

The World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) is about to be held during August 26-September 4, 2002 at Johannesburg. At the WSSD, national governments and NGOs are expected to review the progress made since the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) held at Rio de Janeiro in 1992.

The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) popularly called 'Earth Summit' produced six agreements:

- The Rio Declaration
- Agenda 21
- Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)
- United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)
- Renegotiations of the Convention to Combat Desertification (CCD)
- Non-legal binding statement of principles on the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests

Rio to Johannesburg: Some Issues and Concerns

Further, the UN General Assembly had set up the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) to monitor progress under these different agreements and every year a stocktaking meeting was organised.

Unfortunately, the trend of decisions taken to implement commitments made at Rio through integrated national development strategies and bi-lateral/multi-lateral commitments clearly demonstrates that the actions have not yielded the desired results, though concern for the planet's health is growing. This is largely due to conflicts inherent in the various international agreements and approaches adopted by the developed and developing world.

Some nations are struggling to finalise their strategies and mechanisms on Agenda 21 within the frameworks of their own national laws for effective natural resource management to sustain livelihoods, tackle poverty and reverse environmental degradation. This is largely due to the unavailability of \$600bn per annum, envisaged as the average cost in 1992-2000 for implementing Agenda 21 activities in developing countries.

The Biosafety Protocol that was signed in 2000 remains to be ratified and implemented. The question of sharing benefits from the genetic resources acquired prior to the CBD has not yet been resolved partly because of the lukewarm response of the developed nations and the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) system that hold these collections. So the state of implementation is patchy. Following recent initiatives by



(BL, 24.06.02)

EcoConsumer

A Quarterly Newsletter
for the Promotion
of Sustainable
Production and
Consumption

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2/2002
(April-June)

United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), biodiversity-rich nations viz. India, Brazil, Cambodia, Chile, China, Cuba, Egypt, Kenya, Peru, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Venezuela are forming a coalition to prevent bio-piracy and protect traditional knowledge.

Implementation of the Kyoto Protocol on the reduction of emission of greenhouse gases has been the most contentious issue. Calling it 'fatally and fundamentally flawed', the US rejected the Protocol in June 2001 and a year after Australia too decided to pull back. Today the Protocol stands the risk of falling apart.

The principles of good governance, stakeholder involvement, transparency and accountability together with restructured financial institutions and regulatory measures are absolutely essential for achieving sustainable development. Currently a lot of debate is taking place on 'public-private partnerships' referred as 'Type 2 initiative' as a new mechanism for implementation. However, one of the biggest problems with such an initiative is accountability and ensuring global equity. In order to buttress and hasten implementation of the commitments made by governments (referred as Type1 initiative) one can perhaps engage in a Type 2 initiative. However, Type 2 in no way should be allowed to replace or override any Type 1 initiative.

Further, an international institutional and financial mechanism needs to be created with the full support of member-countries to manage global commons, such as biodiversity, seas and the atmosphere. The conservation and management of water and energy resources also need to be addressed immediately. Access to new technologies and their appropriate use, in association with traditional knowledge, innovations and technologies must become the basis of improving the quality of life of the poor.

Let's hope that the outcome of Johannesburg Summit will be a "strong implementation plan" to achieve the desired goals of sustainable development based on the past experiences.

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Plastic Bottles Recycled

South Africa Polyester Recyclers has found a market niche recycling plastic cold drinks bottles to make fibre filling for pillows and clear sheets of ribbon for video and audio cassettes.

Using a plastic resin called Polythene Terephthalate, which is obtained from discarded cold drink bottles, the company also manufactures polyester carpets in a variety of colours. The resin can also be spun into floss to make fibre fillings for pillows, quilts and jackets and can be rolled into clear sheets of ribbon used in the manufacture of video and audio cassettes.

At present the company is experiencing a boom in the demand for its recycled plastic products and has, as a result, posted notices in local newspapers in which it said it was "frantically collecting" discarded plastic cold drink bottles and was willing to pay collectors per kilogram.

(AEN, 17.05.02)

Environment Friendly Weapon!

Britain has plans to destroy Afghanistan's opium crop with a bio-weapon. The British Foreign office has spent nearly £500,000 developing a fungus that kills opium poppies but leaves other plants and animals unharmed.

The organism *Pleospora papaveracea* attacks the opium plant, causing lesions that spread until they consume it altogether. It remains active in the soil for years. The fungus makes the fields useless for opium but fine for other crops.

UN Scientists say the fungus is environmentally friendly because it occurs naturally and does not spread from where it is sprayed.

(TOI, 28.05.02)

New Basel Guidelines for Batteries

In an effort to reduce global risk of lead poisoning the Basel Convention on Hazardous Wastes has finalised a set of guidelines promoting environmentally sound recycling of spent lead-acid batteries. Used lead batteries are the highest source of lead in the world.

According to Klaus Toepfer, executive director of United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the recycling of lead-acid batteries is one of the greatest potential sources of risk, especially for exposed workers in the informal sector and children in many developing countries. The safe recycling of these batteries requires strict environmental and occupational standards that can only be ensured by specialised firms.

(FE, 02.06.02)



ABP, 10.06.02

Environmental Project to Target Pesticides

A multi million-dollar southern Africa project for environmentally sound and sustainable management of obsolete pesticides was unveiled simultaneously in Namibia and South Africa. The overall objective is to put in

place an environmentally sound and sustainable management plan for unwanted chemicals in Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, South Africa and Swaziland.

The five countries have estimated stockpiles of around 2,000 tonnes of obsolete pesticides. These pesticides include the 12 de-registered organic pollutants-aldrin, chlordane, dieldrin, DDT, endrin, heptachlor, hexachlorobenzene, mirex, toxaphene, PCBs, dioxins and furans.

The project is sub-divided into two phases, namely an inventory project and a collection management project. There will be two country-specific activities - the distribution of migratory pest awareness tools in Namibia and the repacking of obsolete stockpiles in Swaziland.

Under the project obsolete pesticides will be identified, repackaged, transported and disposed of locally. Local people will also be trained to take over the project once it is weaned off donor funding.

(AEN, 23.05.02)

Indigenous Technologies

Scientists are overwhelmed at the response to the National Innovation Foundation (NIF) that was set up in 2002. A string of surprise innovation has been thrown up by the attempt to popularise appropriate technology.

A man from Arunachal Pradesh in India has developed an artificial tooth using bamboo. It is both tough and durable and comes at a price of Rs. 20 (US 40 cents) a tooth. Another man from Rajasthan has developed a pulley used in wells that does not slide back when the rope is released. It is a simple technology that can revolutionise the wells in the country. Another innovator with no background in engineering has won a place in the Guinness Book of World Records for developing a stream engine that fits on a thumbnail.

The NIF programme aims to build a national register of innovations, mobilise intellectual property protection and set up incubators for converting into viable business opportunities.

(TOI, 30.05.02)

Innovative Soap Technology

Scientists at New Jersey have developed an innovative soap technology called Microbial Attachment Technology (MAT). MAT is based on three commonly used cosmetic ingredients petrolatum, dimethicone and polyquaternium. These ingredients prevent bacteria from adhering to the skin.

Hand washing is the most effective and best way to prevent the spread of germs and currently there are two ways to control germs on the skins namely, bar and liquid hand soaps. The clinical data demonstrates that fewer bacteria bind to the hand skin after washing with soap containing MAT.

As bacteria survive for several hours on objects such as doorknobs, telephones, toys, etc a technology that reduces the acquisition of bacteria by the skin would offer a consumer-relevant benefit.

(TH, 13.06.02)

Caffeine as Slug and Snail Repellent

Scientists at the US department of agriculture in Hawaii have discovered that caffeine is a remarkable slug and snail repellent. The scientists found that a 1-2 percent solution of caffeine killed slugs and snails, and a concentration as low as 0.01 percent was enough to deter the critters from chomping on leaves.

The environment damage of a caffeine slug-killer appears to be negligible. In preliminary trials, two percent solution of caffeine caused no damage to palms and orchids, but did cause yellowing in lettuce and ferns. However, this could be overcome quite simply by mixing caffeine with an agricultural polymer. This would ensure that the spray spreads evenly over the plant and absorbed less swiftly into it. Hence, scientists believe that they can transform it into a clean, environment friendly pesticide.

(ET, 28.06.02)

Sustainable Community Effort

National Council of Applied Economic Research, Delhi came up with the finding that the number of millionaires in the country was increasing. There has been a growth of 172 percent in Mumbai's super rich.

Far away from the commercial capital of the nation, a small village in Maharashtra, Ralegan Siddhi could easily take on these millionaires. The secret behind it is a sustainable community effort to regenerate their ecology. A study done by Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) shows that over a quarter of the households in the village earn in excess Rs. 0.5mn a year. After a decade of ecological regeneration Ralegan has a branch of a major bank in the village with the total savings of Rs. 30mn.

