATESMAN

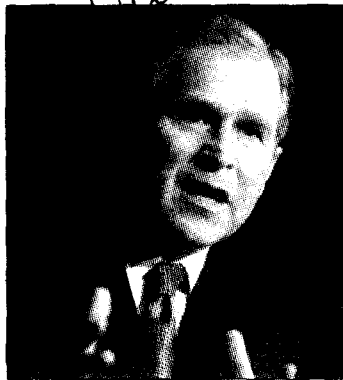
Environmentalists stand up to Bush charge

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, June 13

NEW DELHI has been guarded in its reaction to President George W Bush's charge that India is a major emitter of greenhouse gases. But an environmentalist came out with a strong protest today, observing that the US was the single largest emitter of GHGs.

Bush had identified "developing countries such as China and India" as being responsible for much of environmental pollution and global warming. Director-general of TERI, Dr RK Pachauri said, "It cannot be ignored that the US is the single largest emitter of GHGs, accounting for 24 per cent of world emissions, though it is home to only about five per cent of the world's population."

Bush had called on developing



GEORGE W BUSH

countries to evince commitment towards reducing pollution. To this Dr Pachauri said: "This is actually a red herring. It is meant to avoid any responsibility towards addressing the global challenge of climate change."

"Bush's primary objective is to

avoid any commitment that would require the US energy and industrial sectors to restructure and undertake efforts to become less GHG-intensive," he said.

"The US wants to achieve most of its GHG reduction commitments through forestry activities and cooperative projects in developing countries."

Bush had acknowledged US responsibility towards reducing GHG emission levels. But he stressed that large developing countries with vast industrialisation programmes, such as China and India, were no less culpable for contributing significantly to global warming. They should share the burden of reducing global GHG emissions, the US President had said.

Pachauri today underlined the contradictions between universally acknowledged scientific findings about global warming

and Bush's stand.

One of the fundamentals about climate change and the Kyoto protocol is that developed countries are not only "historically responsible" for climate change, but also equipped financially and technologically "to tackle this problem". Developed countries are therefore committed to control, stabilise and reduce their emissions.

"There are no GHG reduction targets for developing countries in the first commitment period (2008-2012) but with financial and technical assistance from industrialised countries, they are required to attempt to move to a future path that is less carbon-intensive," Pachauri said.

Bush has questioned the foundation of the FCCC and the Kyoto Protocol by insisting that China and India should be made to pay for their role in climate change.

THE HINDUSTAN

Bush targets India, China on pollution

By AZIZ HANIFFA

Washington, June 12: President George W. Bush has dismissed the Kyoto pact on global warming as "fatally flawed," saying it is a threat to the US economy because major polluters like India and China are not party to it.

But in an effort to disarm his critics as he left for his first presidential trip to Europe, Mr Bush mapped out steps to boost research and development on global warming, which would require participation of developing countries

like India and China. He did not offer any specifics on what his administration's alternative is to the 1997 Kyoto Treaty that requires industrial nations to reduce emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouses gases that cause global warming.

In a Rose Garden statement, Mr Bush declared, "The Kyoto Protocol is fatally flawed in fundamental ways. But the process used to bring nations together to discuss our joint response to climate change is an important one."

"That is why," he said, "I am

today committing the United States of America to work within the United Nations framework and elsewhere to develop with our friends and allies and nations throughout the world an effective and science-based response to the issue of global warming."

"Concentration of greenhouses gases, especially CO₂, have increased substantially since the beginning of the industrial revolution. And the National Academy of Sciences indicate that the increase is due in large part to human activity." Mr Bush conceded

"our country, the United States is the world's largest emitter of manmade greenhouses gases. We account for almost 20 per cent of the world's man-made greenhouse emissions."

"We also account for about one-quarter of the world's economic output," he argued, but said, "We recognise the responsibility to reduce our emissions." Mr Bush went on to note "we also recognise the other part of the story — that the rest of the world emits 80 per cent of all greenhouse gases." (IANS)

Bush seeks to blunt European criticism on climate issue ^{HD-19}

By Sridhar Krishnaswami

WASHINGTON, JUNE 11. Hoping to take the sting out of the planned demonstrations in Europe as well as ease some of the official criticism in that part of the world, the President, Mr. George W. Bush, is taking steps to boost research and development on the subject of global warming.

The President will outline his proposals in a speech on Monday that would include a proposal to seek new technologies for curbing greenhouse gases. One of the objectives of Mr. Bush's speech and proposals is to send a message that he is serious about the problem of climate change and that Washington is keen to work with other capitals in coming up with a response.

On Monday night, Mr. Bush leaves for a six-day visit to Europe that will take him to Spain, Belgium, Sweden, Poland and Slovenia and will participate in a summit of the European Union in Gothenburg, Sweden. Europe has expressed outright anger at the Bush administration literally abandoning the 1997 Kyoto Treaty on the Environment that required industrial nations to curb carbon dioxide emissions and other greenhouse gases that scientists maintain are the chief causes of global warming.

Europe is not exactly enthusiastic about other aspects of the Bush administration's foreign policy, especially pertaining to the real temptation of unilaterally walking away from the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty by persisting with the National Missile Defence system. Very few European allies have come out to openly back the NMD system, fearing that this would set off a new arms race.

But Mr. Bush's prime focus pri-

or to leaving Washington is going to be on the environment even as he and his advisors are getting ready to talk about other issues with allies during the trip. At least one senior unnamed White House official has made the point that the President will be making no major commitment on reducing emissions of gases causing global warming. Mr. Bush would merely be making his intention to try.

The impression is that whatever the President will say prior to his departure is going to be far short of what is being expected of him. Officials are making the point that Mr. Bush will talk about reducing emissions only in a general way.

The attention on Mr. Bush's statements on climate change comes at a time when a report of the National Academy of Sciences has concluded that the earth's climate is affected by human activity and that dramatic climate changes could occur in this century. The report was presented to the White House last week.

The Bush administration has also been making the point that Europe too has not gone the distance with respect to the Kyoto Protocol. The argument is being made in some quarters here that Europe is being guided more by emotion than science and several countries in the continent are yet to ratify the 1997 accord.

The Republican administration distanced itself from the Kyoto Treaty saying it was unfair that it did not require countries such as China and India to cut greenhouse gas emissions. The problem for the administration has been that major allies in Asia and the West have been calling to move forward on the Kyoto Treaty without the U.S.

THE HINDU

JUNE 11 2001

Karnataka to abide by Cauvery tribunal decision

By Gargi Parsai

NEW DELHI, JUNE 7. Karnataka today said it was fully committed to abide by the decision of the Cauvery Water Disputes Tribunal and would make good the shortage reported by Tamil Nadu in the first week of June this year "depending upon the monsoon".

At the 8th quarterly meeting of the Cauvery River Water Authority Monitoring Committee held here in a "cordial atmosphere", it was agreed to form a sub-group of experts from the Central Water Commission (CWC) to go into the uniformity of measurement of storage levels in Karnataka and Tamil Nadu reservoirs. The demand was raised by Tamil Nadu.

Speaking to *The Hindu*, the chairman of the Committee and Secretary Water Resources, Mr. B.N. Navalawala said, "The meeting was very cordial. There was mutual understanding of each other's concerns."

The Karnataka delegation was led by the Chief Secretary, Ms. Theresa Bhattacharya, Tamil Na-

du by the Secretary, PWD, Mr. M. Kutralingam, and the Engineer-in-Chief, Mr. P.V. Sahadevan and Pondicherry by the Chief Secretary, Mr. T.T. Joseph.

At the meeting, Mr. Kutralingam said there was a shortfall of 1.4 tmc in the inflows into Mettur, against the stipulated release of 2.5 tmc to be made by Karnataka in the first week of June. He wanted the shortfall to be made good to enable the State to release waters to farmers by June 12.

Responding to this, Ms. Bhattacharya said the storage position in the four reservoirs in Karnataka was very low. It was nil in Harangi, Kabini and Krishna Sagar, and only Hemavati was in a active stage, while the storage in Mettur was at a comfortable level. However, the shortage would be made good in view of the interim award of the tribunal and the clarificatory orders, she added.

Last year, after initial shortages during June, July and August, Tamil Nadu had received 306.50 tmc water on account of a good mon-

soon, as against the stipulated 205 tmc. The monitoring committee set up in August, 1998, under the Cauvery River Authority chaired by the Prime Minister, Mr. A.B. Vajpayee, had drawn a monthly schedule of Cauvery waters to be released by Karnataka into Mettur. Any shortfalls were to be made good in subsequent weeks.

The tribunal, in its interim award in June 1991, had asked Karnataka to release 205 tmcft water to Tamil Nadu in a water year from June to May. Of this, Tamil Nadu had to release 6 tmcft to Pondicherry. At the meeting, Pondicherry asked for official gauging of the 6 tmcft it is to get at Karaikal.

Besides reviewing the storage positions and implementation of hydrology project in the Cauvery basin, the meeting discussed monitoring of area under irrigation in Karnataka. Mr. Navalawala said the Karnataka Government had given some data which would be studied by Tamil Nadu and the CWC.

The problem of biopiracy

Much needs to be done before the problem of misappropriation of biodiversity and associated knowledge is addressed meaningfully, says Biswajit Dhar

ON 1 May, the United States Patents and Trade Marks Office (USPTO) granted a patent to Reliv International Inc. for "Dietary supplement for nutritionally promoting healthy joint function". Hidden behind this ubiquitous title of the patent was the fact that the "dietary supplement" for which the patent was claimed contained among others turmeric and ashwagandha, two of the more common substances that have long been used by the traditional systems of medicines in this country.

Occurrences such as these do not hog the limelight now as they once did when the patents granted on the wound healing properties of turmeric and basmati first came to into full public gaze in 1996. The much-publicised case of the challenge made against the turmeric patent by the CSIR leading to the eventual revocation of the patent in 1997 seems too distant to remain in memory. In the meanwhile though numerous other patents on products or processes using various medicinal properties of turmeric not unknown to this country have been granted by the USPTO and the European Patent Office. Validity of at least five of these patents granted by the USPTO since 1999 should have been challenged in the manner that was done in the past. It is quite another matter though that two of these five patents have been granted to CSIR!

The continuous stream of patents that have been granted in the United States and the European Union on products that use the medicinal properties of substances like turmeric, neem and now the ashwagandha bring to light the widespread attempts at misappropriation of traditional knowledge that is taking place the world over. This has been an issue over which a lot of emotions have been wasted over the past several years, but precious little has been done to protect the holders of traditional knowledge systems from the exploitation that they face in the market place. Leading the pack of countries where this issue has been discussed is India, but precious little has come of the large volume of literature that have been generated over the past

decade. There has been much fire in all that has been said, unfortunately all this has shed very little light.

That little progress has been made in concrete terms has become crudely evident in the process of formalisation of the biodiversity Bill, the instrument which has the elements to make the beginnings towards safeguarding the country's interests against misappropriation of biodiversity and associated knowledge. The proposed piece of legislation provides for the regulation over access to genetic material and it also recognises the fact that an arrangement for benefit sharing has to be put in place when the associated knowledge is commercialised. So



BONNY THOMAS

lengthy has this process been that very few would possibly remember when the first attempts to give effect to the commitments taken by the country when it became a signatory to the Convention of Biological Diversity (CBD) were made. The more worrisome part of getting to this piece of legislation has been that it was for the first time that the bureaucracy had involved the civil society in a partnership mode for drawing up an instrument of policy. After years have rolled by and much of the forests have been sacrificed at the altar of the new and improved drafts, the biodiversity Bill has reached its final resting ground: Parliament. The only hope left now is that the MPs would recognise the urgency of the task and get the Bill through without further delay.

In the meanwhile, however, the government has a significant role to play towards ensuring that the legislation is able to deliver all that is promised. One of the most important areas that must to be given immediate attention is the documentation of the country's biodiversity and associated knowledge.

Much of this knowledge has been confined to the oral tradition and has remained largely undocumented. In a situation where the country has to protect its interests in a court of law, this lack of documentation can be a major hindrance. This became evident when the CSIR launched its challenge against the patent granted on the wound healing properties of turmeric when after much search the relevant reference was found in a Sanskrit text. Although several initiatives have been taken by the government to address this problem of documentation, they have as yet not built bridges with the plethora of NGOs who have been engaged in their own exercise at developing extensive databases on biodiversity and related knowledge.

Over the past few years, possibly the most meaningful work that the NGOs throughout the country have done is to develop the so-called community biodiversity registers (CBRs). These CBRs contain an extensive database but no attempt has thus far been made to pull all this information together. In the meanwhile though,

some NGOs have started lucrative businesses out of these rich information bases that they have developed. Much of this information is available for a price. And while the information is sold to the best bidder, the communities whose knowledge has been documented wait endlessly for their day of deliverance. So much for the problem of biopiracy!

There is therefore much to be done than catches the eye before the problem of misappropriation of biodiversity and associated knowledge is addressed in a meaningful manner. A way out of the present state of chaos is to adopt a consortium approach wherein the civil society organisations and the government machinery put their own strengths together so as to protect the interests of the local communities in as effective a way as possible. For this to happen, both the actors need to develop their own codes of conduct and not fall prey to easy temptation of using the knowledge which is not theirs for their own benefit.

(The author is with RIS, Delhi. These are his personal views.)

State plans disaster management centre

SOMA MOOKHERJEE
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

LAST YEAR'S FLOODS PROMPT MOVE

5/1
26/5
KOLKATA, May 27. — The state government proposes to set up a disaster management centre to combat natural calamities like floods, landslides, cyclones and earthquakes.

The proposal is likely to be placed formally at the sixth Left Front ministry's first Cabinet meeting on 6 June.

The decision to set up such a centre has reportedly been taken after the state government failed to deal suitably with the devastating floods last year due to absence of a proper disaster management system.

The centre will have two wings. The operational wing will be set up at the relief directorate on SN Banerjee Road.

The centre's academic wing will be opened at the State Administrative Training Institute in Salt Lake.

The state minister for relief, Mr Hafiz Alam Sairani, said there was a need to improve the relief management system before the monsoon sets in.

For the operational wing at the relief directorate, the government will procure scientific equipment like "belli-bridges", high power cranes for removing debris during landslides, mechanised boats with a load-bearing capacity of 40 metric tons, satellite phones and wireless sets, to meet emergency situations.

A senior relief department officer said the government

would seek no-objection certificates from the Union ministry of communications for procuring satellite phones and setting up wireless connections with all district headquarters, especially in flood-prone districts.

Some satellite phones will be sent to the district magistrates of North 24-Parganas, South 24-Parganas and Midnapore districts before monsoon sets in, the officer said.

The relief department has sought the finance department's nod for the security and activation fees of Rs 11,200 for each satellite phone. These will be connected through the VSNL.

The satellite phones were donated to the department by

Unicef, he added.

It has been decided that the academic wing will draw up contingency plans for combating disasters. The wing will also have trained people and maintain data and documents about various kinds of disasters and will have detailed knowledge about the terrain of the state.

The government also plans to involve non-governmental organisations in this endeavour. The NGOs will work with panchyati samity members in distributing relief and other modes of tackling disasters.

The officer said the crisis management group, which already exists, will continue to function, though district-wise coordination committees chaired by zilla shabhadhipatis will be set up for better coordination.

THE STATESMAN

28 MAY 2001

Govt. attacked for ignoring dams panel report

By Gargi Parsai

NEW DELHI, MAY 26. The Centre today came in for sharp criticism for its decision to stay away from a discussion here on the Report of the World Commission of Dams (WCD). Such a meeting had been postponed twice in the past, not to forget the denial of permission by the Government for the Commission to hold its first public hearing on dams in India.

First, the idea of such a Commission did not sit well with the Government. Then, it found everything wrong with the Commission and its report and has now decided not to accept it. Not only that, the Ministry of Water Resources lobbied hard with State Governments and institutions to prevent officials from participating in today's meeting.

Several renowned people, including the vice-president of the WCD, Mr. L.C. Jain, former Minister of State for Water Resources and Planning Commission Mem-

ber, Mr. Som Pal, former judge of the High Court, Mr. Rajinder Sachar, former bureaucrat, Mr. B.D. Sharma, and former Water Resources Secretary, Mr. Ramaswamy Iyer, decried the "undemocratic" stand of the Government. The Commission has since been dismantled and replaced by a Dam Development Unit.

Countries such as Sri Lanka and Brazil have decided to set up National Commissions on Dams and Pakistan has decided to operationalise its guidelines, said Mr. Jan Weltrop, a Commissioner. Ms. Medha Patkar of the Narmada Bachao Andolan is also one of the 12 commissioners on WCD, drawn from all over the world.

But it was not as if the Government was unrepresented. There was a battery of retired engineers from the Ministry, from Gujarat and retired members of the Central Water Commission who eulogised the virtues of big dams and rubbished the report saying it was

"biased, impractical and utopian". Mr. L.C. Jain, however, ran through the numerous unfinished projects and decisions of the Water Resources Ministry some of which have been pending for more than three decades to show how the Government had delayed water projects and policies and were now pointing a finger at activists for a four-year delay in the construction of the Sardar Sarovar Project in Gujarat.

Mr. Som Pal said issues such as food, agriculture, health, environment and human rights were outside the realm of Water Resources Ministry which handled mega dams. Mr. Ramaswamy Iyer asked officials to call off hostilities and get rid of the belief that there was a vast western conspiracy to prevent India's development.

"Nobody wants to dissent. But consent will not come unless there is dialogue," said Ms. Medha Patkar, one of the Commissioners from India on the WCD.

THE HINDU

27 MAY 2001

MD-1
26/5

Gujarat starts raising dam height

Swaminathan

By Gargi Parsai

NEW DELHI, MAY 25. The Gujarat Government has begun work on raising the height of the controversial Sardar Sarovar dam by building three-metre high humps, ignoring the reservations expressed by the riparian States of Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and the panels on rehabilitation and environment under the Narmada Control Authority (NCA) chaired by the Union Water Resources Secretary.

The Narmada Bachao Andolan leader, Ms. Medha Patkar, who is in Delhi, lashed out against the decision and the manner in which

it was taken. She said, "It is illegal, inhuman and fatal. There are no figures of the people who will be submerged by this, when as per the Government's own estimate people are yet to be rehabilitated at 90 metres. After the Supreme Court decision allowing reconstruction, it has become entirely their game, their rules and their field. This is their arrogance because there is no channel for redress."

At the NCA meeting held at Indore earlier this month, the Gujarat Government pressed for raising three-metre high humps at an elevation of the existing 90

metres, despite Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra objecting that this would add to the effective height of the dam, resulting in larger areas getting submerged from the backwater effect during the monsoon. This amounted to flouting the Supreme Court order on rehabilitation of the affected people.

Highly-placed sources in the Ministry of Water Resources told *The Hindu* that the NCA chairman, Mr. V.N. Navlawala, who incidentally is from Gujarat, took an opinion from the Attorney-General on this.

In fact, in a strange manner of

the executive seeking instruction from the judiciary, the NCA decided to take legal opinion from the Attorney-General and, in his absence, from the lawyer who represented the Union Government in Narmada Bachao Andolan's writ in the Supreme Court!

Apparently, Mr. Navlawala took the "technical" opinion of the Central Water Commission and the Central Water Power Research Station at Pune and reached the conclusion that during the non-flood period the water level would be maintained at 90 metres. "But when there will be floods, there will be floods."

THE HINDU

26 MAY 2001

El Nino linked to Antarctic wave

REUTERS
SYDNEY, MAY 24

98-9 25/5

AUSTRALIAN scientists say the recurring El Nino weather phenomenon in the Pacific Ocean determines the strength of a giant subsurface wave which circles the Antarctic and affects rainfall.

El Nino typically causes drought in Australia and Southeast Asia and floods in Africa and South America, but its influence on the Antarctic Circumpolar Wave produces increased rainfall in southern parts of Australia - with a three year lag.

"This (is) a back door influence (from El Nino)," said Dr Peter Baines, a scientist with the Australian government-backed Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO), who discovered the new weather link.

Baines' work shows that the formation of an El Nino weather pattern produces higher sea surface temperatures in a block of the Southern Ocean, and cooler waters adjacent to that.

The areas of warm and cold water are then slowly transported eastward, approaching Australia about three years later.

The practical significance of the discovery is that it increases understanding of weather patterns and indicates where rainfall may increase or decrease in southern areas in response to an El Nino event, Baines told Reuters.

"During El Nino events, there is a massive buildup of warm water in the equatorial central Pacific Ocean," he said. "This warm water causes atmospheric linkages, known as teleconnections, that set up a large region of high atmospheric pressure in the South Pacific near the Ross Sea, off Antarctica," Baines said in a statement on Thursday.

Associated with this, warm northerly winds heat the surface waters of the Southern Ocean nearby, raising the temperature by up to one degree Celsius over a six-month period. Cold southerly winds also cool a similarly large region adjacent to it, he said.

When the warm patch of water passes to the South and West of Australia, it appears to produce higher rainfall over the South of the continent, he said.

Regular occurrences of El Nino - every four years from the 1980s until the mid-1990s - strengthened the Antarctic circumpolar wave, he said. An irregular pattern by El Nino has since had weakened it.

INDIAN EXPRESS

25 MAY 2001

Frees no buffer against global warming'

aris

CEPTICS WHO say global warming can be offset by planting trees have been dealt a blow by new scientific evidence, which suggests forests are of very limited use in tackling the problem.

American conservatives, especially the powerful US oil and coal lobby, say global warming has been overblown as a danger.

They argue that rising levels of carbon dioxide the byproduct of fossil fuels blamed for causing atmospheric warming can be cut by planting forest "sinks" rather than by enforcing unpopular fuel taxes or efficiency rules.

Trees thrive on atmospheric carbon dioxide, sucking it up as

part of the process of photosynthesis. So the extra carbon dioxide will cause trees to put on a huge spurt of growth, their trunks and branches storing up most of the added airborne carbon, according to this argument.

But two studies published today in the British science weekly Nature condemn these hopes as unfounded and the findings could resound at negotiations to complete the Kyoto protocol, the UN's global-warming treaty.

The research was based on a remarkable, long-running experiment run by Duke University, North Carolina. Eager to find out, in real life rather than laboratory conditions, how higher carbon dioxide could affect trees,

the university's environment scientists in 1993 ringed off a 30-metre patch of forest land where a typical north American pine, the Loblolly, grows. They then erected a system of pipes around this patch which discharged air enriched with carbon dioxide, simulating the possible state of the earth's atmosphere in 2100. The result, the carbon dioxide doped pines shot up to start with.

For the first three years, their growth was 34 per cent more than normal pines in the adjoining area. But growth then plunged over the next four years, to just six per cent more per year than the other pines. The reason for this is clear, say the authors, led by Duke University's Ram Oren.

Even though the pines had more carbon dioxide their growth was limited by the nitrogen nutrients in the soil. When the team added nitrogen fertilizer to half of the carbon dioxide enriched plot, trees in that area started to flourish just as before.

In another study, based on the same experimental site, researchers looked at another key factor how long a forest can store carbon before it is released back into the atmosphere when the vegetation dies and rots.

In a carbon dioxide rich environment, the total amount of dead leaves and branches on the forest floor increases, but so does the rate at which they break down.

AFP

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

25 MAY 2001

Australian scientists link El Nino to Antarctic waves

Sydney, May 24: Australian scientists say the recurring El Nino weather phenomenon in the Pacific Ocean determines the strength of a giant subsurface wave which circles the Antarctic and affects rainfall.

El Nino typically causes drought in Australia and Southeast Asia and floods in Africa and South America, but its influence on the Antarctic Circumpolar Wave produces increased rainfall in southern parts of Australia — with a three year lag.

"This (is) a back door influence (from El Nino)," said Dr Peter Baines, a scientist with the Australian government-backed Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO), who discovered the new weather link.

Mr Baines' work shows that the formation of an El Nino weather pattern produces higher sea surface temperatures in a block of the Southern Ocean, and cooler waters adjacent to that.

The areas of warm and cold water are then slowly transported eastward, approaching Australia about three years later.

The practical significance of the discovery is that it increases understanding of weather patterns and indicates where rainfall may increase or decrease in southern areas in response to an El Nino event, Mr Baines said.

"During El Nino events, there is a massive buildup of warm water in the equato-

rial central Pacific Ocean," he said. "This warm water causes atmospheric linkages, known as teleconnections, that set up a large region of high atmospheric pressure in the South Pacific near the Ross Sea, off Antarctica," Mr Baines said in a statement on Thursday.

Associated with this, warm northerly winds heat the surface waters of the Southern Ocean nearby, raising the temperature by up to one degree Celsius over a six-month period. Cold southerly winds also cool a similarly large region adjacent to it, he said.

When the warm patch of water passes to the south and west of Australia, it appears to produce higher rainfall over the south

of the continent, he said.

Regular occurrences of El Nino, every four years from the 1980s until the mid-1990s, strengthened the Antarctic circumpolar wave, he said.

An irregular pattern by El Nino has since had weakened it.

"We may expect the next big El Nino to fire it up again," Mr Baines said.

During the opposite phase of El Nino, known as La Nina, the Antarctic wave cools, producing reduced rainfall in southern regions. El Nino translates from the Spanish as "boy child" and is a term used by Peruvian fishermen to describe the periodic arrival of warm waters which reduce their anchovy catch. (Reuters)

THE ASIAN AGE

25 MAY 2001

HD-16

Toxic chemicals treaty adopted

29/5

STOCKHOLM (SWEDEN), MAY 23. Environmental advocates stressed that a global treaty banning 12 highly toxic chemicals is only the beginning, as they looked to Governments to take the next steps: ratify, implement and expand.

"Today, we should endorse the convention as it is, but soon enough, we have to start discussing and preparing for adding new chemicals," Sweden's Environment Minister, Mr. Kjell Larsson, said at a news conference before the treaty was formally adopted.

The pact on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) concluded in December in South Africa — was adopted by consensus after nearly two years of sometimes tense negotiations. Environment Ministers or senior officials — taking to a stage one-by-one in the alphabetical order of their nation — started signing the agreement at a two-hour ceremony that began at 10 a.m. on Wednesday. The pact was signed by 87 countries in Stockholm, with the rest having up to a year to sign under the

deal. The treaty is aimed at eventually eliminating all hazardous chemicals but lists 12 widely known as "the dirty dozen" for priority action, including PCBs and dioxins, DDT and other pesticides shown to contribute to birth defects, cancer and other problems in humans and animals. The treaty has been endorsed by the U.S. President, Mr. George W. Bush, giving him an environmental reprieve with European leaders and environmentalists worldwide who have criticised his rejection of the 1997 Kyoto treaty.

But while praising the U.S. administration for its strong endorsement of the chemicals treaty, Mr. Larsson reiterated his disappointment over the beleaguered accord to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. "I would, of course, have wanted the same kind of commitment to a very important environmental global protocol — the Kyoto protocol," he said at a news conference.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency chief, Mr. Christie Whitman, in Stockholm to

sign the treaty, said proposals for alternative measures to address climate change will be forthcoming "soon."

Environmental activists gave a thumbs-up to the chemical treaty's adoption but urged quick ratification and implementation by Governments and the eventual addition of more chemicals to the list. "What now remains is turning words on paper into action, especially in the United States," the Greenpeace spokesman, Mr. Rick Hind, said.

Canada, which has taken a leading role in the five U.N. Environment Programme-sponsored negotiating sessions that started in 1998 in Montreal, was expected to be the first to offer ratification shortly after signing the treaty on Wednesday. "It is very simple for us to ratify, we are already doing what the convention requires and we will be certainly vigorous with assisting other countries," the Canadian Environment Minister, Mr. David Anderson, said in an interview. "We hope others will follow." — AP

THE 11 2003

11 2003

'Gujarat flouting SC order on dam'

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

BHOPAL, May 21. - The Gujarat government was engaged in manoeuvrings to raise the height of the Sardar Sarovar dam beyond 90 metres with the Centre's help, the Narmada Bachao Andolan alleged today.

Moreover, the government had not fulfilled the conditions of environmental and rehabilitation measures stipulated by the Supreme Court for raising the dam's height, an NBA spokesman, Mr Alok Agarwal, told a press conference here.

In its 18 October 2000 majority judgement, the Supreme Court had cleared the construction of the dam from the then existing height of 88 m to 90 m

and thereafter higher up to the dam's full height subject to further clearance from time to time by the Narmada Control Authority, which in turn will take into account the implementation of environmental and rehabilitation measures.

Mr Agarwal said the Supreme Court had made clear on 23 November 2000 that the effective height of the Sardar Sarovar dam will not be raised beyond 90 m including 'humps' until further construction is permitted as per the conditions laid down in its majority judgement. The court had given this ruling on a petition filed by the NBA seeking some clarifications on its majority verdict.

Mr Agarwal alleged that Gu-

jarat has already raised the height of the Sardar Sarovar dam till 90 m without constructing humps. He alleged that Gujarat has now been trying to find some way to raise the height by three metres on the 'pretext' of construction of humps for safety of the dam.

In its meeting early this month, the NCA did not give permission to Gujarat for going ahead with construction of the Sardar Sarovar dam beyond 90 m since besides the NCA Sub-Group on Resettlement and Rehabilitation and the NCA Sub-Group on Environment, the Grievances Redressal Authority for Madhya Pradesh and the Madhya Pradesh government had opposed further construc-

tion on the ground of non-implementation of environment and rehabilitation measures, Mr Agarwal claimed.

The NBA is considering to file a contempt petition in the Supreme Court against Gujarat besides taking legal action against the NCA, Mr Agarwal added. He said about 3,500 families of dam oustees, who have not been rehabilitated even at the present height of 90 m, would face submergence this monsoon. He alleged Gujarat and the Centre had thus violated the Narmada Water Dispute Tribunal Award and the Supreme Court orders which stipulate that the rehabilitation of the oustees should be fully completed before submergence.

THE STATESMAN

22 MAY 2001

Civic body admits arsenic presence

SFS
22/5
Environment

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

KOLKATA, May 21. - The CMC authorities today said arsenic is present in some underground water sources in the city.

The tests, conducted by the civic body, had confirmed this, the MIC (water supply), Mr Sovan Chatterjee, told reporters. Tubewells in 69 A, Sonali Park, WBSEB office in Bansdroni, one source in Brahmapur More, D1/1 Aurobindo Park, Gangapuri Primary School and Ramkrishna Nagar Primary School were the six sources where arsenic contamination was found. Mr Chatterjee said two of these were CMC tubewells. Forty-four samples were tested, of which only these sources revealed contamination and had been immediately sealed, he said.

The Statesman has been carrying a series of reports on arsenic contamination in Kolkata. Both the state government and CMC had been countering these reports for a long time. Earlier, the School of Environment Studies, Jadavpur University, and All India Institute of Hygiene and Public Health had found several sources in the city contaminated by arsenic. The CMC had rubbished those reports then. But today Mr Chatterjee admitted that several sources are indeed contaminated. He said due measures will be taken and tests conducted in these areas.

Since sealing the six sources would create water scarcity, the CMC would soon make alternative arrangements by testing the water in these

areas. Deep tubewells would also be dug to avoid further contamination.

Meanwhile, scarcity of water has become a major issue in the city, thanks to the summer heat.

There was scarcity of nearly eight gallons of water in the past few days, Mr Chatterjee said.

There is water shortage in ward number 132 as well. Mr Chatterjee himself is the councillor in that ward. Several other areas in Behala have reported lack of adequate water supply. The MIC is receiving complaints of water scarcity daily. Ward number 13, 14, 31 and 35 are also suffering from the same problem.

Presently, the total supply of water in the city is 250 million gallons per day.

The construction of most of the 11 boosting stations are still on. About 150 CPI-M supporters blocked Raja Dinendra Street and Sahitya Parishad Street crossing from 9 a.m. today to protest against the leakage of a pump, causing waterlogging in the area. Another blockade started at Sahitya Parishad Street-Vivekananda Road crossing from 9.40 a.m. The two blockades went on simultaneously till 1 p.m., causing major traffic snarls. Traffic had to be diverted from Manicktala.

Mr Sovan Chatterjee said the problem was related to the leakage of a private connection, which caused waterlogging in the area. "Only a phone call could have prevented the chaos today. Such incidents are un-called for," he said.

THE STATESMAN

21 MAY 2001

40-16
2/5

21/5

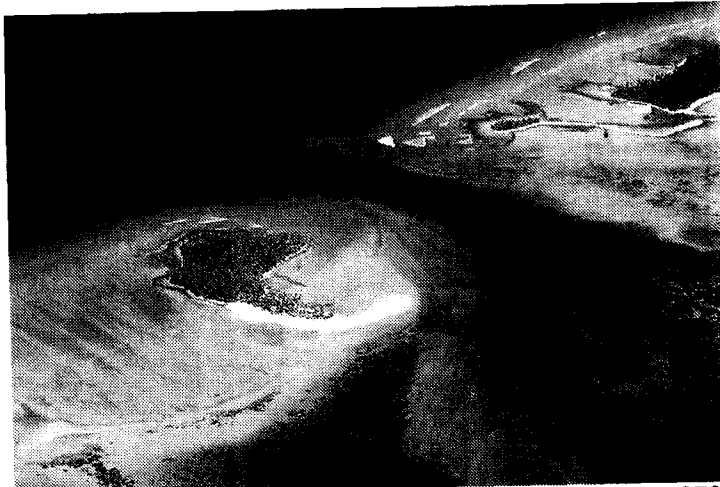
World set to ban 'dirty dozen' chemicals

STOCKHOLM, MAY 20. More than 120 nations will formally sign a pact on Tuesday to outlaw or minimise the use of the "dirty dozen" toxic chemicals blamed for causing fatal diseases and birth defects among humans and animals.

