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## *Slow and Unsteady*

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*There is plenty of talk about Global Warming.*

*It is such a part of everyday talk, that when discussions on environment, public spaces and amenities, and peoples' initiatives were organized with high school students of a local municipal institution, it was something quite well known to these children of lower-middleclass and the poorer sections of the local population. (There is a small write-up on this event in this issue of ecoethic).*

*Being such a part of everyday conversation, it is no surprise that there is increasing reportage in mainstream media – print and audio-visual. It was also a well-publicised part of the G8 summit talks earlier this year. May be we should have been warned of the publicity that attended this issue in the run-up to the Summit. Since then, there has been a deafening silence, and very little follow-up action, or even speeding up on commitments made under the Kyoto Protocol. (for a small write-up on the Kyoto Protocol, see box on p 6).*

*So we go into the next Conference of Parties with very little momentum on actually doing something about Greenhouse Gases.*

*Most progress on the Kyoto Protocol commitments is in a very narrow segment of action taken to keep those promises – in Clean Development Mechanisms (CDMs). Otherwise progress is singularly lacking, as countries lag behind. Not that CDMs are a sign of progress in keeping those promises. As feared by critics of the Protocol, the CDMs have been an escape hatch enabling the 'developed' nations to renege on their cutbacks in Greenhouse Gas Emissions.*

*There have been quite a few projects taken up in India under this Scheme. INECC sent a technologist to look at a project in north Andhra. What is reported bears out with what has been systematically studied by a research group, which kindly let us have an advance peep into its report and findings. Shocking is an understatement.*

*The process of accepting projects in the CDM fold is opaque, extremely hurried, very costly, and, putting it mildly, very mildly, downright ignorant of ground realities. To aver more than this would mean challenging the bonafides of the people who coordinate and supervise the process of vetting these projects, the institutions that manage this process, and the implementing agencies. Let the excerpts we have been allowed to make available to our readers tell their own stories.*

*To top it all, the Climate Change negotiations have brought into play another Mechanism to reduce emissions vicariously – Joint Implementation in the erstwhile Soviet bloc, which saw a dip in their economies after the breakup of the Soviet Union, and therefore are already below their emission levels of 1990!*

*Finally, we need to understand that the practice of Conservation and Comfort is not easy. There is a trade off to be made at every level, from the international through to the personal. We bring you a piece on the implications of some practices in living this trade off.* 

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*editor*

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## A Trade in Pollution

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When the first international treaty to reduce greenhouse gas emissions was signed in 1997, people around the world thought that the community of nations would become serious about reducing their greenhouse gas emissions. We were in for a bad surprise: The treaty came with an 'environmental' excuse for rich nations and their polluting corporations to start a quixotic and absurd trade in the World's carbon-absorbing capacity. They discovered able partners in the nouveau riche of the developing countries, who sensed a business opportunity and jumped onto the bandwagon.

In spite of its persistent refusal to take on any international emission reduction commitments, India emerged as one of the most favoured carbon market destinations. A friendly, indulgent Government, a 'clean' and aggressive corporate sector, and a happy band of national as well as transnational 'validators', consultants and project developers made India a paradise for carbon 'offset' projects. With a record-breaking 450 projects queuing to sell credits in the Kyoto carbon market which will allow extra fossil fuel

emissions in the developed countries, India has opened the door for bigger windfall profits than any investor, broker, validator, developer, or carbon consultant could have imagined.

All big Indian corporations are on board, Reliance, Tatas, Birlas, Ambujas, ITC— disproving earlier apprehensions that the complex procedural nature of the Kyoto carbon market would put off big companies. Carbon credits were found to boost companies' stock prices significantly, even in cases where carbon credit sales were not publicly recorded, and buyers extremely uncertain. Several companies were found to include carbon 'offset' projects in their public issue prospectus to prove the profitability of the company, though at time of issue, those projects were not actually expected to contribute much to the company's internal rate of return.

Because it is generally assumed in India that carbon 'offset' projects are so 'environmental' that they do not need any environmental impact assessment or management plans, information on individual projects is rarely available in public domain. Each time we have looked closer at



## CDM In Air: Wind Energy Projects In Satara, Maharashtra

### Wind Mills In Satara . A Historical Background

Maharashtra Energy Development Agency(MEDA) started a "Demonstration Wind Mill Project" at Chalkewadi village in 1996. Initially, the Government leased 100 acres of land from villagers on a five years' term, and later purchased the land at Rs. 6000 per acre. The lands were wasteland and not used for agriculture purposes. MEDA set up 4 power plants at the site, with installed capacity of 3.7 MW per plant. The apparent success of the project attracted private companies like SUZLON ENERGY LTD who were already at the trade as the premier Supplier and Manufacturer of Wind Turbines and related equipment. SUZLON erected wind plants in the area at invitation of MEDA, and purchased land from Chalkewadi and other adjacent villages like Vankuswadi, Absari, Kati etc at the cost of 40-60,000 per acre, within a radius of 20 Kms.

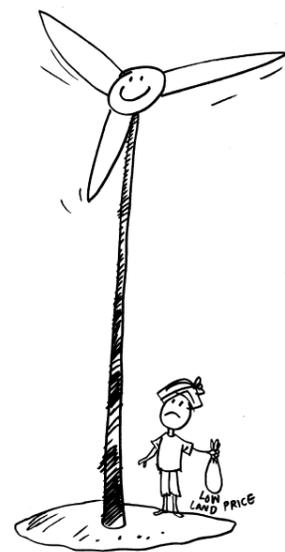
Many companies like Bajaj Auto, Tata, Encron, Star, GIO, Sarita Chemicals, WESTAJ RRB, Energy Micon, MTL, etc purchased the power plants set up by SUZLON. It was learnt from the workers in those plants that Suzlon sold the plants with land at a minimum of Rupees 5 Crores each, and they remain operational for 20 years. It was further learnt that SUZLON already invested a huge amount of Rs.40,000 Crores in the wind energy plants, and now the valley has approximately 1000 plants. Out of these, MEDA has 11, SUZLON has 67, Bajaj Auto has 100, and the Tatas have 76.