(DTE, 15.05.02)

Therapeutic Cloning will Help Create New Tissues

A team of US Scientists revealed that they have successfully implanted tissue obtained through therapeutic cloning into cows. This is seen as a major breakthrough for the future of the organ transplantation.

Heart "patches" and miniature kidneys were transplanted back into cows, from which original skin cells have been harvested. The study provides the first scientific evidence that cloned tissues can be transplanted back into animals without being destroyed by the body's immune system.

(ET, 04.06.02)

Naked Chicken

The first genetically modified featherless chicken was unveiled during May. It is claimed by its creator, an Israeli scientist, that the fowl is environment friendly, fast growing and low in calories.

The Israeli scientist crossbred a small, bare skinned bird with a regular broiler chicken to engineer the featherless fowl. The red-skinned prototype called the "naked chicken" is being heralded as the high-speed future of chicken farming.



(TH, 21.05.02)

Non-Polluting Economic Transportation

The first electric vehicle was built in 1834. Ready availability of petroleum products hindered the growth of electric vehicles (EVs). Today, it is a concept whose time has come! EV technology is gaining ground and popularity rapidly among all major automakers around the world.

Reva Electric Car Company, California, now manufactures environment friendly, cost-effective electric vehicles for in-city mobility solutions. Primarily EVs are zero

emission vehicles that are noiseless.

Studies show that the potential for EVs is most attractive in India, Brazil and China.

With the running cost of just 40 paise per kilometer, the Reva is priced at Rs. 2.54 lakhs in Delhi. Its power pack has a life of about 40,000 km, which should last three to four years in city driving giving 80 km on a single charge and can be charged anywhere, anytime, using only a 220 volt, 15-amp power source.

(TH, 27.05.02)

Sustainable
Production

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Environmentally Benign Initiatives in India

Clean Technology Initiative Benefit Corporates

Clean Technology Initiative (CTI) is a joint project of USAID, Tetra Tech, ICICI Limited. The project has enabled many leading corporate houses like Maruti Udyog, LG Electronics, Whirlpool India and Sundaram Clayton to enhance productivity and competitiveness through adoption of clean, environment friendly technologies and certifiable environment management systems as per ISO 14001.

Adoption of environment friendly technologies has resulted in substantial short and long-term savings besides heightening the public image of these organisations. It has also improved the workers' health and safety.

(FE, 09.04.02)

Battery Operated Cycle

In an effort to be environment friendly, a Calcutta based engineer has devised a cycle with a magnet motor and a 4.5 ampere battery.

The cycle has speed control equipment and can be driven without manual efforts. The cycle can travel a distance of eight kilometres everyday. The life of the battery would be three years and would cost around Rs. 6000.

(TOI, 23.05.02)

Eco-Park Proposed

The Tamil Nadu government in India has plans to set up an eco-enterprises park in the Madurai-Dingigul area to encourage setting up of units that use environment friendly technology.

The proposal for the eco-enterprises park is a part of the 15-point programme announced by the Chief Minister. The programme gives high priority to energy security, especially in its linkage with ecological security.

(BL, 22.06.02)

Ecofriendly Radials

On the eve of World Environmental Day, JK Industries Ltd has launched a range of ecofriendly radial tyres with silica thread for the passenger car market.

The new range of tyres would cost 10 percent more than the normal radial tyres. According to the company spokesperson, the higher price would be offset or matched by benefits such as fuel efficiency and longer life.

(BL, 05.06.02)

Ecofriendly Technology Division to be Set up

Mahindra and Mahindra (M&M) is currently working out modalities for setting up an alternative technologies division in India. The division will focus on ecofriendly vehicles among others.

In addition to ecofriendly vehicles, the new focus area for the division would be solar energy projects. M&M is looking at getting into standalone solar power stations and is also talking with foreign partners for the project.

(FE, 22.05.02)

Ecofriendly Mirror

Gujarat Guardian has launched environment friendly, corrosion resistant Modiguard mirror for the first time in India. The green mirror processing coating used in the mirror gives protection to the silver film and does away with traditional copper coating.

(TH, 17.06.02)

Climate Watch

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Himalaya is Melting

The rise in global temperatures is one of the biggest threats to Himalayan Glaciers including Mount Everest. According to a team of climbers from Swiss-based International Mountaineering and Climbing Federation, the climate in the Himalayan range has warmer and wetter. The landscape bears scars of glacial retreat, while glacial lakes are swollen by melted ice.



According to United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), as global temperature has risen by 0.6 degree Celsius in the last century it has led to melting of glaciers. Even in the Indian parliament the Everest issue raised alarm following which a decision has been taken to keep close observation on the issue. The working group on Himalayan glaciology of the International Commission on Ice and Snow apprehended that the glaciers in Himalayas were receding further in any other part of the world and if the present rate continued, could disappear by 2035.

(BL, 09.06.02 & TOI, 29.05.02)

Weather Related Disasters on the Rise

An analysis done by International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies shows that floods and other weather related disasters has been soaring during past one decade across the world.

The "World Report on Disasters" that was released in June, highlights that the economic losses incurred for natural disaster is quite high. During the 1990's, an average of around 200mn people have been affected every year. This figure is nearly three times of the figures during the 1970's. The economic loss averaged at 63bn a year, is nearly five times than the figure in the 70's. Therefore role of developmental experts become crucial apart from disaster managers in the current scenario to curb risk factor.

(TH, 30.06.02)

US Admits Global Warming

The Bush administration has admitted for the first time that man-made global warming will inflict serious, permanent changes on the American environment. A new report issued by the Environment Protection Agency, concludes that the changes are inevitable but does not recommend altering the administration's current policy on greenhouse gases. Instead the report says that if, America's economic growth is to be protected, the country will have to adapt to a climate that is between five and nine degrees Fahrenheit warmer.

Apparently, president Bush unveiled plans to focus on reducing only the 'intensity' of US greenhouse gas emissions. The approach involves reducing the ratio of emissions relative to the size of the US economy, which in turn angers environmentalists for keeping economic concern ahead of environmental concern.

(TH, 05.06.02)

Sunspots Influence Climate

A research published in the journal "Geophysical Research Letters" provides striking evidence that sunspots influence global climate change. Sunspots are blemishes on the sun's surface indicating strong solar activity. According to researchers from UB's College of Arts and Science, their work reveal two different mechanisms by which climate is affected by cosmic rays, charged particles that stream towards Earth and which are strongly influenced by solar activity.

After studying several volcanic eruptions, solar cycles scientists found some definite proof on natural disasters with all of the correlation reversals between sunspots and climate. Therefore, during the time of high volcanic eruption, the sunspot-climate correlation reverses and dust levels rise.

(TH, 20.06.02)

EU Ratifies Kyoto

While US backed out of Kyoto Protocol Treaty, all 15 countries of European Union have ratified the same. The Kyoto Protocol of 1997 requires industrialised nations to cut down their greenhouse gas emissions by five percent over the period 2008-2012.

The EU as a block is to meet its target of reducing greenhouse gases by eight percent from 1990 levels. The data shows a 3.5 percent emission cut by EU in 2000 released by European Environment Agency. Many member countries find it difficult to meet their individual targets as set under a "burden sharing" agreements.

The most difficult targets have been made by Britain and Germany of reducing emission by 12 percent and 21 percent respectively. Spain being allowed to increase its emission by 15 percent, were already up 33.7 percent by 2000. Eight other EU states are also falling short of their targets.

(Reuters, 31.05.02)

Climate Change to Affect Millions

Millions of people in Bangladesh are likely to be affected by climate changes because of greenhouse gas emissions that the country is particularly vulnerable to, says a World Bank study. While strategic adaptation to climate change concerns all sectors of the economy,

coastal resources, fresh water resources, agriculture, ecosystems, including biodiversity and human health, require the most urgent attention, claims the report.

According to the estimates of United Nations Intergovernment Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the sea level rise in Bangladesh will be in the range of 15 cm to 95 cm by the year 2100. This will inundate



18 percent of the country by the year 2100, if no special protective measures like embankments are taken.

(TS, 23.05.02 & BO, 04.06.02)

2/2002

Kyoto under Further Pressure

Australia has backed out from ratifying Kyoto stating that the same would cost them job and industry. Surprisingly it had secured right to increase its emission to a limit of eight percent by 2012, which even could not drive them to ratify.

On the other hand, Japan ratified the protocol as a step to strengthen an international framework to deal with climate changes. New Zealand expressed its view stating that they are not ready to sign the treaty before World Summit on Sustainable Development at Johannesburg.

(ENS, 06.06.02 & TH, 05.06.02)

Climate Change and Agriculture

Global warming is likely to have negative impact on rice and wheat yields of the country. The Agricultural Minister of India, Ajit Singh mentioned that a necessary action should be envisaged to ensure access to technological advances by developing countries and develop a more informed choice of policies and practices. He was speaking at South Asia Expert Workshop on "Adaptation to Climate Change for Agricultural Productivity" at New Delhi.