The chemicals, used in pesticides, in fire retardants in homes and in paints or plastics, have been found to trigger disastrous side-effects including cancers. Traces of the 12 so-called Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs), swept around the globe by air or ocean currents, have been found even in the breast milk of Inuit women in the Arctic and have been blamed for turning polar bears into hermaphrodites.

Meeting in Stockholm, Environment Ministers and senior officials from more than 70 nations will on Tuesday formally agree on a deal to ban or restrict the use of the chemicals, a pact which was hammered out in December in Johannesburg. They will hold preparatory talks on Monday and sign the agreement on Wednesday. Under the pact, use of the POPs will be banned or heavily restricted.

The United States, under fire even from its allies since the President, Mr. George W. Bush, pulled out of a global agreement aimed at combating global warming, will be among those signing — in a sign that it is not abandoning all environmental cooperation. But the so-called Stockholm Convention is less controversial — many of the 12 chemicals have been known killers for decades and have been banned in many industrial nations. And costs of eliminating



An aerial view shows Tarawa, Kiribati, South Pacific in this 1978 file photo. The earth's atmosphere is warming faster than expected and evidence is mounting that human activity is responsible, according to the United Nations Environment Programme. The U.N.'s Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) now projects the earth's average surface temperature will rise 1.4 to 5.8 degrees Celsius between 1990 and 2100 potentially displacing tens of millions of people, especially in low lying areas such as the Pearl River Delta, Bangladesh and Egypt.

them are far lower than fighting climate change. "Every single nation is going to have to do something it is not already doing to comply," Mr. Jim Willis, director of chemicals for the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), said.

Among the chemicals covered by the pact are the pesticides and insecticides aldrin, chlordane, dieldrin and endrin, blamed for inadvertently killing fish and birds. Dioxins and furans, the unwanted byproducts of chemical production or burning, have been linked to serious illness in humans. Also on the list are polychlorinated biphenyls, used as

heat exchange fluids or as additives in paint and plastics and believed to have caused disorders in animals and birth defects in humans. The anti-malarial DDT, already widely restricted, is included as are several chemicals believed to be carcinogenic.

"It'll be a victory for the environment if the words on paper and from the Ministers are turned into concrete actions," said Mr. Darryl Luscombe of Greenpeace. "It's obviously good that the United States has agreed to sign and ratify. But, of course, they should also take their other international commitments just as seriously," he said. — Reuters

THE MAIL

7/2/95

Light and Dust

The US president's energy plan released recently has, expectedly, generated a heated debate. Should we concentrate on providing for our immediate needs, or should we act as responsible custodians of the world's future? Environmentalists denounce Bush's energy proposal as pandering to the oil, coal and gas industries and as showing complete disregard for the sanctity of unexplored public lands. What riles them further is the fact that the Bush administration's relationship with the energy industry is too close for comfort. Bush's frontal attack on the US energy crunch focuses more on crisis-averting measures than on long-term, solutions-based issues. He has called for more coal-burning plants, use of nuclear energy as an alternative, and an ease of regulations in siting and licensing of energy plants and gas refineries. He has opened up new federal-owned sites for energy exploration, including drilling for oil in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge area. The turnaround in emphasis from environment-based values to energy availability-based ones has apparently not appeased even domestic lobbies: The average American wants her energy cheap and abundant but not at the cost of the environment. Suggestions pouring in on how to overcome the energy crisis range from the banal to the bizarre. A Californian wrote in her suggestion to a leading US daily: "California is home to thousands of health clubs, where people go to get rid of energy. Let's capture that energy by adding an electric generator to every treadmill. Healthclubs would then become mini-power plants and working out would reduce your electricity bill as well as your weight".

It is no secret that the American way of life is larger-than-life: Excess consumption pervades almost every activity, whether it is in leaving the lights on, in over-eating, a passion for junk food or in 'pitching' stuff that would be considered perfectly usable in any other country. The US, incidentally, is the world's largest producer of greenhouse gases. It was only after the global oil crisis in the '70s that the US began to look, perforce, beyond the huge fuel-guzzling cars that had become symbolic of the American way of life. But now comes the Bush team, unapologetically echoing Keynes's words, that in the long run, we're all dead. And yet, for all the brazenness of this approach, the US under President Bush may well have to ask itself if squandering away energy resources and then seeking to replenish supply through means harmful to the environment is a prudent measure, even if only in the short-term. Not only has President Bush ruffled the feathers of the Kyoto Protocol signatories by refusing to conform to its emission guidelines, he has also incurred the wrath of green and anti-nuclear activists who threaten to rise against his carefully crafted, pro-industry policy. With the Democrats already crying foul over his disregard for pollution, George Bush will have to do more than just concede tax-cuts for hybrid (alternative fuel) cars to improve energy efficiency. To compound matters, there are rumblings in California over the power crisis which has more to do with mismanagement of distribution than inadequate supply. These are ominous enough signs for a newly-elected president.

AG clears building of a hump on Narmada dam

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
GANDHINAGAR, MAY 18

THE Gujarat government has finally received a legal opinion in its favour from the Attorney General of India to construct a three-metre hump over the 90-metre Sardar Sarovar Narmada dam, putting to rest speculations over the contentious issue.

Hailing the legal opinion in the government's favour, Sardar Sarovar Narmada Nigam Chairman Bhupendrasinh Chudasma told *The Indian Express* from Kevadia on Thursday night that work on constructing the hump would begin immediately after the Narmada Control Authority (NCA) completed the process of eliciting comments on it from the participating states over the next three days.

Chudasma said the NCA chairman would seek comments through fax messages from the beneficiary states on the construction of the hump, and the process to be completed in three days. Queried, the Narmada Nigam Chairman said: "It is immaterial whether the

Madhya Pradesh government offers its comments against the hump, for the process of seeking the comments by the NCA is a mere formality."

Responding to another query, Chudasma said the NCA need not convene a meeting to decide on allowing the Gujarat government to construct the hump, as the comments of the participating states would be sought through fax. Chudasma is camping at the dam site to ensure that the work on the hump begins as soon as the NCA completes this process.

The construction of a three-metre hump over the Narmada dam is considered a technical requirement to avoid any damage to the dam structure during a possible flooding of the Narmada river in the ensuing monsoon. "With the legal opinion coming in our favour, we will complete the construction work on the hump in one month," asserted Chudasma.

Delay in getting the legal opinion in favour of constructing the hump had caused a great deal of anxiety not only in the corridors of power in Gandhinagar, but also among the pro-dam organisations active in the state.

INDIAN EXPRESS

19 MAY 20

Bush energy plan disastrous: UN

REUTERS

AMSTERDAM, May 18. - The head of the UN forum on climate change Mr Jan Pronk dubbed President George W. Bush's new energy plan a 'disastrous development' for international efforts to slow output of global warming gases.

Mr Pronk, who is also the Dutch environment minister, told a Dutch television news programme yesterday that the Bush plan would 'undoubtedly' lead to increased output of carbon dioxide, the main greenhouse gas, although he still awaited proposals from the world's biggest polluter on how to cut emissions.

In a speech on Thursday, Mr Bush called for increasing reliance on oil, coal and nuclear power by the US, while offering \$10 billion in tax credits for conservation measures.

"In terms of the possibility of forming an integrated policy (to cut emissions), this is a disastrous development," Mr Pronk said.

A UN scientific body has said greenhouse gases as carbon dioxide, produced by the burning of fossil fuels, will contribute to warming of the earth's surface. That in turn will lead to higher ocean levels, dramatic changes in weather patterns and

greater frequency of severe storms.

In March, an international outcry rose on Mr Bush's rejection of the Kyoto Protocol, which calls on industrialised countries to cut output of carbon dioxide by an average of 5.2 percent from 1990 levels by 2010.

Mr Bush said he rejected the pact because it did not demand emission cuts by developing countries like China and would damage the US economy.

Mr Pronk reiterated his earlier stand that he would press other countries to move forward with the Kyoto pact without the United States, but hoped to draw the US within its fold at a later date. "I'm trying now to keep the rest of the group together," he said.

Negotiations to add teeth to the Kyoto Protocol broke down in November in the Hague after the European Union balked at the US proposal to use forests and farms as 'sinks' to soak up carbon from the atmosphere.

Talks will resume in Bonn in July, although many countries are showing reluctance to join the pact without the US.

Mr Pronk said he would be in Japan on Saturday to try to keep the US on the negotiation board.

"If that is successful then we have a good basis for an agreement with Europe and Ja-

pan which can pull in other countries. But if that fails, then there isn't really any reason to start the Bonn conference," he said.

Mr Pronk also disagreed with the US claim that cutting carbon dioxide emissions would be too expensive.

"The cost of prevention is much lower than the cost of the consequences from a worsening of the climate," he said.

Pacific and Australian environmentalists reacted with horror today to Mr Bush's plan to boost coal, oil and nuclear power production, branding the proposal a 'crime'.

A group of Pacific islanders complained, the region's concerns were being ignored, even though some of its tiny, low-lying nations faced obliteration if sea levels rose too far.

"We are all environmental criminals. But there must be a new category for the United States. I would like to see an international justice system that would recognise this crime," said Ms Patrina Dumararu, climate officer for the Fiji-based Pacific Concerns Resources Centre, a regional umbrella group for non governmental organisations. Global environmentalists accused the US President of delivering an 'energy scam' rather than a plan, and said it could have been drafted in a boardroom of one of the US oil firms.

19 MAY 2001

Rich nations flay U.S. stand on Kyoto

By Batuk Gathani ¹¹⁰⁻¹⁷

BRUSSELS, MAY 18. With the sharp rise in inflation in the euro-zone (12 E.U. countries which have adopted 'euro' as common currency) during April, the European Commission is pushing for a programme of sustainable development and initiate sweeping changes to the E.U.'s environment, public health and transport rules.

The agenda and the strategy to achieve this will be presented by the President of the European Commission, Mr. Romano Prodi, at next month's summit of the heads of Government of E.U. in Sweden. Mr. Prodi on Thursday presented the plan for sustainable development to the European Parliament. He expressed optimism that the economies of the 15 member states would be able to turn to a sustainable path provided the policy was "intelligently designed" and long-term targets were announced in good time.

Mr. Prodi stated that the E.U. may endeavour to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by one per cent and on the public health sector by 2020, it may produce and use chemicals in ways that do not significantly threaten health and environment. Mr. Prodi also called for new policies on the agricultural front to promote the quality rather than quantity of output.

Finance Ministers from member countries

^{m/c} of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and Europe who met in Paris on Thursday, attacked the U.S. for disrupting international initiatives on climate change and accused the Bush administration of "undermining co-operation against global problems".

As the OECD Finance Ministers wrangled over a deal on sustainable development, an uneasy compromise was produced in the final communique. The debate highlighted the impression of "collective outrage" against the U.S. for quitting the Kyoto protocol which sets targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Simultaneously, the world's biggest trading powers also meeting in Paris, under the auspices of the "quad group" — the U.S, E.U., Japan and Canada — resolved to launch a fresh diplomatic effort to either coax or persuade the world's developing countries to support an initiative to launch a new round of trade talks for more liberalisation. The 'quad' initiative has the approval of OECD comprising 29 the world's richest industrialised countries. The 'quad' officials and negotiators have instructions to narrow differences between them on issues such as investment, competition and environment.

The developing countries could be offered a new deadline for putting into effect the World

Trade Organisation agreement on trade-related investment measures or TRIMS.

Observers note that amid evidence of further global financial turbulence, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) calls for a five-point plan to reform global financial system and many analysts wonder if the U.N.'s call will be heeded in time.

In the E.U. forums it is argued that although inflation is never really dead, it is not yet a serious problem but could be if there is further rise in energy and food prices coupled with high wage pressure. "The trouble with inflation is that by the time it shows up, it is often deeply entrenched and it is very hard to bring it back down again", *The Financial Times* editorial writer concludes.

In financial markets on Friday many eyebrows were raised when the ECB revealed that its money supply data, which determines interest rate decisions, could be distorted. This has sparked speculation of a further cut in euro-zone interest rates to boost business confidence and economic growth. The ECB's public image, to say the least, is poor. The general impression is that three-year-old institution modelled on Germany's Bundesbank, may not be competent in gathering information and setting fiscal policy for the euro-zone.

THE HINDU

19 MAY 2001

Drought spreads to over 1,200 villages

■ Nashik, Aurangabad, Pune worst-hit ■ No Central assistance in sight, says State

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
MUMBAI, MAY 4

THE drought which currently plagues the State is threatening to get worse with the number of villages facing acute water shortage increasing by 204 just in the last week of April. The overall figure touched an alarming 1,246 at the end of April.

According to official figures of the water supply department, drinking water is

not available in 1,246 villages and 1,491 hamlets in the state.

The gravity of the situation can be gauged by the fact that last year the number of villages facing water shortage was 616, which is around half compared to this year's figures, said a water supply department official.

The department has already pressed 862 tankers into service for supplying water. The worst hit area is the Nashik revenue division where 327 villages and 197

hamlets are being supplied water by tankers. In Nashik district alone, water sources in 166 villages have run dry.

Marathwada region, which is known as the Aurangabad revenue division, is also facing acute water scarcity as 306 of its villages and 157 hamlets are hit by drought.

The Pune revenue division follows the list with 293 villages and 744 hamlets facing water shortage.

"We are doing everything possible but

the situation is so grim that the administration is under tremendous crisis," said water supply minister R R Patil. Significantly, the state government has lost the hopes of getting central assistance to tackle the drought situation.

"We had demanded Rs 100 crore from the Centre but we have not got any reply despite repeated requests. We are not pulling out funds allotted for other schemes. Our top priority is water supply," Patil said.

INDIAN EXPRESS

- 5 MAY 2001

Risks of genetic engineering

By Debashis Banerji

140-12
295

THERE IS an air of great expectation, almost euphoria, about the potential role of genetic engineering in transforming Indian agriculture. In such an atmosphere it is easy to overlook the extremely disturbing questions being thrown up by rigorous scientific research about the very cornerstone of this approach — recombinant DNA (r-DNA) technology. There is mounting evidence being reported in authoritative scientific journals that this technology could have unpredictable, unprecedented, irreversible and disastrous consequences for the health of all living beings on earth. No wonder informed public opinion all over the world, especially in Europe, is asking for much greater public scrutiny of this technology, before it is approved for commercial production. Even the U.S.-based Union of Concerned Scientists, with 1,600 members, including 100 Nobel laureates, is raising serious questions about r-DNA. But debate in India has been limited. Is all the evidence even available to our farmers and consumers, to enable them to make an informed decision? Is the Government sufficiently seized of its role to protect the right to life of the Indian people that could be threatened by this technology?

As a plant physiologist, trained in molecular biology with over 40 years of research experience in the field, it is my considered view that r-DNA technology may eventually come to be regarded as one of the most dangerous technological interventions in the history of humankind. No one should be allowed to get away by saying that r-DNA is a mere carrying forward of nature's work or even of conventional breeding as practised thus far. r-DNA is a technology completely different from anything known so far. In nature, gene transfer is gradual, holistic and vertical, i.e., from parents to offspring. The same process is somewhat accelerated in conventional breeding. By contrast, r-DNA involves forced, uni-dimensional, horizontal gene transfer across species. Historically, progress in agriculture has entailed enriching crops in desired traits that can be inherited. Conventionally, this has been done by selection breeding or gene transfer via the hybridisation technique. Both these techniques are intra-specific, they operate within varieties of the same species. These techniques facilitate nature. In

contrast, GE involves transfer of genes across species, genetic and even phyletic barriers. That is, transfers are made across different animals and plants, animals to plants, microbes to higher organisms etc.

In nature, DNA from a species cannot normally enter the cell of another species, survive in the new cell milieu or get incorporated in the latter's genome. This is due to barriers at the cell surface that preclude entry, as also the existence of enzymes that destroy the alien DNA. The exceptions to this rule in nature are the nucleic acids of infective bacteria and viruses that can enter all kinds of cells, survive there by using the cellular machinery and even get integrated into the host DNA.

Recombinant DNA technology could have unpredictable, unprecedented, irreversible and disastrous consequences for the health of all living beings.

Genetic engineers have used precisely this phenomenon to carry out their horizontal gene transfers. They use the DNA of microbial pathogens/ parasites as "carriers" to smuggle an alien DNA fragment into plants. These are designed to deliver genes into cells and to overcome cellular mechanisms that destroy or inactivate foreign DNA. Being particularly good at transferring genes horizontally between unrelated species, they can jump out of the host into the other organisms, and will do so whether intended or not. Thus the very mechanism that has to be necessarily deployed to enable horizontal gene transfer becomes a potential source of proliferation of dangerous bacteria and viruses.

We must also recognise that a gene's expression is predictable, stable and reproducible only in its own evolved genomic environment, as is the case in nature and even conventional breeding. In r-DNA technology, however, the gene insertion is both random and in an alien neighbourhood, which produces a totally unpredictable disturbance in host genetic function as well as in that of the introduced gene.

What is more, to mark distinctly the cells where the transgene has been integrated, genetic engineers use "markers". These markers are usually antibiotic-resistant genes. This creates the danger of spread of

antibiotic resistance in all organisms that come into contact with the transgene. Further to switch on the transgene, genetic engineers use "promoters". These promoters are DNA sequences, often derived from disease-causing viruses. A common example of this is 35SCaMV (from Cauliflower Mosaic Virus), which resembles the HIV and Hepatitis B viruses. Thus, each element of the r-DNA technology — carriers, markers and promoters — has potentially lethal consequences for the health of all living organisms. Scientific research journals have already brought out all these risks inherent to transgenic technology. A few of the many can be mentioned here.

The reputed journal *Applied and Environmental Microbiology* reported a case where 25 per cent of the initial level of genetically engineered DNA survived for as long as one hour even after exposure to saliva, which is loaded with degradative enzymes. Not only that, it also integrated into the DNA of the bacterium *Streptococcus gordonii*, a major source of throat infections. By doing so, it transformed this susceptible bacterium into an antibiotic-resistant one. J. Davies in *Science* and D. Mackenzie in *New Scientist* have demonstrated the transfer of antibiotic-resistant genes from genetically-modified (GM) food residues into intestinal bacteria.

Chances of induction of cancer in mammalian cells by ingestion of foreign DNA (*Tibtech*, 1997) and residual GE Bovine Growth Hormone (BGH) in the milk of dairy cows (*International Journal of Health Services*, 1996) have been reported. According to the British National Institute of Health, the BGH is identical to human IGF-1, the hormone that induces various kinds of cancers in humans at high levels of concentration. Further, K. Suzuki and others have reported in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, USA* (1999) that consumption of GE foods could promote several auto-immune diseases, following the entry of undigested genetically engineered (GE) double-stranded

DNA into the bloodstream.

Possibilities of creation of "superweeds" by transfer of herbicide resistance genes from transgenic crops have been reported both by J. Kling in *Science* (1996) and J. Bergelsen and his co-authors in *Nature* (1998).

The inherent risks of transgenic technology have already manifested themselves in a number of instances around the world. One of the first reported cases of disastrous unpredictable consequences of r-DNA technology was the death of 37 people and permanent disability of 1,500 others in the U.S. in 1989 after they consumed genetically engineered (GE) Tryptophan, a nutritional supplement. As P. Raphals explains in *Science* (1990), this batch of Tryptophan was produced by using genetically engineered *bacillus amyloliqueformis* as fermenter, which led to the unexpected appearance of several toxins in this batch.

Considering the mounting evidence of the very real dangers to human health posed by GE foods, one would have expected great vigilance to be shown by public regulatory authorities. However, the FAO-WHO's "principle of substantial equivalence", the basis for safety assessment, is a sad commentary on the lack of independence of international regulatory authorities. The principle means that any GE produce which is found to be "substantially equivalent" to its unmodified counterpart, would be regarded as safe and fit for human consumption. But unfortunately, while determining equivalence, or the lack of it, between GE and non-GE foods, only bulk, quantitative chemical analysis is carried out. No attempt is made to conduct qualitative, biochemical analysis or toxicity or allergenicity tests. Even compositional analyses are, for example, limited to uninformative amino-acid profiles. In the absence of rigorous testing, it will be impossible to recognise the huge dangers posed by recombinant-DNA technology. Alarming, the evidence I have presented in this article is only the tip of an iceberg that poses unprecedented threats of life on earth.

(The writer is Director, Baba Amte Centre for People's Empowerment, Madhya Pradesh, and formerly Professor and Head, Botany, CCS University, Meerut.)

THE HINDU

- 3 MAY 2001

11-10

Tehri Infirma

A Disaster Waiting To Happen

By SUNDERLAL BAHUGUNA

22/11

HAVE we learnt anything from the Gujarat earthquake? Scientists have warned of a future earthquake in the Himalayan region. If construction of the mega Tehri dam on the Bhagirathi still continues, it would be nothing short of an invitation to disaster. A deputation recently asked Prime Minister A B Vajpayee to get work on the dam stopped. This is not the first time such a demand has been made. But all previous efforts have met with failure.

The dam site was selected in 1949, but the Planning Commission only cleared it in 1972. The work on diversion tunnels could begin only in 1978, because the local people had been continuously opposing the project. Prime Minister Indira Gandhi appointed a committee under the chairmanship of S K Roy to study the environmental impact of the proposed dam. The committee recommended that the project be dropped.

In 1986, an agreement was signed with the USSR to implement a 2,400 megawatt project at Tehri on a turn-key basis, but after some time the Soviet Union itself dissolved. The project continued — and so did the people's resistance, despite official high-handedness and cases of violence.

The dam has been designed to withstand earthquakes measuring up to 7.0 on the Richter scale. However, in the past 100 years, four major earthquakes measuring more than 8.0 on the Richter scale have occurred in the adjacent Himalayan region. Now the Tehri region too may have an 8.5-Richter intensity earthquake any time. No wonder the Environmental Appraisal Committee headed by Professor Bhumla remarked in 1990 that "it would be irresponsible to clear the Tehri Dam as currently proposed".

In the event of the dam collapsing, the 42 sq km reservoir would be emptied in 22 minutes. Rishikesh would be under 260 meters of water in 63 minutes, Haridwar under 232 meters in another 20 minutes. The entire region up to Bulandshar would be flooded within 12 hours, with water flowing through Bijnor, Meerut and Hapur. The claim that the dam will be strong enough to withstand any earthquake is hollow.

The hillocks of Raika on the left bank and the slippery portion of chhar between Malideval and Serain are very weak and fragile.

These hillocks may fall into the reservoir as soon as it is filled with water. This happened with the Vajont dam of Italy in 1963. The dam stayed intact, but the hillock fell into the reservoir and the water overflowed. Within an hour, 2,400 people were washed away. The water of Tehri dam will flow towards the plains, where people cannot save their lives by climbing upwards, as happens in the hills.

The only way to avert this disaster and utilise the expenditure incurred so far in the construction of the dam is to convert it into a run-of-the-river hydro-electric project. This will generate less power than the project as it is planned today, but it will be much safer. Besides, possibilities for more run-of-the-river hydel projects like Maneri-Bhali in the submergence area of the reservoir may be considered.

There is no increase in the volume of water when impounded

a motorable road along the Indo-Tibetan border. Its objective is to rehabilitate the virgin land. In contrast, we have no Himalayan policy. The elite and the younger people flee to the plains in search of a better life. It is a universally recognised principle that hardy citizens are the second line of defence. But in Uttarakhand the youth have left their aging family members, women and children behind. The only economy here is the 'money-order economy'.

If the youth are to be retained, and the money-order economy ended, we need to follow a simple formula: "Dhar ainch pani, dhal par dala, Bijli banawa khala-khala" (Lift water to the hill-top, plant trees on slopes and generate electricity from every rivulet). This will bring stability to the fragile Himalayan hills. The youth will get employment. The flow of the rivers will be stabilised.

Often, the implementation of such projects is entrusted to government departments. The tree plantation programme is implemented by the forest department. The British were traders and the forest department was created to grow timber trees. As a result, the natural mixed forests of the Himalaya, which were the source of prosperity, health and happiness of the hill people, were converted into timber mines. Conifers — chirpine and cedar — make the soil acidic and have nominal capacity to conserve water. Bushes and other tree species do not thrive under them. The forest has been defined as a community of living things, whose members include small and big trees of different species, bushes, grasses, roots and tubers, birds and animals. Moisture is required to grow grasses, bushes, roots and tubers. Birds need a dense canopy for nesting, which conifers cannot provide.

The dying Himalayas need to be strengthened by clothing them with trees and bushes. The ratio between man and land is very favourable in the Himalayas. There should be a provision to provide land and resources to each family to plant food (nuts like walnut on a priority basis), fodder and 200 fibre species. Free saplings and a subsidy of even Rs 5 per family would go a long way. The hills' pristine greenery would be restored; the country would get a regular supply of water and the Himalayas would become an impregnable fort.

IN BRIEF

- A major earthquake could wreck the Tehri dam, causing widespread devastation
- The dam should be converted into a run-of-the-river hydel project
- An aggressive reforestation effort is needed if the Himalayas are to be saved

into a reservoir. On the contrary, it decreases as some water is lost due to seepage into the crevices of the hills and some more due to evaporation. The natural way to conserve rain-water is to create a dense green cover with trees, bushes and grasses in the catchment area. This can be seen in Bhutan in the catchment area of the Chukha river. The ratio between the winter mean and monsoon peak flow is 1 to 10, while it is 1 to 70 in the case of the Bhagirathi at Tehri.

According to the builders of the Tehri dam, its life will be 100 years. But according to K S Valdiya, the word-renowned expert on Himalayan geology, it will be silted up in 30 years. Valdiya is not a scholar with bookish knowledge, he has traversed the whole Uttarakhand region on foot.

There is one forgotten aspect of the Tehri dam debate, which the nation and the government remember only when there is a threat from China. China has constructed

Bahuguna arrested, Tehri work resumes

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

TEHRI, April 24. — The construction work of the Tehri dam resumed today after an over three-week break, but not before oustees put up stiff resistance. About 200 people were imprisoned at Hardwar and New Tehri while Mr Sunder Lal Bahuguna was held and confined in a government guest house, about 60 km from here.

The arrests were made in two phases. On Sunday, 84 people were held. About 116 people were today picked up when they staged an indefinite dharna at the dam site. Mr Bahuguna was held from his hut here, overlooking the Bhagirathi.

Eyewitnesses said the arrests were made after Mr Bahuguna was picked up around daybreak. As the news spread to the town, hundreds of people reached the site of the dharna to show their solidarity. Police could nab only a few of them. The rest had escaped from the site.

Police denied that Mr Bahuguna was arrested till mid-day. But when it became public, they said he had been picked up to speak to those who had blocked the dam work. The DM, Mr Radha Raturi, said the action was taken under the Naini Tal High Court orders.

Mr Bahuguna had begun a fast-unto-death even though he seemed too weak to take on the strain. His relatives were not allowed inside the guest house at Narendra Nagar.

Today's arrests came following the failure on part of police to lift the blockade at the site on Sunday. Despite 84 people being held, many oustees broke through a police cordon to resume their dharna within a few hours. They had come from nearby villages and the town.

Those arrested were charged with a breach of peace and hampering government work. Mr Jagdamba Raturi of the Tehri Collation Group said the flooding of the Tehri dam before the oustees had moved out to rehabilitation sites was a violation of their right to live.

Tension mounted in the area as work has commenced under heavy police reinforcements. Markets remained closed in the proposed area of submergence with more and more people taking to the streets.

THE STATESMAN

25 APR 2001

Daring activists win environment awards

ASSOCIATED PRESS
SAN FRANCISCO, APRIL 24

9B 25/8
A Rwandan trying to save gorillas, an Indonesian who was tortured for picking a fight with a mining company and two American journalists who sued their employer for pulling their report on a genetically altered hormone were among winners of a top award for environmentalism.

Eight activists from Bolivia, Rwanda, Greece, Indonesia, New Caledonia and the United States won the 2001 Goldman environment prize yesterday and each took home 125,000 dollars and a small statue.

Oscar Olivera from Bolivia,



Winners of the 2001 Goldman Environmental Prize, in San Francisco - (l-r) Bruno Van Peteghem, Gabriel Herbas, Yosepha Alomang, Eugene Rutagarama, Giorgos Catsadorakis, Steve Wilson and Jane Akre - AP/PTI

who has been charged by the government with treason for his work, was awarded for helping return the water system in the country's third-largest city, Cochabamba, to the public.

Yosepha Alomang of West Papua, Indonesia, was honoured for her fight against the mining practices of New Orleans-based Freeport-Mcmoran Copper & Gold Inc., a battle that has courted detention and torture by the Indonesian government.

The US company has given Alomang's human rights group, Hamak, a 248,000 dollars grant for education and office space that she says she will use to continue her fight.

INDIAN EXPRESS

25 APR 2001

SC objects to Patkar's response

19-13
 Environment

NEW DELHI, APRIL 23. The Supreme Court today adjourned till the first week of August the hearing on the petition seeking initiation of contempt proceedings against the Narmada Bachao Andolan leader, Ms. Medha Patkar, Booker prize winner, Ms. Arundhati Roy, and advocate Mr. Prashant Bhushan for staging a demonstration outside the court and raising slogans against its verdict in the Sardar Sarovar dam case.

Adjourning the hearing, Mr. Justice G.B. Pattanaik, heading a two-judge bench, observed that the allegations made against the contemnors in the petition might not turn out to be contemptuous but the tone and tenor of the averments made by them in their replies seemed to be objectionable. The judge said two options were open — one to drop the proceedings against them or to direct an inquiry into the allegations. Dispensing with the personal appearances of the contemnors, who were present in the court, till further orders, the court asked the Additional Solicitor-General, Mr. Altaf Ahmad, to assist the court in the matter.

Turning their attention to the petitioners, Mr. Justice Pattanaik said: "If your allegations were found to be incorrect after inquiry, you could also be sent to jail."

Earlier, senior counsel Mr. Shanti Bhushan, appearing for Ms. Medha Patkar, and former Law Minister, Mr. Ram Jethmalani, appearing for Mr. Prashant Bhushan, objected that the petition was full of defects should have been entertained by the registry of the court. The bench,

which included Mr. Justice U.C. Banerjee, said it was not hearing arguments on the merits of the petition right now.



Narmada Bachao Andolan activists, Ms. Medha Patkar and Ms. Arundhati Roy, with their supporters in New Delhi on Monday. — PTI

In their separate replies to the petition, filed by Mr. J.R. Parashar and two other advocates, the alleged contemnors did not render any apologies for allegations levelled against them. They reiterated that it was within their constitutional rights to protest against any unreasonable judicial pronouncement.

Earlier, Ms. Patkar, accompanied by scores of dam-affected people from the valley, marched towards the apex court shouting slogans against it. Police detained around 200 people — mostly peasants and adivasis from the Narmada valley region of Maharashtra, Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh — about 100 metres from the court premises.

Ms. Patkar was later allowed to take eight persons, including social activist Swami Agnivesh, inside the premises. "These people have travelled all the way to personally convey their despair and anguish at the court's decision to allow the construction of Sardar Sarovar," Ms. Patkar said. "They have not yet been resettled and will lose their land and homes in the monsoon to the rising waters of the reservoir." — UNI.

Kyoto: stress on pushing ahead with talks

Swine
HO. 16

NEW YORK, APRIL 22. Most countries want to push ahead with talks for a legally binding international treaty to combat global warming despite the opposition of the United States to the Kyoto Protocol, said the conference Chairman, Mr. Jan Pronk, yesterday.

He was speaking at a news conference after a day-long meeting of Environment Ministers from about 40 countries, called to prepare for the resumption of the U.N. conference on climate

change in Bonn on July 16.

Last month, the U.S. President, Mr. George Bush, declared his opposition to the 1997 Kyoto Protocol, which sets specific targets and a timetable for industrialised countries to reduce their emissions of so-called "greenhouse gases".

But Mr. Pronk said that at yesterday's meeting, held in New York, the U.S. made it clear that it was still a party to the 1992 Framework Convention on Climate Change (Fccc). — AFP

THE HINDU

23 APR 2001

The Biodiversity Bill may promote exactly what it intends to prevent: the destruction of biodiversity

HR 8
23/9

A biodegradable law

By M.K. RANJITSINH

THE OXFORD Dictionary of Natural History (1985) and A Dictionary of Biology (1986) by F.W. Roberts explain terminologies like biological clock, biological control and biosphere reserves. Neither mentions biological diversity — or its abridged version, biodiversity, which gained circulation after the UN convention at Rio de Janeiro in 1992.