Though lure of cheap infrastructure and bulk subsidies at source drew the Companies to Satara, the possibility of earning additional revenue through sales of Carbon credits acted as another strong incentive, and many companies applied for CDM registration, mainly with bundled wind energy projects (bundling several small plants at different locations together). No new plants were set up for the CDM projects, and CDM is seen as easy money for something that already exists. The additionality logic and the investment barriers(proving that the project is a no-go without Carbon revenue) given in the PDDs submitted by the Project Holders therefore remain open to all sorts of questions.

### Additionality?

It was found that private companies like Ellora Time Ltd., Bharat Forge, Star Gutaka, Sarita Chemical, Westaj RRB, Energy Micon, MTL etc. are selling electricity to Maharashtra State Electricity Board (MSEB) at Rs. 3.16 per unit. But these companies consume electricity provided by MSEB at a concessional the concessional rate of Rs. 1.20 per unit from MSEB. Both the Government of India and the Maharashtra Government have been providing subsidies and cheap infrastructure to such

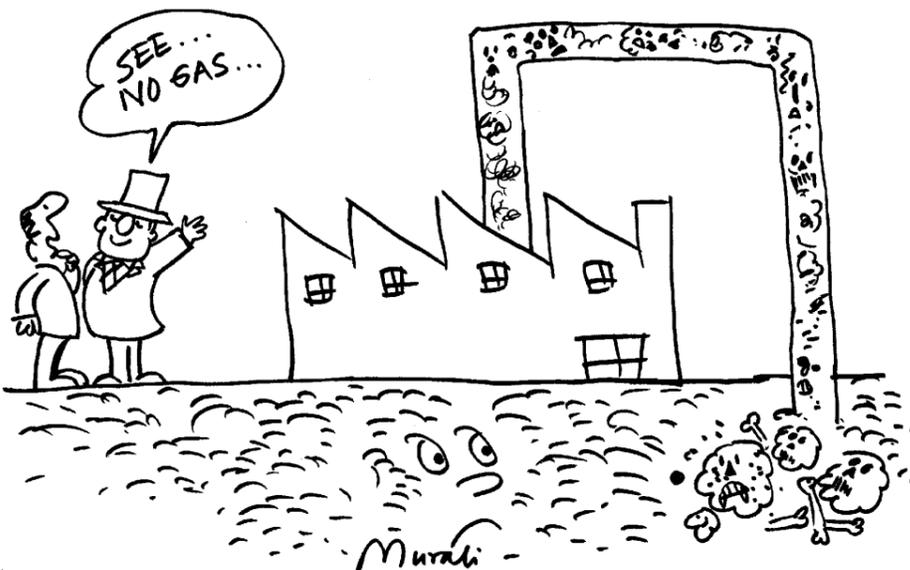
'renewable' and 'green' companies. The projects also enjoy support of local political leaders. This happy combination of factors make a wind mill project in Maharashtra an extremely attractive economic proposition, which does not require carbon credits to become viable, and would have come up even without the new subsidy in form of carbon revenue.



### Dubious Projects

More than the additionality aspect, however, the inherent dubiousness of the Satara wind Energy projects stems from their often unethical and illegal dealings with the villagers. Villagers were seldom paid proper price for the land acquired for the windmills and the lands were more often than not obtained through evidently fraudulent means. This study examined seven out of ten CDM wind Energy projects in Maharashtra (in various stages of registration), and it was the same story everywhere. Below, we look at some of them, and see how the projects grossly violate the sustainability criteria, and make a mockery of the claims the PDDs make. There was also severe environmental impacts of having so many wind turbines in a small area. The study tried to observe the impact of wind energy project on local people, assess the level of public awareness about CDM, and also the extent of people's participation in designing, selection and implementation of the projects.

claims made internationally by project developers about these projects' social and environmental – or even climate – benefits, we found a world of two tales between claims and reality on the ground.



We do not object to trading. But

trading at whose expense? How can the Government of India accept proposals for trading in a 'clean development mechanism' from chronic polluters? How is it ascertained that the project proponent has the will or capacity to ensure social and environmental wellbeing when the factory consistently violates existing Indian legislation? How can a project be even considered as 'clean development' when it adversely affects the ecology and economy of communities? How can projects be registered on basis of evidently incomplete and falsified project documents?

The carbon 'offset' market is proving to be an all-round win-win scenario for polluters and greenhouse gas emitters in both hemispheres. The polluting industries continue emitting toxic fly ash and carbon dust (Sponge Iron factories, India), their effluents pollute rivers and underground aquifers (ITC, India), yet they earn extra money through flimsy claims of sustainability and emissions reductions. The project developers, consultants and validating agencies earn fat fees, and perhaps a cut of carbon credit revenue. The brokers get another substantial cut, and the buyers in developed countries get certified licenses to pollute. Governments, inter-governmental forums like the UN Framework Convention on Climate

Change, NGOs and International Financial Institutions oversee this merry process, while the global carbon market reaches the magic one-billion dollar mark.

What happens to the people whom the carbon market is supposed to benefit? In India, Brazil, Uganda, South Africa, Chile, Thailand and elsewhere people see their land taken away and destroyed for large hydro dams and small ones, new monoculture tree plantations, while liquid and gaseous filth from the 'clean and green' factories poison their soils, rivers and air.