Speaking at the Workshop, Klaus Toepfer, Executive Director of United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) said that developing countries would bear the brunt of the negative effect of climate change. Some studies have shown that heat stress and temperature-driven inhibition of flowering cause significant decline in production of main crops i.e. rice and wheat.

On the other hand, a new report of the US Environment Protection Agency states that global warming may flourish production of a few crops such as soybeans, cotton, sorghum and oranges in coming decade. The increasing concentration of carbon dioxide in the soil jointly with slightly warmer weather is likely to become beneficial for higher yield.

(TH, 02.05.02 & PA, 04.06.02)

Sahara Crossing into Europe

The Sahara desert is moving across the Mediterranean into southern Europe, where a lethal combination of global warming and soil-degradation are expected to bring far-reaching changes, experts say in Spain. Dry areas will turn into deserts, droughts will destroy water resources, floods could claim lives, and new diseases and agricultural plagues could arrive from Africa.

(TSt, 27.05.02)



NOAA Predicts El Nino

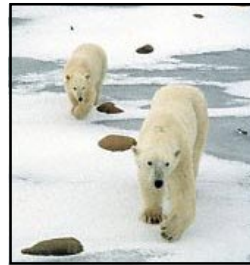
Scientists of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) predict that 'weak to moderate' El Nino weather conditions will develop by the end of 2002.

According to a May 9 press release, scientists at NOAA's Climate Prediction Centre said that warmer-than-normal sea surface and sub-surface temperatures were observed throughout most of the equatorial Pacific during April.

(USIS Official Text, 10.05.02)

Polar Bears and Global Warming

World Wildlife Fund (WWF) in a report warns that polar bears, the world's largest land predators are facing series of threats including large scale habitat fragmentation,



pollution and excessive hunting owing to increasing warmth in Arctic region. The report said global warming could drastically shrink the thickness and extent of the polar ice erasing most of the bear's habitat. Pollution also is worrisome, the report said. It noted high levels of heavy metals such as mercury have been found in polar bears.

(PA, 15.05.02)

Climate Watch

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Snippets

Scientists See a Heat-Sick World

A wide ranging survey of world eco-systems shows that warmer temperatures have sparked a host of epidemics in plants and animals, suggesting that global warming could ravage the planet's ecology and accelerate disease in a number of species including humans.

(IHT, 22.06.02)

Helping Smog

According to a new study, smog or pollution tends to form a protective layer over India, thereby keeping the effects of global warming away. It states that smog particles across the subcontinent are cooling the land by absorbing solar radiation before it reaches the surface.

(KT, 07.05.02)

Automobile on Attack

California lawmakers are looking at limiting greenhouse gas emissions, a move automakers called a veiled effort to tighten fuel economy standards and push gas-guzzling sport utility vehicles off the road. The only way to get less CO₂ released into the atmosphere is to combust less fuel, opined a spokesman for the Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers.

(PA, 22.04.02)

World Loses Ground to Deserts

The explosive growth of greenhouse agriculture has made Almeria province one of Europe's most remarkable economic success stories. But the use of vast amounts of water for hydroponic cultivation in the hothouses has severely depleted the region's underground water supply, thus degrading the soil by increasing its salinity.

(IHT, 04.04.02)

Global Warming Hits Africa Most

Scientists studying the impact of global warming are forecasting that the phenomenon would further increase disease, famine and poverty in Africa. In a report, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) says heavy, monsoon-like, rains and higher temperatures will favour the breeding of disease-carrying mosquitoes, allowing them to thrive at higher altitudes. In developing countries, 790mn people are estimated to be undernourished. Scientists say that climate changes will increase this number in the developing world, including Africa.

(TP, 04.04.02)

Ozone Watch

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India's Efforts to Save Ozone Layer

Government of India and United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) jointly launched a new initiative on May 2. The initiative aims to accelerate the phase out of ozone damaging chemicals across India.

Under the initiatives four manufacturers of chlorofluorocarbons (CFC) are pledging to crack down on "rogue emissions" by introducing cleaner production Technologies.

CFC is a chemical widely used in refrigerators and air conditioning units. UNEP is also backing a nationwide public awareness scheme targeted at various companies that are part of the CFC supply chain.

(FE, 05.05.02)

Ozone-Based Water System

Coimbatore based SARA Elgi group will launch an ozone-based water and effluent treatment system and air scrubber for the domestic and export markets by July-end. The system will have application in wide range of industrial and residential usage. The initial investment and running cost will be significantly lower in comparison with other conventional system.

According to company officials, the product can be used in potable water treatment and in commercial areas like food processing, health care support system, pools, laundry and bleaching system, water recovery plant, textile industry etc.

While the ozone-based purification systems are well accepted in the developed countries, cost-effectiveness is a crucial issue for domestic market. To overcome it the company involves application of high voltage electricity under regulated pressure across the electrode, which generate ozone used for air and water treatment.

(BL, 23.06.02)

Pacific Islands to Phase Out Ozone Depleters

The Pacific Islands have been given a major financial boost in their efforts to phase out ozone depleting substances, as required under the Montreal Protocol. Refrigerants and air conditioning chemicals chlorofluorocarbons (CFC) and hydrochlorofluorocarbon (HCFC) deplete the ozone layer, a natural shield in the earth's upper atmosphere that filters out harmful ultraviolet rays from the sun.

The project managed by United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) will start with a regional scale strategy meeting at Nadi, Fiji. The project will enable the Federated States of Micronesia, Kiribati, the Marshal Islands, Palau, the Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu to completely phase out the use of CFCs by the end of 2005.

The strategy will include direct support for national monitoring actions, regional facilitation for policy setting, training and public awareness, collaboration with bilateral donors and advisory services from UNEP's division of Technology, Industry and Economics staff based in the Regional Office of Asia and the Pacific in Bangkok.

(ENS, 17.05.02)

Antarctica Cooling Due to Ozone Hole

While most scientists blame people, at least in part, for global warming some researchers now say people may be partly to blame for the cooling of Antarctica as well. While average global temperatures have risen about one degree Fahrenheit over the past century, Antarctica over all appears to have cooled slightly in the past few decades.

(TOI, 04.05.02)

ODS Registration Mandatory

According to a government notification, industrial units involved in the production, consumption and handling of ozone depleting substances (ODS) have to register before July 19, 2002. The registration of units under ODS (Regulation and Control) Rules 2000 with the designated authority is mandatory and those not complying have to stop using these substances.

The relevant authority for registration for small units is the state Small Scale Service Institute (SISI) while the large and medium units have to register with the Ozone Cell under the Ministry of Environment and Forests (India).

The units producing aerosol, foam, fire-extinguisher, refrigeration, air conditioning, gas charging units, metered dose inhalers, compressors etc. fall in the category of ODS substances users.

(BL, 07.06.02)

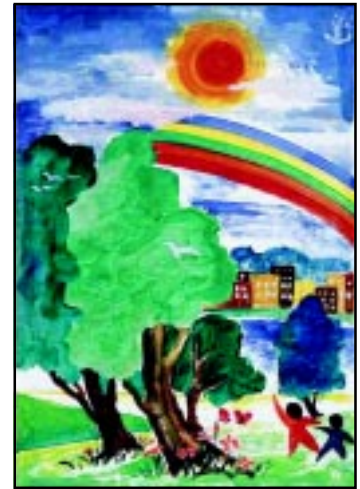
Climate Change Depletes Ozone Layer

By 2030, climate change may be causing more damage to the ozone layer than chemicals like CFCs, suggested a new study by National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA). Drew Shindell, an atmospheric scientist from NASA found that greenhouse gases like methane and carbon dioxide including water vapour are changing the climate in many ways, which may delay the recovery of ozone layer over populated areas.

Besides CFCs, other pollutants including the greenhouse gas methane can interact with ozone to destroy it and thin this protective layer.

Shindell used computer simulations to show that as CFCs decline, the ozone layer could make close to a full recovery by 2040, if global warming is not taken into account. But when CFCs, water vapour and temperature changes were combined in a computer model, ozone levels recover only slightly from their current low point by 2040.

(ENS, 05.06.02)



Green Group Push US to Act on Ozone Problem

Ten US Health and Environmental groups accused the Environmental Protection Agency of "foot dragging" and threatened to sue the agency to begin enforcing a 1997 law designed to curb ozone.

The American Lung Association and other members of the coalition of advocacy groups said standards put in place to help communities trim ozone have not been followed, leaving millions of Americans at risk for developing respiratory problems such as asthma.

(PA, 03.06.02)

Ozone Hole on the Mend

The Antarctic ozone hole will recover as soon as 2040 as levels of chlorine and bromine in the atmosphere decline, informed researchers of the National Institute for Environmental Studies in Ibaraki, Japan.

(www.nature.com, 31.05.02)

2/2002

Hydro-Energy Need of the Hour

US has developed a national hydrogen vision. India needs to do the same. No country can afford to be left behind in the movement away from fossil fuels. The cost of doing so may seem high but the cost of not doing so will be even higher, commented Krishna Sapru, an US-based expert in hydrogen energy technology, in a news conference in Delhi.