To give expression to the tenets of the convention, the ministry of environment and forests has obtained funding for preparing the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) — which envisages action plans at sub-state, state and regional levels on the basis of which a national action plan will be prepared.

Madhya Pradesh has already almost completed its biodiversity strategy under the leadership of Chief Minister Digvijay Singh and M.S. Swaminathan. I was privileged to chair one of the three committees set up for the purpose: the committee for biodiversity conservation.

The process showed repeatedly how little we really understood biodiversity, how differently it meant to different people and how people were trying to utilise biodiversity to fulfil different political and personal agendas.

The most significant manifestation of the NBSAP has been the Biological Diversity Bill, currently under consideration of a parliamentary committee. The proposed legislation defines biological diversity as the "variability among living organisms from all sources and the ecological complexes of which they are part and includes diversity within species or between species and of ecosystems". Not very lucid nor very comprehensive, but it conveys the broad implications of biodiversity.

What it does not elucidate is the wide spectrum and holistic ramification of biodiversity as portrayed in the NBSAP — wild species of fauna and flora including micro-organisms and the natural ecosystems that they depend upon and vice-versa. It also leaves out domesticated species of animals and plants, indigenous cultivators and agricultural ecosystems.

What neither the NBSAP nor the Bill mention is the very essence of biodiversity: that it is not just the number and accumulation of species, but a conglomeration of interdependent diverse species all of whom need to be conserved in juxtaposition in their respective natural ecosystems.

The Bill defines equitable benefit shar-



Chew on the contradictions

ing of biodiversity, the main prop and indeed the covert *raison d'être* of the legislation — as sharing of benefits determined by the national authority. Sections 48 and 49 state that the Central and state governments will have power to give directions to the National Biodiversity Authority (NBA) and State Biodiversity Boards (SBB) respectively.

'Sustainable use' is defined as "the use of components of biological diversity in such manner and at such rate that does not lead to the long-term decline of biological diversity thereby maintaining its potential to meet the needs and aspirations of present and future generations".

What about the short-term decline of biodiversity? Also, it doesn't mention at what level of productivity and diversity one is using the word 'sustainable'. Who decides what's sustainable usage? Section 41 lays down that the NBA shall consult the local biodiversity management committee (BMC) and the state biodiversity boards in decisions related to the use of biological resources. Will the BMCs and SBBs be able to resist local pressures and populist postures responsible for pressures on biodiversity?

The one fundamental aspect which the definition of 'sustainable use' — indeed the NBSAP and the legislation itself — overlooks is the ecological axiom that any

utilisation of biological resources will cause the impoverishment of biodiversity. Thus, while there can be sustainable use of biological resources, any use would damage biodiversity. The only way 'usage' can help biodiversity is if there is an ecological trade-off which should be under the protected areas system.

What is most bemusing is the scope of the work of the NBA and hence of the proposed law. Sections 3, 4, 6, 19, 20 and 21 indicate that the NBA is only authorised to permit and regulate research, utilisation and survey of biological resources by non-Indian individuals and entities, and the transfer of intellectual property rights. Sections 7, 23 and 41, however, seem to imply that the three categories of bodies that the Bill seeks to establish have a much wider ambit of work.

Section 7 states that no citizen of India or a body registered in India can obtain any biological resource for commercial utilisation "except after giving prior intimation to the state biodiversity board concerned". Biological resources are defined as "plants, animals and micro-organisms or parts thereof their genetic material and by-products..."

Is it the intention that any dealer who buys *tendu* leaves to make *bidis* will have to first give prior intimation to the SBB? Section 23 further empowers the SBB to

regulate by granting requests for the commercial utilisation of bio resources by Indians. Section 41 provides that in this regard the local BMC will have to be consulted.

As agricultural products are an integral part of bio resources, will anyone wishing to instal a sugarcane crushing plant have to take prior approval of the SBB and the BMC? The bill seems to imply so, as the only persons exempt from the provisions of section 7 are "local people and communities, including *vaid*s and *hakims*, who have been practising indigenous medicine".

Section 37 provides for the declaration of biodiversity heritage sites by the state governments and framing of rules for their management. Section 38 mentions declaration of threatened species and undertaking of measures to protect them. What if state governments declare existing national parks and sanctuaries as biodiversity heritage sites and prescribe management rules different and contrary to the provisions of the Wildlife (Protection) Act under which they are presently governed?

If the provisions of the Biodiversity Act and the rules clash with those of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, the Forest Act, the Environment Protection Act, or the Forest Conservation Act, which one shall prevail?

The answer is given in section 57 of the bill: "The provisions of this Act shall have effect notwithstanding anything inconsistent therewith contained in any other law for the time being in force." The biodiversity bill does not strengthen existing legislation dealing with biodiversity conservation. It chooses to ignore them and by providing parallel provisions, adds confusion.

The Biological Diversity Bill 2000 is a misnomer. The legislation is only concerned about the "spoils system" of biological resources, about their utilisation through "equitable distribution" on a "sustained yield" basis. There is no biological content and the bill does not provide for the conservation of biodiversity.

Indeed, by emphasising upon the wide usage of bio resources and the proposed garnering of fees for collection of bio resources by the local bodies, the Bill may promote exactly what it purports to prevent — the destruction of biodiversity.

The author is a conservationist and former Environment Secretary

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

EU rejects Australia's call for new greenhouse pact

REUTERS

CANBERRA, April 18. - The European Commissioner, Mr Chris Patten, today criticised Australia's decision to seek a new process to control greenhouse gas emissions after the USA abandoned the Kyoto protocol.

"I don't see how it helps simply to say, well, because America isn't going to go along with it ... The rest of us can tear it up and go back to base," Mr Patten told reporters and diplomats in Canberra.

The Australian environment minister, Mr Robert Hill, said on Sunday that the international community needed to start a new process for cutting global greenhouse gases following last month's decision by Washington to reject the 1997 Kyoto treaty on global warming.

Mr Hill, speaking at a luncheon, said the pact was a "good starting point" but it was better to start a new process because the Kyoto deal would sink with-

STOLEN GENERATION STILL HAUNTS ABORIGINES

SYDNEY, April 18. - The days of the "Stolen Generation," when Australia forcibly removed fair-skinned Aboriginal children from their parents, are over.

But 35 years on, indigenous children remain six times more likely to be taken from their homes and placed into care than non-Aboriginal children, as poverty, cultural misunderstandings and drug and alcohol abuse tear Aboriginal families apart. There were 3,496 Aboriginal children aged up to 17 in "out-of-home" care nationwide in June 2000, the latest government statistics show. That was equivalent to a rate of 18.3 for every 1,000 indigenous children.

By contrast, just three of every 1,000 non-Aboriginal children were in out-of-home care for a total of 13,427, the federal Productivity Commission said in a report earlier this year on government services. - Reuters

out US participation.

But Mr Patten, scheduled to meet foreign minister Mr Alexander Downer and trade minister Mr Mark Vaile tomorrow to discuss security, trade and environmental issues, said the 15-nation European bloc didn't accept Australia's argument.

"Certainly in Europe, I don't think that would be acceptable to our elector-

ates. I think our electorates would much prefer us to say, well, we'll do what we can to ensure that at least on our part the protocol is ratified by the time of the conference on sustainable development in 2002," Mr Patten said.

He said the global community should continue to negotiate with the USA in an effort to find an agreement to "bind them in" to emissions reductions.

Save the environment

The USA, the world's biggest producer of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases, said last month it would abandon the Kyoto protocol.

The pact agreed by world leaders in Japan in 1997, called on industrial countries to cut carbon dioxide and other gas emissions by an average 5.2 per cent below 1990 levels by 2012.

The US President, Mr George Bush, said cuts would harm the domestic economy and were unfair since developing nations like China didn't have to make the same sacrifices.

The Australian Prime Minister, Mr John Howard, said he shares the US views on Kyoto's shortcomings but has written to Mr Bush to stress the importance of a global solution.

EU leaders have pledged to work intensely from now until the resumption of United Nations-sponsored talks in Bonn at the end of July to get the USA to recommit to the protocol.

THE STATESMAN

Meet on global ecology under way

By Sridhar Krishnaswami

UNITED NATIONS, APRIL 17. The Ninth Annual Session of the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) got under way here with the twin goal of meeting the world's increasing energy needs and coming up with measures to protect the global environment.

Over the next two weeks in addition to the Commission's meetings, there will be informal consultations on the Kyoto Accord in which some 40 nations from the European Union, the developing world and an umbrella group consisting of Australia, Japan, Canada and New Zealand will be participating.

The Ministerial component of the CSD is slated to be held between April 18 and 20. And between April 30 and May 2, the Commission will begin its Tenth Session to start preparations for the World Summit on Sustainable Development to be held in Johannesburg next year.

This year's session of the CSD is taking place amid a world outcry against the Bush Administration's decision to reject the Kyoto Protocol which has had a trigger effect in that some in the Asia Pacific, notably Australia, are calling on the international community to start a "new process" for cutting greenhouse gases.

Australia is making the point that without the participation of the U.S., the Kyoto Accord will get nowhere. "I don't think Kyoto can last without the United States. However, if the United States is not going to accept it, then we have to work out the next step forward because the problem is not going to go away," its Environment Minister, Mr. Robert Hill, has said. The Australian Prime Minister, Mr. John Howard, is also said to have written a letter to the U.S. President, Mr. George W Bush.

A United Nations Report prepared for the CSD has said that the consumption of fossil fuels — the lead source of greenhouse gases — will grow over the next 10 to 20 years in spite of increased use of renewable

sources and vastly improved energy efficiency. The setback to Kyoto and the surge in international oil prices, it is maintained, has only brought to the fore the difficulties in getting the energy policies right without hitting the poor further.

The U.S. decision to walk away from the Kyoto Accord has been flayed by both the industrial and developing world. Officials from the Group of 77 are saying that yet another attempt will be made to have Washington change its mind, but thus far indications from the Bush Administration are that its present position is not about to be changed.

The U.S. is arguing that the Kyoto pact is not in the interests of America as implementation would hurt the local economy. The pact called for, among other things, the reduction of emissions of industrial nations to 5.2 per cent below the 1990 levels by 2012. No industrial country has ratified the it.

While the general consensus has been that the participation of the U.S. in the accord is critical, European nations have been trying to keep it alive suggesting that parts of the 1997 treaty could be re-negotiated, especially the ones Washington finds problematic and objectionable. European Environment Ministers have also said that they intend to keep the pressure on the U.S. against abandoning the treaty.

Meanwhile, Green Parties from over 70 countries at a three-day conference in Canberra have vowed to launch a boycott of multinational oil companies as a way of rescuing the stalled climate change talks. "Those companies have been pressing the Bush Administration not to ratify the Kyoto Protocol. So it is time to send them a message," said the President of the European Federation of Green Parties.

Further, the Green Parties have said that there should be a mechanism to prosecute people who commit crimes against the world environment. One suggestion has been to create the World Environment Court as a part of a new U.N. body called the World Environment Organisation.

THE HINDU

18 APR 2001

Australia's green politicians to target multinational firms

BY PETER O'CONNOR

Canberra, April 14: Green politicians and activists said on Saturday they are planning to form a global network to peg back the influence of multinational companies.

The first target of the new global strategy will be US oil companies who were behind President George Bush's decision last month not to implement the Kyoto agreement on global warming, delegates said. Action against the US companies would include international boycotts of their products by green

supporters.

"We used to say think globally act locally. Now we say think globally act globally," French Greens Party member Catherine Greze, told delegates at the Global Greens 2001 conference.

About 800 delegates from 70 countries are attending the three-day conference that started Saturday and aims to formulate a global greens charter and begin networking green political parties and organisations around the world.

Australian Greens Sen. Bob Brown, said the conference was the

beginning of a new political force in world.

"A global force at the start of this century that is going to challenge the old parties (and) the economic rationalist philosophy which governs politics

around the world," said Mr Brown.

Mr Brown said globalization to date has largely been corporate globalization, a process that is shifting power from parliaments to multinational companies, corrupting governments, destroying the environment and

increasing the gap between rich and poor, all in the name of profit.

A global green strategy would attempt to return power to national parliaments and increase greens representation in them, he said.

Arnold Cassola, secretary-general of the European greens, said the old

greens strategy of being a protest party is no longer enough. "If you want to obtain change you need some power," he said. Mr Cassola said greens parties now had parliaments in 18 European coun-

tries and shared executive power in six major states including Germany. According to conference organisers, there are now 260 greens members of Parliament around the world.

The US administration's decision to back out of the Kyoto agreement on global warming was the hot topic at the conference, with delegates drawing up a strategy to bring bush back to the table.

Under the Kyoto protocol, which must be ratified by 55 nations to come into force, developed countries agreed to legally binding tar-

gets for curbing heat-trapping "greenhouse" gases, which are mainly carbon dioxide from burning fossil fuels.

A preliminary meeting of green activists on Friday began drawing up a hit list of multinational firms, predominantly US oil companies, to target. Top of the list is US oil giant Exxon.

Greenpeace is driving the strategy. "Greenpeace now has given a 10-day ultimatum to the US oil companies to detach themselves from the Bush decision," Mr Cassola said. (AP)

SPOTLIGHT

THE ASIAN AGE

15 APR 2001

SC rejects NBA review plea

Examination
ST-8 *18/9*

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, April 12. — The Supreme Court has rejected a petition by Narmada Bachao Andolan seeking a review of its earlier decision which gave a conditional green signal to construction work of the Sardar Sarovar project in Gujarat.

In a recent order, a three-judge Bench comprising Chief Justice Mr AS Anand, Mr Justice SP Bharucha and Mr Justice BN Kirpal rejected the review petition, which sought reconsideration of the majority judgement by Chief Justice Mr Anand and Mr Justice Kirpal.

Chief Justice Mr Anand and Mr Justice Kirpal said they went through the review petition and "did not find any error apparent on the face of the record which may call for review of the majority judgement."

The Bench said the issue of correctness of the majority judgement raised by the Narmada



Ms Medha Patkar

Bachao Andolan in its review petition was outside the purview of such a petition.

Mr Justice Bharucha, who had given a dissenting judgement, said the two judges had declined to review it, the review petition had to fail. He, however, said he stood by his dissenting judgement.

The court, by a majority judgement, had said the construction of the dam to a height of 90 meters, could be taken up immediately. Beyond this, the work could be taken up only in stages after getting clearance from environment authorities.

However, Mr Justice Bharucha had ordered immediate stoppage of the work at the site saying the same could be resumed only after clearance from impact group in the environment ministry.

The Narmada tribunal had envisaged 138 meters to be the height of the dam, which would benefit Gujarat, Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh.

THE PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

13 APR 2001

Joshi heads panel on Tehri dam

DEHRA DUN, April 12. — The Centre has formed a 11-member panel to review the Tehri dam project. The panel will be headed by the Union science and technology minister, Mr MM Joshi.

Work on the project was suspended two weeks ago when the Centre assured the VHP chief, Mr Ashok Singhal, that a review committee would be formed.

Copies of the Centre's notification appointing the panel were distributed to reporters yesterday evening at the state VHP headquarters by Mr Rajendra Singh Pankaj, national organising secretary of the Bajrang Dal.

The committee will examine any possible impact of the dam on the purity of the Ganga water and also its chances of surviving a high-intensity earthquake. It has been reportedly asked to submit report within four weeks.

Mr SL Bahuguna has welcomed the formation of the panel. He said he would continue his agitation against the dam on the Ganga's bank even if the dam's tunnels were closed and water started filling up the reservoir. — SNS

THE STATESMAN

13 APR 2001

N-waste shipment crosses into France

FRANKFURT, APRIL 11. A train carrying spent nuclear fuel from German power plants crossed the border to France after police cut free protesters who had chained themselves to the rails close to the frontier.

Police said the train was held up for an hour after a man and a woman evaded police posted along the route to attach themselves to the track near the town of Hagenbach.

The train, carrying five containers of radioactive waste, had set off from the nearby station at Woerth, where it was assembled from wagons arriving from three German nuclear power plants further west. It was bound for a reprocessing plant in the French port of La Hague.

The hold up was a brief, last-ditch success for German anti-nuclear activists, who last month staged massive demonstrations and caused more serious delays to a shipment of reprocessed waste returning from France to a storage site in northern Germany.

Earlier yesterday, police said they ringed one of the nuclear plants, at Philippsburg in Baden-Wuerttemberg state, with about 2,000 officers and said they arrested hundreds of protesters who tried to reach the tracks and block the shipment.

They also removed activists from the environmental group Greenpeace who had chained themselves late Monday to a rail wagon due to carry waste from the Grafenrheinfeld plant in Bavaria and yesterday occupied a bridge along its route. At least 15 protesters were arrested. — AP

Nuclear chain-gang strikes again

FROM SABINE SIEBOLD

Berg (Germany), April 10 (Reuters): Anti-nuclear activists today held up a German shipment of spent fuel rods bound for reprocessing in France by chaining themselves to railway tracks after earlier clashes between demonstrators and police.

A police spokesman said the train carrying nuclear waste from three southern German nuclear power plants had stopped some 6 km short of the French border crossing at Berg after two women activists chained themselves to the tracks.

About 100 demonstrators gathered in the nearby village of Hagonbach to protest against the shipment. Earlier, riot police repelled a group of about 250 activists who repeatedly tried to

break through a barricade near the Philippsburg power plant in the state of Baden-Wuerttemberg.

Anti-nuclear activists said more than 50 protesters had been slightly hurt in the clashes, two of whom were seen on German television with bloodied faces and wearing bandages. A police spokesman could not comment on the number of injured. "It is unbelievable," said activist spokesman Jochen Stay. "Beating has been abolished in schools and prisons. Parents are banned from hitting their children, but the police cudgel adult citizens who want to peacefully gather on the rail tracks to demonstrate against irresponsible atom policies."

Some 20 demonstrators were detained in Philippsburg, while others were held during protests near two other power plants. Sev-

eral thousand police were escorting the nuclear waste, the first transport to a reprocessing plant in France in three years after Paris and Berlin agreed in January to resume them.

Hundreds of demonstrators clashed with police two weeks ago when Germany took back the first cargo of reprocessed waste from France since the German government banned the shipments in 1998 over concerns about radioactive leaks and huge protests.

Authorities used 20,000 police costing the state about \$50 million to protect the shipment on its way from France to a storage facility in Gorleben. Protesters halted the train for a day by chaining themselves to the track. Five containers from three power plants were to be transported to the French reprocessing plant at La Hague.



Greenpeace activists hold banners after chaining themselves to a container of nuclear waste in Germany. (AFP)

Maheshwar dam funds misused, says NBA

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

BHOPAL, April 10. - The controversial 400 MW Maheshwar dam project is steeped in 'large-scale financial irregularities', the Narmada Bachao Andolan has alleged.

The Maheshwar dam being built on the river Narmada in Khargone district of Madhya Pradesh is the country's first private hydro-electric project.

"The actual amount spent on the project so far is much less than what is being claimed by the project promoter, S Kumars, and the Madhya Pradesh government, thereby leading to the real possibility of diversion of funds to other concerns of the promoter," an NBA spokesman, Mr Alok Agarwal, told reporters here yesterday.

Mr Agarwal alleged that an estimated Rs 55 to 60 crore have been spent on the project's civil works till date as compared to the promoter's claim of Rs 110 to 120 crore on this score.

He said the project cost of the Maheshwar dam has shot up from Rs 465 crore in 1994 to a staggering Rs 2254 crore in 2000. "There has been a systematic over-invoicing of all components of the project," he added.

The NBA spokesman said the Maheshwar project authorities are currently engaged in seeking funds from Indian public financial institutions like the IFCI, UTI, LIC and GIC, as all the prospective foreign investors, including the Ogden Energy Group and PacGen of USA, the multinational Siemens, and two German power companies, Bayernwerk and VEW Energie, have withdrawn from the project due to sustained struggle against the dam by the oustees of the Narmada valley.

Mr Agarwal claimed that the Maheshwar project authorities have been negotiating with Indian FIs in a bid to raise 94 per cent of the total project cost - including both equity and loans

- from them. This is in contravention of the Union government's guidelines for investment in the power sector, he said. A 1991 central government notification stipulates that "not less than 60 per cent of the total outlay for the (power) project must come from sources other than Indian financial institutions".

The NBA has sent complaints to the Comptroller and Auditor General of India and Reserve Bank of India and urged them to probe into the status and purpose of Indian public funds being sought to be infused into the Maheshwar dam by its project authorities, he said.

The NBA has also asked the Digvijay Singh government and S Kumars to make a public statement about the accounts of the Maheshwar project, the total project costs and details of investors, the status of escrow cover, and the proposed cost of electricity to be paid by con-

sumers.

Referring to the reports of the Maheshwar project promoter holding negotiations with the public sector company BHEL for purchase of power equipment at 'considerably lower price', Mr Agarwal asked why the latter was not engaged in the project earlier when the project promoter had opted for Siemens after claiming to have floated global tender for the purpose.

"The NBA has urged the country's financial institutions and companies to stay away from squandering public money in an anti-people project like the Maheshwar dam, which is financially unviable, technically flawed, environmentally disastrous and socially catastrophic," he said.

It has also asked the state government and the the Union power ministry to immediately scrap the Maheshwar project and look for 'cheaper and better alternatives' for power generation.

THE STATESMAN

Environment

Go-by to global warming

HD-16 899

THE CONSERVATIVES and the business houses are simply elated at the thinking of the White House under a Republican President. But, on the other side of the fence, environmentalists and liberals are railing at the administration for backtracking on the Kyoto Treaty reducing greenhouse gas emissions. And the more the Bush team talks about sound environmental policies, the more exposed it is getting on the shallow grounds it is treading.

The final word on the Kyoto Treaty has not been said, but much will depend on the kind of moves this conservative administration is going to make between now and July. The kind of participation in the meetings set for this month in New York and later on in Bonn this summer will be an indication whether Washington is putting the finishing touches on walking away from Kyoto.

It is not just the Greens, the environmentalists and the liberal Democrats who are appalled at what has come out of the Environmental Protection Agency in the last two weeks. "... we have no interest in implementing that treaty", Ms. Christine Todd Whitman, Administrator of the EPA, remarked, even as officials in the department were quick to say that their boss did not speak of the treaty being "dead". But the general consensus has been that for all practical purposes, the Kyoto Treaty is indeed dead.

One argument has been made that the rationale for not pursuing with the Kyoto Treaty is not the science behind global warming or the President's lack of sensitivity to the issues behind it. Rather it is a political one — the Bush administration has no interest because there is no stomach for the Kyoto Protocol on Capitol Hill.

The other view is something that has not been well developed — that Ms. Whitman who was applauded by Republican moderates on being appointed to the EPA is finding herself at the receiving end from the more hardline Conservatives in the party. And the Kyoto Treaty must just be the starting point.

There has been the argument in the administration and conservative circles that aside from the fact that key developing nations have been left out of the Kyoto Treaty and process, not a single industrialised country has ratified the pact. And the U.S. is not going to be the first by any stretch of imagination. But critics have been making the point that the Bush administration is walking away from the treaty without even proposing changes which could then be negotiated.

It is not as though the U.S. under a conservative administration does not understand the significance of the Kyoto Treaty. Signed by the previous Democratic administration but one that could not be shepherded legislatively in the last term of Mr. Bill Clinton, the Kyoto pact is seen internationally as one of the first serious efforts to come



Covered in a cloud of smoke, a Greenpeace protester wearing a cutout mask of the U.S. President, Mr. George Bush, holds a frying pan with a globe inside it, during a protest against the U.S. stand on the Kyoto Treaty, in front of the U.S. Consulate in Sao Paulo, Brazil... worrisome attitude.

to grips with global warming. It calls on the U.S. and other industrialised nations to cut emissions of heat trapping gases between 5 and 7 per cent below 1990 levels by the year 2012.

It was not just Ms. Whitman who set the ball rolling for, earlier, the President, Mr. George W. Bush, excused himself out of a campaign promise to cut carbon dioxide emissions, seen as "the" culprit by scientists as the main greenhouse gas.

The U.S. emits the largest quantity of carbon dioxide gas in the world, accounting for as much as 25 per cent of the world total.

Mr. Bush argued that the energy crisis in the U.S. had made him re-think the campaign pledge; and the White House argued that placing restrictions on power plants over carbon dioxide emissions would be costly to the American economy and therefore to the consumer. Hence, in the name of national interest — read American interest — the

Bush administration delivered its knockout punch.

The Europeans have been taken aback at the decision — or the lack of a clear decision — by the Bush administration; but for the moment their entreaties are getting nowhere. The Europeans have basically told the Americans that they will be pursuing the Kyoto process, leaving the door open for the Republican administration to get into it as well. But even European officials who have met senior officials of the Bush administration are not quite sure as to where the present administration stands on the issue.

"They do not have any concrete alternatives or options for the moment," the European Union's Environment Commissioner commented recently; and there is the feeling both in this country and overseas that the Kyoto Treaty and other aspects of Mr. Bush's environmental stance will become major foreign policy challenges of the administration in the months to come.

Walking away from the Kyoto Treaty and in general placing a lower premium on environmental issues have domestic implications as well; and one that will be played out in the Congressional elections of 2002 and the Presidential elections of 2004. As it is, Republicans who come from environmentally friendly states are at a loss to explain the actions of their President. And the Democrats are gloating over the fact that they may have just placed their hands on a winning issue down the road.

The more the Bush team talks about sound environmental policies, the more exposed it is getting on the shallow grounds it is treading, finds Sridhar Krishnaswami.

INSENSITIVE DECISION

THE UNITED STATES finds itself almost entirely alone after its decision to withdraw from the Kyoto Protocol on greenhouse gases (GHGs). But that is unlikely to make a difference to its decision because in less than three months the Bush Presidency has shown that the new U.S. Government is not very sensitive to either domestic or global environment concerns and that it is more open in its alliance with business interests that are against major green initiatives.

Contrary to what the U.S. President, Mr. George W. Bush, claims, the overwhelming majority opinion in the world scientific community is that the threat of a major change in the world's climate — rising temperatures and sea-levels — is real and becoming ever more likely. There is therefore an urgency to act now, especially because reversing the process will take decades and not years. However, ever since the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) was signed in 1992 there has been little evidence of any global control over the emission of greenhouse gases like carbon dioxide. The original target in the Convention was a lowering by 2000 of the 1990 level of emissions. When that seemed impossible to achieve, the deadlines were pushed back and the targets lowered. The Kyoto Protocol of 1997 called for a 5.2 per cent reduction in emissions compared to 1990 levels for 38 industrialised countries — with the target to be achieved only between 2008-12. It was acknowledged then, outside governments, that this was too small a reduction being aimed for over too long a period. It was also known in 1997 that the U.S., during the Clinton Presidency, was not in favour of even the reduced targets unless the developing countries (India and China in particular) contributed to the effort. But the world's biggest polluter of the atmosphere — with 5 per cent of the global population the U.S. contributes to 25 per cent of global GHG emissions — was essentially looking for ways to avoid

HO-12 ✓
taking the hard decisions required to cut back on domestic industrial and automobile emissions of carbon dioxide. Hence the search for various "innovative" schemes such as trading in pollution credits, setting off forest sinks against GHG discharges and taking credit for assistance to a lowering of emissions in developing countries in order to get round the target. It is important to note that while the Kyoto Protocol was negotiated in 1997, two subsequent meetings (in Buenos Aires in 1998 and in The Hague in 2000) could not result in an agreement on how to achieve the targets for 2008-12 and while the U.S. was the main obstacle, differences within west Europe were not minor. In a sense then the U.S. has dealt a mortal blow to what was already an ineffective and weak agreement.

It has always been assumed that the emission of GHGs can be reduced by improvements in efficiency. But considering the magnitude of reductions required efficiency improvements alone cannot do the job. Perhaps the U.S. decision is a more open admission of the fact that without changes in developed country consumption patterns it will not be possible to make meaningful reductions in emissions and to do so will hurt the economy and the consumer. But those decisions have to be taken sooner and not later lest irreversible climate changes take place. It is true that the industrialised countries bear the main responsibility for the build-up of GHGs in the atmosphere and it is therefore they and not the developing countries which should take action to halt the process. But the developing countries' governments would be on firmer ground if they were to show signs of taking some action to check their own emissions. This does not have to be done at the expense of development. To claim, however, that the demands of development do not oblige them at all to address their emissions is to show that they are least concerned about what is a serious global and human problem.

Centre raises Tehri dam pitch, residents panic

Deep Joshi
Tehri, April 3

THE CENTRE is keen to rush through the Tehri dam project, but the State Government has not been able to relocate most of the thousands of families whom the dam will render homeless.

"The authorities are ousting us without rehabilitation. We must be given land in lieu of the land we will lose," says Saroj Vyas of Maldreview village.

This is just Vyas's demand. More than 3000 families living in the 42-sq km submergence area of the proposed dam are yet to be rehabilitated by the State Government.

Their demand has put Uttarakhand's rehabilitation department under tremendous pressure. The Government doesn't have land to rehabilitate them.

"We are finding it difficult to get the 6,000 acres needed to rehabilitate families from the submergence area," said Narendra Singh, Superintending Engineer, Rehabilitation.

The department, sources said, had suggested to the Centre that the compensation for displaced families be raised to Rs 10 lakh for every acre.

"This would free us of the problem of providing land to the displaced," one of them said.

The Centre's plan to complete a four units of Stage I, 1000 MW capacity power station by March 2022, is part of its objective to complete the project as soon as possible.

To achieve this target, the Centre had proposed closure of tunnels of the mega dam by March 31.

Though it failed to meet the deadline because of VHP supremo Ashok Singhal's interference, the exercise sparked panic among residents.

"We will not move out unless the government provides alternative land," says an agitated resident of Maldreview village.

Anti-dam activist Samir Ratudi said: "Villagers want cultural and emotional rehabilitation too. They want to shift to an area where all their basic needs like food, fodder, fuel and water are fulfilled."

The experience of people relocated in Dehra Dun and Rishikesh was bitter. They were settled in barren land, without any irrigation facilities, Ratudi said.

"We will not be able to sever ties with the land of our ancestors, even after its submergence," says another anti-dam activist Rajiv Nayan Bahuguna.

"Memories of the areas where we moved, played, worked and studied will keep haunting us throughout our lives," he said. "Once the dam area is impounded, all traces of our culture will be erased."

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

4 APR 2001

New Zealand lends voice to global warming controversy

Washington

NEW ZEALAND'S Foreign Minister has urged the United States to start working on the global warming problem "as soon as possible", even as the Bush administration rejected the global warming treaty. "This is a real problem. It has to be addressed," said Phil Goff, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade.

"We would expect the United States to remain involved and to work with the International community to find a solution to the problem of global warming," Goff told reporters on Monday as he left a meeting with Secretary of State Colin Powell at the State department.

The US decision has drawn condemnation across the globe,

especially from the 15-nation European Union. An EU delegation arrived in Washington on Monday to press the administration to stick to its commitments.

The delegation, headed by Kjell Larsson, Sweden's Environment Minister, and Margot Wallstroem, the EU's environment commissioner, was expected to meet on Tuesday with among others, Christie Whitman, the head of the US Environmental Protection Agency.

"If the United States leaves this process, does not want to be a part of the united effort, then I think many people will look upon that as some kind of arrogance," Larsson told reporters.

Bush last week said the United States would not implement the worldwide agreement, which was

negotiated in 1997 in Kyoto, Japan, and had been signed but not ratified by the United States.

The Kyoto protocol calls for countries to agree to legally binding targets for curbing greenhouse gases, including carbon dioxide, from burning fossil fuels. The Bush administration said it is seeking an alternative to Kyoto that would include poorer, underdeveloped countries that are now exempt from Kyoto commitments.

Earlier this year, Bush asked for more time to review the arguments for alternate fuel strategies and renewable technologies. Other nations were taken aback by the sudden reversal.

"It was somewhat of a surprise to us that the Kyoto protocol was declared dead in that way," Goff said.

AP

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

4 SEP 2001

AIR POLLUTION

Need To Increase People's Awareness

THE ocean of air is being poisoned with anthropogenic as well as natural emissions all the time. Air pollution, however, is not a new problem. As long as man lives in cities, he develops a tremendous propensity to pollute the air. It is a problem for the ever-increasing technological society. Most artificial impurities are injected into the atmosphere at or near the earth's surface. Therefore, what is new about air pollution is its scope and severity.

It is well known that for most pollutants the troposphere cleanses itself of these within a very short period of time because of its vertical mixing tendency. Rainfall also helps to remove the impurities to a certain extent. But any substance that is not part of air's gaseous make-up is regarded as a pollutant. Airborne suspended particulate matter

(SPM) and contaminant gases exist in the atmosphere in various amounts.

TERRITORY

Air pollution is not confined to a particular territory. In major urban cities of India, the quality of air has been deteriorating fast in the last two decades. Kolkata and its suburbs are no exception. The City of Joy's air is unclean and far from satisfactory in comparison with the WHO standard. The city's ever increasing population, expected to be in the vicinity around 15 million by 2002, is also posing a serious problem.