Beyond boundaries of local people's everyday lives and knowledge, climate games are played with baselines, business-as-usual predictions, and carbon credit vintages. Glaciers and polar icepacks meanwhile continue to melt, flash floods wipe away entire villages, prolonged droughts and extremes of temperature create havoc with agriculture, and cyclones devastate fisherfolk villages. The real and perceptible danger of climate change is offset by the illusion of the most absurd and impossible market human civilization has ever seen. And that market is bad for the South, bad for the North and bad for the climate.

*Soumitra Ghosh, Hadida Yasmin, Arindam Das and others, activists and researchers with NESPON, a NGO based in Sub-Himalayan West Bengal, India, and NFFPFW, a national alliance of forest movements; summarized from a forthcoming report on CDM projects in India. An abridged version of this note was published in The Guardian*



## Kyoto Protocol set to help green economies of eastern and central Europe

26 October 2006, Bonn — The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) today launched a new mechanism of the Kyoto Protocol expected to generate significant reductions in greenhouse gas emissions which cause global warming. With the launch of the Kyoto Protocol's joint implementation (JI) mechanism, developed countries will be able to acquire carbon credits from greenhouse gas emission reducing projects undertaken in other industrialized countries, in particular central and eastern European transition economies.

<http://unfccc.int/2860.php>

## Kyoto Protocol

### The provisions of the Kyoto Protocol and its rulebook

The 1997 Kyoto Protocol shares the Convention's objective, principles and institutions, but significantly strengthens the Convention by committing Annex I Parties to individual, legally-binding targets to limit or reduce their greenhouse gas emissions. Only Parties to the Convention that have also become Parties to the Protocol (i.e. by ratifying, accepting, approving, or acceding to it) will be bound by the Protocol's commitments. 165 countries have ratified the Protocol to date. Of these, 35 countries and the EEC are required to reduce greenhouse gas emissions below levels specified for each of them in the treaty. The individual targets for Annex I Parties are listed in the Kyoto Protocol's Annex B. These add up to a total cut in greenhouse-gas emissions of at least 5% from 1990 levels in the commitment period 2008-2012.

### The negotiation of the Kyoto Protocol and its rulebook

When they adopted the Convention, governments knew that its commitments would not be sufficient to seriously tackle climate change. At COP 1 (Berlin, March/April 1995), in a decision known as the Berlin Mandate, Parties therefore launched a new round of talks to decide on stronger and more detailed commitments for industrialized countries. After two and a half years of intense negotiations, the Kyoto Protocol was adopted at COP 3 in Kyoto, Japan, on 11 December 1997.

The complexity of the negotiations, however, meant that considerable "unfinished business" remained even after the Kyoto Protocol itself was adopted. The Protocol sketched out the basic features of its "mechanisms" and compliance system, for example, but did not explain the all-important rules of how they would operate. Although 84 countries signed the Protocol, indicating that they intended to ratify, many were reluctant to actually do so and bring the Protocol into force before having a clearer picture of the treaty's rulebook. A new round of negotiations was therefore launched to flesh out the Kyoto Protocol's rulebook, conducted in parallel with negotiations on ongoing issues under the Convention. This round finally culminated at COP 7 with the adoption of the Marrakesh Accords, setting out detailed rules for the implementation of the Kyoto Protocol. As discussed above, the Marrakesh Accords made considerable progress regarding the implementation of the Convention.

The Kyoto Protocol entered into force on 16 February 2005.

[http://unfccc.int/essential\\_background/kyoto\\_protocol/items/2830.php](http://unfccc.int/essential_background/kyoto_protocol/items/2830.php)

## United Nations Climate Change Conference - Nairobi 2006

6 - 17 November 2006  
United Nations Office at Nairobi, Gigiri



Kenya will host the second meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol (COP/MOP 2), in conjunction with the twelfth session of the Conference of the Parties to the Climate Change Convention (COP 12), in Nairobi from 6 to 17 November 2006.

The conference will also include, from 6 to 14 November, the twenty-fifth session of the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA 25), the twenty-fifth session of the Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI 25), and the second session of the Ad Hoc Working Group on Further Commitments for Annex I Parties under the Kyoto Protocol (AWG 2).

The second workshop under the dialogue on long-term cooperative action to address climate change by enhancing implementation of the Convention (the Dialogue) will be held from 15 to 16 November.

[http://unfccc.int/meetings/cop\\_12/items/3754.php](http://unfccc.int/meetings/cop_12/items/3754.php)

## Figures reveal Europe falling far short of climate targets

**Seven countries set to break emission limits, says environment commissioner**

New projections have shown that the European Union, self-styled global champion in the battle against climate change, is falling woefully short of its targets for cutting greenhouse gas emissions.

The European commission said that, based on current measures and policies, the emissions of the EU's original 15 members will be just 0.6% below 1990 levels by 2010. The EU-15 countries are committed under the Kyoto protocol to an 8% cut on 1990 levels by 2012. On unchanged policies, seven countries - Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Ireland, Italy, Portugal and Spain - would exceed their individual emission limits, which are binding under EU law.

The findings are designed to spur European leaders to press for tougher targets in the second, post-2012 round of Kyoto at Nairobi. The 25 governments have set targets of up to 30% cuts by 2020 and 80% by 2050, but not made them binding.