In the transition to clean technology, alternative fuels, she said, hydrogen has been accepted globally as a clean winner. It is available in abundance, non-polluting, economical and safe. It can be used for transportation, electrical energy and even for cooking.

(TOI, 10.04.02)

Powering Waste

New policies around the world including the Kyoto Protocol are supporting the use of alternative energy production and stringent waste disposal systems. Companies in the US expect to build over 150 renewable energy plants world wide in next 15 to 20 years which could involve over 7,500 MW hours of capacity build up. This opportunity in the energy sector is enhanced by the complementary strength in the waste disposal sector.

A US company, Solena offers the expertise. The Group's renewable energy plants make productive use of waste materials that are creating a global waste crisis. This is now recognised as a cost-effective and practical source of renewable energy. The process accepts all types of materials including industrial wastes, municipal solid waste, hazardous waste, biomass, coal fines and sludges.

EU has mandated that in the next eight years, that is by the year 2010, roughly 12 percent of all energy production should come from renewable sources, including waste to energy plants.

(ET, 05.06.02)

Target Students for Spreading Awareness

Educational institutions can be used to spread awareness among all sections about the need to increase the use of renewable energy technologies, says the Director (south), in the Ministry of Non-Conventional Energy Sources. At a recent meeting at Chennai (India) with the Vice-Chancellors of different Universities, it was decided that by 2002-2003 all colleges and universities would install renewable energy systems to meet 25 percent of their power requirements. About 100 colleges had agreed to install biogas plants in their kitchens.

(TH, 21.06.02)

Oil from Trees

Deriving oil from wild trees as substitute for diesel could completely replace the current use of fossil fuel and help India overcome the huge \$6bn oil import bill, claimed the chief programme executive of the Sustainable Transformation of Rural Areas project.

In his presentation on 'Biofuels' at the Bio 2002 conference at Bangalore, he said oil bearing trees like the Pongamia Pinnata was ideal for this purpose.

According to him, every 10mn hectares of tree cover could yield 25mn tonnes of diesel substitute and another 70mn tonnes of cake. When fermented, the cake could be used to substitute equal quantity of coal.

(TOI, 17.04.02)

Water Supply to Generate Power

The Murray River in South Australia will be used to generate renewable energy for around 1600 homes, Hydro Tasmania announced recently. In a joint venture partnership with the South Australian water authority SA Water, it will use mini-hydro technology to harness energy from the local supply which takes water from the Murray and Adelaide Hills catchments.

It will be the first time in Australia an established city water supply system will be used to generate renewable energy, i.e. when Adelaide water consumers turn on their taps, they will also help create clean, green renewable energy. The proposed mini-hydro scheme plans to tap into the renewable energy potential of Adelaide's water supply in the Tea Tree Gully and Onkaparinga Council areas.

(PA, 21.05.02)

Alcohol-Laced Petrol

Come November, fuel-filling stations in Bangalore are likely to serve alcohol-laced petrol and diesel. Karnataka has already braced itself to supply cheaper, cleaner fuel mixed with five percent ethanol (ethyl alcohol). Firstly, ethanol is oxygenated fuel and assures more oxygen availability in the atmosphere. Secondly, the country will save on its oil import bill.

(TNIE, 28.06.02)

Poultry Wastes to be Tapped for Power Generation

As part of efforts at harvesting energy from new sources, the Ministry of Non-Conventional Energy Sources (MNES) has identified poultry and sago wastes in Tamil Nadu. It has been estimated that seven MW can be generated from poultry waste in Namakkal, famous for its poultry. Similarly, about 20 MW can be produced from the sago industry waste in Salem district, the MNES regional officer director, P. Radhakrishna told.

(TH, 23.06.02)

The Fuel Cells - the Future Energy Source

A fuel cell is a device that combines hydrogen with oxygen, and produces electricity and water in the process. It is similar to an ordinary power cell but unlike an ordinary cell it never loses its charge as long as there is a constant source of fuel. Although each fuel cell gives only 0.7 to 1.0 volts of electric energy, they can be stacked together to produce more power.



The fuel cell was invented more than 150 years ago. But only after World War II more attention was paid towards its development. Now there are mobile phones, cars and buses running on fuel cells in many countries. One New York City firm has even produced a fuel cell power plant for use in home. The cost of fuel cell is high right now but a lot of research is being done in this field. A break-through could put this technology at our disposal within the next few years.

(TH, 08.06.02)

Environment Swiss 'Green' Technology

The Switzerland- funded \$1.2mn Cleaner Technology promotion Project launched at Bangalore (India) aims at enhancing competitiveness in three industrial sectors. The five year project is being promoted through UNIDO and will help improve the green image of the target industries.

Under the project, technology would be transferred from Switzerland and other OECD industries to Karnataka's automobile supply chain and power co-generating sugarcane industries. Dyes and dyes intermediary industries in Gujarat is the third targeted sector.

The National Cleaner Production Centre (NCPC) in New Delhi will implement the project. Switzerland has been supporting the NCPCs in 11 countries. A similar project has been planned for China.

(BL, 08.05.02)

UN Report Warns of Eco-Problems

Expansion of cities, destruction of forests, erosion of fields and rising demand for water are likely to threaten human and ecological health in many countries for at least a generation, according to a new report on environmental trends released by UN Environment Programme (UNEP).

The report warns of severe water shortages in West Asia over the next generation, and it says the growth of agriculture is damaging landscapes, depleting aquifers, raising the level of salt in the soil, and reducing habitat for wild life.

The report says an important cause is the accelerating growth of vast, poor and largely unplanned cities in developing countries, most of them near coast lines. Increased sewage, storm runoff and conversion of land around such cities will inevitably produce more human disease and kill more marine life, it warns.

Already the report says, five billion acres of soil, more than the area of the US and Canada combined, is degraded by human activity with a sixth of that 'strongly or extremely degraded'. More than 80 percent of the damage has come through water and wind erosion.

(TH, 24.05.02)

Drought Tolerant Tree for Wastelands

Scientists at the Forest College and Research Institute (FC&RI) of the Tamil Nadu Agricultural University has been conducting extensive research on a high yielding oil-bearing tree that can be successfully grown in the waste lands.

The tree popularly known as the Paradise tree (*Simaruba glauca*) has been found to yield good quality edible oil. Being a highly drought tolerant tree, it can be ideally grown in the dry tracts for afforesting waste lands. The average yield of seeds from a hectare from a 10- year old plantation of *Simaruba glauca* will be about 6000 to 8000 kg, claimed the Dean, FC&RI.

The Paradise tree yields seeds of high oil contents. Seed samples analysed in the laboratory recorded 58 percent oil. The oil quality is almost equivalent to groundnut oil.

(TH, 20.06.02)

New Environmental Activists

Corporate America is now facing a whole new breed of environmental activists. They are the institutional investors and mutual funds, who also have a stake in limited liability companies. The theory is that if conscience does not work, money will. One of the most recent cases of

pressure being applied on US companies to reveal more of their policies relating to pollution control and environment protection is by the General Electric (GE) share holders. What is significant is that the move may well be a trendsetter.

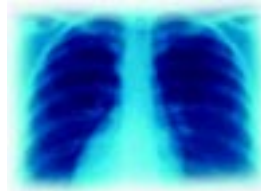
For 30 years, GE has dumped more than a million pounds of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) into the Hudson. Human exposure to PCBs has been associated with increased incidence of miscarriages, delayed development of children, weakened systems and liver and skin cancer. With the backing of institutional investors, for the first time, the company's share holders have framed a resolution which should force the management to take measures for protecting the health and wildlife in and around the Hudson river.

The National Wildlife Federation, a GE shareholder, has also urged all shareholders to vote for the proposal on 'report on PCB clean-up cost' which it is spearheading.

(ET, 03.05.02)

Pollution Goes to the Heart

Air pollution has a significant impact on the heart, points out a new study after experimental animals developed a thickening in arteries known as atherosclerosis within a few weeks of being exposed to pollutants. Atherosclerosis is a process that eventually leads to heart disease, says the authoritative heart journal, *Journal of the American College of Cardiology*. Although conducted on animals, the study is being viewed as significant for humans as well.



World Bank study estimates that nearly 40,000 people die annually in six Indian cities- Ahmedabad, Mumbai, Calcutta, Delhi, Kanpur and Nagpur due to air pollution. This study explains why city dwellers are known to have a higher prevalence of heart disease. Earlier studies have established an increase in coronary events with increase in pollution level.

(TOI, 17.06.02)

New Knowhow for Wasteland Management

The microbiology laboratory of Utkal University has developed a technique for proper use of wastelands in the country. The technique aims at improving the fertility of the land by using different microorganisms in the soil. These organisms used as biofertilisers will generate nutrition for the plants in the waste areas and restore the greenery.

The technique's plus point is its cost effectiveness, as there is no recurrent expenses after the waste area is planted. The department of environment and forestry (Government of Orissa) has accepted it as the standard technology for the wasteland development in the mine area.

