

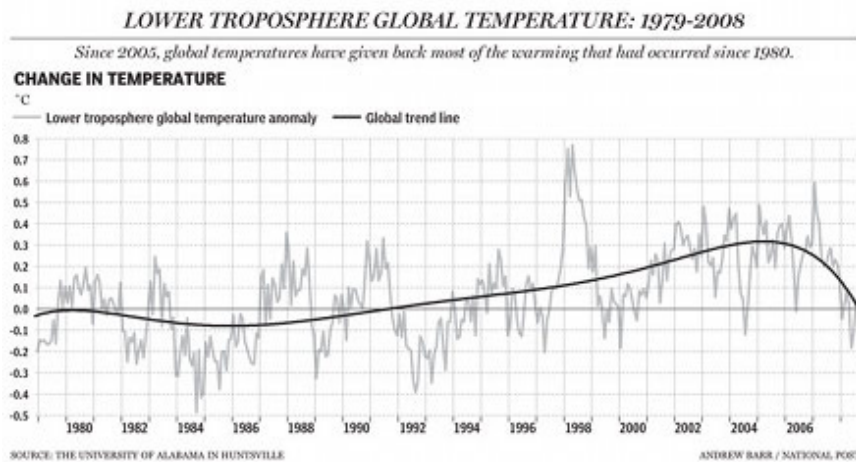
Global Warming a myth, Orissa Warming a reality *With special reference to Water Resources & Mining*

(A statement by Chitta Behera before Review Meeting on Climate Change Action Plan orgd. by Forest and Environment Dept Orissa at 3.30 PM on 8.12.2010 in Secretariat, Bhubaneswar)

Global Warming, a Myth

Granted the fact cited by IPCC (Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change) that the last (twentieth) century has shown a rise by 0.74 C in the mean global surface temperature level, there is little ground for raising a panic around it, and absolutely no ground for building a mega ideological bandwagon like the present one that is being thrust from atop the international bodies on national Governments and via them on civil societies all over. The proverbially short public memory tends to forget that the last Century had also experienced a fairly long cooler period roughly from 1940 to 1975, prompting Time Magazine 24 June 1974 to come out with an article typically captioned, "Another Ice Age?", which had noted "the atmosphere has been growing gradually cooler for the past three decades".

Again, is it true that the global surface temperature has been showing a secular trend of rise since early 80s last, as often claimed by the Climate Change pundits? Not, at all. The following graph on global temperature anomaly, drawn by a group of professional meteorologists shows that the global temperature has been rapidly declining since 2006. Moreover, what can be a better proof of the declining global temperature than the incontrovertible fact that the very world assembly of statesmen, bureaucrats and scientists who had gathered at Copenhagen just a year ago, in December 2009 to further highlight 'global warming' were themselves awestruck by Europe's coldest winter in 50 years.



Further, the last millennium too had alternate occurrences of warm and cool periods. The Warm Period from 950 to 1250 AD, called Medieval Climate Optimum was eventually followed by a colder period, now famously called Little Ice Age that lasted from 16th Century down to mid-19th Century. Incidentally, it is worth remembering that during the Warmer Period, a prosperous Viking Civilization had flourished in Arctic areas including Greenland, where it suffered extinction following the onset of Colder Period. Is it not a befitting salutation to the otherwise condemnable syndrome of Global Warming that human civilization had once sprung up in areas that are now too frozen for humans to conceive it as a site for their habitation, not to talk of a civilization of the mainstream order?

About the hawkers of Climate Change

As everyone knows, the Nobel Prize for Peace in 2008 was jointly awarded to Mr. Al Gore, former Vice-President of USA and Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change chaired by Mr. Rajendra Pachauri, Chancellor of TERI University for their seminal work on climate change. And what was their seminal work? The Report of the Panel had forewarned, "Glaciers in the Himalaya are receding faster than in any other part of the world and, if the present rate continues, the likelihood of them disappearing by the year 2035 and perhaps sooner is very high if the Earth keeps warming at the current rate". But in the face of the challenge to the scientificity of the claim so made, the members of the Panel themselves admitted that their report was not in the category of a peer-reviewed scientific literature, but based upon a media interview with an anonymous scientist conducted in 1999. As a matter of fact, neither Gore (who did his PH.D on impact of television on Presidential Elections in USA) nor Pachauri (a mechanical engineer by qualification) being a bonafide meteorologist, they could bag the Nobel Prize on a subject that is quintessentially meteorology. This single instance typifies the kind of pseudo-science that has gone into the making of Climate Change hullabaloo and the kind of dirty game-plan for its legitimization by the so-called highest award-giving forum of the world.

Leitmotif of Climate Change

A very pertinent question may arise, why so much fanfare about Climate Change by the industrially advanced countries of the world, be they Europe, USA or Japan. The real truth is that the Climate Change fills in a vacuous gap left by the bankruptcy of the entire corpus of theories of international trade that the advanced countries used to peddle to the rest of the world right since the days of Absolute and Comparative Cost Advantage by Smith and Ricardo. As every textbook on the subject informs, the Comparative Cost Advantage Theory for its obvious one-sided emphasis on a single-factor i.e. labour, it gave way to a more acceptable theory of Heckscher-Ohlin-Samuelson called Factor Endowment or Factor Proportions Theory or in its Marshallian version General Equilibrium Theory of International Trade. But this brand new model was falsified by Leontieff Paradox (1953) that showed that contrary to the basic premise of the theory, USA a capital rich country was exporting labour intensive agricultural goods while importing capital intensive machineries from abroad. Since then so many newer theories have come up, such as gravity model, product life cycle model and the latest one i.e. National Competitive Advantage Model. But no theory is attractive enough to hold the ground of international trade in favour of the industrially developed countries. Under the circumstances, it is them who want a new, populist ideology like Climate Change having universal appeal to all across the world, so that they can maintain their superiority not only in respect of the nascent trade in clean technologies but also in respect of their rest of merchandise to the developing and underdeveloped countries.