Automobile emissions have been identified as the major source of air pollution in the Kolkata metropolitan region. It is contributing nearly 60 per cent of total air pollution in the city. The situation is appalling owing to the increasing number of vehicles and the restricted space for their movement. Domestic consumption of fossil fuels, sometimes in the open street and pollutants from small industries and godowns are further accentuating the problem. The pollutants vary from one place to another, its intensity assumed alarming proportion in the heart of the city and diffused gradually away from the centre. The common air pollutants in Kolkata are sulphur dioxide, oxides and nitrogen, carbon monoxide, hydrocarbons and heavy metals.

Air pollutants of Kolkata exist in gaseous or particulate form. Their concentrations are expressed most commonly either in

The author is an educationist and was associated with the University Grants Commission.

By PARTHASARATHI CHAKRABORTY

microgram per cubic metre or as volume mixing ratio which are diverse in character.

In order to minimise the effect of air pollution over the city of Kolkata and to make the city a better place to live, work and invest in, the British Overseas Development Administration has put forward certain recom-



mendations through the Kolkata environment management strategy and action plan. It has identified auto-emissions from the vehicles of outmoded technologies as solely responsible for environmental hazards including emissions of mischief potentials. The action plan also indicated that the 24-hour average concentration of SPM, sulphur dioxide, nitrogen oxides, carbon monoxide and hydrocarbons in some places of Kolkata in its maximum level are far above the limits of the central and state pollution control boards. The air pollution index (API), according to the action plan, is maximum at the Howrah Bridge approach followed by BBD Bag.

PROPOSAL

The action plan envisaged that auto emission control, air quality monitoring and dissemination are inter-related. In its consolidation phase document, the action plan has put forward a comprehensive and short-term proposal for effective and meaningful implementation. The roadside air quality is worse than the air quality standards for all pollutants. The poor and the weaker sections of society, who spend most of the time on the roadside, are greatly affected by the pollution. Pavement dwellers, underprivileged and vulnerable groups experience direct health hazards. In addition, heavy air pollution leads to increasing the mortality and morbidity rate.

Lead petrol has been banned in most of the developed countries. But unleaded petrol has got other disadvantages which need special attention. Unleaded petrol releases a higher level of aromatic organic compounds and also releases a high

concentration of benzene which is known to be potential carcinogen. According to WHO, there is a risk of cancer disease (particularly leukaemia) when human beings are exposed to one microgram of benzene per cubic metre of air. There is, therefore, great risk and danger due to the use of lead-free petrol in automobiles. Suitable measures need be taken immediately to eliminate

the emission of toxic benzene in Kolkata's air.

In the dismal picture depicted above and sordid state of air pollution over Kolkata, there is one point to ponder: how the millions of citizens are surviving amidst extreme pollutants present in the air? One probable explanation may be that the ambient air pollutants are shared by millions of people and they act as biological filters. There are no immediate apparent perceivable

symptoms of danger manifested in the body — but they arise unfortunately after a prolonged period of time.

VEHICLES

As the mischief pollutants are the results of auto-emissions — the entire auto-emission regulatory process needs to be revamped immediately. Reduction of vehicular emissions by a continuous check for permissible limits, strict enforcement of the law and periodical survey of the emission control equipment seem to be absolutely necessary. The air-quality monitoring process should be strengthened. The vehicles of old outmoded technologies need also to be discarded. The uses of catalytic converters inside a car exhaust system also yield good results. The use of unleaded petrol in automobiles without converters is a great risk to public health. Personal exposure to benzene at service stations should be minimised. All the service stations should be marked with a skull and with cautions about the risk of benzene exposure. The quality of fuel used in automobiles is also an important factor in curbing air pollution and its samples need to be analysed regularly.

The development of infrastructure should receive priority. The equipment for continuous auto-emission control, including mobile laboratories, needs to be utilised meaningfully. The display of air quality information boards in the prime locations of the city would also increase the awareness of the people to a certain extent. Finally, success in mitigating air pollution depends largely on people's participation and awareness of health hazards due to auto emission.

THE STATESMAN

6 APR 2001

LIKE a drowning man clutching at a wet straw, an increasingly ozone-depleted world has been clutching at the 1997 Kyoto treaty on global warming. Now the American President has casually thrown it away. The Kyoto Treaty is against American economic interests, George W Bush said recently. He doesn't realise he has blown away one of our most important chances of survival.

In this unipolar world, instant worldwide outrage and condemnation only bounced off Mr Bush's back. Either he doesn't understand or doesn't care or both. Even NATO allies like Germany are upset. And leading voices in Mr Bush's own country are going on international networks saying they are ashamed of their government. Mr Bush has made his first great goof-up. It doesn't look like the last.

The Kyoto Treaty commits economically advanced countries to progressively cut emissions of the so-called greenhouse gases by 2012.

Now the government of the world's greatest polluter says, in effect, that solving the problem it largely created for the rest of the world isn't any of its concern. In a more just, equitable world, George Bush would have been hauled up before a more effective international court of justice.

More infuriating to green warriors worldwide is that the Kyoto Treaty had been tough to create. It took 11 hard days of negotiation before an agreement was born on 11 December 1997 in Kyoto, Japan. The USA pledged to cut greenhouse gas emissions by seven per cent from 1990 levels, the European Union promised cuts by eight per cent, and Japan promised cuts by six per cent.

The cuts are crucial. What seemed good news last decade, turned into a nightmare recently, with the UN meteorologists declaring that the hole in the ozone layer is growing at an unprecedented rate. It could soon reach record frightening levels, they said. That blew up reassurances in the last decade of the ozone layer stabilising to the levels it was when originally detected.

The ozone layer in the stratosphere is made of a type of oxygen that blocks harmful solar radiation. Without it, plant, animal and human life can suffer severely. The sun's direct ultra violet rays can cause skin cancer, cataracts, damage to the immune system and can play havoc with

50-2
6799
natural ecosystems, particularly in the oceans. Scientists say that without the ozone shield, life on earth cannot exist.

The infamous hole in the ozone layer, about 28 km above the Antarctic, was first detected in the mid-1970s, with the advent of chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs). These chemical compounds, used mainly as refrigerants and aerosol-can propellants, are reckoned to be the biggest cavity maker in the ozone layer.

After some sustained international effort, it was thought happier times lay ahead. 165 nations pledged to progressively stop producing and using CFCs at a Montreal conference in 1987, known as the Montreal Protocol. The agreed deadline for industrialised nations for CFCs' use expired in 1995. The economically developing nations have a 2005 deadline. With ozone-friendly alternatives to CFCs, researchers expected that the big worry in the stratosphere would be plugged by 2050. That was until the shocking announcement this September.

The outlook is ominous. Last year, the World Meteorological Organization, after NASA reported the largest-ever hole over the Antarctica, said greenhouse gases were wreaking devastation on the ozone layer. It confirmed the global warming link to ozone layer depletion. Earlier, environmental scientists believed both aren't connected. They changed their minds after the largest ever survey of the Arctic stratosphere zone.

Another ozone layer destruction suspect is reckoned to be the low winter temperatures over the Antarctic. The extreme minus 90 degrees centigrade produces polar stratospheric clouds (PSCs) that gobble the ozone layer. Computer simulation

The Kyoto betrayal

President Bush's shocking decision to back out of a crucial global warming treaty is a brutal blow to one of the planets most important struggles for survival, says RAJA M



A Greenpeace protester wearing a mask of President Bush in front of the US consulate in Sao Paulo on Tuesday. The protest was held to criticise Mr Bush's recent declaration that mandatory cuts on carbon dioxide from burning fossil fuels are no longer acceptable to the USA. The Kyoto protocol calls for countries to cut heat-trapping emissions as many scientists believe such emissions are causing the earth to warm up significantly. — AP/PTI

has confirmed it, say scientists. Whether it is the PSCs or the CFCs, the root cause is their production of chlorine and oxygen molecules when they interact with the stratosphere. Environmental scientists say the chlorine level in the stratosphere should not exceed two parts in a billion. The level now is at least three times higher.

One major fatal result is depletion of plankton in the oceans (plankton have a pivotal role in sucking carbon dioxide in the atmosphere into oceans). Plankton depletion could cause serious damage in the earth's ecosystem and climate patterns. The 1994 Montreal Protocol Environmental Assessment Panel said a 16 per cent depletion of ozone layer could cause a five per cent loss of plankton.

More damaging is the effect on humans. One per cent loss in the ozone layer causes a three per cent increase in risk of skin cancer. It particularly

affects fair-skinned people. Over 40,000 cases of skin cancer were reported in the UK last year. The rate is doubling every decade.

Not everyone agreed that the ozone layer depletion had been in control, even in the last decade. Australian scientists, for instance, have been saying the ozone-depleting compounds have been increasing at a surprising rate in the stratosphere, in the past decades. Measurements they made in Tasmania showed an increase in concentration of halon-1211, the chemical used in fire extinguishers. Researchers had earlier expected emission of this compound to hit a high in 1988 and then decline, as industrial nations fall in line with the Montreal Protocol.

Then came the crucial agreement in Kyoto. At least 166 countries agreed on measures to curtail emissions of carbon dioxide and other gases blamed for global warming. China and the USA were not too happy. China, for instance, grumbled about countries being allowed to compensate for increasing or unchanged pollution levels by buying credit from other nations. It was a loophole for which the USA lobbied. The USA won, even though other countries complained.

The USA, on the other hand, wasn't happy about developing nations like China and India getting away from any firm immediate commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. It was probably that crucial paragraph China managed to get struck out that now gave Mr Bush some basis to dare turn his back on the treaty.

The loser, however, is the entire world. The damage on the global climatic pattern is evident. In New Zealand, for instance, peak summer-

time levels of killer ultra violet radiation increased by a whopping 12 per cent the past year, the damage directly attributed to ozone depletion.

Scientists have been nervously watching that ozone depletion. In 1998, satellite pictures of the ozone layer showed a gaping hole the size of Europe. The latest Nasa pictures apparently breaks that record. Before the Nasa pictures, the edge of the ozone layer hole had been determined over the town of Ushuaia, Argentina. The latest Nasa pictures expands the horror story. The ozone layer hole is seen as a massive blue blob, covering the Antarctica and touching the southern edge of South America. It's a size spreading over 11 million square miles, an area three times the land area of the USA.

The day after the Kyoto Treaty, former Vice President Al Gore had told the media from the Roosevelt Room, on 11 December 1997, "Over the course of the next century, it will mean that our children's future will be more secure from the dangers that scientists have warned about — more record floods and droughts, spreading infectious diseases, melting glaciers and rising sea levels and stronger, more frequent storms. Ironically, Mr Gore had declared that the USA had more to cheer than cry about the treaty. The final agreement was based on the core elements of the American proposal, he said.

Obviously, Mr Bush hasn't seen it that way. But the callous way he has cast away the treaty has shocked the world more than the fact that Kyoto was given the goodbye. No negotiations, no effort to get the rest of the world to see whatever problems Mr Bush was seeing. He just threw away one of the most significant treaties of our times like used tissue paper. Its only strengthened the campaign fears that Mr Bush is more the front man and puppet of American Big Industry and Big Money, than leader of the democratic world.

So, thanks to Mr Bush, expectations of ozone layer getting back to normal in another 50 years lie smashed. The resident CFCs in the stratosphere are said to stay put for thousands of years. That simply means that unless planet Earth gets its ozone crisis control act together, soon, it can gradually kiss itself goodbye.

(The author is a freelance writer.)

THE STATESMAN

- 6 APR 2001

BJP president Jana Krishnamoorty was ~~also~~ ~~in~~ ~~the~~ ~~state~~.

Summary
11-10

Cool on Kyoto

5/9

No nation is perhaps as vocally committed to the green agenda as the US but when it affects its own interests, all this concern goes out of the window. So it comes as no surprise that the Bush administration has formally reconfirmed its opposition to the Kyoto protocol agreed upon by the international community to cut down on the emission of greenhouse gases. These gases, it is now widely accepted, cause global warming with all its adverse ecological consequences. Economic recession is the excuse professed by the new US government for this unilateral reneging on an international obligation. In addition, it cites the need for more energy and avoiding job cuts in the US. Of course, during his campaign, Mr Bush had promised that he would pursue measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from power stations — something he gave up quickly enough. It is no secret that as a Texan Mr Bush has considerable stake in the oil industry. While his bias was anticipated, the abrupt jettisoning of the Kyoto protocol has shocked European allies. Visiting German chancellor Gerhard Schröder signalled his disagreement, though in diplomatese. The failure of The Hague conference two months ago to follow up on the Kyoto protocol, mostly as a result of differences between the US and the western Europeans, was clear advance warning that the US was likely to pull out unilaterally. The present rift between the US and the Europeans adds to the rejection of the comprehensive test ban treaty, WTO issues, and the pursuit of national missile defence. All this is seen as part of the increasing unilateralism of the US. President Bush is likely to be encouraged by the lack of enthusiasm in the US senate for the Kyoto protocol. This rejection brings out clearly the risks of negotiating international treaties with powerful nations, particularly the sole superpower.

There is an irony in this rejection. Large sections of the US business and scientific community firmly believe that the pursuit of the green agenda will enhance US commercial interests. Green automobiles are being developed and so also various other eco-friendly technologies. Those new technologies will be extremely profitable for the US which is in the lead as far as R&D goes. Similarly, apprehensions about the negative consequences of burning fossil fuels have brought about a renewed interest in nuclear power, though with vast improvements in waste disposal. This again will be to the advantage of the US since it is in the forefront of power reactor development. Therefore, the US appears to be sacrificing long-term interests for short-term parochial gains. This pattern was witnessed in the 1980s when another Republican administration was permissive of the nuclear proliferation in respect of Pakistan, narcotics traffic, religious extremism in Afghanistan and the spread of small arms on a vast scale for the short-term gain of countering the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Today, many parts of Asia and the US itself are paying a high price for that strategy. Now that the equation of US power vis-a-vis the rest of the world has further tilted in its favour, the international community will have to be prepared to face further counter-productive unilateralist behaviour by Washington based on short-sighted perspectives.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

5 APR 2001

KILLING KYOTO

Bush backs out of climate control

THE majority of one by which the US Supreme Court stopped the recount of presidential votes in Florida may well prove to have repercussions for the world's environment. While Al Gore is a committed environmentalist, George Bush has effectively pulled the rug from under the Kyoto Climate Change Treaty signed in 1997, which commits developed nations to reduce greenhouse gas emissions (which affect the earth's temperature) by 5.2 per cent by 2010. The Kyoto protocol had languished since its signature with rules and operating procedures still undecided. By pulling out the US, which generates about a quarter of the world's greenhouse gases and whose lead many nations follow, Bush has effectively scuttled the Kyoto Treaty. His action has provoked outrage in Germany and Japan, and will create doubts about American leadership in European eyes.

The Bush administration argues that emission caps will hurt the American economy, even though a technologically innovative nation like the US could have turned it into an opportunity by marketing environmentally friendly ways of producing energy. Cultural factors may be responsible — Americans love their cars, and will not give up their gas guzzlers (and gas emitters) easily. One of the outstanding issues is the US argument that developing countries should come on board in any attempt to cut emissions, which India opposes tooth and nail. However, emissions cannot be blamed on developed countries alone, with China the second greatest producer of greenhouse gases, and India not too far behind. Developing countries, of course, are also the least technologically capable, and will have to import expensive foreign technologies if they are to meet emissions norms. But by the same token they will also be the hardest hit by climate change. In any case, the prospects look bleak at present for any kind of binding international agreement.

THE STATESMAN

1 1 1 1 1 1 1

Annun 'regrets' U.S. move on Kyoto accord

NAIROBI, APRIL 3. The move by U.S. President, Mr. George W. Bush, to withdraw from a global treaty on climate change could prompt greater attention to environmental issues, the United Nations Secretary General said on Monday. *ND-17*

Mr. Kofi Annan told a news conference that the world must take steps against climate change caused by emissions of carbon dioxide. *UN*

He made the comments a week after the U.S. government announced its opposition to an agreement — signed in 1997 in Kyoto, Japan — that would require industrial nations to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions by 5.2 per cent by 2012. *ND-17*

"I regret the U.S. decision to step back from the Kyoto protocol, but it gives us one more reason to fight to bring environmental issues into focus again," Mr. Annan said.

The official scientific body that advises governments on the global warming issue — the intergovernmental panel on climate change — is scheduled to meet in Nairobi for three days starting Thursday. — DPA

THE HINDU

- 4 APR 2001

Kyoto: E.U. team to persuade Bush

By Batuk Gathani

BRUSSELS, APRIL 2. The European Union today embarked on a diplomatic offensive to persuade the Bush administration not to reject the Kyoto treaty on global warming, to which the U.S. contributes between 25 and 40 per cent of emission of carbondioxide.

A E.U. delegation led by Sweden's Environment Minister, Mr. Larsson, will leave for Washington today to reiterate the European perception that there are "no alternatives" to the Kyoto protocol.

The E.U. environment ministers met over the weekend in northern Sweden to work out a strategy to contain the new challenge to global warming posed by the Bush administration. Mr. Larsson said, "no country has a right to declare a multilateral agreement dead. We hope that the U.S. will participate in the Kyoto process". The E.U. was prepared to find a solution without the U.S.

According to European diplomats, the Bush administration's overt unilateralist approach is mainly attributed to financial power and political influence of America's powerful energy establishment, which mainly comprises big oil and energy utility companies. The current posture is attributed to desire of a new presidential regime to distance itself from its predecessor. At Kyoto, the Vice-President in the Clinton administration, Mr. Al Gore, had agreed to reducing carbon emission in the U.S. by seven per cent from their 1990 levels by 2012. According to some analysts, even key figures in the Clinton administration regarded the Kyoto accord a "dead letter" as it was not likely to be ratified by the U.S. legislature.

Current estimates put the carbondioxide emission in the U.S. about 34 per cent higher than in 1990. According to the Kyoto accord, the U.S. will have to reduce such emissions by more than 40 per cent within a decade. This could cause much strain on the economy and hence, it is argued, no U.S. administration could af-



The Chairman and Swedish Environment Minister, Mr. Kjell Larsson (right), shares a laugh with the Austrian Environment Minister, Mr. Wilhelm Molterer, at the second day of an informal meeting for the Ministers of Environment from the 15 E.U. countries in Kiruna, Sweden, on Saturday. Sitting (from left) Mr. Willer Bordon, the Italian Environment Minister and Mr. Eugene Berger from Luxembourg. — AP

ford to embark on such a mission. Hence, the Europeans are keen to find a middle way based on new scientific evidence to resolve the problem of global warming.

The developing countries, led by China and India, have already pointed fingers at the industrialised world for the current envi-

ronmental and global warming. They accused the developed world for taking a "lion's share" of emission of greenhouse gases.

The president of the European Commission, Mr. Romano Prodi, criticised the Bush administration and proposed a dialogue at "highest level" to ensure that the U.S. is

engaged "constructively" in the dialogue.

Another team for Russia

Apart from the delegation to Washington, E.U. officials are travelling to Russia, China, Japan and Iran this week. Iran is holding the rotating presidency of "Group 77" developing countries. The officials feel that, perhaps with the exception of the U.S., most countries will ratify the Kyoto protocol in 2002.

There is much speculation in the European media about emergence of President Bush's "quarreling coterie" divided between pragmatists led by the Secretary of State, General Colin Powell, and arch-conservatives led by the Vice President, Mr. Dick Cheney and Mr. Donald Rumsfeld at the Pentagon. The ideological divide is rated as alarming in the background of Mr. Bush's recent headline decisions, highlighted by the unilateral raids against Iraq and strained relations with Russia.

The E.U. rates issues related to global climate as an important part of broader trans-Atlantic trade and foreign policy. The officials argued that to implement the Kyoto protocol, it must first be ratified by countries accounting for 55 per cent of the world's greenhouse emissions. The U.S. is a key player as it accounts for over half of industrialised world's share of emissions. Japan and Russia would support the accord if and when it is ratified by other industrialised countries. The E.U. countries hope to meet their target of cutting emissions by eight per cent before 2010.

The more ardent and vocal lobby of environmentalists are talking of imposing trade sanctions against American energy-intensive products. This is rated as unwelcome as it may trigger fresh trans-Atlantic trade war.

So far, the Bush administration has come up with no alternatives to the Kyoto protocol. The European emissaries are keen that the Bush administration participate in the proposed conference in Bonn this summer to seek a consensus approach on global warming.

THE HINDU

5 APR 2001

Agency needs two more years to quantify radioactive uranium

Washington, March 31

THE ENERGY department says it could take two more years to determine how much recycled uranium, which contains traces of plutonium and other radioactive materials, passed through its nuclear facilities.

The agency released a preliminary review on Thursday analysing the flow of recycled uranium throughout the doe sites between 1952 and 1999. The agency was unable to complete a final analysis due to "significant inconsistency and inherent uncertainty" in the data it gathered from 12 facilities at nine sites.

The investigation began in 1999, prompted by concerns that workers were unknowingly exposed to high levels of radiation at uranium enrichment plants in Paducah, Kentucky,

Piketon, Ohio, and Oak Ridge, Tennessee.

The energy department used uranium in nuclear weapons and as fuel for reactors. The agency began recycling it in the early 1950's to reduce US Dependence on foreign uranium. The report said most energy department facilities stopped using recycled uranium in the late 1960's.

Recycled uranium is more harmful than mined uranium because it has been processed in a reactor, where it becomes contaminated with plutonium and neptunium.

Pete Dessaulles, a team leader in Doe's office of plutonium, uranium and special materials inventory, said an overall assessment of the 12 facilities will help determine exactly how much recycled uranium was used over the years and how much may

still be stored around the country.

However, the task is proving more difficult than expected, Dessaulles said. "The biggest challenge in completing the report is standardising the definitions that were used in the site reports for recycled uranium," he said. "That may involve looking at millions of records."

According to Doe, recycled uranium was present at the following locations: Hanford, Washington; Savannah river, South Carolina, Idaho National Engineering and Environmental Lab, Idaho, Fernald, Ohio, West Valley, New York, Weldon Springs, Missouri, RMI Inc., Ohio, the gaseous diffusion plants in Paducah, Piketon and Oak Ridge; the y-12 plant in Oak Ridge; and Rocky Flats, Colorado.

AP

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

Bush not to sign treaty on global warming

519
5/13

DAMIAN WHITWORTH
THE TIMES, LONDON

WASHINGTON, March 30. — The US President, Mr George W Bush, last night sought to reassure Mr Gerhard Schroeder that he is ready to work with him, despite German dismay at the American decision to abandon the Kyoto treaty on global warming.

The treaty, agreed in 1997, commits developed countries to substantial cuts in emissions of greenhouse gases by 2012, as a measure to slow global warming. Different countries agreed to different targets. Before meeting the German leader, Mr Bush defended his decision not to support the treaty, saying that USA was in the midst of an energy shortage and insisting that his priority was to keep the economy on a steady course.

He said, "We'll be working with Germany, we'll be working with

MORI PLEA TO US PRESIDENT

TOKYO, March 30. — Japanese Prime Minister Mr Yoshiro Mori today joined a flock of world leaders angry at a decision by the USA President Mr Bush to reject a treaty on global warming, sending him a letter urging him to change his mind.

Mr Mori wrote the letter after Mr Bush said this week he would no longer back the international accord to cut greenhouse gas emissions that was reached in Kyoto, Japan, in 1997, on the grounds it was not in the economic interests of USA.

In his letter, Mr Mori voiced strong concern over the impact of Mr Bush's decision on measures to combat global warming, top government spokesman Mr Yasuo Fukuda said. "We are strongly concerned about the impact of such moves on measures against global warming," Mr Fukuda quoted the letter as saying. — Reuters

our allies to reduce greenhouse gases, but I will not accept anything that will harm our economy and hurt our American workers. We have an energy shortage. I look forward to explaining this today to the leader of Germany." Mr Schroeder had indicated earlier that he would take the President to task over his stance on the environment. He said, "It is important that

USA understands its responsibility for the global climate. Ignoring this responsibility is simply unjustified in relation to future generations."

Last week the German leader asked USA to abide by the agreement, which the European Union has called integral to relations with Washington. He is anxious for progress on the environment to be made in order

to satisfy the Greens in his coalition. The US announcement was also the worst possible prelude to the UN climate conference in Bonn this summer.

The Chancellor said in an interview with the Los Angeles Times that global warming "is one of those issues where one can say from a basis of real friendship, 'Dear friends we are of the opinion that if you abandon Kyoto, you are in the wrong'."

Mr Schroeder was also expected to raise misgivings about USA's plans for a national missile defence shield which has particularly alarmed Russia, Germany's other important ally outside the EU. Mr Bush's spokesman said that the President "expects to talk about the strong, lasting relationship we have with Germany" and was keen to discuss enlargement of Nato and Europe's plans for a rapid-reaction military force.

THE STATESMAN

31 MAR 2001

Japan to push USA over climatic treaty

AGENCE-FRANCE PRESSE

TOKYO, March 29. - The Japanese government today vowed to keep up pressure on the US government following President, Mr George W Bush's decision to abandon the Kyoto Climate Change Treaty.

The treaty seeks to limit industrial-nations' emissions of greenhouse gases thought to cause global warming.

"It is extremely important that USA - the world's biggest state to emit carbon dioxide - signs the treaty," chief Cabinet secretary, Mr Yasuo Fukuda, said at a press conference.

"We have to continue to call on USA, and build our diplomatic efforts on the country to ensure that the Kyoto protocol will take effect," he added.

Mr Teiichi Aramaki, the Governor of the ancient capital of Kyoto, where 38 industrialised countries had agreed to the protocol in 1997, has slammed

Mr Bush's decision.

The Governor said: "It nullifies all the efforts the international community has built up. It is disappointing and regretful."

The White House said yesterday that Mr Bush had effectively ditched the treaty, which requires the nations to cut "greenhouse gases" at an average of 5.2 per cent by 2010 compared with 1990 levels.

"The President has been unequivocal. He does not support the Kyoto treaty," White House spokesman, Mr Ari Fleischer told reporters.

Mr Fleischer added that the treaty puts an unfair burden on the country's economy.

"It is not in USA's economic best interest," he said.

Britain concerned: Britain expressed concern today at the US decision to abandon the Kyoto treaty against global warming, adds Reuters from London.

THE STATESMAN

3 0 MAR 2001

US abandons pact on global warming

REUTERS
SYDNEY, MARCH 29

95-4
Ewinman

US President George W Bush walked into a hail of protest on Thursday after ditching the 1997 Kyoto treaty aimed at staving off global warming, with Pacific islands warning rising seas could wipe them off the map.

The European Union said it was "very worried" by the US decision, Japan urged Washington to reconsider and Australia reminded the world's most voracious resources consumer it had a responsibility to cut the globe's emissions of greenhouse gases.

In the Pacific Ocean, island states already suffering devastation because of rising sea levels and severe storms and droughts said their very survival was at stake.

"It is very worrying if it is true that the US intends to pull out of the protocol," EU Environment Commissioner Margot Wallstrom said in a statement. "The EU is willing to discuss details and prob-

lems — but not scrap the whole protocol."

British Environment Minister Michael Meacher said the US decision was extremely serious.

"(Global warming) is the most dangerous and fearful challenge to humanity over the next 100 years," Meacher said.



White House spokesman Ari Fleischer said on Wednesday President George W Bush had been "unequivocal".

"He does not support the Kyoto treaty. It is not in the United States' economic best interest," Fleischer told reporters.

The UN pact was signed in the Japanese city of Kyoto by ex-President Bill Clinton and leaders of other industrialised countries, but it has not been ratified by the US Senate.

Under the treaty, the major powers agreed to cut greenhouse gas emissions, which result mainly from burning coal and oil, by an average of 5.2 percent below 1990 levels by 2012.

THE HINDU

30 MAR 2001

Nuclear waste train reaches destination

Gorleben, March 29

A 60-TONNE shipment of nuclear waste, that provoked environmentalist protests on its way across Germany, arrived early today, under heavy police protection, at its final destination - a waste dump in this northern town.

The convoy completed the 12-mile journey from a rail terminal at the northern town of Dannenberg shortly after dawn, a trip of little more than an hour, following a much-disrupted journey across the country.

Gathered in the rain, a small group of protesters whistled and waved flags.

Preceded by a column of armoured vehicles, the trucks inched into the Gorleben dump site - a squat warehouse - with three police helicopters hovering overhead and riot police lining the road. The last leg of the route was considered particularly vulnerable to protest.

But police had left little to chance. The slow-moving six-truck convoy was briefly delayed by a tractor blockade at Laase, just short of Gorleben, police said, but the final stretch otherwise passed without major problems.

Police in riot gear and on horseback lined the road, which runs through a thick forest. Authorities said there were no protests overnight.

The final stretch by road was the scene of clashes between police and protesters during the last such shipment in 1997. To prevent a repeat, about 20,000 policemen were in action in Germany's biggest security operation in years.

Police had patrolled the area with night-vision equipment ahead of the shipment, which



A man grapples with police officers as they arrest him near Dannenberg on Wednesday.

AP PHOTO

was delayed a day by protesters who chained themselves to the tracks about 25 kilometres before the rail terminal.

"The road is being protected and sentries will be posted along the whole length all night," a policeman said. Cordons of hel-

meted, armed officers were stationed at 50-metre intervals on either side of the road to keep demonstrators away, he said.

Shortly after the train reached Dannenberg yesterday, police turned water cannons on protesters who clogged the town's

streets. Nearly 11 hours later, the rail cars carrying the waste reached Dannenberg's heavily protected depot before being loaded onto trucks to complete the journey from a French reprocessing plant.

AP

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

30 MAR 2001

40-16 'Business lobby behind Kyoto decision' ✓

By Batuk Gathani

BRUSSELS, MARCH 29. The European Union officials are both alarmed and perplexed with the Bush administration's decision to reject and abandon the Kyoto treaty, designed to combat global warming. The U.S. accounts for nearly a fourth of the global warming emissions. The media, environment lobby and government establishment also have expressed concern.

The European Commissioner (minister) for Environment, Ms. Margot Wallstrom, said she was dismayed by Mr. Bush's proposition and urged the U.S. Government to play a "constructive role" at the proposed July conference in Bonn to work out the final terms of the Kyoto treaty. She said: "It is worrying if it is true that the U.S. intends to pull out of Kyoto protocol. The European Union is willing to discuss details and problems — but not to scrap the whole protocol."

Hence, much attention is focused on the German Chancellor, Mr. Gerhard Schroeder's first encounter with Mr. Bush at the White House, amid a widening chasm between the Europeans and the Americans over climate changes. A more cynical perception is that Mr. Bush's sudden 'u-turn on environment issues related to Kyoto accord, highlights 'payback' time for energy related big business which has contributed to Republican election coffers.

A commentator in the *Los Angeles Times* is



The European Union Commissioner for Environment, Ms. Margot Wallstrom, gestures while speaking during a press conference at the E.U. Commission headquarters in Brussels on Thursday. — AP

today quoted: "The gang in power is out to pillage environment with abandon, not witnessed since the days when strip mining was

in vogue. The principle seems to be that what is good for a company that gave money for the Bush campaign is good for the country." A front-page headline put it, "With Bush happy days here again for business lobby".

Mr. Schroeder's brief is to first put trans-Atlantic common interest in security and regional crises over differences on trade and environment, to establish a sort of working rapport with the Bush Administration. The German government's coordinator for German-American relations, Mr. Voigt, is today quoted saying:

"Things should go well at the operating level but it will take longer for them (Mr. Bush and Mr. Schroeder) to understand each other as both leaders come from very different backgrounds and opposing ends of the political spectrum. They are meeting at a time of 'unusual strain' in trans-Atlantic relations.

Technically, the U.S. is not committed to the reduction of greenhouse gases under the Kyoto treaty, because the agreement has not been ratified by the U.S. Senate.

Mr. Bush said that it was no longer appropriate as it did not serve the U.S. interests in the background of acute energy shortage in the U.S. The Europeans generally and Germans particularly think otherwise and this is the message Mr. Schroeder could convey to Mr. Bush.

THE HINDU

30 MAR 2001

US makes China go green

Beijing, March 30 (Reuters): China added its voice today to the global chorus criticising the US rejection of a treaty on global warming, calling President George W. Bush's decision "irresponsible".

"The US announcement that it will not meet its emission reduction duties, citing the lack of obligations on developing countries, violates the principles of the Kyoto Protocol and is irresponsible," the foreign ministry said in a statement.

Bush said this week he would no longer back the international accord to cut greenhouse gas emissions that was reached in Kyoto, Japan, in 1997. Washington signed the Kyoto Protocol, but it has not been ratified by the US Senate.

The Kyoto pact aims to reduce major industrialised nations' emissions by an average of 5.2 per cent below 1990 levels by 2012 to avoid disastrous global weather changes. Bush opposes the pact because it does not also bind de-

veloping nations to curb emissions and because he believes the costs outweigh the benefits, said White House spokesman Ari Fleischer.

The foreign ministry statement reiterated China's stance that developed countries should take the lead in cutting greenhouse gas emissions.