(TOI, 05.04.02)

LG's Green Project

On the World Environment Day (June 5), LG Electronics has successfully completed a USAID initiated project of Green Supply Chain Management (GSCM). LG is the first company from the electronics sector in South East Asia to be involved in addressing global environmental issues with their vendors as partners by adopting GSCM.

(FE, 05.06.02)

2/2002

Slovaks Ignore Waste Disposal Law

Under a new waste law adopted last year by the Slovak Parliament, producers of waste are responsible for its final disposal. But today illegal dumps are still found just anywhere, and they are polluting the soil in the Slovak capital Bratislava. In addition, Bratislava is facing the environmental consequences of long standing contamination with petroleum products.

(ENS, 25.06.02)

Ban Mercury Thermometers

A Senate panel recently approved a bill that would ban mercury thermometers and provide \$20mn for a programme to encourage families to trade in their old thermometers for new ones that are safer for the environment. Ten US states have already banned the sale of mercury thermometers and the Senate bill, sponsored by Republican Susan Collins, would expand that to the entire US.

Mercury is a toxic, gray liquid metal that occurs naturally in the environment in tiny amounts. An old-fashioned thermometer contains about 1 gram of mercury, which is enough to contaminate a 20-acre lake and require fishing advisories, according to environmental activists. When a mercury thermometer is broken, it forms miniscule droplets that emit dangerous vapours, which can harm the human nervous system.

The ban on mercury thermometers is supported by several US public health groups, physicians and other environmental groups. Most mercury pollution in the US has been linked to electricity generating plants, which spew the toxic material into the air. The mercury particles eventually settle in waterways and are eaten by fish, then move up the food chain.

(PA, 28.06.02)

Submerged in Severe Pollution

Kathmandu valley (Nepal) is experiencing severe air pollution due to brick kilns, cement factory, domestic fuel, and ever increasing vehicular traffic. The city is suffering from poor waste management, an increasing air, land, water and noise pollution. The cultural heritage sites are being threatened by uncontrolled urban developments.

Appellate Court of Pokhara (Nepal) has issued a mandamus in the name of Pokhara Sub-metropolis to make necessary arrangements for protection of the environment by controlling the use of plastic bags

(KP, 26.06.02 & 29.06.02)

Brazil Fines Shell for Toxic Pesticide Pollution

Brazil said that it had fined oil and chemical giant Royal Dutch/Shell 105,200 reais (\$38,963) for contaminating the environment in its second investigation caused by toxic pesticide operations. Sao Paulo state's environmental watchdog Cetesb informed that it had found unacceptably high levels of dieldrin, in wells near the Vila Carioca fuel and chemical distribution depot in the south of the state capital operated by Shell since 1951.

The pollution on the site, which used to operate as a pesticide plant, was a "grave fault," Cetesb said in a statement. It ordered the company to propose a clean-up and contention plan. The residents of the area have planned to demand compensation for health and other damages in what could potentially become a multi million-dollar lawsuit.

(PA, 20.06.02)

Waste to Wealth Projects

The likely revival of a solid waste recycling project, to digest the daily mounds of garbage generated by Dhaka (Bangladesh) dwellers and simultaneously produce some 60 MW of power, while keeping the capital reasonably filth-free, is a prospect that all look forward to with great expectations. The idea first proposed four years ago, was reportedly shelved for want of funds for the initial consultancy considered necessary to establish the feasibility and sustainability of such power plants.

(BO, 21.06.02)

Wastewater Treatment Needs Urgent Improvement

The municipal and industrial wastewater treatment at the city of Lvov in Ukraine, and Brest, Grodno and Vitebsk in Belarus need to be improved urgently, according to a Baltic marine protection organisation. The Helsinki Commission (Helcom) stated that the sewer system in the city of Lvov is in bad condition and needs renovation to avoid groundwater pollution, but noted that a US \$40mn project is expected to start in the near future and will focus on the city's discharges.

(Edie-Internet, 28.06.02)

German Court Clears Use of Bottle, Can Deposits

Germany's constitutional court has cleared a government directive to introduce deposits on non-returnable cans and bottles in a move that could harm the beverage trade but benefit makers of recycling machines. The government has introduced the measure in an effort to meet strict domestic environmental standards.

The directive calls for deposits of 25 cents (\$0.25) for smaller disposable containers and 50 cents for cans and bottles above 1.5 litres, starting in 2003. Deposits are returned when the bottles and cans are disposed of in special recycling machines.

The measure has faced opposition from retailers and beverage manufacturers but environmental bodies applauded the decision saying it supported their campaign to clear three billion cans and bottles from Germany.

(PA, 28.06.02)

Beware of Pollution from Hi-Tech Gadgets

Pollution and junk disposal are now a real problem with hi-tech gadgets. Proliferation of mobile phones, personal computers (PCs), laptops, fax machines, television etc. means rising electronic wastes. Despite the development of 'disposable mobile phone' in the US and the growth of 'mobile phone swap-shops', and 'take-back' old PCs by computer makers, the challenge to handle the problems of electronic pollution and disposal is, indeed, daunting.

Unless efficient ways of disposal or recycling of the electronic wastes are developed, the threat from these devices is soon to emerge as one of the biggest ecological challenges in the future.

(BL, 24.05.02)



Basic Needs

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Summit Pledges to End Hunger

Food, the most basic of human needs, is in critically short supply for nearly one in every eight people on Earth. Every day, more than 800mn people worldwide, among them 300mn children, suffer the gnawing pain of hunger, and the diseases or disabilities caused by malnutrition, said UN Secretary General at the opening session of the World Food Summit (WFS) in Rome, hosted by the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation.

Delegates from 183 nations pledged to reduce the number of hungry people in the world from 800mn to 400mn by 2015. But the critics say the pledge was not enough, since the goal was set at a similar summit in 1996 and yet the number of hungry people has remained the same. In other summit results, 45 new countries signed the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, bringing the total number of signatories to 56, including 35 developing countries, 20 developed countries, and the European Union.

(ENS, 10.06.02 & TH, 14.06.02)

Hunger Crisis Grips South Africa

Aid officials and government leaders from around Southern Africa began meeting in an effort to stave off a potential famine across the region. An estimated 12.8mn people in six southern African countries are on the brink of starvation, the UN World Food Programme (WFP) informed. Zambia President declaring the regional food shortage as national disaster appealed for urgent international aid to assist the four million Zambians threatened with starvation.

According to WFP, the region needs 1.2mn tonnes of food aid and about four million tonnes to make it through the year. Aid officials were also worried that the food shortages would worsen the impact of HIV, which infects an estimated five million people in the region's countries. The hunger across the region has been blamed on two successive harvests ravaged by droughts, floods and other disastrous weather.



(TH, 01.06.02 & 06.06.02)

Nerica to Fight Poverty

A group of non-governmental and research organisations have developed new high yielding rice varieties in a bid to tackle poverty and hunger in Africa. Developed in West Africa, the new varieties can yield up to 50 percent larger crops without fertiliser and up to 200 percent more with fertiliser and improved management. Development of the new rice varieties was organised by West Africa Rice Development Association with financial and technical assistance from the United Nations Development Programme.

New Rice for Africa (Nerica) varieties are also substantially richer in protein, taste, more tolerant to disease, drought and acid soils, resistant to pests. Several best practice elements were used to develop Nerica, including biotechnology techniques and gender sensitive procedures to take full advantage of indigenous knowledge and partnerships between institutions, researchers and farmers.

(EACN, 10.04.02)

British Study Finds Likely Carcinogen in Foods

Britain's food watchdog announced that it had confirmed a Swedish study, which found a substance that may cause human cancer in everyday foods. In Brussels, the European Commission said it would not act until it had more information on acrylamide, which the British Food Standards Agency (FSA) found in high-carbohydrate foods such as chips, crispbreads and cooked potatoes.

Acrylamide has been shown to cause cancerous tumours in rats. But little is known about the effect of eating it on human health, the FSA said. The FSA study was the first to confirm the Swedish findings on evidence that acrylamide is formed in very high concentrations when carbohydrate-rich foods are fried or baked. Overcooking raises acrylamide levels even further, the study found. Scientists across the globe are planning further studies to guide consumers. The World Health Organisation is due to meet on June 25-27 to study the issue.

(PA, 20.05.02)

Chocolate Makers Sued for Lead Content

Claiming that chocolate contains enough toxic metals like lead to pose a health risk, especially for children, American Environmental Safety Institute (AESI) a California watchdog group has launched a lawsuit against major chocolate makers for failing to warn consumers of the alleged danger. AESI alleged chocolate makers for not disclosing their products contain enough lead and cadmium to pose a serious health risk, a disclosure required by California law, if true.

The chocolate companies dismissed the lawsuit as frivolous and alarmist saying the amount of lead and cadmium in products like candy bars and instant hot chocolate is no more than in other common foods because the metals are naturally occurring.