ORISSA WARMING - A Stark Reality

That Orissa has been warming up at an accentuated rate during the last decade and half is both scientifically and empirically verifiable. The most compelling evidence of this phenomenon is that anywhere in Orissa, during the months of extended summer i.e. from late March upto mid-July it becomes almost impossible on the part of the people to walk on the streets, let alone work in the open fields, during major part of day-time, even from 8AM in the morning upto 5 PM long period. The common people have already got accustomed to doing manual labour in the early hours around dawn or in the late evening and night. While the level of overall temperature in Orissa remains

around 45 to 46 C, at places, like Angul-Talcher area or Ib Valley area in Sundargarh and Jharsuguda districts it reaches upto 51 C, making it unbearable for the working people to work.

No meteorological chart is necessary here to drive home the worrisome but inescapable truth of Orissa getting hotter year to year during last one and half decades, since every Odishan suffers its cruel pinch. Who doesn't know that in places like Angul-Talcher and Jharsuguda-Sundargarh the mercury rises to even 51 C on quite many days of the summer? The spacious excuse often offered by the Government officials, corporate think-tanks and careerist academicians to explain such steep rise in air temperature is that it is all due to global climate change. Can there be a greater sophisticated lie than such escapist punditry? Is it not simply meant to disown and pass the buck to some nebulous, hypothetical, non-existent actors and factors, which are out and out beyond the control, nay, comprehension of a layman?

The question needs to be pointedly asked, why is it that the southern States that are located nearer the equator show less warming than Orissa? Again, why is it that the above areas of Orissa despite some or other regular mining activities in the past didn't experience so much heat barely a decade and half back? The reasons are not far to seek, but near and very much under our nose. The single greatest factor behind the 'hot cauldron syndrome' that the above two valleys (Mahanadi and Ib) has been recently passing through is the reckless opencast mining of coal by the foreign and desi Corporate entities, jointly sponsored by Government and World Bank. As the Principal Investigator of a Pilot Study 'Lingering Impact of reckless mining /industrialization in Angul District on Dalit Segment of Population with special reference to Talcher & Chhendipada Blocks during 2000-2010', I have got to know for sure how the Open Cast mining, a practice abandoned by developed countries, but practiced seldom and with much precaution in other developing countries, has resulted in the abnormal increase in air temperature, irredeemable toxicity level in soil and water and massive loss of vegetation and above all rendering the surrounding environment unlivable for humans and animals as well. One can see for himself how the ever-burning fires raging around small and big coal heaps, here and there, are radiating heat day in and day out throughout the year, and no wonder, the streams of heat radiating from these areas do hot up the entire environment of Orissa. The excessive heat that we experience in interior rural areas all across the State is as a matter of fact the result of the accelerated and reckless open cast coal mining in the above two valleys coupled with the massive scale mining operations, legal and illegal in respect of iron ores and other minerals in different parts of the State, which are being undertaken with absolutely no regard paid to the environmental safeguards.

The practice of underground mining which has been going on since 30s of the last century has not caused as great havoc to the ecosystem and humans as the opencast mining in last one and half decades. However, the companies doing the underground mining, that used to practice some precautionary and protective measures earlier, such as filling up the vacuous space by the excavated earth before closing off a sector and ample afforestation on the overground, have started abandoning those wholesome, long practised ameliorative measures so as to maintain their competitive edge vis-à-vis the newly inducted technology of opencast mining. As a result, we find today many villages affected by underground coal mining to be bereft of any source of ground water.

Water Resources

The Orissa Action Plan has ascribed the recurrence of high floods to Climate Change, without explaining the causal link between the two. There is nothing farther from truth than such a grandiose indulgence in bluff-mongering par excellence. The question needs to be pointedly asked, why all the main river systems of Orissa, which were perennial in nature over centuries, do presently go dry most of the year, except barely a couple of rainy months, when they suddenly rise

into spates resulting in high floods. In contrast, we need to ask why the river, say Chao Phria of Thailand, which can be compared to Mahanadi of Orissa, remain perennial, nay navigable round the year. The reason lies in the obvious fact that there being no institutional mechanism at the Government level in place to maintain the water-holding depth of the river beds, these have got sediment-infested, so much so that they have not only lost the capacity to hold water during non-monsoon seasons, but also a little rains here and there in the monsoons drives them into massive spates. The result is disastrous on all fronts- drought in the summer, high floods in the monsoons, drainage of all rain water down into the sea, dysfunction of hydro-electric projects most of the year, massive relief operation and accompanying ecological and economic hazards of all sorts.

Delving deep into the chronic malaise that our water bodies currently suffer from, it is the well considered view of this author that till date, we don't have any Ministry at the Central or State Government level to look after exclusive, regular, round-the-year maintenance of water-bodies, rivers, lakes and creeks etc. What we have in the shape of Ministry/Department of Water Resources right since colonial times, is basically aimed at commercial exploitation by the Government of the utilitarian functions of water bodies- taxes from irrigation, income from navigation and fisheries, generation of hydropower, allocation of river water for industrial-corporate use and the like. But the paramount question is- where is a Ministry or Department whose exclusive domain is the regular and sustainable maintenance of the water-bodies by undertaking such necessary proactive and corrective measures as removal of sediments by dredging, safeguard of the contours, ensuring of navigable depths, protection of the flora and fauna and the like.