"The main source of greenhouse gases are the developed countries and the priority task of developing countries is to develop their economies and eliminate poverty," it said.

China, the world's most populous country, was described in Kyoto as one of the largest total emitters of carbon dioxide, although per capita emissions are much lower than in the rich countries.

Much of China's energy comes from coal-burning plants, which

fill the urban skies with sulphurous smog, putting its cities at the top the list of the world's most polluted cities.

The United States is the biggest producer of emissions of man-made carbon dioxide, which many scientists say is the main greenhouse gas causing global warming. The gases are emitted by power plants, automobiles and other industrial plants.

The Bush administration's flat rejection of the Kyoto treaty has prompted an outcry from Japan, the European Union, Britain and Australia.

French President Jacques Chirac today called on all countries to implement the Kyoto pact, two days after US President George Bush said he would no longer back the international treaty on global warming. "At a time of global warming and of a

disturbing and unacceptable challenge to the Kyoto Protocol... of spreading deserts and an impending freshwater crisis of major proportions, how can we affirm the right to a protected and preserved environment, the right of future generations?" Chirac asked in an address to the UN Commission on Human Rights.

"It is in this spirit that I call urgently on all states, and first of all the industrialised countries, to fully implement the Kyoto Protocol on climate change without delay," he told the 53-member state forum, which is holding its annual six-week session in Geneva. Chirac also said the UN Commission on Human Rights could contribute to the upcoming 10th anniversary of the Rio Summit, which proclaimed the principles of sustainable development, by helping develop a defined right to environment. This was most crucial for developing countries, because they were most vulnerable to damage to the natural environment.

Chained Greens push back atomic waste wagons

FROM KAI PFAFFENBACH

Sueschendorf (Germany), March 28 (Reuters): Anti-nuclear protesters who dodged security forces to chain themselves to rail tracks forced a train bearing atomic waste today to retreat near the end of its journey to a dump in north Germany.

Riot police broke up a separate blockade attempt further down the tracks after charging a group of some 200 activists who staged a sit-in on the line.

Wielding pneumatic drills and heavy bolt cutters, police freed three of the five protesters who

had attached themselves by their arms to tubes cemented into the bed of the rail line but they could not say when the train could move again.

"Once the people have been removed, the tracks will need to be repaired," said a police spokesman on the scene in Sueschendorf, 25 km from the Dannenberg depot where the waste is due to be unloaded onto flatbed trucks for its final journey by truck to the Gorleben dump on the Elbe river. "It could take 10 minutes or it could take hours," he added. The train, travelling since Monday from a waste repro-

cessing plant in northern France, withdrew to nearby Dahlenburg for refuelling and maintenance.

The action, carried out overnight by an environmentalist group called Robin Wood, delayed further the arrival of the six "Castor" containers of reprocessed nuclear waste which had been scheduled yesterday.

"It's an amazing success to force the Castors to turn back," said one protester, saying this was the first such retreat since controversial transports of reprocessed waste starting in 1995.

Some 20,000 police have been deployed to guard the shipments

in one of Germany's largest peacetime security operations.

A group of around 200 activists briefly staged a separate sit-in protest on the tracks in Dannenberg before being charged by baton-wielding riot police. A small number of protesters responded by firing flares and throwing stones before retreating. One was knocked unconscious during scuffles.

"It was a shame, we could have had a good peaceful occupation of the track with two or three hundred people," said Matthias Hofmann, a 27-year-old student from Hanover who said he had taken

part in many anti-nuclear protests. "If they can't send their waste to France then the reactors will have to be shut down," he said, describing the blockades as "stratagulation tactics" on German nuclear plants which do not have their own reprocessing facilities. Police deployed water cannon and detained nearly 600 people last evening. They said the scuffles were provoked by left-wing activists. If and when the train reaches its destination at Dannenberg, loading is expected to take between eight and 12 hours before the final 25 km road journey to Gorleben.



Two anti-nuclear activists from the green group "Robin Wood" take a break from protests in Sueschendorf, Germany. (AFP)

THE TELEGRAPH

29 MAR 2001

Nuclear waste train retreats

ASSOCIATED PRESS

DANNENBERG, March 28. - A train delivering waste from reprocessed nuclear fuel to a German storage site was forced to retreat today after protesters blocked the rails and clashed with police. The protesters said dozens on their side were injured.

Riot police sent reinforcements to this northern German town about 20 km from the waste dump after ultras pelted stones and fired flares yesterday at police, who replied with water cannon and baton charges and water. A police car was torched.

Clashes died down overnight, partly because bitter cold forced the militants to retreat, police said.

Police decided today to have the train reverse a few kms to the next station for unspecified maintenance while trying to clear the track.

THE STATESMAN

2 MAR 2001

Greenpeace blocks nuclear waste shipment

GORLEBEN, March 27. - Protesters tried to obstruct a nuclear waste shipment by chaining themselves to a rail bridge over a river today as the transport rumbled through Germany in the first such shipment in four years.

Police in rubber boats tried to persuade the Greenpeace activists to come off the bridge, 25 km from the Gorleben nuclear waste dump in northern Germany, where the 60-tonne waste shipment was headed.

"We want to obstruct this transport as long as possible," a Greenpeace spokesman said. The transport was due to arrive late today at a rail terminal from where trucks will bring the six containers - each with about 10 tonnes of radioactive waste sealed in 28 glass casks - to Gorleben. The train was delayed by an hour by demonstrators whom police later cleared from the tracks. - AP



The Greenpeace activists who tried to obstruct nuclear waste shipment by chaining themselves to a rail bridge near Dannenberg, north Germany, on Tuesday. - AP/PTI

THE STATESMAN

28 MAR 2001

Plastic material may damage eco-system of Kutch: Experts

By Amit Mukherjee
The Times of India News Service

AHMEDABAD: The massive amounts of relief material that got pumped into Kutch district after the earthquake may have the makings of a disaster of another kind. A visit to Kutch along the highway No. 8 A shows vast stretches of land infested by plastics, in all forms and shapes. These are the remains of the relief rushed to quake-affected villages.

Millions of plastic bags, bottles, jerry cans, used food packets can be strewn all over Bhachau and Anjar and often at locations far from habitation, blown by winds that sweep across the long stretch of devastation. At the peak of relief operations, so much mineral water was available that people were using it to wash utensils. While on the one hand, plastic remains are causing severe damage to the cattle population living in the area, environmentalists say the situation may give rise to graver problems in the long run.

"In some places the debris have not been cleared, so the concern of removing plastics would come much later," says Ramesh Sawalia, an environmentalist associated with the Centre for Environmental Education.

Kalpana Patel, associated with a voluntary organisation running veterinary camps in the area, said cattle were eating bags which smelt of food.

A large number of such cases have been reported in

Bhachau taluka. "When the animals were operated for suspected internal disorders, plastics weighing even up to 60 kg were obtained from some stomachs," Ms Patel asserted. Cattle cannot digest plastic polymers. As a result the substance keeps accumulating inside the elementary canal. "The large-scale accumulation of plastics often results in the hardening of the abdominal region. The animal dies after a period when it is unable to carry its own load," Ms Patel said.

Mr Sawalia says the situation would lead to a waste management crisis as the plastic being non-biodegradable would also lead to wide spread pollution of the soil in the area.

According to Srinivas Mudrakartha of VIKSAT, an NGO dealing with environmental issues in Gujarat, said, "Large amount of plastic if embedded in the soil, may lead to problems with crop productivity in the area. Further it may cause accumulation of salts in particular areas leading to the soil texture being altered."

Mr Sawalia adds that plastics may cause havoc in the natural and artificial drainage of the area. "During rains drainage systems get completely blocked leading to accumulation of water in communities," he adds. While Mr Sawalia was against the gathering and burning of the left-over plastics, Mr Mudrakartha said the situation can also be channelised to create job opportunities and get the polymers collected and recycled into usable items of daily use.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

2 MAR 2001

27 MAR 2001

Greenpeace founder dies in car crash

Rome

DAVID McTAGGART, one of the founders of Greenpeace International, who piloted boats into the teeth of the French navy to disrupt nuclear testing, was killed Friday in a head-on car crash on a country road in central Italy. He was 68.

Police said McTaggart was alone in his car. The driver of the other car was also killed in the accident, while his wife suffered injuries. The accident happened in Umbria, about 20 miles from Perugia.

"Greenpeace would be unimaginable without his force of personality," Gerd Leipold, the organisation's interim international executive director, said from Amsterdam, Netherlands.

McTaggart, a native of Canada, had lived in Italy for many years and had an olive farm in Umbria.

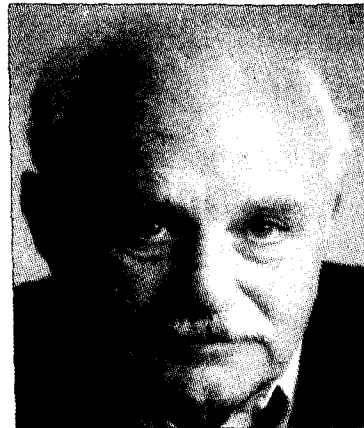
He galvanised the Interna-

tional environmental movement in 1972 by leading protests against French nuclear testing in the South Pacific.

He went on to stir up support for Greenpeace throughout Europe, forging an alliance in 1979 among separate factions of the organisation and uniting them under his chairmanship as Greenpeace International. He was chairman until 1991.

In 1995, McTaggart and two companions had slipped onto the Mururoa atoll in the South Pacific in an inflatable speedboat to disrupt planned French nuclear tests and remained there for two weeks playing cat and mouse with French authorities. As they infiltrated the atoll, French commandos stormed their main vessel, the Rainbow Warrior II.

Repeatedly detained by French authorities, his reckless confrontations with the authorities helped establish Green-



DAVID McTAGGART

peace's reputation for fighting for the environment.

"He was the last medieval knight, capable of great symbolic acts for the environmental cause," said Gianfranco Bologna, a spokesman in Italy

for the World Wildlife Fund.

Crazia Francescato, president of the Italian Green Party, called McTaggart "a figure of extraordinary force" and "an example for all of us." In a 1991 article, Forbes magazine depicted him as a masterful manipulator and myth-maker who turned Greenpeace into one of the largest environmental organisations in the world and a booming business.

Under his leadership, it said, Greenpeace mastered "the tools of direct mail and image manipulation" and indulged "in forms of lobbying that would bring instant condemnation if practiced by a for-profit corporation."

McTaggart, sometimes dubbed "the shadow warrior," was "a very difficult person because he was extremely stubborn, extremely tough," said David Newmann, ex-director of Greenpeace Italy, adding he was

"a person of enormous courage and determination."

Born in Vancouver, British Columbia, McTaggart worked in the construction business for 20 years, before moving to the United States in the 1960s where he became a successful contractor and developer.

He retired after an explosion destroyed a resort his firm had built and sailed the Pacific for pleasure. In 1971 he became outraged with the French Government's decision to cordon off a vast swath of international waters in the Pacific for nuclear tests.

McTaggart was also a driving force behind Greenpeace campaigns to save the whales, to stop dumping of nuclear waste in the ocean, to block production of toxic wastes, to end nuclear testing, and to protect the Antarctic continent from oil and mineral exploitation.

AP

LIVING WITH ARSENIC IN WATER

By MELVYN BROWN

58-6
19/13

IN Mokrapur-Nichupara of Murshidabad is a village with a tragic story. It is a small isolated village where people from neighbouring places shy away from the residents, and no one finds grooms for their nubile girls, or brides for their young men. They are treated like outcasts and unlike their neighbours they will die before their time. Almost 6,000 residents of the doomed village grow crops and survive — all of them are victims of “severe arsenic poisoning”.

For many years these people have been living in poverty and drinking contaminated groundwater. Gholam Kibria, once a panchayat pradhan, said, “more than 45 of us died of arsenic poisoning in the past five years”. With sores on their hands and feet, loss of appetite, and a discoloured pigmentation on their skin, conditions worsen till they are bedridden. Ashrafal, once a well-to-do farmer, was compelled to sell his land for the medicines he and his wife needed. Both are victims of the arsenic blight in their village.

An independent survey stated that the level of arsenic contamination was 50 times over the tolerable limit. In this village the residents waited for six years to get tap-water. Now, they have a single tap for 6,000 people. Most often even the tap-water dries up. Village folk are forced to use tubewells, or water from the ponds. Wake up Kolkata! The threat of arsenic contamination is on your doorstep.

Since water, not to mention groundwater, is so hydrogeologically complicated, consider the arsenic in your drinking water. An ambitious study in Kolkata by the All India Institute of Hygiene and Public Health concludes that many parts of the city have arsenic above the acceptable level.

ALARMING

Prof KJ Nath, director of AIIH and PH, CMC, insists that all wards in the city must conduct tests. Water samples from Alipore, one of the better areas of the city, have high levels of arsenic contamination. The permissible limit with WHO is 10 micrograms per litre. Exactly how permissible is the maximum limit? Fifty micrograms per litre.

Mr Ashesh Roy, chief engineer of the state public health engineering, believes that 50 ug/l “is a grey area”. How was this problem created, asks the common man. The explanation is rather simple: too much underground water is being taken

out with the government's permission. This water shortage creates a vacuum under the surface which in turn contaminates lower layers. Sometimes it is difficult to overcome an arsenic problem which is geogenic in nature.

The situation is serious, and alarming. Prof Dipankar Chakraborti, director, School of Environmental Studies, Jadavpur University, says that in five years' time people will be carrying heavy doses of arsenic in their bodies. Groundwater contamination is on the increase, he says.

SOLUTION

Arsenic intake is also possible through other sources, like vegetables and foodgrain grown in land irrigated by impure groundwater. What is the remedy? Clean or surface water should be supplied to people staying in arsenic-contaminated areas for drinking and cooking purposes.

However, the only practical solution is to find low-cost ways to purify groundwater at the individual tubewell level. Otherwise, more than 21 million people in West Bengal will be affected by “arsenic poisoning” by the year 2005, said a researcher.

It is not possible to stop dependence on groundwater for washing clothes, utensils, bathing and irrigating croplands. It is a question of time when 1,287 villages in 18 districts of West Bengal will be on the “affected list”.

Meanwhile, Kolkata with the assistance of 16 NGOs, is launching a project to provide safe drinking water and to control arsenicosis in 400 villages. The cost is around Rs 886.34 lakhs, of which India-Canada Environment Facility contributes Rs 814.54 lakhs, AIIH & PH Rs 38.8 lakh, and the NGOs Rs 33 lakh.

The City of Joy has also found a saviour in Harbaur GmbH of Germany. Harbaur is a global waste-water and effluent treatment major. He will assist the government to contain the arsenic problem. He is working in collaboration with Pal Trakner, a city-based company. Together they will manufacture and install 95 anti-arsenic gadgets at a cost of Rs 46 lakh. Water from tubewells with the help of the gadget will be arsenic-free; it will also reduce the level of iron in potable water.

Leading newspapers and the media have made a brave effort in bringing this problem to the forefront. A series of reports have already appeared, exposing the threat to the people of Kolkata. There is no cause for panic — not yet.

The author is a freelance contributor.

Panel to combat arsenic menace

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

KOLKATA, March 15. - The CMC has formed a core committee to fight the arsenic menace in the city. The committee was formed last month after a meeting between representatives of the CMC, the All-India Institute of Hygiene and Public Health, the PHE and Unicef. The committee comprises representatives from these organisations.

"The CMC will assist with its full machinery to find out the current situation of arsenic contamination in underground water in the city," Mr Sovon Chatterjee, MIC (water supply), said. The committee has been formed with eight members now, who will use their expertise to analyse and assess the situation, and form the infrastructure necessary to combat arsenic contamination in underground water.

574 143
There has been much work related to arsenic contamination in several parts of the state. The core committee will work following a similar method, Mr Chatterjee said. He added that the situation in the city is not "vulnerable" yet. However, the committee has been formed with a view to immediately prevent the situation from getting worse rather than taking curative measures later, he said.

In order to combat any situation that might arise in future, the CMC has decided to keep a strong infrastructure ready, Mr Chatterjee said.

The Statesman has been carrying a series of reports on arsenic contamination in underground water in several parts of the city. Reports of the School of Environmental Studies in Jadavpur University showed that underground water in parts of the city was con-

taminated with arsenic. Later, the AIH&PH reports also reaffirmed that parts of the city were contaminated. But the CMC laboratories revealed no contamination in the samples collected, Mr Chatterjee had claimed earlier.

The core committee, presently working on the situation, will submit a report on the current situation in Kolkata in a short while. The work of the committee will also include conducting tests on a regular basis.

Mr Sovon Chatterjee also said though the CMC had earlier countered the reports of the SES, JU, and the AIH&PH in suggesting that the CMC's own tests had showed no arsenic contamination, he will now conduct further tests in those very areas where the AIH&PH had found contaminated water, and the results of the report will be announced thereafter, he said.

THE STATESMAN

16 MAR 2001

16 MAR 2001

419-17
53

G-8 deal on global warming

TRIESTE (ITALY), MARCH 4. The Group of Eight Environment Ministers reached a compromise today on how to declare their commitment to combating global warming, an issue that had divided European members and the U.S., French delegation sources said.

A draft final communique seen by the AFP said the G-8 members expressed "concern about the seriousness" of the phenomenon.

They also committed themselves "to strive to reach agreement" at talks in Bonn in July to conclude the Kyoto protocol, the cornerstone U.N. treaty to combat global warming.

But the statement steered clear of committing all the G-8 members to ratify the protocol in time for a 2002 summit on the world's biggest environmental problems.

"A successful outcome (at

Bonn) is necessary to allow early entry into force of the Kyoto protocol. For most countries, this means no later than 2002, with timely ratification processes," the draft document said.

European Union members of the G-8 had been demanding a stronger commitment to Kyoto and its implementation but agreed to water down the communique in order to accommodate the new U.S. administration, diplomats said.

The U.S. chief delegate, Ms. Christie Whitman, head of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), said Washington needed more time to assess its policy on global warming.

But she insisted the U.S. would not necessarily walk away from Kyoto, which the President, Mr. George W Bush, had opposed while on the campaign trail.

THE HINDU

• 5 MAR 2001

Jogi joins Balco legal battle

FROM OUR SPECIAL
CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, March 3: As workers hit the streets this morning, the Balco standoff snowballed into a formal confrontation between the Centre and Chhattisgarh with chief minister Ajit Jogi saying his government would join the batch of petitioners who have moved court against the selloff.

"We will soon move the Supreme Court," Jogi, who was here for a conference on power, said.

The apex court, at the Centre's request, had yesterday stayed hearing on all petitions regarding the selloff and transferred the cases to itself as a single batch.

Another twist to the controversy was added when a Chhattis-

garh revenue court served notices on disinvestment secretary Pradeep Bajjal, Balco managing director S.C. Tripathy and Sterlite chief Anil Agarwal, whose company was yesterday given a 51 per cent stake in the aluminium firm for Rs 551.5 crore.

The court asked them to appear before it on March 15 for violating land acquisition laws.

"It is very odd that Chhattisgarh is doing such things when the matter is before the Supreme Court," disinvestment minister Arun Shourie said today.

The chief minister said he was willing to name those he thought were behind clearing the sale deal when he had made the charge of a Rs 100-crore payoff. "Let the Centre constitute a joint parliament-

tary committee and I undertake to disclose the names of the kick-back beneficiaries before it. I accept the challenge of disinvestment minister Arun Shourie," Jogi said.

Shourie had said in Parliament that Jogi should name names and not take recourse to the legal immunity that a politician enjoys when he speaks within the four walls of a legislature.

According to Jogi, the sale violated an earlier Supreme Court verdict which had said tribal land could not be allocated to a private entity. Besides, he pointed out, under local laws, too, no private entity could be given tribal land for industrial use.

With the issue turning into a

legal standoff in Delhi, Central officials today held emergency meetings to tackle the situation at Korba, the epicentre of the controversy, where striking Balco workers paralysed the company's plants since morning.

About 2,000 employees blocked the entrance of the Korba unit to launch an indefinite strike, bringing work to a standstill.

"The strike is on. We have not been called to the negotiating table as yet," Balco union general secretary P.N. Sharma said.

The strike, which began at six this morning at all the five plants, is being spearheaded by the joint front of different unions under the banner of Balco Bachao Sangharsh Samiti, Sharma said.

■ See Business Telegraph

THE TELEGRAPH

2 MARCH 2001

MAR 2001

Ecological aggression unfair: UNEP chief

By Kalpana Sharma

CAPE TOWN, MARCH 3. The head of the United Nations Environment Programme feels "the ecological aggression of developed countries against developing countries" is unfair. Dr. Klaus Toepfer, speaking exclusively to *The Hindu* at the end of the three-day forum meeting of the World Commission on Dams said this was so because the consumption patterns of the developed world had not changed. He was speaking in the context of global climate change and decreasing biodiversity.

Expressing concern over the increasing gap between the rich and poor with more people living in absolute poverty conditions, Dr. Toepfer said the most important aspect of "sustainable development" remained development. "The developed world must avoid asking developing countries to pay for environmental deterioration."

Dr. Toepfer's organisation had offered to assist in the follow-up on the extensive and detailed WCD report — Dams and Development: A new framework for decision-making. "If we can't link the WCD process with the overall debate on sustainable development, we'll be missing a chance," he said. The timing of the report was significant as the ninth meeting of the Council for Sustainable Development, the follow-up mechanism to the Rio conference on Environment and Development, was addressing the issue of

energy. In this context, it was essential to discuss some of the findings of the report.

"The issue of dams has been misunderstood as an isolated topic," said Dr. Toepfer, "at the end of the day, people want water and energy. Let's get the best option. We should not just think of supply-side solutions."

South Africa will host the World Summit on Sustainable Development or Rio Plus Ten next year. And the UNEP chief, who will be organising it, said it was important to remember that in 1992, when the U.N. conference on Environment and Development was held, the world was just coming out of the era of bipolarism. Today, we are at the centre of a globalised world. "We now have to add to environment and development, the question of globalisation. How can we make this work for the poor, for the environment?"

It had to be done "without paying the high price of losing identity." Dr. Toepfer said people in many parts of the world were increasingly equating globalisation with uniformity. "We have learnt from nature that diversity means strength while monocultures are destructive."

Dr. Toepfer hoped the Rio Plus Ten conference would not become just a "super environment summit" but could concretely establish that "environmental protection is a precondition to stable economic development."

THE HINDU

• 4 MAR 2001

BALCO: Jogi ready to drop names, move SC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, MAR 3

CHATTISGARH government would soon move the Supreme Court on the controversial BALCO deal, Chief Minister Ajit Jogi said today, declaring that he would disclose the names of beneficiaries of the Rs 100 crore alleged kickback before a parliamentary committee.

"We will soon move the Supreme Court," he said, adding that the deal was in contempt of the 1996 verdict of the apex court in the case of Samatha vs Andhra Pradesh where it was ruled that tribal land could not be allocated to private entity. "Let the Centre constitute a joint parliamentary committee and I undertake to disclose the names of the kickback beneficiaries before it... I accept the challenge of the disinvestment Minister Arun Shourie," Jogi said.

Jogi said transfer of majority stake to Sterlite Industries in BALCO was in 'violation' of tribal land laws and added that the state

government had sent a legal notice to the disinvestment secretary Pradeep Baijal.

On how the state legislature could pass a resolution against disinvestment in BALCO after the issue was cleared by Parliament, Jogi said that in the federal structure "we are doing what we should....What we have done is constitutionally and legally correct. It is no transgression."

No retrenchments

■ NEW DELHI: Undeterred by opposition from Chattisgarh Chief Minister Ajit Jogi and labour unions to privatisation of BALCO, Sterlite Industries today promised massive investment in the newly acquired PSU and said there would be no retrenchment of the 7,000 strong workforce. "I would like to remove any kind of fear from the minds of the employees of BALCO, regarding job security. We are against retrenchment of employees," Sterlite chief Anil Agarwal, who took over as chairman of BALCO, told PTI.

INDIAN EXPRESS

3 MAR 2001

3 MAR 2001

SC issues notices to Medha, Arundhati on contempt plea

The Times of India News Service

NEW DELHI: The supreme court on Monday issued notices to Narmada Bachao Andolan activists Medha Patkar, Booker Prize winner Arundhati Roy and lawyer Prashant Bhushan on a petition seeking initiation of contempt proceedings against them for staging a demonstration before the apex court against its judgment in the Sardar Sarovar dam case and also allegedly using derogatory language to lower the dignity of the court. A bench comprising Justice G.B. Pattanaik and Justice B.N. Agrawal issued the notice after attorney general Soli Sorabjee said one could ignore the general conduct of the protesters but if the language alleged to have been used in shouting slogans was true, it prima facie constituted contempt of court. Mr Sorab-



Medha Patkar

jee, however, said that he wanted to be excused from the case and added that one of the law officers would assist the court in this case.

Petitioner J.R. Parashar alleged that when some lawyers intervened during the rally dissuading the activists to desist from using abusive language, they were assaulted.



Arundhati Roy

The court on October 18 had given green signal for construction of the controversial dam on the Narmada river up to a height of 138 metres as

per the Narmada Water Disputes Tribunal award.

Mr Parashar said NBA counsel Prashant Bhushan had allegedly led the rally on December 13. The NBA activists had staged a dharna before a gate of the court to protest against the judgment.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

27 FEB 2001

CLIMATE CHANGES

THE SCENARIO PROJECTED by the U.N. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change during the present century is a lot more than being just gloomy. It is alarming since what awaits us is a steady intensification of global warming for the tropical and developing countries and storms and rising sea levels for the richer countries as well on the Florida and the Atlantic Coast. If, as Mr. James A. McCarthy, environmental scientist of the Harvard University, has said, "Most of the Earth's people will be on the losing side", it sounds very much like a forecast of doom. Apart from its being very frightening, it should also bewilder many who might have taken it for granted that the dizzy pace taken by science and technology during the last century would spread greater prosperity and a happier and healthier world.

What has gone wrong? The kind of progress towards which science and technology were geared should provide the answer. While accelerating industrialisation, neither the West where it had begun with the Industrial Revolution in England two centuries ago nor the late comers in the rest of the world in the post-colonial era had cared to go about it with the imagination required to safeguard the generations unborn from the toxicity they were going to be exposed to.

The warning to the rapidly industrialising West about where it was heading did come very early and there was enough time to act upon it with corrective steps. The smoke and fumes from the mushrooming factories were trapped in a sky over which there was almost always an overhang of clouds except during unusually bright summers. This inevitably led to the stifling atmospheric inversion from the spewing out of more and more carbon dioxide. The heights which the growing volumes of toxic gases from an industrialising Earth were reaching were beginning to tear away the protective ozone layer to expose the planet to global warming from the unshield-

ed rays of the blazing sun. While the new entrants into industrialisation in the tropical countries had earlier lived under a warmer sun dispersing or dissolving the cloud cover, the same trail they took as the West quickly led to the blackening of the sky with the destruction of the forests and the release of the carbon dioxide stored in their trees.

If the baking of the Earth is not stopped, it will eventually make it uninhabitable and wholly devoid of life like the other planets of the solar system. A great deal is indeed known about how this could be stopped and it is only a question of the nations of the world mustering the will to ensure the greening of the Earth. (It is, incidentally, ironic that the word "greenhouse" refers to the warming of the Earth while it should be throwing up an inviting image of luxuriant greenery.) What is needed is the stabilisation of greenhouse gas concentrations spelt out in the Treaty of U.N. Framework Convention of 1994 to which 165 countries were signatories and which have been ratified by almost all their Governments. The stabilisation on which there has been a consensus is aimed at preventing dangerous anthropogenic (human-induced) interference with the climate system. But the levels at which the emissions should be contained are not specifically stated and there is only a vague emphasis against the concentrations becoming dangerous. This could reflect an unwillingness of the developed countries to accept responsibility for the checking of greenhouse gas emissions. The multinational corporations from the richer countries are also projecting a deceptive concern for the industrialisation of the developing countries with offers to set up production units for them while their real objective is the shifting of polluting technology away from their own shores. The developing countries, therefore, should be on guard against the intrusion of a new brand of anti-ecological colonialism.

THE HINDU

23 FEB 2001

Pesticide ruin Kerala villagers lives

Apratim Mukarji
New Delhi, February 22

A STATE-RUN corporation in Kerala has been spraying a deadly pesticide, Endosulfan, banned or restricted in many countries, over its cashew plantations for over 20 years for better yields, ruining hundreds of lives in the villages which dot Kasaragod district.

Plantation Corporation of Kerala, is however far from being apologetic and even resorted to spraying with police help last December. The district administration is allegedly openly siding with it, and villagers have been forced to move court to tem-

porarily stall the spraying. But the injunction is coming up for vacation shortly. The only solace for the villagers is an inquiry committee set up by the Kerala Government, which will submit its report within three months.

The havoc that 20 years of aerial spraying of Endosulfan has wrought on Padre village, within the four sq km area and among around 2,000 people living in approximately 400 houses, there are four cancer patients. Fifty-one others who had died of cancer, 38 cases of mental retardation, 49 psychiatric cases, 33 patients of epilepsy, 16 children born of congenital anomaly and 11 suicides.

Altogether, a shocking 202 cases involving just 126 houses; there are 48 families which account for two or more of the serious medical cases; two families are grappling with as many as five cases and three others have four cases each.

Two unusual warriors from the nondescript Padre village of Kasaragod district were here this week, Dr Y S Mohan Kumar, a physician, the man who was puzzled for many years over the unusually high incidences of cancer, mental retardation, epilepsy, congenital anomaly, psychiatry and even suicides among a mere 400 families and Srikrishna Shree Padre, a jour-

nalist-farmer who is leading the fight against the Plantation Corporation of India.

CSE laboratory tests show that while the maximum residue limit for endosulfan in soil, water and vegetables from Padre are breached many times over.

The tests conducted at the CSE laboratory show that each resident of Padre whose blood sample was tested has Endosulfan residues several hundred times the residue limit for water.

The results strengthen the suspicion, said CSE chairperson Anil Agarwal, that Padre residents are subsidising the Kerala Government's cashew production with their lives.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

23 FEB 2001

Centre shaping disaster management body

BY OUR CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, Feb. 20: Jolted by the Gujarat earthquake, various ministries of the Central government are working overtime to give final shape to the proposed disaster management authority.

The announcement to set up such an authority was made by Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee in the wake of the Gujarat tragedy. The issue also figured in the consultative committee meeting of ministry of science and technology on Saturday. The MPs in the committee called upon the government to constitute the authority as early as possible.

The proposed authority will not only be tuned to face the natural disasters, it will also look into the aspects of man-made calamities. The MPs sug-

gested that the authority should have legal powers so that it could recommend the state governments to take steps to face the disasters. Science and technology minister Murlu Manohar Joshi had mooted the idea of setting up of the authority after the Orissa cyclone.

The department of science and technology is also formulating a five-year plan to deal with the natural disasters which struck the country at frequent intervals. Several initiatives had been taken by the department to deal with a crisis of the magnitude witnessed in Gujarat. The proposal to set up an earthquake risk evaluation centre in the Indian Meteorological Department has already been approved by committee of secretaries. V-Sat-based communication facilities are being provided to link the seismological observatories with CRS

in New Delhi to provide on-line data for quicker analysis and dissemination. As part of the Jai Vigyan technology mission project, six seismological observatories were being set up in the Northeast and a multi-parametric geophysical observatory is also coming up. The region lies in the high seismic risk area. This is besides the installation of stand alone strong motion accelerographs at various locations.

The various measures included are to suitably upgrade the existing seismological network of the country with state-of-the-art equipment to enable location of earthquakes of magnitude 3.0 and above with an accuracy level of 2 km for epicentre, to establish earthquake risk evaluation centre in IMD with a view to provide institutional mechanism for data collation and integration.

Committee or calamity?

Talking heads cannot ensure proper disaster management

ON Sunday, some six national parties, together with 16 regional ones, confabulated for three hours on the Gujarat earthquake as part of the National Committee on Disaster Management's deliberations, and not once did the most obvious aspect of this calamity surface. Yet, although the observation that it is not earthquakes that kill people but badly built constructions in which they live that do, has become a cliché, no one thought it necessary to highlight that aspect. Not once during this meeting convened by Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee was the insidious builder-politician nexus, which had given rise to a rash of dangerously unsafe buildings across the state, referred to. If disaster management does not include, within its ambit, a scrutiny of the basic cause for a particular disaster, then what is the point of setting up such a committee in the first place and wasting everybody's time?

The sad fact is that committees have become just another way to manage the political repercussions of various crises without really doing very much to address them in real terms. Invariably, committees of this kind end up only perpetuating themselves — more paper, more red tape, more to-ing and fro-ing. Sunday's meeting, to nobody's great surprise, recommended the setting up of a working group of professionals and experts which has, in turn, been mandated to set up a task force to prepare long-term plans for each calamity. There is, besides, the all-party committee on calamity management headed by NCP chairperson Sharad Pawar. Clearly, all this

calls for another committee — one designed to coordinate the activities of these various committees! At the end of a little more than three weeks — a period when earth became a living hell for the people of Gujarat — only the committees have proliferated, unfortunately, not people's welfare.