(BS, 09.05.02)

ECOWAS Gets FAO Food Security Support

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has recently signed a Technical Cooperation Project (TCP) agreement worth \$360,000 with the Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) for the implementation of the Regional Programme for Food Security in the sub region. This was the second TCP agreement for the implementation of food security programme. The first, worth \$395,000 was signed in November last year for the establishment of a Regional Food Security Information System in the ECOWAS sub region.

The objectives of the programme include strengthening and enhancing national sub regional capacity for food security, as well as increase in production and productivity. A third and final agreement worth \$455,000 is to be signed next week in Rome.

(www.allafrica.com, 03.05.02)

Food Insecurity Due to Socio-Economic Inequity

Food insecurity is the direct result of the prevailing socio-economic inequity characterised by the breaking and loss of cultural diversity and traditional forms of food production, massive poverty and unequal access to land and food. This is one of the major conclusions of the Salzburg Seminar 398 on "Achieving Food Security through Community-Based Food Systems," organised in partnership with W.K. Kellogg Foundation in the US in May.

2/2002

EcoConsumer

55 participants from 28 countries shared a common view that although food insecurity and hunger are a global phenomenon, the reasons, dimensions and severity and the solutions to the problem are fundamentally different across regions. To achieve meaningful results, it is necessary to foster collective community action linked to social movements that should deal with the root causes of food security, and demand basic rights such as food sovereignty, access to land, respect for cultural and biological diversity, the seminar concludes.

(TH, 14.05.02)

DNA Markers for Indian Basmati Rice

According to scientists the pioneering study by the Centre for DNA Fingerprinting and Diagnosis (CDFD) will help distinguish traditional Basmati varieties from hybrid varieties and can give India an upper hand on the claim to patents on the rice variety. The study for the first time provides requisite molecular tools to authenticate the traditional varieties. Further, by comparing the DNA tags of traditional and evolved Basmati varieties, the extent of adulteration of traditional Basmati varieties with hybrid varieties can be detected.

India's traditional and hybrid Basmati export market is about Rs. 2100cr a year. As on date, CDFD's DNA markers is the only method available to accurately ascertain how close a hybrid variety is to a traditional variety. The closer a hybrid rice variety is to the traditional variety, the higher its price. Traditional varieties command a greater premium over hybrid varieties in the western market.

(TOI, 17.05.02)

Dwindling Water Supplies

Lack of clean water will be the biggest issue facing the world in the next 50 years and governments and business are failing to face up to the challenge, Graham Harris, Researcher of the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) said in an environmental conference in Melbourne. Even if human populations were to level off in the next 50 years, double the present supply of energy, materials and water is required. Harris pointed out that the vast majority of the world's people already have only limited access to clean water, basic shelter and adequate food.

In an earlier meeting held in Melbourne last week, the experts said that for cities to become sustainable, they had to be treated as ecosystems. This required much more recycling and reuse of water instead of spending large sums on dams, new housing developments incorporating stormwater tanks, so that city people would drink their own roofwater etc.

(PA, 09.04.02)

Hated Dam Projects to be Shelved

The chief of the Irrigation Department in Thailand promised in the anniversary speech that the department would shelve all dam projects opposed by local people and green groups. He said that his department would spend more money on maintenance of its existing irrigation works than on construction of new ones.

So far the department has built 800 large dams, 8,000 small dams and 3000 royal-initiated dam projects. The chief mentioned Thailand still had ample water resources, but increasing consumption, particularly in the agricultural sector, could cause a water shortage about 10 years from now. Water consumption would rise from

28 to 38bn cubic metres in the next decade, while the existing dams could store only 32bn cubic metres. Thus according to him building more dams in the future was unavoidable. Official of Wildlife Fund Thailand suggested that the department should work harder to get water to small-scale farmers with limited access to irrigation schemes.

(BP, 14.06.02)

Basic Needs

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Refugees in Trouble

Following the sudden shifting of 193 families of Sri Lanka refugees from the Arcot and Krishnagiri camps to Mettupatti (India), complaints are coming from them that the place is woefully lacking in basic amenities. Flooring is improper, gaping holes in the roof, no power connection, toilets are kept locked, no hospital, clinic, school in the vicinity, lack of proper transport system are the major problems stated by them. A



A majority of them is ready to go back to the war-torn island and face the bullet instead of living here in sub-human condition. When contacted the Revenue Divisional Officer, said the Mettupatti camp had been provided with amenities as specified in government orders.

(TH, 11.06.02)

India Emerging Force in Biotech

According to a report by Ernst & Young, India is amongst the emerging forces in the biotech world with potential to become a leading player in the Asia/Pacific region. The report has identified India as a notable area for biotech expansion.

The Indian biotechnology industry, which currently stands sixth in terms of the number of companies, is poised to emerge as a significant force. The Indian expertise in the manufacture of generic pharmaceuticals has also provided a platform for the biotech industry.

The Associated Chambers of Commerce of India has recommended a 10-year tax holiday and zero import duty on capital goods and consumables used by the biotechnology industry. The Chamber has decided to establish an Assocham council on biotechnology to bring the same to the forefront of future business investment.

(TOI, 13.06.02 & TH, 13.05.02)

Villagers in Charge

As many as 385 villages in the Kolar district in Karnataka have quality assurance teams (QAT), comprising villagers, to ensure supply of safe and regular drinking water and other civic amenities. From collection of water tariff to ensuring that low quality pipes are not laid in their villages, the two-member (man and woman) QAT for every village are fully in control of the state-of-affairs in Kolar. All villages have the water supply and sanitation committee (VWSSC), which meets every month to put forth their problems before their respective gram panchayat.

(TOI, 11.06.02)

A Nobel Job

Ramkrishna Mission Seva Pratisthan (RKMSMP) is planning to distribute flats built in the gifted land among slum dwellers. At Bagmari in Calcutta (India), RKMSMP has spent Rs. 1,30,00,000 received from donations to build 78 flats. Size of each flat is 383 sq. foot. On April 14, 78 families residing in the neighbouring slum are expected to get the key of their flats. State government has waived the registration fee. RKMSMP has decided to build a child ward equipped with modern instruments in 14 acres of land vacated by the slum dwellers.

(ABP, 12.04.02)

Kenyans Need Health and Sanitation Assistance

Floods and landslides have killed 20 Kenyans and forced up to 150,000 to leave their homes, raising fears of a cholera outbreak as victims cluster in temporary shelters, the Kenyan branch of the Red Cross relief agency informed. It warned that flood victims uprooted by several weeks of torrential rain were in urgent need of health and sanitation assistance to hinder the threat of water borne diseases.

An official at the government's National Disaster Operations Centre said heavy rains had triggered several landslides that killed 15 people in the past two weeks. Between 120,000 to 130,000 people had been driven from their houses in the western Nyanza province, while up to 20,000 had been displaced elsewhere in Kenya.

(PA, 09.05.02)

Life-Saving Poison

British researchers have found a molecule called peptide secreted by rain forest frogs as a weapon against cancer and heart disease. It can reduce high blood pressure, stop blood clotting, fight against deep-vein thrombosis and heart disease, tackle conditions that are resistant to treatment by conventional antibiotics, make crops hardier against insect attack, help tackle cancer, tumours and leukemia, and protect bone marrow against damage during chemotherapy.

(TH, 13.06.02)

Desert Cure

The rich diversity of rain forests has long drawn scientists in search of life-saving plants, but few knew that desert could be a source of such medical marvels. Realising this, the researchers with the University of Arizona, the Arizona Health Sciences Centre and the Arizona Cancer Centre have started their search in Sonoran desert.

They are looking specifically for compounds that might combat increasingly common cancers like those of the lung, breast, prostate and colon, which involve the growth of numerous tumours and are extremely difficult to treat. The interesting fact is that the extensive exposure to intense light increases metabolism in some desert plants, causing them to produce unique secondary metabolites that may hold cancer-fighting and specifically tumour fighting qualities.

(TH, 30.06.02)

Chinese Herb-Based Drug to Fight Malaria

Chloroquin, an inexpensive medicine was the best-known treatment for malaria for decades that has saved millions of lives. However, in recent years, the malaria parasite has developed resistance to chloroquin. Owing to these many countries have already moved to sulphadoxine-pyrimethamine, known as SP or "Fansidar", as first line treatment. However, resistance to SP is also fast spreading.

World Health Organisation (WHO) has recommended artemisinin-based combination therapies, derived in part from a Chinese herb, that kill the malaria parasite very fast, allowing the patient to recover rapidly and with very few side effects. WHO opined that the malaria parasite, which has developed resistance to other single treatments, would not be able to evolve resistance in this case because these therapies combine two medicines that work in different ways.

(TOI, 29.04.02)

Medicinal Value of Tomatoes and Tea

Scientists at the Purdue University and the US Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Research Service have developed a genetically modified tomato that contains as much as three-and-a-half times more of the cancer fighting antioxidant lycopene. Research also shows that lycopene reduces the amount of oxidised low-density lipoprotein, the so-called bad cholesterol, thus reducing heart disease risk. Cooked tomato sauces are more effective than raw tomatoes.