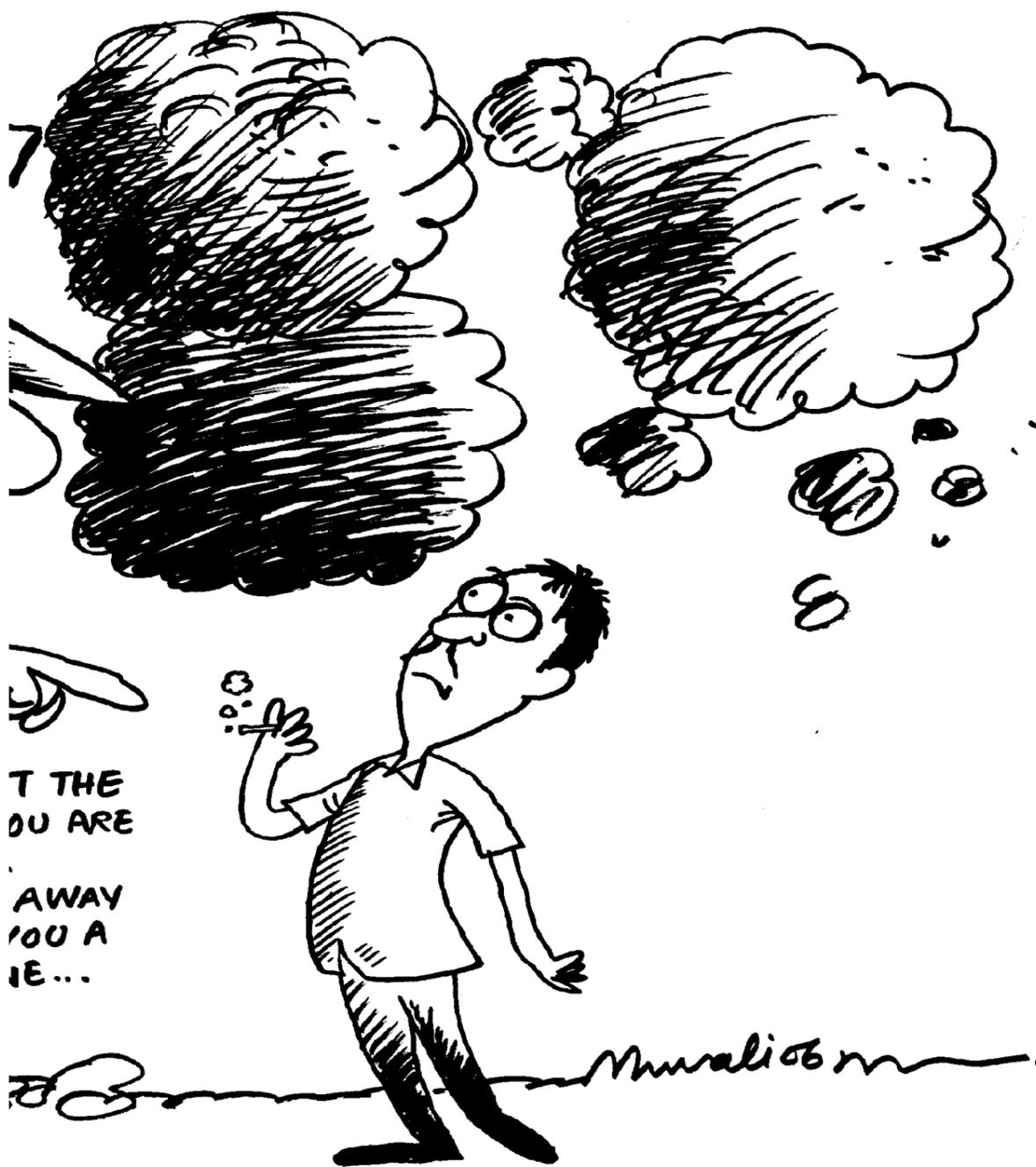
Esther Bollendorff, climate campaigner at Friends of the Earth Europe, said: "This is pretty dramatic as the projected 0.6% is not even a tenth of the target. This sends a very weak signal about the EU ahead of the Nairobi conference."

David Gow in Brussels, *The Guardian* October 28, 2006  
<http://environment.guardian.co.uk/climatechange/story/0,,1933867,00.html>

# Credit Unworthy



# credit Unworthy



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## **Myths and Reality: ITC and its Social Forestry/Carbon Forestry plantations in Khammam District, Andhra Pradesh**

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### **Myth: ITC as a Carbon-Neutral Company**

*(A press Release from Times of India, January 10, 2006)*

ITC is getting closer to becoming the first corporation to turn both water and carbon positive and also achieve zero solid waste discharge. It is already water positive three years in a row and has achieved 86% carbon sequestration and 80% solid waste recycling.

ITC's efforts in the field of energy conservation, its use of carbon neutral fuels, sourcing of renewable energy and large scale tree plantations through social and farm forestry have resulted in ITC sequestering 85.36% of the carbon dioxide emitted by its operations. ITC's farm and social forestry plantations, covering 29,230 hectares (19,500 hectares till 2003-04), enabled sequestration of 85.6% of greenhouse gases emitted during the year, up from 18% in 2002-03. In the current financial year, plantations have

already covered over 40,000 hectares, getting ITC even closer to turning carbon positive.

Intense R&D has resulted in the productivity of these plantations, doubling in the last few years. A study by experts from the Indian Institute of Sciences, Bangalore, has shown that the above and below ground biomass contributes 71% carbon sink additional to the carbon dioxide sequestered by pulpable wood.

In 2004-05, 80.5% of the total waste generated was recycled (53.3% in 2003-04). Significant progress was made by a large number of units towards achieving zero solid waste, through reduction or elimination of waste at source, coupled with recycling and reused practices...the waste generated was either reused internally or totally recycled.

### **The Reality: ITC as a Profiteer**

#### **Plantations: ITC version**

Under this project, the private wastelands owned by rural poor (tribals) would be developed for raising plantations with eucalyptus. The project is being implemented through several Non Governmental Organisations—Society for National Integration through Rural Development (SNIRD), Human Organization for Poverty Eradication (HOPE) & Society for Health and Agriculture Department (SHADE), who identified the tribal beneficiaries and group them into Sanghas (User Groups / Society) for taking up plantations on their own lands. According to ITC, it provided and continues to provide 'quality planting stock' and 'free extension service to the beneficiaries apart from providing finance to the entire project activity'. ITC buys back the wood at market price and the entire proceeds of wood sale is given to the Sangha, who in turn distribute

the sale proceeds and 'sustainably manage the plantations apart from developing new plantations'.

