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Offsetting Omissions



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Will Sajida Khan's killers please stand up

Tribute to Climate Justice Activist Sajida Kahn

As the World Bank plans its launch of a new carbon fund at the United Nations climate conference in Bali, activists worldwide will pay tribute to the woman who spent her last breath resisting one of the most controversial projects in the portfolio of the Bank's first Prototype Carbon Fund.

Sajida Khan won the struggle against the project. The Bank pulled out of the toxic South African landfill but, sadly, Khan passed away on 15 July 2007 in her Durban home. Aged 55 her fragile but vibrant, uncompromising life endured several bouts of debilitating cancer. And although she won the fight against the Bank, the dump that the government promised to close in 1987 is still open and thriving. Indeed, plans for new carbon financing were sealed by the South African government even before the Bali conference.

In Khan's tragic absence, it is hoped that the fight against the two new billion-dollar coal plants the SA government is now planning will be taken up by others, although these plans will no doubt be conspicuously absent from that delegation's presentations. South Africa is one of the top twenty polluters worldwide, but it is far from unique in its over-reliance on coal as an energy source.



The Bali conference is likely to generate a lot of hot air as it searches for climate solutions, but as government delegations debate yet more market-based policies for the post-Kyoto era we should pause and reflect upon who really killed Khan?

Meet the suspects and consider their motives:

1) Bisasar Road's original design team of apartheid bureaucrats who in 1980 dumped what became Africa's largest formal garbage heap in the middle of a nature reserve in the mixed-race residential neighbourhood of Clare Estate.

2) Operators of the illegal medical waste incinerator parked at Bisasar during the 1990s, sprinkling toxins onto Khan and her neighbours until its belated closure.

3) Durban Solid Waste for not terminating the dump as repeatedly promised. It runs a methane incineration system that spews yet more cancerous ingredients-dioxins, lead, cadmium—into the toxic soup around Bisasar.

4) The World Bank team who met Durban officials in 2002, persuading them that the dumpsite should remain open for seven to twenty more years. The reason? To capture carbon credits by selling investments in Bisasar methane-to-electricity operations to global pol-

(cont'd page 2)

Indigenous Peoples Fight for Rights in Bali

While some 17,000 government, non-government, indigenous and all other kinds of activists have congregated in Bali to discuss, debate and confer about climate change, its impacts and what to do about these, a small group of Balinese activists sit in Bedugul Mountain, one of the most revered sites on this island to mediate with the gods for protection over us all. Bedugul is a mountainous forest site where three lakes, the Tamblingan, Bhuyan and Beratan, which are the source springs for all freshwater on Bali, are situated.

These same activists have been working intensively so that a geothermal project slated for this sacred place will not be carried out. The project proposes to clear 128 hectares of forest around this lake area and will violate the taboo against excavating the earth in one of the holiest places in Bali.

145 priests of the 48 temples in that area have submitted a petition to the Governor, as have many of the village representatives, the Bandeda Adat, to their House of Representatives. Over several years rituals have been performed in communication with the Dewidutha, Goddess of the Lake and other deities of the area, who have assured the activists that they will on their part, do their best to prevent the heat from surfacing through the excavations of the company, and in reciprocation the activists should perform Panchdathu on Bali and Java: the planting of the five precious metals in five cardinal points at five sacred spots on each of these islands. So far, of the nine exploratory drillings and the five more intensive diggings carried out, only one has produced some gas, not enough to justify the project.

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Because the Earth Is Not for Sale

Gender Issues at the COP? Not Likely

Women around the world: indigenous women, marginal farmers, forest dwellers, factory and field workers have aggregated and evolved, over thousands or hundreds of years, a vast store of knowledge, of the environment, of survival in very adverse conditions and of the skills needed to bring communities and families through devastating crises.

Still, so far Gender Issues have been excluded from UNFCCC and the Kyoto Protocol though women's organizations and gender experts have campaigned intensively because women and women's resources are most acutely impacted by climate change and also its proposed remedies, and are moreover, expected as a matter of course, to provide for shattered and disintegrated communities and people to survive and if possible grow whole and strong again.