Scientists have found that tea may help prevent cataract, which accounts for over 42 percent of blindness around the world. Researchers from Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology, Hyderabad and Hyderabad Eye Research Foundation informed that tea is a rich source of antioxidants called flavonoids and has the ability to retard the progression of eye lens cataract. A cup of tea provides an approximate 20 mg of flavonoid. Thus a minimum of one or two cups of tea daily could help delay the onset of cataract.

(TH, 06.06.02 & 27.06.02)

News

Five Key Areas

UN secretary-general Kofi Annan mentioned five key areas where he expected Johannesburg Summit to make a real difference, viz. Water and Sanitation, Energy, Health, Agriculture, Biodiversity.

(UNIC, 14.05.02)

Majority of Mumbai Slum Dwellers Literate

The census for the year 2001 shows that slum dwellers in Mumbai (India) have a high percentage of literacy, 83.13, a little lower than Mumbai's average literacy of 86 percent. The high figure contradicts the common impression that most slum dwellers are anti-social and illiterate.

(TOI, 11.05.02)

Sulabh Sanitation Award

World Health Organisation has annexed the Sulabh Global Sanitation Award this year for its immense global contributions in the field of health, hygiene, sanitation, water supply and other related areas.

(TH, 22.04.02)



ET, 01.05.02

STEPPING STONES: A PAIR OF DIAMOND AND PLATINUM SHOES

Affluence- A Definition

Affluence refers to a flow of consumption that is too large in relation to a specific reference or societal norm. Such a reference may be an ecologically untenable situation. The term gained its present implication in the critique of the age of mass consumption when it came to reflect the needs/wants nexus and the notion of "false needs".

Affluence refers to the need for a general reduction, challenging the habits of the whole population. But the concept of affluence does presuppose an opinion on what is deemed a human need. This is in the end a social, political decision. "False needs" are those supposedly not genuine to human nature while real needs are those that a good society should provide all its members.

(www.arbld.unimelb.edu.au)

Overweight School Children

A recent research has shown that almost a third of the school children in Shanghai city are overweight or obese. The Shanghai Morning Post quoted the Shanghai Medical Association as saying 29.6 percent of children at 12 schools was overweight.

China's strict one-child policy and booming economy have meant growing incomes are often spent on the family's only child, resulting in a sharp rise in child obesity. For two decades, China has limited families to a single child and family provided most of their income to their child's nutrition showing an alarming growth in child obesity in most of the rich cities while poverty and poor nutrition are still problems in the western hinterland.

(ET, 03.06.02)

Responsibilities of the Rich

A new Global Fund to fight Acquired Immuno Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS), tuberculosis and malaria was started this year. However, rich countries have contributed less than one-tenth of the money to the fund. Neither US nor Europe have allotted more money.

According to Jeffrey Sachs, rich countries would face three opportunities to their action. The World Food Summit hosted by United Nation's Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) presents an opportunity to reverse the collapse of financial assistance for food production to poor countries. As with AIDS a few dollars per person of

assistance for agriculture each year could spare millions from hunger.

Affluence

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Later in June rich countries will hold their annual G-7 Summit. More money from Africa rather than more soothing words will be the true test of the summit. In August when political leaders from entire world will gather in Johannesburg for the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), rich countries will once again have a chance to be true partners of the poor.

(ET, 21.06.02)

Affluent Kids More Prone to Obesity

Affluence may be taking its toll on children's health, with a new study in Delhi indicating that every 15th school going child in the high-income group is obese. The study cautions that such children are prone to hypertension, diabetes, coronary artery disease and overall morbidity later in life. A survey of over 200 schools by New Delhi based Health Related Information Dissemination Amongst Youth says students from affluent families and studying in private schools are physically inactive and, thus, prone to a number of diseases.

(TP, 07.04.02 & 27.05.02)

Alarm over Asian Baby Shortage

Population experts expressed alarm over falling fertility rates in Asia's richer countries. Fourteen countries and cities in Asia have fertility rates below the 2.1 births a woman required to replace the older generations, the experts said at a seminar in Singapore. This is more pronounced in the region's affluent nations and cities such as Japan, Singapore, Taiwan, South Korea, Hong Kong and Macau, where fertility rates are below 1.5 per woman, while Thailand marginally higher at 1.8.

(IE, 11.04.02)

Time is Money

There has been a decline in time spent by consumers on movies and social events. The feeling of time scarcity is increasingly being sensed among the affluent classes. In 2001, 25 percent of the consumers spent more time attending social events, compared to only one percent in 2002. Compared to previous years, consumers are pessimistic about spending time on shopping, leisure and other outside home activities.

Consumers believe that they will spend a higher share of their time at work by reducing time spent on other activities. Around 47 percent of the rich consumers feel that they are unable to shop due to want of time. Moreover the distance traveled for a purchase is reducing in metros, as time-starved consumers prefer shopping near homes or offices.

(ET, 24.03.02)

Wellspring of Affluence

Green is the color of money and if you have got it, green can be the colour of your Roanoke lawn, no matter the city's outdoor watering ban. While the drought is turning most of Roanoke brown, Bedford Well Drilling is blanketing affluent South Roanoke with fliers advertising its ability to end water restriction problems. For \$5,000 or more, depending on particular needs, the company will sink a well on residential or business property, creating cool, moist oases in the middle.

(RT, 27.06.02)

AdWatch **Misleading Pill Ad**

14 One US based pharmaceutical company has advertised potassium iodine tablets for protection from radiation of nuclear weapons. The company claims that the pill is "safe and effective" and can be used by children as well. To lend credence to the claim, the company adds that the pill was effective at Chernobyl. The advertisement comes at a time when it has been medically established that there is no known pharmacological agent to prevent the effects of nuclear radiation.

(TOI, 15.06.02)

Consumers Reject Direct Pharmaceutical Ads

Consumers Association, UK published a survey on the public perception on pharmaceutical industry advertising of prescription-only medicines directly to patients. This is to oppose a view by European Parliament to have done a pilot project to initiate process to set up an interactive website and telephone help lines to provide information by drug companies.

The results of the survey shows that people are suspicious about the idea as they believe in most of the cases companies will advertise on those drugs which renders more profit to them. Several evidences from United States and New Zealand show that pharmaceutical advertisement is likely to contain inadequate information on content and may result in price.

On the other hand, the Association of British pharmaceutical Industry argues that the move by European Commission is to facilitate information flow on medicines etc to the patients. This would also relieve patients in Europe to get proper information about US drugs for which they need to rely on US website.

(JL, 18.06.02)

Award Winning Advertisement

The "Static Electricity House" television commercial on home energy was honoured as one of the top ten commercials in the world by the judges and producers of World's Greatest Commercials on CBS-TV. The alliance public service advertisement (PSA) beat other commercials from the US including better-known ones from top branded companies such as Citibank.

"State Electricity House" features a family's wild experiment to cope with high energy prices by powering their home with static electricity. It requires all family

members, including the dog to keep rubbing their wool socks on the carpet to keep lights on and power functioning. After several such humorous actions, they realise the essence of adopting energy efficiency approaches and "Energy Star" labelled products, which are approved by US Environmental Protection Agency and still reduce their energy prices, energy use and pollution.

(ENS, 22.05.02)

LG Show Caused

The Monopolies and Restrictive Trade Practice Commission (MRTPC) has issued a show cause against LG Electronics India on charges of unfair trade practices. Whirlpool India Ltd & Godrej Appliances Ltd and a consumer filed a petition with MRTPC accusing LG for over claiming the capacity by 11.14 percent on its frost-free models where the Bureau of Indian Standard (BIS) allows only three percent variation on declared capacity.

(BL, 13.06.02)

No-Tobacco Day

In a move to celebrate 'No Tobacco Day' activists from an environmental NGO blacked out a popular South Indian actor's face on a hoarding that portrayed him smoking. In different countries various advertisements have come up discouraging smoking.

(TH, 01.06.02)

Increasing Popularity of Online Ads

Online advertisement is picking up more popularity than its offline counterpart. According to a Jupiter Media Metrix analyst, the online classifieds from companies like Monster.com soared 38 percent in 2001 even as newspaper classified dropped 15 percent.

A compound annual growth of 21 percent is projected on the basis of this trend. This means online classifieds will grow from \$1.2bn in 2002 to \$2.3bn in 2007. In comparison with other media only cable fared better than the Internet.

A hurdle for online advertisement till now was the lack of unifying standards such as those that exist for television or print media. As a solution and to add to the growth a new version of terms and conditions have been formulated by the Internet Advertising Bureau and the American Association of Advertising Agencies.

(ET, 03.05.02)



Serving with Care

Gas Authority of India Limited (GAIL), an ISO 9002 company has been trying to play a critical role in promoting clean and green environment by promoting CNG in automotive sector. According to their advertisements in various media over one lakh vehicle in Delhi & Mumbai are now plying on CNG, which reduces vehicular pollution to a considerable extent.