#### **What's Happening**

According to Mr. Adil Khan, who owns a nursery in the Aswapuram Mandal village, only Eucalyptus plants are being developed under the project. The plants seem to be in great demand because the Forest Department also wants them for plantations in adjoining forest areas. He has supplied about 50,000 plants to local farmers so far to start Eucalyptus plantations in their lands. After harvesting, both the Department and the farmers sell the pulpwood to the ITC Paper boards and Specialty Papers Division (ITC PSPD) Bhadrachalam Unit.

According to Adil, an acre of these plantations contains about 1000 to 1500 plants. The first crop

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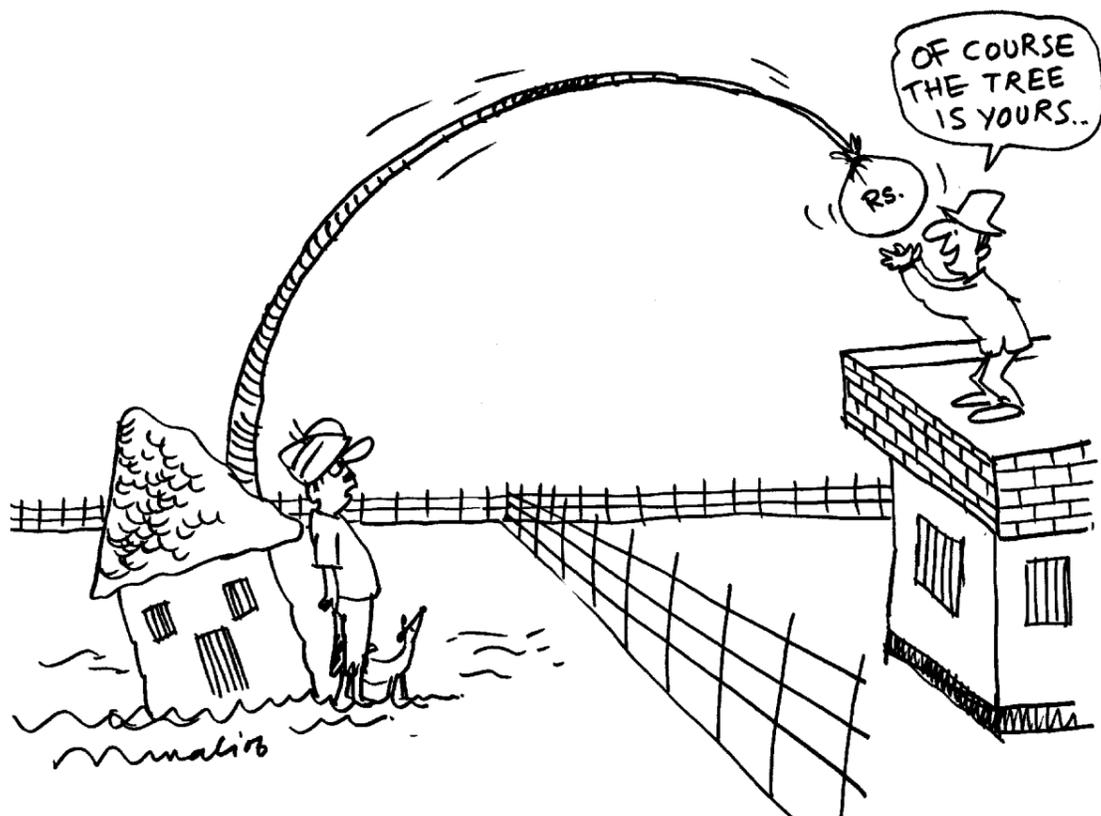
comes after 3 years, and the yield varies from 45 to 70 tones per acre. There is a 20 percent increase in next three years. ITC pays Rs.1600 for each ton of pulpwood to the VSS.

According to the father of Adil Khan, who is employed in the Forest Department as a guard, all such plantations are being done under Joint Forest Management (JFM), and plantation work is given to people who are placed in Below Poverty Line (BPL). People belonging to forest communities work as labourers in plantations. In addition to the ITC money, a 3-hectare plantation gets a Government fund of Rs. 2,82,000 of which 50% is spent for village development and 50 % in departmental expenses.

The Forest Department forms the Van Surkasha Samiti(VSS) with local villagers, and through the Samiti (committee) raises plantations. The VSS secretary is a forest staff and transacts all official works on villagers' behalf. All villagers are illiterate, and do not understand official work.

The Forest Department shows these plantations as social forestry, under JFM and BPL empowerment programmes. There is an apparent mix-up as to which land is being used for which programme, and plantations in both departmental lands and community lands are being managed by the VSS. Which means that farmers are not getting paid for the plantations they raise in their own lands but through the VSS, which is a forest department controlled mechanism. The only definite payment that villagers get is the daily wages from plantation work, which is available just for a month, and in some cases even less. For instance, many landless farmers in Aswaropeta area work as labourers at the plantation, at a daily wage of only Rs. 70 per day. The work at plantations is usually for 3 or 4 days in one site.

Who gains? Evidently, the ITC PSPD, who takes the advantage of the local people's poverty, and gets the raw material for its paper factory at extremely low cost. Larger shares of 'profit' from plantations goes to the Forest Department who



runs this plantation programme in the name of JFM, and possibly some of the more fortunate peasants. ITC PSPD also takes any profit coming from the carbon credit sales.