The ugly squabbling over the management of the Orissa cyclone seriously affected the smooth conduct of relief and rehabilitation in that state, the deleterious effects of which are being felt even now, 16 months after that calamitous supercyclone. Gujarat needs to be spared this and that can only happen if politicians conduct themselves in a fashion that rises above bipartisan interests. This is, of course, easier said than done in a situation where the party in power, both in the state and at the Centre, is desperate to ensure that the main Opposition party does not gain politically from the earthquake. The main Opposition party, on the other hand, is wasting no occasion to embarrass the ruling party. And so it goes, this big fight that isn't doing anybody any good. While the president of the Congress highlights the discrimination in relief on grounds of religion, caste and political affiliation, the BJP chief minister and prime minister jointly rush to defend their record, instead of ~~duly~~ acknowledging the problems and promising to set them right. Politicians across the board must realise that the people are watching their antics and their patience is running low. It is not words and red tape that they need at the moment, but swift, concerted and effective action.

INDIAN EXPRESS

20 FEB 2001

Panel formed to plan ahead of calamities

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, Feb. 18. — The National Committee on Disaster Management today decided to set up a working group that would recommend long-term measures for tackling natural calamities.

The working group, headed by NCP chief Mr Sharad Pawar, will create task forces for natural or man-made calamities which will prepare long-term plans for the consideration of the NCDM. The Prime Minister suggested constitution of the working group at the NCDM's first meeting here this evening. The meeting lasted three hours.

On relief and rehabilitation measures in Gujarat, chief minister Mr Keshubhai Patel assured the NCDM that his government "will meet the challenge." Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee promised that the Centre "will not lag behind in whatever assistance the Gujarat government will need."

To a request from Orissa chief minister Mr Navin Patnaik for assistance to complete rehabilitation of the super cyclone victims, the Prime Minister assured that the Centre would "stand behind" his government.

Parliamentary affairs minister Mr Pramod Mahajan said the meeting was held in a "constructive and cooperative" atmosphere. Mr Vajpayee hoped that the discussions in Parliament on quake-related

issues would be "calm, cordial and constructive."

Mr Mahajan said the NCDM appreciated the role of the Army in relief and rescue operations and the prompt response of the international community. But the committee was not unanimous on the role of the Gujarat government. To a query, Mr Mahajan said: "By and large, the members were satisfied with the response of the Gujarat government."

He did not specify whether Mrs Sonia Gandhi was satisfied. After a tour of the earthquake-affected areas, the Congress president had accused the state government of discrimination against some communities in relief work. She made the same allegation a letter to the Prime Minister two days ago. And again at the meeting today.

CPI and CPI-M representatives at the committee reportedly did not support the Congress's allegation. Mr Vajpayee and Mr Patel denied any discrimination and assured the committee that a strict vigil would be maintained against such acts. BJP president Mr Bangaru Laxman said he had not come across any instance of discrimination during his tour.

Mr Mahajan said the committee was promised that "all help will go to the needy people, irrespective of religion, caste or political affiliations."

Referring to complaints of

delay in distribution of relief material due to red-tapism, Mr Mahajan said the committee was informed that though the government machinery is "now working promptly and properly, a constant watch will be kept and the government machinery streamlined and improved whenever and wherever necessary."

The meeting was attended by several Union ministers and representatives of six national and 15 regional parties. Among the absentees were Mr Laloo Prasad Yadav, Miss Mamata Bannerjee and Miss J Jayalalitha. Mr PH Pandian, MP, represented her.

The committee was constituted after an all-party meeting on Gujarat quake earlier this month on a suggestion of Mrs Sonia Gandhi.

Mr Mahajan said principal scientific advisor to the government Mr APJ Abdul Kalam Azad suggested that the number of lives lost, and impact on the national economy be taken into account for defining a national calamity. The committee, however, did not deliberate on this aspect.

Builder booked: Gujarat police have booked another builder, Satish Shah, under the Prevention of Anti-Social Activities Act. Shah had constructed 'Shikhar' complex that collapsed in the quake, killing 98 people, adds UNI.

■ Photograph, another report on page 8

THE STATESMAN

19 FEB 2001

— PHOTO. V. SUDHAKARAN

'No discrimination in quake relief'

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, FEB. 18. The first meeting of the National Committee on Disaster Management, presided over by the Prime Minister, Mr. A. B. Vajpayee, today said all help would be provided to the earthquake victims in Gujarat irrespective of their religion, caste or political affiliations. *HD*

Referring to allegations of the Leader of the Opposition and Congress president, Ms. Sonia Gandhi, on discrimination in providing relief to the victims, Mr. Vajpayee and Mr. Keshubhai Patel, Gujarat Chief Minister, denied there was any bias. However, the Committee said that strict vigil would be maintained and assistance rendered to the needy without discrimination.

The Committee also agreed to Mr. Vajpayee's suggestion on setting up a working group of experts

to prepare a long-term plan on tackling natural calamities or man-made disasters. The group would create a task force to tackle these disasters.

Both Mr. Vajpayee and Mr. Patel assured the Committee that the Government machinery was working promptly in distributing relief. It would be further streamlined and improved, the Parliamentary Affairs Minister, Mr. Pramod Mahajan, said tonight briefing newsmen on the deliberations. *Srinan*

On the suggestion of Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, Principal Scientific Adviser to the Government, that loss of human lives and impact on national economy should be the two main parameters for declaring any disaster a national calamity, Mr. Mahajan said as the deliberations focussed mainly on Gujarat, it did not come up for discussion.

Mr. P. H. Pandian, MP, who represented the AIADMK general secretary, Ms. Jayalalitha, suggested that a Central Ministry be vested with the task of undertaking relief in times of such disasters on a permanent basis.

Mr. Sharad Pawar, vice-chairman of the Committee and leader of the Nationalist Congress Party, suggested the inclusion of women and representatives of the minorities to ensure that there were no complaints of discrimination.

The decision to set up the National Committee on Disaster Management was taken at an all-party meeting on February 3. It will suggest short, medium and long-term strategies for relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction of the quake-hit areas of Gujarat. It will look into parameters that should define a national calamity.

Sonia's charge: Page 13

THE HINDU

19 FEB 2001

Relief must be fair, Sonia tells PM

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, FEB. 18. The Congress president, Ms. Sonia Gandhi, who recently spent three days in the earthquake affected areas in Gujarat, has said the relief measures should be implemented in a fair and equitable manner.

In a letter to the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, she said the overwhelming need was for shelter and it must be provided before the onset of summer. "While the enormity of the tragedy is greater in the Kutch area, it is also true that people in Saurashtra are feeling they have been neglected in terms of relief operations."

Ms. Gandhi, who participated in the various relief operations and interacted with the affected families, said the tragedy of the quake would be enhanced manifold if the influential were able to corner the benefits of the relief efforts.

She said there was an apprehension that the State Government was deliberately not taking steps to remove the debris because the number of dead could go up. The debris should be cleared within a stipulated time-frame, said Ms. Gandhi.

The Congress leader felt there was a need to change the norms for payment of cash doles. Employment generating programmes in the areas affected by the quake and drought should be started immediately as there were

no other modes of employment available. Besides, the policy on adoption of villages should be declared immediately so that NGOs, government institutions and organisations could take up the rehabilitation work immediately.

She also wanted the Government to come out with a separate industrial policy for the quake-hit areas, including soft loans, tax holidays and sales tax benefits. Industries must be discouraged from shifting, and problems of migrant labour tackled on a priority basis.

More funds for education in Gujarat

AHMEDABAD, FEB. 18. Besides the Rs. 150 crore package already sanctioned by the Union Human Resource Development Ministry for making functional again the educational system in Gujarat, which broke down in the devastating earthquake of January 26, more allocations under different schemes over and above the existing ones were announced here today by the Minister, Dr. Murli Manohar Joshi.

A cheque of Rs. 2.63 crores from the Women and Child Development Department of the Union Ministry towards setting up 300 learning centres in the 17 quake-hit districts was handed over by Dr. Joshi to the State Education Minister, Mr. Anandiben Patel. — PTI

THE HINDU

19 FEB 2001

ECO-VIGIL

A DROUGHT IS LOOMING LARGE OVER THE POOREST PARTS OF THE COUNTRY

MAX MARTIN pieces together a drought map of India. And things could only get worse by summer

THE century's worst drought last year left a trail of devastation that continues till date in some of the poorest areas of India. Amidst this scenario of continuing shortages of drinking water and livelihood opportunities, arises the fear of yet another year of drought.

Humanitarian agencies warn of a catastrophe if the drought-hit villages in tribal belts of western Orissa, western Madhya Pradesh (MP), Chattisgarh, the Thar desert in Rajasthan and some arid areas of Gujarat are left to the nature's mercy yet again.

It's the backward and tribal belts of the states that are invariably the worst hit. It underscores Amartya Sen's theory that food shortage is not an environmental phenomenon but the culmination of a socio-economic process. Of course, Sen said this specifically in the context of famines, which have never surfaced in independent India.

Right now, thousands of people are facing continuing shortages of water and fodder, sometimes even food, worsening labour migration from Orissa and starting off new migration trends from parts of western MP. "It may be misleading to believe that if it rains for once, the drought



Danger: drought ahead

gets over," says G. Sriramappa, director of Oxfam-India, the indigenously funded offshoot of the renowned Oxford-based famine and disaster relief agency.

This viewpoint cuts through statistics. The Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) claimed that in 2000, the country as a whole had received "normal" rains for the 12th consecutive year. Even in 1999, when India received 96 per cent of the normal rainfall, only seven out of 35 meteorological

divisions recorded deficient rain — but its impact had been devastating.

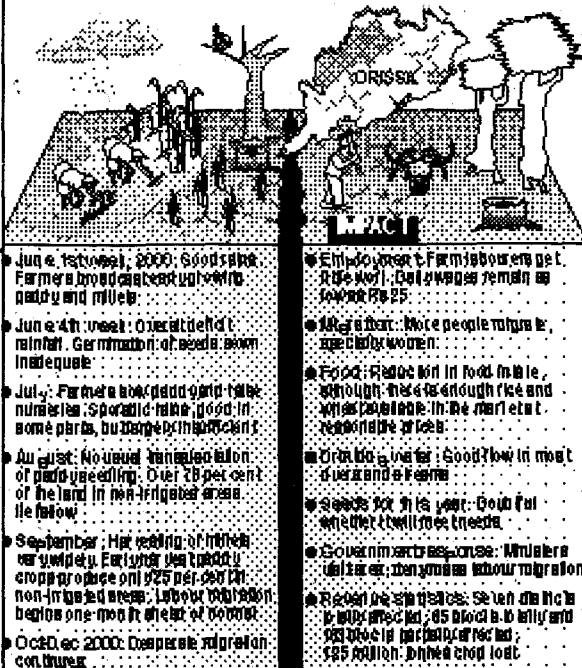
By the end of 2000, there has been a phenomenal increase in the number of women who joined the flow of seasonal labour migration, notes a report compiled by Paschim Orissa Krishijeevi Sangh (POKS - Agricultural Labourer's Organisation) based in Nuapada (Orissa).

Even in non-drought years, thousands of landless or marginal peasants migrate

from here in search of casual or contract labour Raipur in Chattisgarh and Hyderabad in Andhra Pradesh. The drought has made it worse.

The starkest manifestation of the drought is visible in Padampur sub-division of Bargarh district, the POKS report notes. This area falls outside the irrigation command area of the Hirakud dam in Sambalpur. Villagers in Bargarh have resorted to eating roots for survival.

THE GROWING SHADOW



Several villages in the Lunkaransar block in Bikaner have suffered floods as a year's rains showered out on them over a single night.

"The topography of the desert area is such that in some areas the water drains out or trickles down within 24 hours without a trace, still in others sudden rains cause flash floods," notes Ramappa, who has done field visits to these regions.

Oxfam-India claims that there is water shortage in Churu and parts of Udaipur. The villagers term the drought a trikaal denoting a severe shortage of all three life-sustaining needs: food, water and fodder.

Reports suggest that thousands of heads of cattle had perished last year in Barmer, Jodhpur, in the desert region of Rajasthan and in parts of Udaipur, Pali and Churu. New field reports suggest a livelihood crisis in the predominantly pastoral villages of the state.

Environmentalists also point out that the deterioration of traditional water harvesting structures in Rajasthan have exacerbated the water shortage.

Gujarat, even before its latest reversal, was on the edge of a major disaster, with reports suggesting that hundreds of villages in large parts of Kutch, Panchmahal and Rajkot and Jamnagar are reeling under drought conditions.

Despite government-sponsored innovative watershed protection measures, western MP's villages also suffer water shortage.

Fields lie barren in Dhar and are triggering off mass migration. The newly-formed state of Chattisgarh

finds its infrastructure stretched to the limit in its attempt to respond to the drought.

Women are severely affected by drought and labour migration. They face increased health risks and threats of physical violation.

Sometimes, they are being forced to stay back at the labour sites, even when their men return home, an Oxfam update on the drought scenario notes.

This is done to ensure that men do not abandon the work after receiving advances.

Life in these work sites is extremely grim, and they are forced to live on a shoestring budget, consuming sub-standard food to save up to enough money to return home with. Most migrant families take huge advances before they leave.

Being largely illegal, labour migration remains an unaccounted activity. So it becomes next to impossible to ensure minimum wages or labour rights for a migrant.

In case of accident, sickness or death of a migrant, there is virtually no way to ensure compensation.

The drought scenario calls for a twin strategy of food security provision and capacity building in select drought-hit areas, charity workers suggest.

Significantly, the regions like western Orissa attract crores of rupees from the government and international donor agencies. Still, the abject poverty and marginalisation there continue, due to a lack of overall growth and the access of the poorest to natural resources.

Amartya Sen

Source: Drought in Padampur District, 2000 Report, by Students of Institute of Agricultural Sciences, Raipur, Orissa. IE Graphics: B. K. SHARMA

Russia welcomes world's garbage

Fred Weir in Moscow

IT'S A dirty job, but the country could get rich doing it, say supporters of a draft law that could turn Russia into the world's biggest importer of nuclear waste. It's a catastrophe in the making, say environmentalists and other critics. They warn the idea of taking in other countries' radioactive garbage is, at best, a dangerous scheme to exploit Russia's sagging Soviet-era infrastructure for quick profits.

At issue is a law legalising the import of spent fuel from foreign nuclear reactors to be treated and stored in Russian facilities. The bill passed its first reading in December by 319 to 38 votes, and goes to a second reading February 22.

The Ministry of Atomic Energy, known as MinAtom, claims the plan could earn \$21 billion over the next decade, vault Russia into first place in the burgeoning global "nuclear services industry" and provide cash to clean up the country's many radioactive "hotspots" — ecological disaster zones left over from the Soviet era.

"Our aim is to make Russia competitive in one of the most lucrative hi-tech industries," says Yury Besspal'ko, spokesman for MinAtom, which controls Russia's 29 civilian power reac-

tors, most nuclear-related scientific work and many aspects of military research and weapons production. Mr Besspal'ko says he expects the laws will be passed and imports to be in full swing before year's end.

MinAtom has recently contracted to build Russian atomic power stations to Iran and India and it is eyeing the Chinese market.

"Russia must be able to provide the full service to prospective customers in this highly competitive field, including storage and repro-

Trade in Atomic Waste

cessing of spent fuel," says Alexander Kosarikov, a Duma deputy. "And why not? Russian nuclear products are reliable, safe, popular and comparatively cheap".

Environmentalists tell a different story. "From every point of view, this law is a disaster," says Igor Farafontov, a nuclear expert with Greenpeace-Russia.

"The only goal of this scheme is to make money to keep MinAtom alive. And that's bad, because MinAtom is a dangerous, ramshackle

and incompetent organisation that should be closed down".

Russia already has mountains of radioactive waste, much of it left over from the Soviet nuclear weapons program, which critics say cannot be safely transported, processed or stored.

"Existing facilities are based on technology from the 1950's, and they are already overloaded," says Vladimir Slivak of the Social-Ecological Council, a green group.

"Reprocessing spent fuel may be profitable, but the only way MinAtom can hope to be competitive is by drastically cutting corners on safety".

Russia's dilapidated transport network is a key source of concern. Says Anatoly Greshnevnikov, deputy head of the Duma's ecology committee, "Russia's rail lines are in terrible shape, its roads are worse. We have no secure vehicles, containers or systems for transporting this stuff. And we cannot afford to build them," he says.

Analysts warn the profits from MinAtom may be used in the development of a new range of Russian nuclear weapons. They point to the rise of KGB hawks in the Kremlin who are determined to regain superpower status in the face of US plans to build an anti-missile defence shield.

Are national tragedies to be 'used' only to score political points?

Two disasters, two yardsticks

HT-10

BY PRAKASH PATRA

15/2

NATURE IS quite even-handed in the havoc it wreaks. Not so the Central Government. In the latter's scheme of things, some states are more equal than others. There is a subtle but oppressive caste system that pervades the nation when it comes to relief efforts after calamities and disasters. Not only are certain sections of people shown preference, but a *varna vyavastha* governs even the states — which depends solely on their utility and relevance in national politics.

Never mind the constitutional scheme of things which bestows equal rights on citizens regardless of where they live in the country. The value of human life in India seems to be proportionate to a person's status, his class-allegiance and negotiating power. An eloquent testimony of this has been the response of our politicians — particularly those within the ruling NDA — to the Orissa supercyclone last year and the Gujarat earthquake last month.

Fortunately, the common Indian has shown extreme generosity while responding to the cries of help in Orissa and Gujarat. People from every class, region and community — including those living abroad — were spontaneous in their show of concern.

It was the governments which failed in both Orissa and Gujarat. Local administrations collapsed. There is no point blaming petty *tehsildars*, BDOs and policemen because the force of nature made no distinction between Orissa and Gujarat. Officials and their families were equal sufferers in both cases.

But from the very first day of the killer cyclone, Orissa was denied the sensitivity and care it expected from the Centre. Relief efforts in the then Congress-ruled state lost focus amid a rising chorus for the resignation of Chief Minister Giridhar Gamang.

Gamang's scalp was sought for his 'failure' in handling relief operations. Was it because elections to the Orissa Assembly were just round the corner?

The polls were barely four months away when the cyclone struck the state's affluent coastal region on October 29, 2000. The BJP and its local ally, the Biju Janata Dal, were waiting in the wings to wrest power in the state.

Orissa, in its worst hour of crisis, was dished out sermons on 'good governance'. It was mostly denied a much-deserved largesse. But how is it that no one is speaking of Keshubhai Patel's resignation now? Is it because the state happens to be under BJP rule and that the same BJP is also in power at the Centre?

The state administration has collapsed in Gujarat too. Much of the relief work there has been undertaken and sustained by the armed forces, international aid agencies, individuals and voluntary groups. Even the corporate sector has preferred to contribute directly instead of routing help through the Prime Minister's Relief Fund or the Chief Minister's Relief Fund (as was the case in Orissa).

The Gujarat Government has virtually gone underground. It was more or less the same story in Orissa. Immediately after the cyclone, there was speculation about Gamang's fate. The whole focus was on painting the state Government as an inert and inefficient behemoth. The objective was clear for all to see: to extract political mileage out of human misery.

One is not defending the ineptitude of the Gamang administration here. The purpose is to drive home the BJP's reluctance to apply in

Gujarat the same yardstick it had chosen to measure Gamang's crisis-management in Orissa.

Is it not a fact that Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee landed in Bhubaneswar only once, and that too at night? Home Minister L.K. Advani was no better. He took a bird's eye view of Orissa but returned without touching base due to 'inclement weather conditions'. Did he attempt to revisit the ravaged zone after air-link was restored? No.

Advani represents Gandhinagar in the Lok Sabha. For this reason alone, he couldn't have ignored Gujarat.



One man's bungling is another man's relief: Giridhar Gamang (left) and Keshubhai Patel

Newspapers over the past few weeks have regularly carried reports about the Home Minister supervising relief from makeshift tents. Union Defence Minister George Fernandes was indeed deputed by the Centre to head the task force constituted 10 days after the Orissa cyclone. And what was his task? To engage the state authorities in a debate whether or not the supercyclone was a 'national calamity'!

Gamang shouted from the rooftops that he required money from the Centre, but the Centre prevaricated. Yet another debate ensued whether Central assistance was to be treated as an advance, a loan or a grant.

While the state Government and the Congress kept demanding that the Centre should declare the cyclone a 'national calamity' — to ensure maximum flow of Central aid — the Centre argued that the Finance Commission had made no provision

for a national calamity. All this was happening in the very first week of the disaster. Bodies were decomposing in paddy fields and the survivors looting foodgrains in the Orissa countryside.

Now juxtapose this response of the Centre with the quake in Gujarat. The Keshubhai Patel regime has been issued a blank cheque placing no restriction on the supply of Central funds for relief and rehabilitation. No sane person would grudge this. Shouldn't the Centre have shown the same degree of magnanimity to the Gamang Government?

But while underscoring the Centre's evidently partisan approach, credit has to be given to states which suffered from no political predilections while rushing to the rescue of Orissa and Gujarat. They have demonstrated the true federal spirit.

If it was the Andhra Government that cleared roads, restored power supply and set up communication networks in Orissa, the Congress Government in Maharashtra did not lag behind in rushing aid to Gujarat.

Very few MPs have come forward to part with their constituency funds for the rebuilding of Gujarat. Several of them are believed to have even angrily resented the Vajpayee Government's 'arbitrary' move in waving the rules to permit them to divert their entire constituency development fund to Gujarat.

For the Orissa cyclone, MPs were asked to donate Rs 10 lakh to construct *pucca* schools that could provide shelter to people at the time of calamities. Of the approximately 750 MPs, around 300 contributed. Then came the floods in West Bengal. Even fewer MPs came forward to help. Now it's the turn of Gujarat.

Has it something to do with the politics of survival?

For an MP, as long as you satisfy your voters, you can keep coming back to Parliament. Votes matter, not a national cause. It does not take a series of terrible disasters to show that politics is all about expediency, but it does tragically highlight it.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

15 FEB 2001

Relief distributed on communal lines: Cong, Jamat

Vaipayee will head national calamity panel

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, Feb. 7. — The Prime Minister will head the 35-member national committee on disaster management which was set up today at an all-party meeting. Mr Sharad Pawar has been made the vice-chairman.

The committee, which includes members of all national and state parties, will suggest measures for relief and rehabilitation in the quake-hit areas, Union information and broadcasting minister, Mrs Sushma Swaraj, said. It will also discuss legislative and other measures needed to deal with national calamities and consider the parameters that will define a national calamity.

The Union ministers on the panel are Mr LK Advani, Mr George Fernandes, Mr Yashwant Sinha, Mr Nitish Kumar, Mr Kanshiram Rana and Mr Jagmohan. Among the representatives of national parties are Mrs Sonia Gandhi, Mr Bangaru Laxman, Mr Kanshi Ram, Mr Harkishan Singh Surjeet and Mr AB Bardhan

Other members include Mr KC Pant, Mr APJ Abdul Kalam, Miss Mamata Banerjee, Miss Jayalalitha, Mr Laloo Yadav, Mr Mulayam Yadav, Mr Bal Thackeray and Mr Chandrababu Naidu. The Cabinet secretary will be member secretary of the committee.

Quake damage: The Gujarat earthquake has cost the nation Rs 20,875 crore, Mrs Swaraj said. She said the official toll till now is 16,480, while the number of people injured is 150,000.

Compensation: The next of



Quake victims have breakfast in a tent in Bhuj on Wednesday. — AP/PTI

kin of only 719 people of the nearly 16,000 officially declared dead have received the compensation of Rs 1,00,000 from the Gujarat government, SNS adds from Gandhinagar.

The Congress and the Jamat-Islami Hind have accused the state government of religious discrimination in the distribution of relief material, adds PTI

from Bhuj.

"We have received complaint that the administration is deliberately not distributing relief items in Muslim dominated areas of Bhid Bazar," said Mr Jaiveer Singh Jadeja, district Congress leader.

■ More photographs, reports on pages 2 & 8

HEART 2001 Vol. CXXXV 33

ANOTHER COMMITTEE

States, not Centre, must tackle disasters

THE cream of India's political class met last week to assess the situation in Gujarat. There was plenty of gravitas. Political hatchets were not in view. But just because Atal Behari Vajpayee listened intently to Sonia Gandhi, and the Left and Trinamul temporarily forgot West Bengal, it did not mean something was actually accomplished. If words are all, the meeting can be said to have decided to set up a permanent disaster management committee. Even making the most generous assumptions on the speed and clarity with which such an effort can be mounted, its effectiveness in handling a full blown natural disaster remains in doubt. This is not only because of familiar reasons why government committees don't work. A bigger handicap lies in the very conception of the permanent body. To be constituted at the Central level, its remit would presumably be to react fast and coordinate well any disaster in any part of India. But this means the permanent disaster management committee will have to necessarily act in concert with state governments and their agencies. As the Gujarat tragedy shows, state governments can be unreliable allies in combating the disaster.

Even Chandrababu Naidu failed to tackle the Hyderabad floods and the Andhra drought. The record of chronically inefficient states like West Bengal or Rajasthan is considerably worse. What of Bihar? Or the North-east? Will a Central body, however permanent and manned with the best and the brightest, be able to coordinate relief and rehabilitation with official agencies in these states? If the politicians were really serious about helping victims, they would have concentrated on strengthening this tenuous link. But that would necessarily mean national level leaders calling to account state governments ruled by their party colleagues. Sonia Gandhi will not admit Ashok Gehlot has made a mess of Rajasthan drought relief; the CPI-M's Delhi-based comrades insist Buddhadev Bhattacharya is presiding over the people's paradise Jyoti Basu built in Bengal; the BJP likes to think it runs a government in UP, many in the state doubt the existence of any government — and so on. Short of a brutally honest admission of this failures and equally brutal correctives that are needed, disaster management will continue to be disastrous. Some find a way out in giving a Central body overwhelming powers, including those of overriding state governments and their agencies. The disaster management bill under preparation is partly along these lines. This is a dangerous remedy. The warning about absolute power is one reason. The other is that state governments can make things difficult in ways that will not foul any Act but sabotage Central relief nevertheless. Ask the Bengal CPI-M, past masters in politicking with Central aid. The only real solution is decentralising management, with any Central committee acting as supervisor, point man and facilitator. Many thousands and more Indians will have to die before that message gets through to our politicians.

THE STATESMAN

- 8 FEB 2001

Disastrous Management Focus on Mobilising Communities

By MANOJ JOSHI

91-10
SINCE May 1998, as a self-declared nuclear weapon state, India has functioned in the belief that it is capable of visiting awesome destruction on its enemies. Since it has also pledged never to be the first to use such weapons, this has also meant an assumption that it has the capacity to sustain a nuclear attack and then retaliate. But the first lesson of the Gujarat earthquake of 2001, the closest approximation of a nuclear strike, seems to be that the country remains grossly unprepared for major calamities.

Even as the full magnitude of the tragedy unfolds, it is clear that the Union and state government's response leaves a lot to be desired. Relief work began late, in most cases only on January 27 or 28. It focused on Ahmedabad and the larger towns and ignored the smaller villages. It was also poorly managed with many of the specialist rescue teams being left to fend for themselves during the critical period when help was needed.

The primary responsibility for relief and rehabilitation rests with the state government. But reports suggest that the government machinery was paralysed for over 36-48 hours after the quake. The initial relief came through the Army and Air Force personnel who did not wait for the formal invocation of "aid to civil authority" by the local administration and began relief work immediately. But since this involved a limited number of troops available on the spot, their efforts were somewhat limited.

Such a situation was, in a sense, inevitable. Over the years, as salaries have eaten up revenues, state governments' social and administrative services have been withering away. All departments except the police have stagnated. Public health services, education, drinking water and agricultural extension services have begun coming through NGOs, World Bank projects or central schemes.

One measure of the Centre's approach to disaster management comes through the fact that disaster relief is coordinated by the ministry of agriculture based on the belief that drought and flood are the main calamities that the Centre has to deal with. The problem is not so much the ministry dealing with the subject, but that every executive function of the government is under the stranglehold of a generalist bureaucracy which believes that the appointment to a particular office comes with the expertise required to run it.

In such circumstances, institutional mechanisms for disaster

management have not come up and the whole subject is handled through the mechanism of "high-powered committees," whose amateurishness seeks to hide behind bureaucratic titles. Unfortunately, like wars, disasters cannot be fought by committee, but through generals and generalship, not necessarily of the uniformed variety.

So we are left with a system that delivers bumbling and often criminally negligent responses to situations that demand expertise and instant reactions. While the system has been able to get away with poor quality governance in healthcare, education, environment management and law and order, events like the Indian Airlines hijacking, the Orissa and Kandla cyclones or the recent earthquake have shown up our new emperors' lack of clothes. The BJP-led coalition has, to its credit, attempted to address many of these issues, but the combination of coalition politics and bureaucratic guile has entangled all reform projects in miles of red-tape.

So far the system has got away by

IN BRIEF

- India has no institutional mechanisms for disaster management
- In many countries, volunteers deal with local emergencies
- Communities must be more involved in managing crises

utilising the armed forces for disaster relief — natural and manmade. Besides tackling the problems created by misgovernance in Kashmir, Assam and Manipur, the Army handles flood relief on an almost annual basis. Most remarkably, it has now been pressed into fighting environmental degradation through its eco-battalions. The Army brass is not entirely unhappy as in bureaucracies, more work and more men equals more power. And power is what all bureaucracies, including those in uniform, are all about.

Spread across the country, the armed forces can and do bring to bear a disciplined and organised response to natural calamity. Almost every country uses them in times of need, but not necessarily in every emergency. But while the armed forces are adequate to cope with floods or cyclones, they are neither trained nor equipped to provide relief for catastrophic events like rail accidents, fires, earthquakes or landslides. Such events require

highly-trained and specially-equipped teams which must be in place within hours of the event so as to save as many lives as possible.

The experience of other countries shows that such teams are staffed by highly motivated volunteers. In the US, fire services in many smaller towns are manned by volunteers who receive specialised training for this task. In this way, small communities are able to afford a fire department which is also utilised for dealing with other local emergencies.

Given the larger scale of disasters as well as the lack of a volunteering tradition, the government has to play the lead role in disaster management. But while core groups for such events should comprise government personnel, the larger effort should involve communities. The experience of calamity-management in India often shows that communities tend to stand by and even become onlookers, while government organisations are involved in disaster management.

The three services can certainly provide the sinew for disaster management by identifying units like the engineers and designating them for various situations. Thus some engineering units can be trained to handle fire disasters, others can specialise in quakes or landslides. Medical personnel for various emergencies can be identified from military, central and state government health services and used for emergency duty on a monthly rotation. The railways and airlines can, in a similar manner, organise their personnel and assets for quick use and deployment.

All these units can be made available to a statutorily empowered central- or state-level disaster management organisation. The creation of a new bureaucracy must be avoided. The disaster-management organisations themselves should have no assets of their own except a skeleton managerial team responsible for a 24-hour control room in New Delhi and state capitals.

The national and state-level organisations must develop links around the world. Gujarat has shown that disaster relief is now an international effort. It is to the credit of the government that it quickly abandoned its "looking-gift-horses-in-the-mouth" policy and accepted help from everyone. As a result, precious lives were saved and Indians saw firsthand that real expertise is not something you glean from study tours but from patient learning and practical experience, and a bit of modesty.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

5 FEB 2001

Will man prove more merciful?

THE OLD man sat swathed in bandages under the shamiana in Bhuj's Jubilee Maidan, which has become a vast makeshift hospital and camp for the thousands dishoused by the earthquake. His wife tenderly fed him coconut water. Asked what had happened to him, Purshottambhai described his ordeal on January 26. "I had just gone in for my bath," he said, "when the earthquake struck. As I ran out of our rented house in just my underwear, a live wire fell on me and burnt me. A kind stranger gave me these clothes." Added his wife, Lilavatiben, "Now we have nothing left in this world. Our only son died just four months ago. Today, rich and poor, we are all one."

In fact, that is what strikes you when you visit the earthquake zone. When the earth shook, it did not discriminate between the rich and the poor. They have all lost homes, lives, limbs; brand new highrise buildings have crumbled; old, simple structures have been reduced to rubble.

What of the future? Will the steps to provide relief and to help people, rich and poor, reconstruct their lives be equally even-handed? This is where one has less confidence; while the forces of nature may not discriminate, human beings do.

The road to recovery for Kutch, in particular, is going to be long and arduous. To date, the full extent of the damage caused by the Republic Day earthquake has not been assessed. The larger villages and towns are in the picture, but what about hundreds of smaller, more remote, villages? Until a thorough and detailed survey is done of this sparsely populated region, which is one of the biggest districts in the country, the estimates of the number of dead will remain just that — estimates.

The earthquake has also exposed, yet again, how unprepared is our Government — at the Centre and in the States — when a natural calamity strikes. The price for the absence of an efficient disaster management system has been paid by hundreds, perhaps thousands, of people who could have been saved. As each day progressed into a cold night after January 26, the hope of finding anyone alive under the mounds of rubble died.