GAIL also holds ISO 14001 certification for better environment management system and received awards from OISD and British Safety Council. The company helps reduce the usage of wood for cooking, by setting- up a vast and efficient pipeline network for distributing cooking gas even to remote areas in the country.

(TH, 04.06.02)

Earth Day

To commemorate the occasion of Earth Day on April 22, CUTS Centre for Sustainable Production and Consumption organised an Earth Day Lecture titled "Kyoto Protocol: Options Before India". Prof. Sujay Basu, Director, School of Energy Studies, Jadavpur University delivered the lecture. The lecture was followed by a panel discussion. The objective of the discussion was to get an idea about the views of the distinguished panellists on the above topic.



City-based experts on atmospheric issues, government officials, Chambers of Commerce, non-government organisations working on environmental issues, academia and media participated in the above discussion.

(<http://cuts.org/cspac-event-earthday.htm>)

WSSD PrepCom Meetings

Arjun Dutta represented CUTS CSPAC at the 3rd Preparatory Committee meeting (PrepCom3) of the World Summit for Sustainable Development (WSSD) at New York from March 25-April 5. The purpose of this meeting was to arrive at an agreement on the implementation plan of Agenda 21.

Arjun Dutta also represented CUTS CSPAC at the 4th PrepCom meeting from May 26-June 7 at Bali, Indonesia. He was elected the Southern focal of the Energy and Climate Change Caucus to work on the issue of "Full Life

cycle costing by 2005 in all Energy and Pricing Decisions." He also spoke at an event titled "Waiting for delivery: SPAC Watch Report on progress towards sustainable consumption and production," organised on May 29.

CSPAC
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World Environment Day

CUTS Centre for Sustainable Production and Consumption organised a symposium titled "Montreal Protocol: Industry Obligation and Response" on the occasion of World Environment Day, i.e. on June 5. The main objective was to sensitise the small scale and medium scale industries in the Refrigerator and Air Conditioning (RAC) sector in West Bengal about the ODS (Regulation and Control) Rules, 2000.

A range of issues including the role of government and industry in awareness generation, registration procedures, response of industry to ODS Rule 2000 were discussed. During the symposium a core committee on the implementation of ODS Rules 2000 was formed, where CUTS was requested to play the role of the convener.



(<http://cuts.org/cspac-event-environemntday.htm>)

Subscribing EcoConsumer

We would like to subscribe your quarterly newsletter 'EcoConsumer' and procure your publication titled "Greening the Lead Acid Battery Sector: Structure, Problems and Needs." Kindly send us subscription details of the newsletter and also the above-mentioned publication.

Ruchita Khurana
Toxics Link Delhi,
H-2 Jungpura Extension
New Delhi, India

Safety Articles

I am very happy to receive the copy of CUTS' safety articles published in Times of India. I would also be interested for someone to come and speak to our student about such things.

S.M. Cyril
Principal, Loreto Day School, Sealdah
Calcutta, India

Book Review

I am working at the OECD Environmental Directorate on sustainable consumption. Could you kindly add a small notice in your email newsletter about the new OECD book "Towards Household Sustainable Consumption? Trends and Policies in OECD Countries."

Adriana Zacarias Farah
National Policies Division,
OECD Environment Directorate
Paris

Request for a Publication

I will be pleased to receive a copy of your latest promotional booklet on Secondary Lead Recovery "Greening the Lead Acid Battery Sector: Structure, Problems and Needs."

Ajoy Raychaudhuri
Director, VKA Associates
J-9 Saket,
New Delhi, India

Offering Voluntary Service

I am a young software professional working in TCS Calcutta. I want to devote my spare time volunteering for social and environmental cause. I would be very happy to render my voluntary service towards your organisation.

Arka Sengupta
TCS
Calcutta, India

Wishing Success

Thank you very much for your letter dated May 28, 2002 inviting me to be the Guest of Honour at the symposium titled "Montreal Protocol: Industry Obligations and Response" on World Environment Day.

In spite of my keen interest, I regret my inability to be present as Guest of Honour in the programme due to some pressing public business. I wish the programme all success.

Nirupam Sen
Minister-in-Charge
Department of Commerce & Industries
Govt. of West Bengal, India

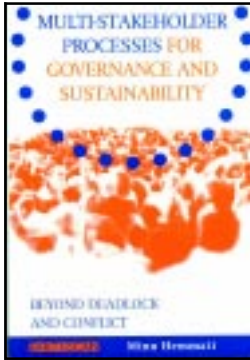
Book Watch

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Multi-Stakeholder Processes for Governance and Sustainability-Beyond Deadlock and Conflict

Governments, businesses, international organisations, local groups and numerous other bodies are turning to multi-stakeholder processes (MSPs) for decision-making as conventional politics is increasingly unable to integrate broad-based, consensual policies.

This practical guide by Minu Hemmati explains how MSPs can be organised and implemented in order to resolve the complex issues in and around sustainable forms of development, whilst recognising the rights of, and risks faced by, all parties. It includes detailed examples of MSPs in practice and provides functional checklists, explaining how to bypass adversarial politics and achieve positive results.



This important contribution to the understanding of participatory approaches to decision-making will be invaluable to policy-makers, NGOs, business, trade unions, local authorities and activists preparing for the next World Summit on Sustainable Development at Johannesburg. It will be essential reading for all stakeholders, agencies and

NGOs, as well as students and academics in politics, development studies and environmental sciences.

Published by Earthscan Publications Limited, London

Transportation in Developing Countries-An Overview of Greenhouse Gas Reduction Strategies

Worldwide, greenhouse gas emissions are rising faster in transportation than any sector. Rapid motorisation is the principal cause behind this. This report by Daniel Sperling and Deborah Salon for the Pew Centre on Global Climate Change elucidates the challenges faced by developing countries in accommodating and managing motorisation and the demand for improved transportation.

The report provides a broad characterisation of transportation in developing countries, identifying common challenges and opportunities for policy makers, and suggesting policy options for slowing the growth of transportation sector greenhouse emissions while improving air quality, reducing congestion, improving safety and enhancing transportation services. It includes input from case studies from India (Delhi), China (Shanghai), Chile and South Africa.

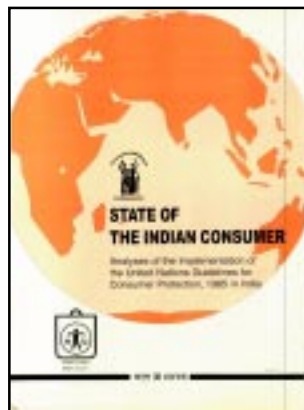
The report also explores strategic paths and alternative futures that could break the link between economic and greenhouse gas emission growth in developing countries.

For more information visit: www.pewclimate.org



State of the Indian Consumer-Analyses of the Implementation of the United Nations Guidelines on Consumer Protection, 1985 in India

Under consistent lobbying by the International Organisation of Consumer Unions, now known as Consumers International (CI), the United Nations adopted a set of Guidelines for Consumer Protection on April 9, 1985 (vide General Assembly Resolution No: 39/248). The Guidelines address the interests and needs of consumers worldwide and provide a framework for governments, particularly those of developing and newly independent countries, for elaborating and strengthening consumer protection policies. The guideline was extended subsequently in 1999 to include a section on sustainable consumption.



The UN Guidelines have outlined eight areas for developing policies for consumer protection, which have been translated into eight consumer rights. The "State of the Indian Consumer" report, published by CUTS, highlights the present status of the eight consumer rights in the Indian context.

The objective of this stock taking exercise on eight consumer rights is to help in drafting of a National Consumer Policy, provided at the end of this report, and to suggest measures that needs to be undertaken in future for proper implementation of the same.

The report is expected to help other countries, particularly the developing ones in protecting and promoting consumer rights.

SOURCES

ABP: ANANDA BAZAR PATRIKA, AEN: AFRICAN ENVIRONMENTAL NEWSLETTER, BL: BUSINESS LINE, BO: BANGLADESH OBSERVER, BP: BANGKOK POST, BS: BUSINESS STANDARD, DTE: DOWN TO EARTH, EACN: EAST AFRICA CROPS NEWSLETTER, ENS: ENVIRONMENT NEWS SERVICE, ET: THE ECONOMIC TIMES, FE: FINANCIAL EXPRESS, HT: HINDUSTAN TIMES, IE: INDIAN EXPRESS, IHT: INTERNATIONAL HERALD TRIBUNE, JL: JAMES LOVE, KP: KATHMANDU POST, KT: KASHMIR TIMES, PA: PLANET ARK, RT: THE ROANOKE TIMES, TH: THE HINDU, TNIE: THE NEW INDIAN EXPRESS, TOI: THE TIMES OF INDIA, TP: THE PIONEER, TS: THE SENTINEL, TST: THE STATESMAN, UNIC: UNITED NATIONS INFORMATION CENTRE.

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