#### **Additionality**

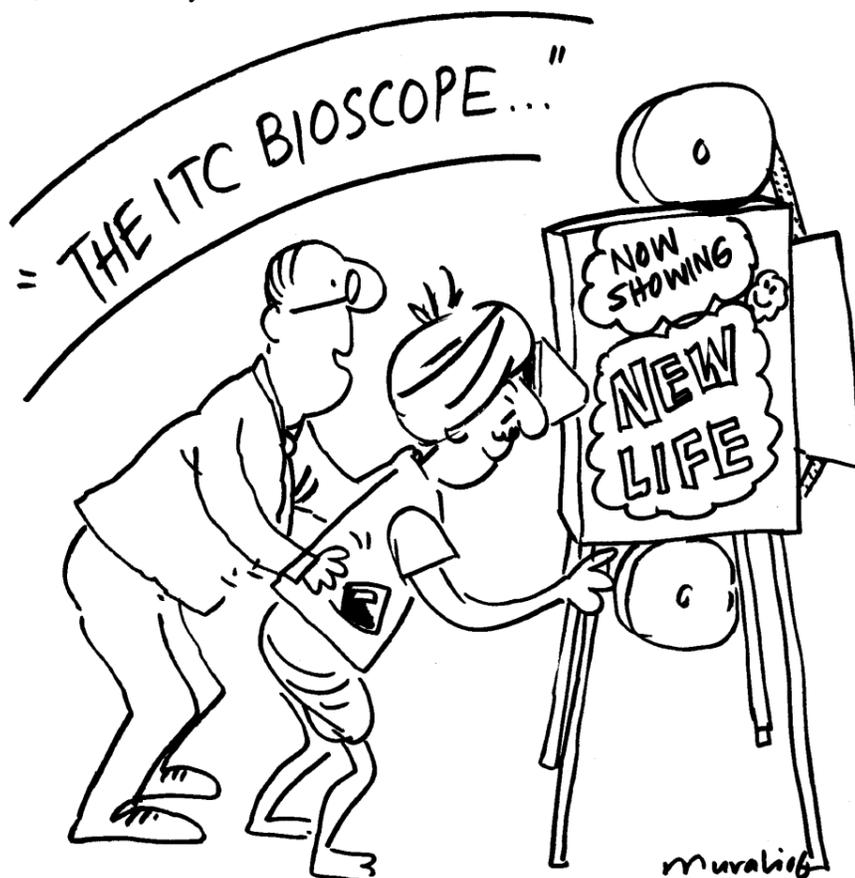
Are these plantations new, or 'additional'? In absence of land records for lands under the ITC LULUCF project, this is hard to determine. Because forest lands at Aswapuram adjoin the crop lands now being converted to Eucalyptus plantations, and plantations in both lands are being managed by the Forest Department under social forestry/JFM programmes, possibilities of mix-up in lands can not be ruled out. Besides, how can a routine departmental programme like JFM/Social Forestry qualify for CDM? The plantations would have been raised, like many similar plantations in the area, with or without the benefit of carbon credit sales, firstly because ITC PSPD needs the raw material, and secondly because raising plantations of fast-growing species has been traditional practice of the Forest Department since last few decades.

In the PDD, ITC claims that poor tribal peasants of the region are not in a position to raise such plantations on their own accord, and hence the project should be considered additional. How true is this claim? In the first place, poor tribal peasants are not being benefited by the project (they are opposing it, actively), and secondly, Eucalyptus was being grown in private farmlands of the

project villages even before the concept of carbon trading arrived (for instance Mr. Narkappa Reddy, a farmer at Paloncha Mondal has been growing Eucalyptus commercially for a long time, and has 3 crops within the last 10 years).

It is clear that ITC has decided to go for the 'icing on the cake', the easy and additional money that the carbon market promises. That the whole thing is being done at the cost of poor tribal peasants whose land, food security and ecology are being terminally violated apparently does not disturb them, or the Andhra Pradesh Forest Department, who actively supports the Company. The lack of awareness among the CDM project 'stakeholders' about CDM and carbon credit sales directly contradicts ITC's declarations in the Project PDD Version 02, about communities and 'Sanghas' being aware about the project. ☹

*Soumitra Ghosh et al, ibid with Trinath Rao, Andhra Pradesh*



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## Voices from School on Environment

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Everyday I pass by scores of young boys and girls who rush to school, most of them who stay nearby come by walk, others take a bus, and a handful of them take bicycle to reach their school. This is a municipal school where I am amazed to find young minds having immense enthusiasm and eagerness to learn new things in spite of the financial instabilities they encounter back home. Braving adverse climatic conditions many times, they head off to school. The zeal to learn and grow in this competitive world amuses me.



I always felt it imperative to make them aware of many issues on climate change for which they are victims but not the causative factors for environmental disasters. Going in that direction I thought I have to reveal some harsh realities to them on climate change since I have been dealing with taking up the Environmental issues to schools program.

We had chosen Kurupam Durga Prasad Municipal School (KDPM) School as an initial start up to the program. This school was established in the year 1957, by the then Raja of Kurupam who had donated his land for the construction of a school for the downtrodden. The school comprises of 1250 students, and about 24 teachers who have all completed their Masters in Education (MEd).

The proposal of starting a program on Environmental Education has been a long drawn out scheme of our organization of creating

awareness and instilling knowledge on climate change issues to municipal schools. The idea of going to Municipal Schools is mainly to make them aware of the issues of climate change and since they are from the downtrodden sections of the society and to whom we can disseminate knowledge and information on various environmental issues. Another key factor is that they lack access to most of the knowledge systems and since I have immense access to the internet which is other wise the gateway to the outside world I felt I could take up abundance of information on various environmental issues to them. I had been quite apprehensive of the fact whether the program will be relevant to this particular segment, or how the impact will be and what their understanding of the issue will be. But after taking up the session and interacting with them all apprehensions were lost in thin air.