Yet, even five days later, some people were pulled out. So inevitably, those who have lost loved ones must ask whether a more efficient search and rescue system could have saved more lives.

Predictably, comparisons are drawn between the Maharashtra Government's response to the Latur earthquake in 1993, which killed 10,000 people, and the Gujarat Government's response today. The

When the earth shook, it did not discriminate between rich and poor. What of the future? Will, asks KALPANA SHARMA, relief and assistance be evenly distributed?

former acted faster; it was decidedly more organised. But the quake was smaller, 6.4 on the Richter scale, it was contained within a 15-km radius and most important, the communications network was not broken off completely. Latur and Osmanabad towns were still functional, Solapur was just two hours away and there were two airports — Pune and Hyderabad — within easy reach.

In contrast, Kutch is badly connected at the best of times. After the earthquake, it was completely cut off. Bhuj is served by a small airstrip that cannot handle big planes. Its

road and rail connections are also inadequate.

Apart from relief — food, water, shelter — that tens of thousands of people need, the long-term issues have to be thought about now. For instance, the temporary shelters, tents and shamianas, cannot be used indefinitely. Interim transit shelters, which can house people until their homes are rebuilt, must be constructed speedily. Who will coordinate this? Who will ensure that the transit homes are suited to the harsh environment in Kutch? Here, the experience gained by Maharashtra in reconstruction and rehabilitation after the Latur earthquake should be drawn upon.

The biggest challenge, of course, is the rehabilitation of people who have lost everything. Just giving them shelter is not enough. There will be thousands in Kutch especially who will have lost their sources of livelihood. How will the Government assess the loss to artisans, for instance? Kutch was famous for its handicrafts. This is a home-based industry where the tools of the trade,

so to speak, were the hands of the artisans. Many of them were women. How many of these skilled workers have died?

And finally, an unspoken question that must be asked now is whether the relief and assistance will be evenly distributed. While Kutch does not have the sharp caste divisions evident in the rest of Gujarat, the years of identity politics have found a mark here too. The more prosperous communities will rally together. They have a tradition of looking after their own. They will do so again. They will also make sure that the aid comes to their kin. But what about poorer, lower caste, groups that are not so well organised, that are dispersed, that do not have the political or economic clout to make their voices heard? Will the tragedy that has struck Gujarat aggravate these divisions and differences?

There are many questions. It may not be appropriate to ask all of them at this time when the crisis of basic humanitarian relief is so overwhelming. But they must be addressed before long.

For a stitch in time

AFTER THE killer earthquake, fear of the outbreak of epidemics is causing mass exodus of the survivors from Kutch district to other parts of Gujarat and outside. With thousands of bodies are feared to be still decomposing under the debris in the district.

It goes to the credit of the Indian Medical Association and the medical fraternity in general that doctors and medicines were available in the earthquake-affected areas speedily. The problem was getting them to the injured.

While the affected in Ahmedabad and most other areas in the Saurashtra region received necessary medical assistance in time, service was a shambles in the worst-hit Kutch district where the collapse of the civil hospital in the district headquarters of Bhuj burying more than 100 doctors, nurses and patients caused a total dislocation of the health services.

With more than 90 per cent of the buildings having collapsed in Bhuj and most other affected towns in Kutch, the medical teams had a harrowing time. The army hospital in

Bhuj was too small to handle the stream of patients needing medical assistance with more than 45,000 people injured in Bhuj alone.

With the panic-stricken injured refusing to go inside the few structures still standing, the medical teams from home and abroad rushed to Bhuj had to perform emergency operations in makeshift theatres in the open.

Doctors and medicines were available. The problem was getting them to the injured.

Even after the road link with Kutch was re-established with the repair of the Surajbari bridge, the doctors faced the problem of shortage of ambulances to shift the patients to hospitals outside the district.

A special IAF plane ferried some emergency cases to the hospitals in Rajkot and Jamnagar and later the State Government stationed some

150 State transport buses to carry some 20,000 patients to the hospitals in different parts of the State and even to Mumbai and Pune. About 25,000 patients were treated locally.

The army came to the aid of the quake victims by installing five 100-bed each field hospitals, while the Navy sent two hospital ships with a total 500-bed capacity. The Red Cross also arranged for 500-bed hospital facilities.

About 700 medical practitioners were working round-the-clock in the affected areas in Kutch district and some parts of the Saurashtra region with the support of more than 10,000 tonnes of medicines rushed from all corners of the world. The IMA vice-president, Dr. Bipin Patel, said "Everything is now streamlined and the medical teams are not facing any problem now as they were initially."

The lack of coordination, however, often delayed treatment to the needy in some of the affected areas, particularly the towns other than Bhuj.

— MANAS DASGUPTA



The cries faded away...

ANIL RATHOD, a self-employed youth of Anjar, was looking forward to happy days ahead. His community had organised a mass wedding for 26 couples and he was one of the grooms.

But two days before that the earthquake struck Kutch, and Anjar is one of the worst-hit areas. Three of the 26 brides were buried alive and most of the grooms have lost family members. But Anil and his family have survived though their home is in the heart of old Anjar which is now a heap of rubble with hundreds of dead underneath.

"I survived because of my father who had seen the earthquake of 1956," Anil recalls. He felt the violent quake and did not know what to do. But his father quickly got every one out and made them stand out of harm's way.

Anil saw Anjar crumbling around him and he could do nothing. He talked of children crying out to their fathers to save them of how those cries slowly faded away.

Instead of tying the nuptial knot on January 29, Anil instead tied a surgical mask to his face and joined the volunteers extricating bodies. "I have taken out about 20 bodies with the help of my friends," he says looking sadly at the 1.5 acre pandal in front of him.

The community elders who wanted to avoid wasteful wedding expenditure had set up the community pandal for all the 26 weddings. It had 60 private enclosures for the families of grooms

and brides. Now these enclosures house medical teams who have arrived from all over the country.

The main pandal has become a shelter for the injured and the displaced families.

"I heard a whirring noise. I was at the flag-hoisting ceremony of our school," says Pradeep Parmar who hails from Palanpur town of Banaskantha but serves in the school of Ghamana Wadi in Bhachau Taluk. "I thought it was an air force plane as usual but soon found myself struggling to stand on my feet. I realised it was a quake when I saw houses caving in. Fortunately, our school is outside the village and it has a large playground where the ceremony was."

The entire village was at the school to see the children perform. And hence it escaped casualties unlike many other villages and towns. In Anjar, Bhachau, Bhuj towns and many villages like Ad-hoi hundreds of school children and teachers have died.

In Anjar, relief workers have dug out bodies of about 30 students of a marching column of 400 (including their teachers). "They were shouting 'Jai Hind' and Vande Mataram' when the came between the Khatri Crossroad and Mandvi Chowk, in a eight-wide lane. The buildings on both collapsed on the children. On 15 boys could escape. Similar are heard in almost every vill'

— ARUNKUM

COMMITTEE OF PARTIES TO MONITOR QUAKE RELIEF

Centre to set up panel on disaster management

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, FEB 3. The Government today agreed to set up a permanent Disaster Management Committee at the Centre, comprising leaders of major political parties as well experts to help the Government in dealing with national calamities. It was also decided to set up a committee of political parties to monitor and help the relief effort in Gujarat in the aftermath of the earthquake.

The decision came at an all-party meeting chaired by the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, and attended by leaders of 19 political parties, this afternoon.

The Parliamentary Affairs Minister, Mr. Pramod Mahajan, later told reporters the Government had no hesitation in agreeing to the two suggestions following a consensus. The proposal for a permanent disaster management committee was made by the Con-

gress president, Ms. Sonia Gandhi, while Mr. Sitaram Yechury of the CPI(M) suggested the setting up of a committee of parties to monitor relief effort.

Mr. Mahajan said an informal committee to monitor relief work would be set up in a couple of days. However, no timeframe had been fixed for the setting up of the permanent disaster management committee. The Government expected the committee to help it evolve norms and guidelines for declaring a disaster a "national calamity". "At the moment there are no criteria for terming a disaster a national calamity; assistance to the area affected is decided purely on the basis of assessment of the damage caused."

Though all parties reiterated their support to the relief efforts in Gujarat, most of them were critical of the State Government's handling of the situation. The Congress, the Left parties, AIADMK, RJD, and even some of

the BJP's allies such as the TDP and the DMK were said to have taken a dim view of the handling of the relief operations.

The TDP's Mr. K. Yerran Naidu pointed to the "poor distribution of relief materials", while Mr. Pandian of the AIADMK said the Government must clear the suspicion in the minds of the people about the distribution of relief material.

Surcharge criticised

The CPI(M) objected to the across-the-board application of the 2 per cent surcharge on income tax, and instead suggested that it be graded. Mr. Yechury urged the Prime Minister to ensure that the "beneficiaries of the surcharge were the poor while the rich were made to pay". Mr. Vajpayee said the Government was only implementing what had been suggested by the Eleventh Finance Commission.

Mr. Janeswar Mishra (SP), Mr.

Raghuvansh Prasad (RJD) and Dr. Prasana Kumar Patasani (BJD) objected to the Government's unilateral announcements on the surcharge, as well as the decision to amend the MPLADS scheme. The BJD member pointed out that when the supercyclone struck Orissa no such provision was made and the Centre had not been as forthcoming as it was in the case of Gujarat.

The Government also came in for some embarrassment on the booklet prepared for the meeting, which only listed the aid and assistance given by the BJP-ruled States. After Mr. Nilotpal Basu and the DMK and TDP members raised the issue, the Prime Minister had to intervene and assure them that before the booklet was made public he would see to it that all States which had given aid found a mention.

'Speak in one voice'

Mr. Raghuvansh Prasad of the RJD said it was important that the Government spoke in one voice in such a situation. The "Finance Minister says no tax, the Prime Minister says there will be extra tax, the Railway Minister rules out new taxes but the PM contradicts her, the Defence Minister says over one lakh have died but the other Ministers give different figures," he said.

Besides Mr. Vajpayee and Mr. Mahajan, the Government was represented by the Union Home Minister, Mr. L.K. Advani, the Defence Minister, Mr. George Fernandes, Mr. Nitish Kumar and Mr. C.P. Thakur. Among the prominent Opposition leaders were Dr. Manmohan Singh (Congress), Mr. Sharad Pawar (NCP) and Mr. S.R. Bommai.



The Prime Minister, Mr. A.B. Vajpayee, and leaders of various political parties observing a minute's silence before the start of an all-party meeting on Gujarat earthquake in New Delhi on Saturday. — PTI

THE HINDU

4 FEB 2001

Koel Karo firing toll reaches 7

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

RANCHI, Feb. 3. — The toll in yesterday's police firing on Koel Karo Jan Sangathan at Tapakara in Khunti sub-division has risen to seven.

Three Sangathan activists are being treated at Ranchi Medical College and Hospital and the condition of one of them is stated to be critical.

The organisation has been opposing the setting up of a hydel

power plant on rivers Koel and Karo on the ground that it will cause large-scale displacement of tribals.

The state home commissioner, Mrs Shushma Singh, said today that Sangathan activists had again attacked the Tapakara police outpost. She, however, said the situation was under control.

She refused to divulge the names of the deceased and even feigned ignorance about the police firing. According to her, police only burst

nine rounds of tear gas shells yesterday to disperse the mob.

Mrs Singh denied the incident was related to the Sangathan's stir against the hydel project. The people got restive on seeing police combing the area in search of naxalites, she claimed.

Additional contingents of state police and RAF have been sent to Tapakara to maintain peace. The DGP, Mr TP Sinha, and the additional DG of special branch

have visited the area.

However, reports reaching here said people are still not allowing the security forces to move in Tapakara.

This was even admitted by the home commissioner. Even political leaders are reportedly not being allowed to enter the area.

The Sangathan activists reportedly turned violent and set ablaze the police outpost and three jeeps after news spread that the police party had removed the

barricade the Sangathan had put up at the site of the proposed hydel project and had also beaten up an activist.

The activist had questioned the policemen of their motive behind removing the barricade.

The barricade was erected long ago to prevent the National Hydro-electric Corporation officials from working on the project. The Sangathan had also imposed "janata curfew" for the purpose.

THE STATESMAN

4 FEB 201

Disaster panel to be set up

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, Feb. 3. — An all-party meeting called by the Prime Minister today decided that a permanent disaster management committee would be set up soon with representatives from all major parties as members.

A national committee with members from the various political parties too would be formed over the next few days to help the government monitor relief and rehabilitation in Gujarat.

The permanent disaster management committee, an informal but high-powered national committee, would "advise and assist" the government in handling calamities, parliamentary affairs minister Mr Pramod Mahajan said.

It will decide issues such as possible guidelines for legislation to allow certain natural calamities to be termed national calamities with attendant benefits, possibly including automatic taxation benefits and 100 per cent tax exemptions for donations.

The Prime Minister today decided to indefinitely postpone his visit to Malaysia and Japan so that he can personally monitor and supervise relief and rehabilitation in Gujarat, Mr Mahajan said.

He added that leaders of all the parties supported the efforts to handle the crisis, but felt the administration needed to be toned up for better relief coordination.

Some officials said various suggestions were made at the meeting, such as raising a volunteer force that could be trained by the Army to act rapidly in a disaster.

Nineteen of the 25 leaders

at the meeting spoke today. Dr Manmohan Singh said Mrs Sonia Gandhi had assured the government of her party's support for the relief and rehabilitation operations.

Mr LK Advani, Mr George Fernandes, Mr Nitish Kumar, Dr CP Thakur, Mr Ram Vilas Paswan and Mr Suresh Prabhu were at the meeting.

Later, Mr Mahajan, referring to the 2 per cent additional surcharge, said a graded levy could be instituted.

Transfer: Late last night, Bhuj Collector Mr Kamal Dayani was transferred and replaced by Mr Anil Mukim, Vadadora Collector, adds SNS Gandhinagar.

Fresh tremors: Kutch was rocked at 8.35 a.m. today by a tremor measuring 5 on the Richter Scale and with its epicentre 25 km north of Bachau. Ten minutes later, a series of mild tremors rattled Ahmedabad, sending residents scurrying out of their houses.

Honour for kids

The Anjar schoolchildren who were crushed to death while participating in the Republic Day parade will be honoured with a memorial when the town is reconstructed. Mr Haren Pandya, minister of state for home, said: "Those who died holding the Tricolour deserve a memorial."

On page 10

- IT 'superpower' misses the bus
- Geologist warns of more quakes
- Gandhi home damaged

THE STATESMAN

- 4 FEB 2011

WHO to study effect of uranium weapons' use

By Sridhar Krishnaswami

UNITED NATIONS, FEB. 2. The World Health Organisation (WHO) has issued a "flash appeal" for \$2 millions to support its activities concerning the use of depleted uranium (DU) munitions in the Gulf War and during the conflict in the Balkans.

Over the next six months, the WHO is asking for the flash funds to strengthen its epidemiological expertise to develop and conduct field surveys with standard protocols and support

data collection as relevant from local health authorities; to support technical support to national surveillance; and to deploy toxicologists and radiation and chemical experts.

The WHO is also maintaining that this request for \$2 millions will eventually be a part of an estimated \$20-million appeal that would cover the organisation's work in the area for the next four years. While the current thinking is that risk from exposure to depleted uranium is low, the consensus is also that information is insufficient to form firm conclusions.

40-16 15/2
"Evidence on the incidence of cancers needs to be strengthened in communities within Iraq and in the Balkans in order to draw any epidemiological conclusions", says Dr. Xavier Leus, the Director of Emergency and Humanitarian Action Programme of the WHO. He added, "There may be other possible risk factors for civilians and the military".

Meanwhile, a four-person team of the WHO which has been in Kosovo to assess the possible health consequences stemming from the use of depleted uranium in the shell tips of bombs used by the NATO during the war has finalised its report which is due to be released within a week.

But a press statement issued by the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo and distributed here has listed a number of general conclusions and recommendations of the WHO team.

Among other things, the WHO experts have determined that depleted uranium is only weakly radioactive and emits about 40 per cent less radioactivity than a similar mass of natural uranium; and that scientific and medical studies have not proven a link between exposure to DU and the onset of cancers, congenital abnormalities or serious toxic chemical effects on organs.

The experts have further said that soldiers, particularly the ones at the site of an attack, are the most likely ones to have inhaled uranium metal and oxides. Excepting in isolated conditions, the civilian population would not have encountered the DU in this fashion, it is said. Further, presence of plutonium in the DU used in Kosovo has not been detected.

The WHO team has recommended that the Commission of Experts be utilised to bring together the local, regional and international bodies to agree on a common approach for medical data recording system in Kosovo. Further, the experts have maintained that a separate clean up programme at depleted uranium sites is not necessary. "The buried penetrators are unlikely to decompose quickly and hence their addition to the national environmental abundance of total uranium in soil will be small", the experts have said.



Two Italian SFOR soldiers dressed in protective uniforms measure radioactivity levels at the Italian NATO-led stabilisation force base in Sarajevo on Thursday. There have been reports that depleted uranium used in NATO's bombing campaign in Bosnia and Kosovo may be related to cases of cancer among soldiers serving in peacekeeping missions in Balkans. — AP

THE HINDU

3 FEB 2001

Firing kills 2 Koel Karo activists in Ranchi

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

RANCHI, Feb. 2. — Two activists of the Koel Karo Jan Sangthan were killed at Tapkara under Khunti sub-division of Ranchi district when police opened fire to quell a violent mob which torched a police outpost and two jeeps belonging to the Torpa police station.

Koel Karo Jan Sangthan, an organisation of the people of Tapakara and the neighbouring areas, was opposing the erection of a 710 MW hydroelectric power station over Koel and Karo rivers resulting

into displacement of a large number of tribal families in the areas.

The organisation activists have not so far allowed the officials of the National Hydro-electric Power Corporation, who have been assigned the job of erecting the plant, to enter into the area.

People became furious yesterday as police team raided the area in search of naxalites.

The barricade at Lohajiml was also damaged by the police team during the combing operation, the sources said.

This infuriated the Jana Sangthan

activists and a mob attacked the police outpost at Tapakara, nearly 60 km from here, and torched it.

They also pelted stones and injured several police personnel while trying to bring the situation under control.

Police resorted to firing and set ablaze the outpost and jeeps belonging to the Torpa police station.

The two activists of the organisation were killed in the police firing. This caused tension in the area. The situation was controlled by

THE STATESMAN

Antarctic glacier melting fast

FROM MAGGIE FOX

Washington, Feb. 2 (Reuters): A huge but remote Antarctic glacier is thinning at rates fast enough to raise global sea levels, British researchers said yesterday.

The whole Pine Island Glacier, which is the largest glacier in West Antarctica, may be afloat in 600 years if it keeps thinning at the present rate, the team at University College London and the British Antarctic Survey said.

But while global warming often is blamed for such events, the researchers said they do not know the cause just yet.

"We don't have any evidence to suggest change of climate," physicist Andrew Shepherd, who led the study, said in an interview.

"This was not part of our research. This could be due to a variety of causes," he added.

Researchers say large chunks are breaking off of Antarctica for several reasons, some due to global warming.

For example, the West Antarctic Ice Sheet (WAIS) has been steadily melting since the end of the last ice age. But human-induced global warming can speed the process.

The WAIS contains enough ice to raise global sea levels by five to 18 feet if it melted.

Much of Antarctica consists of ice sheets with no ground underneath. If the ice melts it could not only raise ocean levels but could shift ocean circulation and weather patterns, bringing drought, severe storms and the wider spread of tropical diseases.

The Pine Island Glacier is the largest glacier in the WAIS.

Shepherd and colleagues used satellite measurements to check how thick the ice was and how quickly it was moving between 1992 and 1999.

"This is a really remote area of Antarctica," Shepherd said. "There are no weather stations, no real-time data. All we can do is remotely sense what is happening."

It seems the glacier is flowing too quickly to sustain itself, spreading out thin and losing ice mass, he said.

In a report published in today's issue of the journal *Science*, the researchers estimate the mass of the glacier is decreasing by approximately 4 gigatons per year — the equivalent of a rise in sea level of about .01 millimeters.

"Over the past eight years the same area has been thinning at the same rate. The pattern has not spread anywhere else," Shepherd said.

So, he and his colleagues have made very conservative predictions about what could happen.

"(Eventually) what would happen is the fast-flowing section of glacier would become afloat," Shepherd said.

"It would be a large ice shelf and would contribute about 6 mm (a quarter of an inch) to global sea level, which isn't much ... I think the people in Florida are OK for now."

But Shepherd noted that the

area is considered very unstable and many scientists believe that such a big change in one area inevitably would spread to others. "If that is the case, our estimates are wildly inaccurate," he said.

The UN-sponsored Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) predicts the average global temperature could change by as much as 11 degrees F (6 degrees C) higher at the end of the century than it was in 1990.

If this affected the Antarctic, it could melt ice significantly and raise sea levels enough to swamp coastal areas.

Now the glacier rests on bedrock more than a mile below sea level. Half the glacier is above sea level and half below. Like all glaciers, it flows or moves steadily from inland to the sea.

Shepherd said all that can be done is to watch the ice sheet. "We have monitored the change for the first time and it is important for us now to continue to model it," he said.

THE TELEGRAPH

3 FEB 2001

Should calamity control centre be autonomous?

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, Jan. 31. — The composition of the National Centre for Calamity Management is worrying the mandarins in the agriculture ministry.

Though the proposed legislation on national calamity management contains provisions for the constitution of the management centre, it is not yet clear whether it would be an all powerful autonomous body with its own staff deployed in all districts or would function under the agriculture ministry as a nodal agency coordinating with different agencies working on disaster management.

An official involved in the formulation of the Bill said this was one of the contentious issues which needed to be sorted out. The agriculture ministry since British times

has been taking care of all types of calamity and would thus like to have its continued control over the NCCM. The 11th Finance Commission had recommended constitution of the centre with statutory powers to see that its suggestions were implemented by the Centre and the states concerned.

The Prime Minister during his Gujarat visit hinted that the centre would be set up soon.

The joint secretary (NDM) in the agriculture ministry, Mr Anil Sinha, however, said this would not be a problem. The draft bill would be forwarded to the Cabinet which could take a decision on the actual composition of the NCCM. A safer option was to get the legislation, incorporating provisions of its constitution, enacted by Parliament and the



A woman lies outside a hospital in Ahmedabad on Wednesday. She refuses to be admitted, in fear of another quake.— AP/PTI

minute details could be laid out in the rules that would be subsequently formulated.

He said the need of the hour was having a law of this nature which would make a real

difference in the response time and quality of the relief work that is being carried out by different agencies in times of crisis. Given the Gujarat situation the government was determined not to make any compromise on the issue.

The government cannot offer excuses that the offices and officials were devastated in a calamity. People want quick response and officials under any situation have to respond to that. It is thus important to know what were the possible natural risks for the area and what was the level of preparedness at the click of a button.

Ways were being devised to channelise community participation as local people are the first to respond when tragedy strikes.

The focus would be prevention and reduction of damage to the

minimal level if a disaster occurs in any part of the country.

The idea was to have heavy stress on networking and preparedness at all levels and preparing an inventory for the availability of relief and rehabilitation material and trained manpower in the neighbouring areas which could be requisitioned without loss of time, Mr Sinha said.

Indian Institute of Technology Kanpur, IIT Bombay (after Latur earthquake) Roorkee University, Central Building Research Institute, Central Road Research Institute, Annamalai university, National Geophysical Research Institute and national Remote Sensing Centre were working on seismic activities and yet the damage caused by the quake could not be minimised.

Centre plans calamity management body

SANJAY SINGH
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, Jan. 30. — The Centre has prepared an ambitious draft National Calamity Management Bill which provides for constitution of an all powerful National Centre for Calamity Management.

The Bill, slated to be tabled in the Budget session of Parliament, empowers designated officials of a disaster-struck state to summon whoever it deems fit, staff from all organs of the state, including members of civil defence, paramilitary and armed forces. Officials said this provision was on the pattern of the Representation of People Act.

Those who refuse to comply with the summons

issued by the central relief commissioner or his state counterparts, without any reasonable excuse, will be deemed to have committed an offence, punishable under Section 187 of the Indian Penal Code.

The Bill also seeks to provide legal immunity for the relief officials concerned. "No suit, prosecution or other legal proceedings shall lie against any person for anything which is in good faith done or intended to be done under the Act. No civil court shall have the jurisdiction to entertain any suit or proceeding in respect of anything done by the officer in pursuance of any power conferred by or in relation to his functions under the Act," the draft Bill says.

■ See CALAMITY: page 8

(Continued from page 1)

The draft of the Bill was cleared today by a high-power committee headed by the agriculture minister, Mr Nitish Kumar, and would be sent to the Union Cabinet for approval. It will then be presented in Parliament.

The Bill also seeks to create an inventory or data bank indicating the availability of rescue, relief and rehabilitation material in each district, state, Central government departments and private agencies as also the list of trained manpower to deal with the situation. The NCCM and the relief commissioners would have the authority to call any of the items listed in the inventory to launch a timely rescue operation.

While a calamity like an earthquake could not be prevented, the idea was to minimise the damage, keep different areas in a state of preparedness to face an eventuality

CALAMITY:

whereby they do not wait for external agencies to offer some voluntary help for the items listed on top priority. They would be simply required to follow the laid out drill and press the local machinery into action. Also, the state government would be in a position to direct the concerned agency to send required equipment without any delay.

If this were to happen, the relief scenario would be in complete contrast to what quake-hit Gujarat is currently facing. Despite the fact that a kind of national alert has been sounded, the worst affected areas in Gujarat are still waiting for gas-powered concrete cutting equipment, cranes, bulldozers, ambulances and other equipment to rescue the survivors, recover the bodies and clear the debris. According to official estimates, the equipment

sent to the quake-hit areas was too little to effectively handle the situation.

A senior ministry official said: "A lot of such equipment is lying idle with different government and private agencies. But we do not exactly know how many of them are there and which agency has them. So one has to wait till the agency voluntarily chooses to offer some help. This situation cannot be allowed to continue when lives of thousands of people could have been saved if timely aid had reached them."

In Lucknow, Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee said the Centre had decided to constitute a national disaster management authority to meet natural calamities.

The authority, the Prime Minister said, would take immediate decisions and steps, including relief and rescue operations and rehabilitation of people, in case of a natural calamity.

1002 NOV 1 2001

THE STATESMAN

THE STATESMAN

31 JAN 2001

GLOBAL WARMING AND THE FATE OF TREES

By MANOHAR MALGONKAR 29/1

THE periodic international conferences on the threat of Global Warming are pure burlesque shows; full of hot words, dire predictions, elaborate scientific presentations, ending up in disagreements.

Meanwhile, Global Warming goes on, and nothing can prevent large chunks of the earth's surface — coastal Bangladesh, for instance — from being swept away in the foreseeable future.

In fact it might be already too late to save some of the threatened areas. All we can do is to slow down the pace a bit, but that will need a determined effort on the part of all the major nations of the world: they will have to make drastic reductions in the use of fossil fuels and, at the same time, initiate programmes for massive reforestation of waste lands.

And, of course, save such forests as are already there.

In brief, use your car only when you must, and go and plant trees.

A peculiar aspect of these Global Warming conferences is that the normal ranking order of the nations of the world no longer holds good. Here, by and large, the affluent nations are the guilty parties and the "developing" countries the finger-pointers. Here Uncle Sam does not play his customary role of Headmaster, but finds himself in the cage as the principal accused: the nation most responsible for the alarming acceleration in the pace of Global Warming!

For their part, the Americans, while they're in complete agreement with the view that something must be done to temper the pace of Global Warming, absolutely refuse to so much as consider lowering their quite horrendously excessive use of fossil fuels. Instead, they say, they will buy up rich rainforests in the poorer countries — such as Bolivia — and make sure that they are not destroyed, and that should be accepted as *their* contribution to the aims of the conference.

In other words: I'll burn up as much petrol as I damn-well want to; but I'm perfectly willing to make amends for my overindulgence by saving a forest in Bolivia — which will ensure that particular source of breathable air is preserved for posterity.

The logic is that of Alice in wonderland, but somehow close to orthodox Hindu ideas of *punya* and *papa*: spiritual merit or demerit, which you earn by good deeds or bad deeds. The pluses cancel out the minuses: a black-money deal washed away by feeding a cow for a year — that sort of thing. Why should we feel guilty about using too much fossil fuel so long as we make amends by saving those rich forests in Bolivia?

NATURE'S GIFT

Oh, well. These are no more than debating points; a smoke-screen of words, a part of the game plan for nations with guilty consciences. But one thing that everyone seemed to be agreed about was that the only way of slowing down the pace of global warming was to create new forests.

Create forests? But how? Have we not, in India, sought to do just that, and failed miserably? Every year during the rains, a day is set aside for *Vanamahotsava*: a festival of forests. We see a positive orgy of tree-plantings. Ministers in all sizes and shapes in the big cities, and armies of bureaucrats in the moffusil, are seen holding watering cans over knee-high saplings while grinning wildly for the photo ops. If only a half of those baby-trees had reached maturity, India would have been smothered in jungles.

It didn't work — but then no one expected it to. *Vanamahotsavas* were, after all, festivals — days for celebrating our veneration of trees — not to create new *vanas* — dammit. We're a country rich in inherited forests, aren't we?

Alas, not! We were rich in forests once; but no longer. Ever since independence, we have gone on savaging our forests with such fury that today, only

truncated and moth-eaten bits still remain.

One such inherited forest area was that of the Western Ghats; recognised as a veritable treasurehouse of gifts from nature; packed with a variety of wild life, animals, birds, trees: 3500 different species of wild flowers — a staggering twenty-seven per cent of the national total — were to be found in the Western Ghats.

All these years, the Western Ghats were all but abandoned to the uncontrolled demands of commerce: enormous dams were put up, populations shifted at will, rainforest hacked away for timber and their habitat blasted out for iron and manganese ores, their river system made to serve as drains for the effluents of industry, their very skies filled with foul smells and soot.

But only lately, those responsible for conserving the nation's natural resources and beauty spots, seem to have woken up to the fact that, unless the rot was stopped, the Western Ghats, too, might become a lost cause — a gone case, to be made a subject for post-mortem investigation along with similar failures: lost Ganga, lost Yamuna, lost Terais, wetlands, tigers, vultures.

ALARMING

The Ministry of Environment and forests has published a policy statement entitled "Guidelines for Biosphere Reserves", and in it singled out the Western Ghats as a *Hotspot* because they possess an "exceptional concentration of species and high levels of endemism (which face) an exceptional threat of destruction".

So, three cheers for the new *mantra*: "Biosphere Reserves". Whatever is still left of the Western Ghats will be saved from further despoliation.

But will it? — because the three states which, between them share the Western Ghats, have their own agendas for their future, and these have little or nothing in common with Central government's plans to create Biosphere Reserves.

The alarming dissimilarities of viewpoints between the F & E Ministry on the one hand and the state governments on the other, was highlighted by the case of a coke oven plant that the Karnataka Government had "cleared" in 1996, and, as it were, pushed forward once again in 1998 — just when the Centre was thinking out ways to forbid the setting up of pollutive industries in what were considered *Hotspots*.

Now a coke oven plant is classed as a "Dinosaur" industry, meaning that it is an outdated method of producing gas and electricity, and because of its devastating effects on the surrounding landscape, it is ranked high among what are called "The Dirty Dozen" of pollutive enterprises. And this particular plant was to be a truly gigantic version, spread over 830 acres, burning up three million tons of coal every year, sopping up all the water from a minor river plus forty million litres a day from another, spewing out ashes and soot in vast quantities, and tar and chemical wastes into the river system.

And against all norms of locating such an industry as far away from prime forests and wild life sanctuaries, this one was to be put up in the middle of a rich forest, and on the edge of a lake as well as a wild life sanctuary.

The howls of protests from the several local environment groups were dismissed as being anti-progressive. Then, after four years, the promoters themselves, for purely commercial reasons, backed out of the venture. If they had gone on with their plans as scheduled, the biosphere reserve formula would have come too late to have saved this particular section of the ghats.

"Blame the environmentalists" was the official reaction. They have torpedoed our best-laid plans for developing this neglected district and to create hundreds of jobs for the unemployed!

STATESMAN

29 JAN 2001

Oil spill threatens Darwin's unique ecosystem

GABRIELLA GAMINI and
MARK HENDERSON
THE TIMES, LONDON

QUITO/LONDON, Jan. 23. — Hundreds of marine animals and birds, including rare sea lions, crabs and flightless terns, will die as a result of an oil spill in the unique Galapagos islands, ecologists said yesterday.

Patches of diesel oil from the wrecked Ecuadorean tanker *Jessica* last night reached the small island of Santa Fe, 30 miles north of San Cristobal, near where the ship ran aground. San Cristobal is where Charles Darwin completed much of his research on

evolution. Two other islands are also in danger.