The program of environmental education to schools has been taken up by the coordinators of Laya, Mr K.Krishna Murthy and Ms A. Samatha. We had realized the fact that this kind of program will have a lasting impact on them as the presentations were on PowerPoint and in an understandable manner.



The program began on an enthusiastic note on the 6<sup>th</sup> of October, 2006 at 10:00 AM. The program had been organized for the students of 8<sup>th</sup> Std of 45 students who can grasp the content faster, but to our disbelief they indeed had very good knowledge on the

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environmental changes which are happening. The topics were on “Global Warming” and “Water Cycle” in a larger perspective which was delivered on PowerPoint presentation. The two-hour presentation was a kind of an interaction with the students on what they know about “Global Warming”, what the causes, consequences of it are and how the temperature is rising over the years. Since it was for the first time ever that this program gave a head start on climate change, we made our attempts of not jumbling up all the issues of environmental disasters into one fold. And hence, took up only global warming in totality, which is also meant to find out what their understanding of the issue is all about.

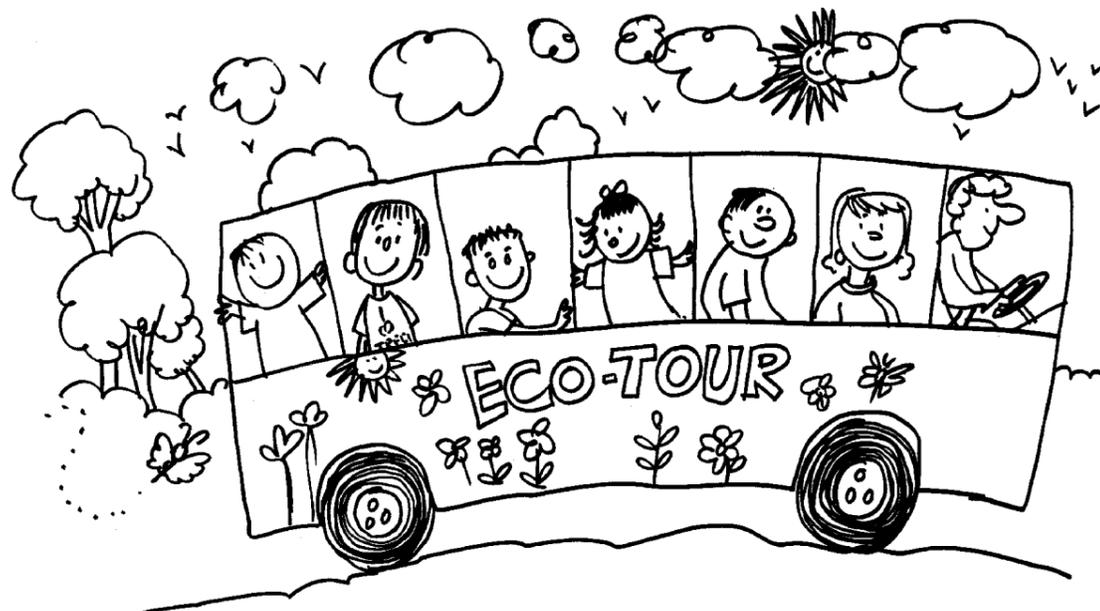
On “Water” the presentation was an animated one which gave them an understanding of how water is formed, stored underground and then used for consumption. So, the students were delighted to see the pictures talking to each other. This was followed by a group discussion on what they think of climate change for us to evaluate the knowledge they have but we were quite amazed at the information they shared with us on all environmental issues.

The students were divided into five groups and the five questions which were posed to them were on what they mean by climate change, why is it

happening, who is to be blamed, what is their role in fostering a clean environment, what are the solutions to the environmental changes that are occurring. Each group had their leader who headed the team and gave their answers on the charts that were supplied to them by us. All the groups answered very aptly. The answers were also more or less similar which reveals the fact that their imagination of a clean and green environment for future generations is inevitable. Let’s hope that their vision comes true. The way they expressed their anxiety and willingness in protecting our planet has indeed delighted us immensely.

Most of the students that I spoke to were very happy to learn new things in these presentations and have also remarked that they hadn’t had this kind of interactive sessions before on environment. They wanted more of these sessions in future since they are topics which are familiar to them but do not have indepth information on certain issues which we were able to deliver in a more lively and interactive way. The session ended on a positive note with the school principal also thanking us for taking up a meaningful session and urged us to take up many more programs of this sort to other classes as well in future. ☺

*A Samatha, Laya, Visakhapatnam*



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### When 'living green' comes with a price

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*BOSTON* Ever since I heard Al Gore say that he and his wife, Tipper, are trying to live "carbon neutral" lifestyles, I have been intent on following suit. I bicycle hither and yon, and now wash my clothes less frequently than I used to. As always, my family and friends suffer the consequences.

*I am seriously considering line-drying my washed clothes, which would further erode my standing in my very proper neighborhood.*

*Did you know that clothes dryers account for as much as 10 percent of home-energy use? "If ... New Englanders would use the clothesline or wooden drying racks, the savings would be enough to close several power plants," reports the pro-line-drying Web site Project Laundry List.*

*Alas, we do not live in a "right-to-dry" state, like Florida, where the legislature has granted homeowners broad rights to hang out their clothes.*

*Richard Monson, the president of the California Association of Homeowners Associations, told Legal Affairs magazine that a clothesline in a neighborhood can lower property values by 15 percent: "Modern homeowners don't like people's underwear in public. It's just unsightly."*

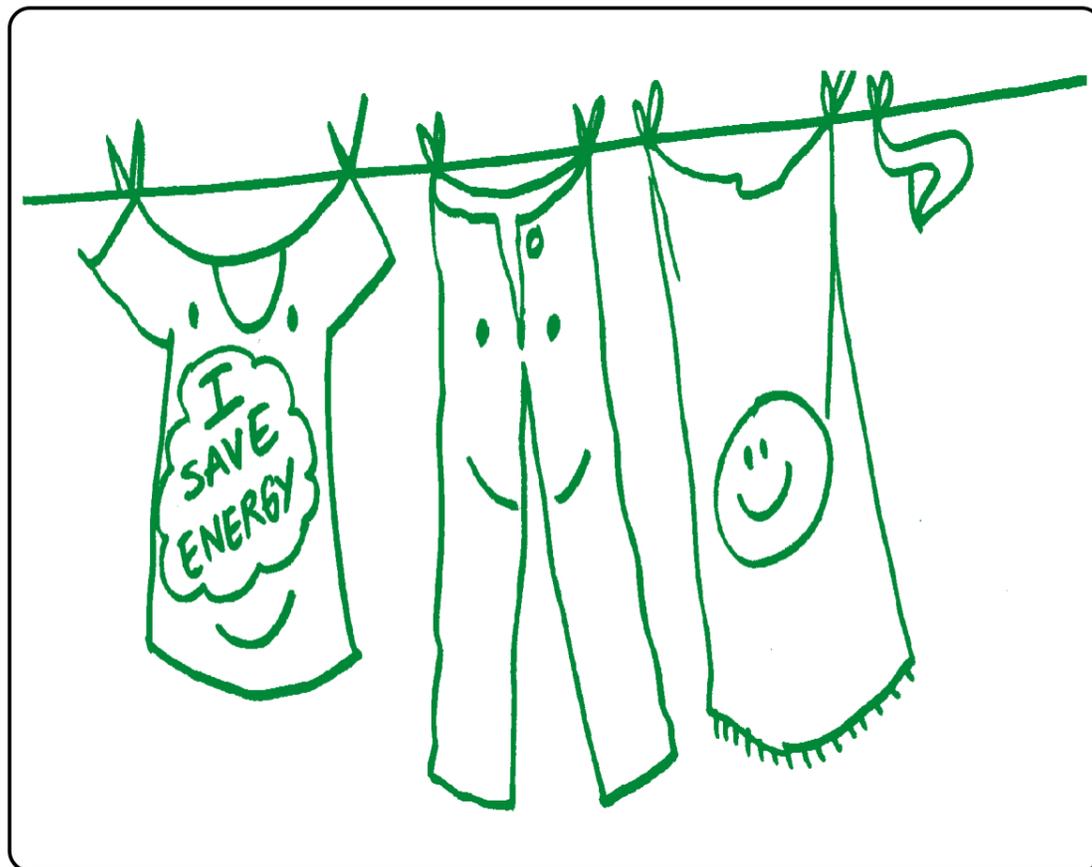
*So that's out. And I have apparently failed to equip my children with the necessary green tools for living. I worry that my son is not carrying a hemp backpack, "chosen for its durability as a fiber and sustainability as a crop," according to purveyor Artisan Gear. AG likewise touts pencils containing 25 percent shredded currency or denim (six for \$31.50), and, "for little artists, a set of 36 soybean crayons is \$57.60."*

*And your kids are using Crayola! For shame!*

*Predictably, my "E-IQ" is far lower than it should be, according to a quiz I took on the Web site of the Abundant Forests Alliance, a timber-industry propaganda front. One of my big mistakes was thinking that artificial Christmas trees are more eco-friendly than real Christmas trees. Wrong! the foresters insist: "You need to incorporate some more green action into your daily life." This should not be confused with the Ecological Footprint Quiz that I took earlier this year, and also failed.*

*Maybe I can achieve carbon-neutral nirvana by following the precepts of Verdant magazine, which calls itself "the nation's first upscale, environmentally friendly lifestyle magazine featuring green ideas for better living." Actually, it's the nation's second ridiculously lavish, flirting-with-self-parody, Whole Earth Catalog-meets-The-Robb-Report glossy rag. New York-based Plenty magazine was the first. Here is what Plenty is selling: "Stella McCartney's runway-ready boots ... made from PVC-free plastics derived from plants. They'll set you back \$795, but in return you'll gain some serious style points."*

*Having plenty of plenty will help you buy what Verdant is hawking, too: organic wines; a tiny, \$10,000 terrarium; illipe nut beauty products from the tropical rainforests of Borneo. Don't bother me with talk of global warming - I'm reading about the "land whispering" architect in this fancy magazine! "The current mantra of 'living green' seems to have everything to do with increased consumption of goods and services when it should in fact be the reverse," Allison*



Arieff writes in her New York Times design weblog.

*It's not just me and Al Gore fretting about the environment. Catch this headline from the Sunday Times of London: "'Green' arms the new killing trend." The article reports that the British arms manufacturer BAE Systems is designing "environmentally friendly" weapons, including "reduced lead" bullets, "reduced smoke" grenades, and rockets with fewer toxins. Happy news!*

*America's military is likewise turning into a lean, green killing machine. Although we Americans don't seem to have a strategy for the war in Iraq, it is heartening to learn of the Army Strategy for the Environment, with its "Triple Bottom Line: Mission, Community, and Environment."*

*Although I am not sure that our military has fully embraced the need for soybean bullets and flak jackets fashioned from the ubiquitous jojoba plant, they have adopted "green procurement" policies and are using alternative fuel vehicles at many bases.*

*Can hemp backpacks be far behind?*

Alex Beam, *the International Herald Tribune*, October 18, 2006  
<http://iht.com/articles/2006/10/18/opinion/edbeam.php>

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