Storms and high tides could hamper efforts to stem the slicks that have spread to more than 1,200 square km, Ecuadorean weather forecasters said. Ecuador appealed for international help to contain the spill as park rangers began work yesterday to move out Galapagos sea lions, marine iguanas, pelicans and a covey of blue-footed boobies from San Cristobal island.

Mr Diego Bonilla, deputy director of the Galapagos National Park, said: "Currents are bringing patches of oil dangerously close to the shore of San Cristobal and we have

ECUADOR DECLARES EMERGENCY

PUERTO BAQUERIZO (Galapagos Islands), Jan. 23. — Ecuador declared a state of emergency for the Galapagos Islands yesterday night. This was meant to allow for quick allocation of funds to help pay for cleaning up the oil spill.

In the evening, some 30 Galapagos National Park employees in small motor boats began skimming the water's surface around the tanker to clean slicks of diesel fuel. "Our orders are to do this until the zone is clean," said a park employee. — AP

herded the animals away from the Charles Darwin Research Station on the islands, who now have been taken to the other side of the island. The iguanas and a dozen birds were transported to another island."

The giant tortoises that gave the archipelago its name have so far been unaffected. Dr Peter Kramer, a former director of

crabs would bear the brunt of diesel poisoning.

"Those are just the more spectacular species," he said. "There will be all sorts of less glamorous creatures affected, and the long-term impact on the ecosystem will be huge. Marine iguanas will eat algae poisoned with diesel and the effects will be passed down the food chain."

The Galapagos archipelago, which lies 700 miles from Ecuador's mainland, became famous after Darwin visited it in 1835 and developed his theory of evolution. It became a national park in 1959 and a world heritage site in 1978.

Some 5,000 species live on the islands, 40 per cent of which are unique to the area. The oil tanker ran aground in a bay 850 yards from San Cristobal last Tuesday. A fifth of the 243,000 gallons of oil has seeped into the sea and fears are growing that the tanker could break up at any moment. Mr Rodolfo Randon, the minister for environment, admitted that Ecuadorean environmental officials had been slow in reacting to the spillage. But the slick is not as devastating in scale as the one from the *Exxon Valdez*, which ran aground in Alaska in 1989, releasing more than 11 million gallons of crude oil that cost pounds 1.25 billion to clean up.

THE STATESMAN

24 JAN 2001

40-17 Danger not depleted

Is the Gulf War Syndrome or the more recent Balkan Syndrome, allegedly caused by cancer-provoking Depleted Uranium shells, just that much hysteria? VAIJU NARAVANE takes a look.

IS THE ten-year-old Gulf War Syndrome and its more recent cousin, the Balkan Syndrome, allegedly caused by cancer-provoking Depleted Uranium (DU) shells, just that much hysteria as NATO and Pentagon officials have claimed?

No trace of uranium has been detected in French soldiers suffering from leukaemia according to medical experts in Paris who say that the Balkan Syndrome theory has no grounding in scientific fact. French medical experts shared their reports with experts from the other 19 NATO states in Brussels earlier this week.

In a terse communique, the French medical authorities stated that six French soldiers who had served in the Balkans (Bosnia and Kosovo) since 1992 had been hospitalised with acute leukaemia and highly malignant lymphomas. A spectrometric Alpha examination of the urine of five of the six soldiers showed no trace of depleted uranium.

The Alpha-ray test is widely used to detect exposure to uranium, which can remain in the body for over ten years after contamination. Supplementary tests are likely to be carried out on the bone marrow of the affected soldiers.

Depleted uranium is used in anti-tank weapons and bullets because its extreme density allows it to pierce the hardest surfaces. "Depleted uranium is wonderful stuff. It turns tanks into cheese," said Mr. Piers Wood, a retired army lieutenant colonel and senior fellow at the Centre for Defence Information. DU shells are made of uranium that has been stripped of most of its radioactivity, present when the metal is used as fuel in nuclear reactors — uranium 235. On impact, DU shells burn up leaving behind pure uranium shrapnel and a fine dust known as uranium oxide.

Several environmental and health groups have warned of the

extreme toxicity of DU and leaked army documents indicate that the Pentagon and the British forces (the only two armies to have systematically used DU shells) have not been unaware of the health hazards posed by the metal. "One single particle of depleted uranium: lodged in the lymph node can devastate the entire immune system," says Dr. Roger Coghill, an experimental biologist. "We know that about a million rounds of DU were used in the 1991 Gulf War and many still lie in the desert causing cancers and birth defects."

However, there is a singular lack of hard scientific evidence that would prove or disprove

Bosnian war and in Kosovo.

When six Italian soldiers died of leukaemia recently the Italian Government called for a clear explanation from NATO. "The alliance should tell us the truth. Our sense of alarm is totally justified. We were first told that contamination could occur only through exceptionally close contact such as open wounds. I am now afraid that things are not as simple as that," the Italian Prime Minister, Mr. Giuliano Amato, said last week.

The European Parliament has called for a moratorium on the use of DU shells by NATO, a demand rejected by the U.S. and certain of its NATO allies. The

by their colleagues from the Atomic and Chemical Laboratories of Spiez, near Berne and concluded that the munitions used in Kosovo by NATO did indeed bear traces of U-236. Contacted in Paris, Mr. Mycle Schneider, director of Wise, an agency specialising in information about the plutonium industry, said: "It is difficult to imagine that uranium from reprocessing plants has been used to make arms. A more plausible hypothesis is that of a contamination of the manufacturing process."

Researchers in Zurich explain that there is secondary production of plutonium during



An Italian soldier who contracted leukaemia soon after returning from peace-keeping duties in Kosovo with one of his generals... will the truth be out?

these charges. The U.S. army maintains that cancers may be caused by the use of chemical weapons and other generalised pollution from the bombing and destruction of chemical or pesticide plants. The debate over depleted uranium goes back to the Gulf War when doctors in Iraq said there was a steep rise in cancers in the south of the country and attributed it to the use of DU shells by NATO forces. The controversy over the effects of DU shells resurfaced recently with several cases of leukaemia and other cancers among soldiers who served as United Nations peacekeepers in the

medical reports presented by the French Army have strengthened the U.S. position.

However, with traces of uranium-236 found on munitions collected by U.N. experts from Kosovo, a far more serious scenario has now emerged. U-236, which cannot be found in the natural state, is produced in nuclear reactors. Experts who describe it as a "highly toxic isotope, far more dangerous than depleted uranium" say the substance has come from plants to reprocess spent fuel.

Swiss scientists from Zurich's prestigious Federal Polytechnic re-examined samples forwarded

the reprocessing of spent nuclear fuel. The arms made of depleted uranium used in Kosovo in all probability contain traces of plutonium, they feel. Plutonium is even more radioactive and radiotoxic than U-236. Experts say infinitesimal particles of plutonium dust are enough to seriously affect health. Swiss army sources say that their own research indicated serious health hazards associated with DU. Plans to provide DU munitions to the Swiss army were abandoned when health risks were detected in the early 1980s. The Swiss Army now uses shells made from thorium or wolfram.

New study confirms city's arsenic blight

SWATI SENGUPTA
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

KOLKATA, Jan. 19. — A report prepared at the All India Institute of Hygiene and Public Health again confirms that groundwater in many parts of the city is contaminated with arsenic.

"The study proves that hydrogeologically, Kolkata is in the risk area — which means that there are chances of arsenic contamination in any tubewell in the city," said Prof KJ Nath, director of AIHH&PH. CMC should thus conduct tests in all its wards, he added.

The report was prepared by Mr Pradip Roy, from the department of sanitary engineering, in the laboratories of the AIHH&PH this month

and is based on tests conducted in 23 CMC wards with 254 samples. Arsenic contamination was found in several sources in seven wards — 93, 94, 99, 100, 112, 118, and 119.

Affected areas include parts of Prince Anwar Shah Road, Raipur Road, Bansdroni Bridge, Jodhpur Park Bazar and certain areas in New Alipore and Behala (including Rajani Mukherjee Road, Buroshibhata Main Road, SN Roy Road, Diamond Harbour Road and Sonali Park).

The study indicates that of the 254 samples collected, five have arsenic content above 0.05 mg/l (milligrammes per litre), 14 have 0.01-0.05 mg/l while 235 samples have arsenic below detectable level.

The Bureau of Indian

Standards recommends 0.05 mg/l as the maximum permissible limit, which is also the generally acceptable limit in the country. The WHO guideline value, however, is 0.01 mg/l.

The report says: "The present situation of arsenic contamination in the groundwater of southern part of CMC areas is not alarming. However, as 5.512% of samples showed arsenic content between 0.01 and 0.05 mg/l, a seasonal study is required to see if there are any variation of arsenic contamination in groundwater with change of season."

The report concludes that "agencies which have recently reported sporadic arsenic contamination in southern parts of CMC areas need to recheck the samples".

Environment
The Statesman has been carrying a series of reports on arsenic contamination in the city. Studies conducted by The School of Environmental Studies, Jadavpur University, showed many city areas, including Alipore and Bansdroni, to be affected.

The state Public Health Engineering department and CMC have repeatedly denied that water in the city is arsenic-contaminated. PHE authorities earlier told The Statesman that CMC should handle the matter since it was not the PHE's responsibility.

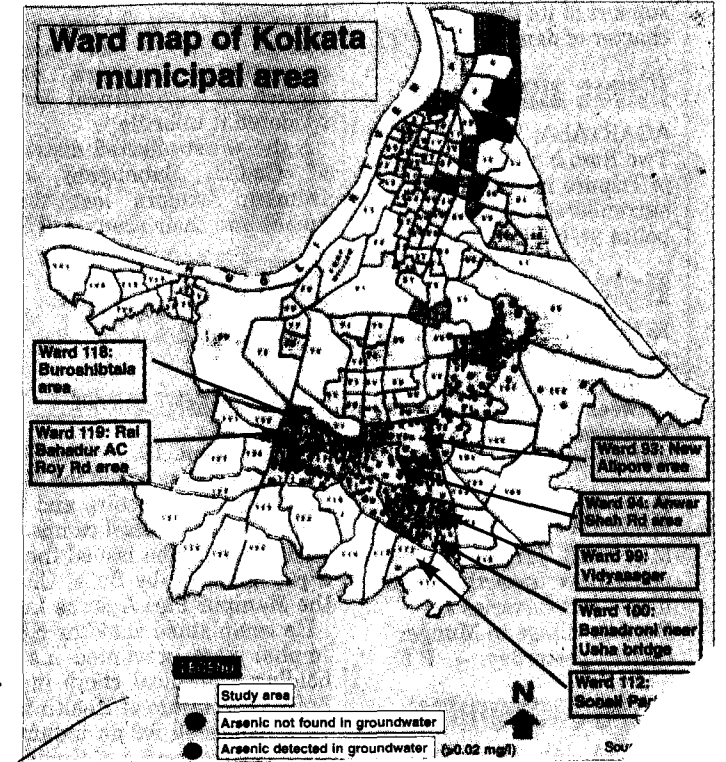
A Central Public Works Department engineer sent water samples collected from various sources in Alipore to the AIHH&PH. The CPWD supplies water in many parts of Alipore.

Tests confirmed that many places had arsenic content above the permissible limit.

"Since the AIHH&PH found water in Alipore contaminated, we thought of conducting a study over a larger area," said Prof Nath. Now, the study in 23 wards clearly indicates that water in areas around Alipore and Bansdroni is contaminated.

Prof Nath said since all the samples collected were from CMC's public tubewells, there were chances that private tubewells in the area could also be affected.

There is no scope for complacency any more, Prof Nath warned. The situation has already deteriorated because of the government's lethargic response, he said.



Kumbh Mela: Polluted water worries experts

HEMENDRA NARAYAN
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

ALLAHABAD, Jan. 18. — Notwithstanding claims by urban development minister Mr Lalji Tandon that the government had taken all steps to ensure clean water at Sangam, officials of the Central Pollution Control Board had been closely studying the pollution level at the six bathing ghats where tens and thousands took holy dip.

Earlier VHP chief Mr Ashok Singhal said there is "no expiry date for the holy water of Ganga".

Mr Tandon further assured that quality of water would remain within "tolerable limits" when an estimated three crore people bathe on the Mauni Amawseya on 24 January.

According to the board officials, flowers thrown in by devotees have increased pollution level at Triveni. They also expressed concern over pollution caused by organic waste.

Jamuna is the worst hit. It had cost the urban development department Rs 5.5 crore to raise the main sewerage line from Aligopibagh to Gaughat pumping station.

The state took temporary measures

to divert sewerage. Earlier polluted water was channelised through 46 nullahs to the Ganga and Jamuna.

Locals allege that the Ganga Action Plan has been a flop and the water treatment plant is yet to come up.

The Allahabad Corporation chief had told Allahabad High Court that work on all the nullahs could not be completed because of paucity of funds.

The court has directed monitoring agencies, the State Pollution Control Board, Lucknow, and the National Environmental Engineering Research Institute, Nagpur, to submit a report on steps taken so far. They are also

required to give their opinion to solve the problem. They have been given two months to submit their report.

Dharam Sansad: The VHP convened three-day Dharam Sansad begins here tomorrow amidst threat of boycott by the All-India Akhara Parishad and confusion over announcement of the date for construction of Ram Temple in Ayodhya, adds PTI.

The AIAP, an apex body of the 13 akharas, has said that it would have nothing to do with the Dharam Sansad and warned that saints attending the sansad would also be "boycotted".

SHOW-CAUSE NOTICE TO BBC, CHANNEL FOUR

LUCKNOW, Jan. 18. — The Mahakumbh Mela administration has issued notices to British TV companies — BBC and Channel Four — for airing "objectionable" footage of the Mela, violating the Uttar Pradesh Melas Act. Mela Commissioner Mr Sadakant, said Indians resented the "indecent exposure" by these two channels, particularly Channel Four.

Mr Sadakant, who show-caused the two companies, has asked them why their Mela pass should not be withdrawn. Channel Four representative David William Richard has been accused of misusing his Mela pass.

A senior Directorate of Information official will probe the filming of th Mahakumbh by the two channels. Mr Sadakant said he would get in touch with the Indian High Commissioner in London to find out if any special complaints had been lodged there. — SNS

THE STATESMAN

19 JAN 2001

URANIUM WEAPONS / MASS SCREENING OF TROOPS FOR RADIATION

U.N. calls for thorough probe

*Clinton
H9-16*

UNITED NATIONS, JAN. 12. The United Nations administration in Kosovo and International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) have called for thorough investigations into the effects of depleted uranium weapons used in the Balkans as several European Governments began mass screening of their troops who had served in peace-keeping operations there.

BBC reported that out of 16 veterans tested in Canada, nine were found to have depleted uranium in their bodies, a finding that is likely to further fuel the concern in Europe. It quoted researchers in Canada as saying that the British tests had not been thorough.

Mr. Shaun Rusling of the United Kingdom's Gulf War Veterans' Association said some of those who believe that their illnesses are due to depleted uranium but have no faith in the Ministry of Defence, have sent samples for testing to Canada. "We felt that we wanted the tests to be independent of this country (Britain) because many of the laboratories in this country that have the ability to do are influenced by grants which come from the state," he said. In Vienna, the Director-General of IAEA, Mr. Mohammad El Baradei, called for a detailed survey of the territory in which depleted uranium weapons were used and of people

who came into contact, to reach an "authoritative conclusion." The head of the U.N. Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), Mr. Bernard Kouchner, has initiated search for organisations which could assist in formulating longer-term initiative regarding depleted uranium. A public campaign is also being launched to warn residents and visitors about possible risks.

The IAEA said depleted uranium is only slightly radioactive, being 40 per cent as radioactive as natural uranium. Chemically and physically, it behaves in the same way as natural uranium.

Till the final conclusions are reached, it would be prudent to adopt precautionary measures and depending on the results of the survey, further measures might be necessary, said the IAEA which has the statutory responsibilities. Depleted uranium weapons were used by U.S. planes in Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina during the Balkan crisis following the break-up of Yugoslavia.

The U.N. administration in Kosovo is posting warning signs in the areas which were hit by such weapons.

Meanwhile, the World Health Organisation is sending a team of toxicologists and radiation specialists to Kosovo to assess the possible consequences of the use of depleted uranium weapons.

In Geneva, the Executive Director of the U.N. Environment Programme, Mr. Klaus Toepfer, provided full details of the map he received from NATO which shows 112 sites where such weapons were used.

In Britain, the Defence Secretary, Mr. Geoff Hoon, said he would consider demands for independent screening of British veterans who fear that contact with depleted uranium weapons has made them ill.

The British Ministry of Defence has said it would offer testing to veterans of the Balkans but Mr. Hoon went a step further, hinting that it may go even further and offer screening independent of the Ministry. — PTI



Protesters dressed as the Grim Reaper march in central Athens on Thursday against depleted uranium weapons used in NATO's airstrikes against Yugoslavia in 1999. The three scythes read from left, "Clinton", "Blair" and "Schroeder", as many Greeks blame these political leaders for the airstrikes. — AP

THE HINDU

13 JAN 2001

New victories for dam evictees

By Gail Omvedt

The Krishna Valley Water Movement calls for restructuring irrigation projects, not junking big dams. This balanced approach has possibly won more significant victories.

WHILE EVICTEES of the Sardar Sarovar Project in Madhya Pradesh are facing an uncertain future, those in southern Maharashtra are winning new victories. Here, the Krishna Valley Water Movement has organised both drought-stricken farmers and dam evictees in five districts, with struggles over dams centered in two, Satara and Kolhapur. The last few months have seen intensified struggles and resettlement programmes proceeding for several dams in progress, with the staunch fighters of villages affected by the Urmodi dam, a large dam in Satara district, taking the lead. They have also seen a ten-day dharna staged on the prohibited area on top of the Chandoli dam, which provides water for the sugarcane-rich fields of Kolhapur and Sangli districts. Over 1,000 men and women, whose homes and lands were lost to the reserved forest in the catchment area, spent bitterly cold nights and days under a blazing sun on top of the dam itself, suspending their movement only when Rs. 17.5 lakhs were distributed as initial payments on their demands.

There are several features of the Krishna Valley Water Movement which deserve emphasis. First, it arises out of a long tradition in Maharashtra of dam evictees' movements which have not opposed dams, but have demanded first, justice for the evictees and second, the widest possible distribution of water of the dam. The spirit behind these movements has its roots in the "Satyashodhak" tradition of the 19th century social radical Jotirao Phule, who criticised the irrigation bureaucracy of his time for neglecting the water needs of farmers. Phule's approach was to unite traditional methods of biofertilizers and water harvesting with the building of large and small reservoirs with fine-tuned distribution systems that would deliver water in measured amounts of farmers' fields. The demand was thus for better-performing dams, not opposition to them.

In the post-independence period,

struggles of dam evictees began in the 1970s under the left leadership of the Maharashtra Dam and Project-Affected Farmers' Conference which had as its slogan "first rehabilitation, then the dam." A similar movement under the same leadership — notably Datta Deshmukh of the Lal Nishan party, himself a farmer and engineer as well as a trade union organiser — argued for extending irrigation water to the widest possible number of farmers in Maharashtra. Krishna valley organising of dam evictees began in the 1980s under independent marxists, including an old freedom fighter, Naganath Naikaudi, and Bharat Patankar, with the main umbrella organisation, the Shetmajur Kashtakari Shetkari Sanghatana, formed in 1993. From the very beginning it sought to unite the concerns of farmers in drought areas who had been excluded from Krishna valley irrigation planning with those of dam evictees. It also took up campaigns on the issue of communalism, including a march of 25,000 farmers in Kolhapur on December 6 of that year protesting the smashing of the Babri Masjid.

The forms of action of the movement, in contrast to those of the Narmada Bachao Andolan, have relied not so much on national and international publicity and pressure as on local militant struggles. Krishna Valley Water Movement activists have never gone to court, but they have gone on strike. Along with marches and dharnas in the major cities of the region, there have been numerous occasions of work stoppages. Like striking workers in factories, villagers have gone onto dam sites again and again and forced stoppage of the work until their demands are met. When promises have not been fulfilled, the work has been

stopped again. In the last year there have been over a dozen such work stoppages, one lasting up to eight months. From just a few dams — the Urmodi evictees have been in the lead — the struggles have spread to wider and wider groups, encompassing most of the dams on the Krishna and its tributaries in Maharashtra. They have also won a favourable image among farmers throughout the region, since they have never opposed the projects as such. While a few ruling party politicians have attempted to rally farmers expecting irrigation water against work stoppages, accusing the leaders of the movement of obstruction, they have not succeeded.

The movement has drawn in radical engineers. It argues that irrigation projects can and should be reconstructed so that every farmer in every village in the Krishna valley can have access to water — and backs this up with the calculations that show that there is sufficient water available in Maharashtra's share of Krishna waters according to the Bachawat Award to provide water for basic needs (and the existing sugarcane needs) for every village in the Krishna valley, when combined with local rainwater. Just as the movement in general calls for restructuring irrigation projects, not junking "big dams" as such, so these alternative proposals combine large-scale projects and local rainwater harvesting, small storages and occasional distribution from big storage. Finally, the movement has taken shape as a broad left coalition. Activists have been mostly independent marxists or from small communist organisations such as the Lal Nishan Party or Shramik Mukti Dal, but there has also been endorsement from trade unions in the region.

This balanced approach has not had the same kind of romantic resonance that has made the Narmada Bachao Andolan famous throughout the world as the champion of displaced "tribals", but it has possibly won more significant victories. Maharashtra was the first State to give concrete legal embodiment to the demand to give dam evictees rehabilitation in the command areas of irrigation projects, so that they could also benefit from the greater productivity and income made possible by the provided water.

In southern Maharashtra, the movements have resulted in a new gain: until the irrigation water actually is provided for these new lands, the oustees will get Rs. 600 a month as compensation money. The Government as usual has been slow about paying this, and the result has been in many cases renewed struggle — but both rehabilitation and the new "water allowance" are now accepted gains of the struggle. The Government has also accepted in principle some of the demands for restructuring water on a basis of equitable distribution, and will take drought-prone Atpadi taluka in Sangli district as a pilot project for this.

Perhaps it is time that activists of the Narmada Bachao Andolan took a closer look at the Krishna valley struggle. So far they have maintained their opposition to all "big dams", which now means an opposition to the decision of the Supreme Court. It is an opposition that sounds romantic and revolutionary, but it has meant an opposition in practice to the kind of alternative provided by the Paranjape-Joy proposal to restructure the Sardar Sarovar project along the same principles that southern Maharashtra farmers are fighting for. In the process of all of this, the real needs of farmers in drought-prone regions who long for, and fight for, irrigation water have been neglected, and the interests of the dam evictees themselves have not been served.

Balkan strikes backfire on Nato nations

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW YORK, Jan. 7. — Radiation emanating from depleted uranium weapons used by Nato in Bosnia and Yugoslavia has sent shock waves through European countries whose troops served in areas in Kosovo where such arms were used, media reports said today.

Mr Pekka Haavisto, former environment minister of Finland, who headed the UN inquiry into effect of the 78-day bombing in Nato war against Yugoslavia, made some startling discoveries, *The New York Times* reported.

"We were surprised to find some radiation in the middle of villages where children were playing — a year and a half later. People had collected ammunition shards as souvenirs and there were cows grazing in contaminated areas which means the contaminated dust can get into the milk," he said.

Mr Haavisto's team has found low-level beta radiation at eight of the 11 sites sampled.

Dubbed as the 'Balkan Syndrome' by European dailies, the discoveries seem certain to fan a rapidly spreading sense of fury and panic across Europe about the well-being of soldiers sent to serve in the Balkans. A dozen soldiers have since died of leukemia.

Residents of Bosnia, Kosovo, Serbia and Montenegro, The NYT said, may also increasingly resent that they were unaware until now of the need to clean up the low-level uranium dispersed by American weapons dropped over Bosnia in 1995 and over Yugoslavia in 1999.

Mr Haavisto said even though the radiation was low level, the debris should be removed immediately. "We are recommending that until the cleanup starts, contaminated areas should be clearly marked and fenced off," he said, adding "the local people do not understand the

material."

Besides the leukemia deaths and cases being treated, many soldiers who served as peacekeepers in the Balkans have complained about an array of symptoms, like chronic fatigue, hair loss and various types of cancer complaints similar to Gulf War syndrome, the NYT said.

The 15-country European Union has ordered its own inquiry into the possible obnoxious effects of the uranium-tipped ammunition and any potential link to the recent cancer deaths among Balkan veterans.

European soldiers who served in the Balkans have already undergone quietly conducted medical tests in countries like Belgium, France and Canada, The NYT reported.

This week, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Finland, Norway, Greece and Bulgaria

have announced that they will screen all Balkan veterans, the report said.

Britain alarmed: British soldiers fear serving in Kosovo because of 'Balkans Syndrome', which is blamed on radioactive dust left by American shelling, the leader of a veterans' support group said yesterday, adds *The Times*, London from London.

Pressure is mounting on the ministry of defence to screen troops for the depleted uranium they may have inhaled from spent shells in Bosnia and Kosovo.

One veteran, Mr Kevin Rudland, spoke of his fears that he is sick as a result of his service in the Balkans. Dozens of others are suffering in silence for fear of damage to their army careers, Larry Carmock, chairman of the Gulf Veterans Association, said.

A leading expert into the medical effects of modern warfare yesterday attacked the government as 'criminally negligent' for not testing British troops for radioactive poisoning.

THE STATESMAN

THE STATESMAN

8 JAN 200

Provide food without harming environment: PM to scientists



Dr M G K Menon being honoured by Prime Minister A B Vajpayee as HRD Minister Murlidhar Manohar Joshi looks on in New Delhi on Wednesday. Photo: Arvind Yadav

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, January 3

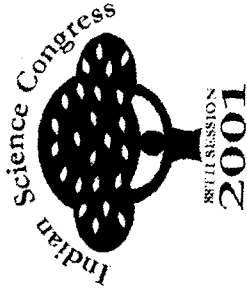
THE 88TH Indian Science Congress today opened here with the Prime Minister's call for the Indian scientists to help meeting the nation's food and nutritional needs without harming the environment.

Outlining the agenda for Indian science in the new millennium, the Prime Minister said food storage and not production, was the country's main problem today. Even with a food surplus, one-third of the country's children were malnourished.

In the race to achieve sufficiency, qualitative and quantitative degradation of land, water and bio-resources had been overlooked. The theme of the congress, he said, "Food, Nutrition and Environmental Security," could not have been more timely and better. He said neglect of the environment was proving costly and will get worst if immediate steps were not initiated.

"We must therefore step up our

programmes on soil and water management, renewable energy sources, forest management, containment of chemicals and other pollutants, waste management.



and conservation of bio-diversity for sustainability of Indian agriculture," he said. In this endeavour, both science and traditional wisdom could prove fruitful.

Renewing Government's commitment to boost scientific activity, Vajpayee said he remembered promising an increase in investment in R&D to two per cent of the GDP and some steps had been taken in the direction. The

Vision...

"By 2020, India will be free of poverty, hunger and malnutrition, and become an environmentally-safe country. This, we believe, will be possible to achieve through accelerated social and economic development - by harnessing the advances in science, and blending them with our indigenous knowledge, wisdom and unique socio-cultural ethos. We believe India can banish poverty and emerge as a developed nation by promoting growth through efficient and sustainable use of our human, natural and other resources."

...commitments

- Orient publicly supported science towards poverty, employment, livelihood and environment on a priority basis.
- Double investment in research in the next five years. Ensure that private investments in proprietary science and technology do not hurt science and society.
- Form a consortium of scientific institutions at regional or local level by involving local bodies to make rural upliftment an interactive process.

Finance Minister earmarked Rs 50 crore for the India Millennium Missions to be executed by Technology and Assessment Council and an additional Rs 50 crore for the New Millennium Leadership Initiatives by CSIR.

"The message of these initiatives is clear and simple: India should be

tion to "ramp up" facilities at IITs, regional engineering colleges and other premier science institutions.

"To realise these objectives, we will take necessary measures to radically reform the governance structures of our higher education institutions and encourage the flow of philanthropic funds from alumni and the Indian diaspora," Vajpayee disclosed.

He said bio-informatics was the next wave in which India should be in the vanguard. "India caught up with the Silicon Valley phenomenon rather late. Can we not create the new Genomic Valleys of the 21st century," he said.

Suggesting *panch sutras* of People, Productivity, Permanency, Policy and Partnership to realise the "shared vision" of Indian science, released in a document by the Prime Minister, Dr R. S. Paroda, general president of the science congress, reminded the gathering that science and research must relate to specific needs of the poor, and ensure maximum returns per unit of investment and time.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

4 JAN 2001

HF-12 111 The festival of despair

While the nation ushers in a new year, villagers in Madhya Pradesh are reeling under a severe drought. Government policies are responsible for the mess, writes ANJANA TRIVEDI

OVER A thousand villages in the district of Dhar, 60 kilometres from Indore, are wilting under the grip of a severe drought. With rains playing truant, the Khargone, Badwani and Jhabua districts have also turned into dry landscapes, destroying standing millet, maize, soyabean, green gram and other crops. A larger part of the crops grown on the 84,000 hectares in Khargone has withered, and the Sendhwa-Pati area of Badwani has lost 60 per cent of its crops. The cattle has to trek 15 kilometres simply to quench their thirst.

In this milieu, the distressed *adivasis* today have access to no relief other than resorting to various charms and spells in a futile bid to appease the rain-gods.

In Dahi block, an *adivasi*-dominated belt, the same ritual offering to the rain gods greets the eyes in almost every village — a bamboo pole on the periphery of the village with a pitcher-mouth, a broken pot, a winnowing basket and a broom tied round its top. The *adivasis* perform yet another daily ritual, one of walking west to east. An earthen pitcher is broken and then hung on to a bamboo, which is also placed on the boundary of the village. The whole village then walks over to the other side and re-enacts the rite.

But all this has been of no avail. In Jhabua, only 57 of the 269 water bodies still have some water. The rest have dried up. Some 550 villages have been severely affected by drought in this district. According to the BDO of Bagh, Dhar district alone has seen a migration of 12,640 people. He is, however, unable to say where the people have migrated to.

The woes of Dhar district, mainly inhabited by the Bhil and Bhilala tribes, are not confined to the drought. Forestry projects, land grabbing, epidemics that take a heavy toll of cattle, exploitation by unscrupulous moneylenders, all these have also made life unbearable for the tribal. And Panchayati Raj, instead of providing empowerment, has succeeded in economically disenfranchising them. All development work undertaken by Panchayats and their various committees has, in fact, done

PLATFORM

nothing for these people.

The Bagh block of the district is a case in point. Thousands of *adivasis* from the villages of Ringnad, Rajgarh, Tanda, Sardarpur, Kharbodi, Bhammori, Badaania, Geta and Badkach have been reduced to starvation and abject penury.

The story of Jaamla village is no different. Cattle have been dying here like flies in the past two months. The worst part is that these were bought by the villagers after raising loans from moneylenders, most of which is yet to be



repaid. Even Nahar Singh, who had 25 *bighas* of land in the village, was forced by circumstances to look for a job as a menial labourer in Indore. But with the labour market overflowing with men like him, he had to return to his village empty handed. Recounting his city experience, he has nothing more to offer his community. He advocates collective suicide as a way out.

In Barkachagaon, perpetual hunger gnaws not only in the stomachs of people but has also taken away their dignity and way of life. People have strived gallantly to raise crops from a parched earth time and again. But for the third time, they have been let down by nature. With moneylenders appropriating what little hard-earned assets and jewellery the people possessed in lieu of their loans, their houses are today empty shells inhabited by despairing souls.

Resplendent and lush green fields once enriched by the waters of the Bageshwari, a river separating Malwa and Nimad, now wear a moth-eaten look. And vibrant evenings of dance and echoes of lively folksong have been transformed into an oppressive and eerie silence. This is like the calm before impending death.

Government insensitivity has not helped either. While Rs 49 crore has been set aside for the region, the money remains locked up due to bureaucratic red tape. The response of the BDO of one of the worst affected blocks in the district characterises this attitude. For one, he refuses to accept that the situation is critical. He maintains that while a proposal has been sent to the state Government for providing people with work, the needful will be done only after orders have been received 'from above'.

Two major schemes have been cleared by the Government for this region. One, the deepening of existing ponds and the digging of new wells under the Ma Bhagirathi scheme. But the money is yet to be sanctioned. Two, the Annapoorna scheme aims at providing much needed grain relief to the starving people. But here again the norms qualifying a family to make it eligible to receive the relief grain border on the absurd. A family will get relief grain only if a member is either on the threshold of starvation death or if your hearth has not seen the warmth of a fire in the past day!

All this prompts one to aver that a very rigorous investigation needs to be conducted into the way drought relief is disbursed, and more importantly, to find out the real causes of the drought. There is a nagging suspicion that the real culprits behind the long drawn-out droughts will turn out to be inappropriate water management programmes and mismatched administrative policies of the Government. Programmes and policies that have wreaked havoc on the finely balanced ecosystems and made a negative impact on the environmental equilibrium of the region may be the real reasons for such a situation.

And who pays, dearly for these blunders? The *adivasi*, of course.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

1 JAN 2001