How long can we do this without strong and consistent support at the level of policy commitments which are carried through from this platform to the ground where each day, literally millions of people and soon millions more are and will be homeless and rendered destitute, criminalized by an environmental and climate injustice system that like in the middle ages of Europe, makes felons of those who seek bare livelihoods for themselves and their families.

With over 40 million women at a rough underestimation (many of them heads of households), in developing countries of Asia, Africa, South America, currently displaced either by the natural phenomena contingent on climate change itself or by the CDM projects for generating carbon credits by clean energy projects, such as dams or plantations for carbon sequestration or for agrofuels, there is still not a clear dialogue at this forum on the impact on these women, from the billions of dollars being made off the carbon exchange, originally intended so we were told, to enable and fund the work of adaptation and mitigation.

The Gender Caucus (Gendercc, Women for Climate Justice):

- Coordinates and organizes gender activities related to the UNFCCC and the Future Climate Regime
- Campaigns for Gender justice in adaptation and mitigation efforts
- Facilitates development of common positions on climate policy and protection tools
- Compilation of knowledge about these issues on a new web based information platform

Who We Are:

Alter-Eco is published by a group of NGOs, IPOs and social movements at the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change COP-13 who came together to make a unified call in support of real solutions to climate change and against the false market-based solutions to climate change that are being implemented under the Kyoto Protocol.

We join together to produce **Alter-Eco** as an instrument through which to project our collective voice, which reflects the views and concerns of grassroots constituencies and impacted communities all over the world.

To submit an article, event, photo or graphic to **Alter-Eco**, please email globalecology@gmavt.net.

Organizations contributing to this issue: Global Justice Ecology Project, Global Forest Coalition, Carbon Trade Watch, Transnational Institute, FERN, CORE (Center for Organizational Research and Education), The Corner House. **Alter-Eco** does not necessarily reflect the views of all of the participating organizations or contributors to **Alter-Eco**.



Sajida Kahn cont'd from front page

luters, who in turn will face less pressure to cut their own emissions.

5) The Kyoto Protocol – meant to turn the corner on climate change – is thus also a suspect. It established a 'free market' in carbon credits that would permit polluters in the North to purchase shares in 'Clean Development Mechanism' projects like Bisasar, instead of reducing their own greenhouse gases.

6) Major international polluters ranging from Big Oil to the Dutch government, who are the buyers of this 'privatised air', according to critics in the Durban Group for Climate Justice, which Khan's struggle helped inspire the founding of in 2004.

7) Other landfill sites in Durban's Marianhill and La Mercy suburbs, which are also supported by the World Bank's Prototype Carbon Fund. The bigger prize would have been a \$15 million Bisasar investment, but Khan's 90-page Environmental Impact Assessment submission frightened off the Bank.

8) Who can forget the role of the national Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism? What Khan termed 'carbon colonialism' is its official policy, according to the National Climate Change Response Strategy: citizens must understand 'up-front' how the 'Clean Development Mechanism primarily presents a range of commercial opportunities, both big and small. This could be a very important source of foreign direct investment'. Khan and her Durban Group comrades considered this position a form of eco-prostitution equivalent to accepting toxic waste for a pittance.

9) Then there's the South African economy itself, addicted to fossil fuels and the world's cheapest energy. The US is the world's largest CO2 emitter in absolute terms, but in relative terms SA emits 20 times more of that gas than the US, measured by each unit of output per person.

That in turn has made Pretoria aware of the need for even rotten offset projects like Bisasar, so as to market SA's feeble attempts to cut back on greenhouse emissions.

13) The final suspects are all of us: for the governments we elect, for the rubbish we generate each day, and for the greenhouse gas emissions created through overconsumption, waste and air travel.

So who killed Sajida? We all did!

But hopefully now that we have unmasked the villains we can proceed to try and solve the most urgent crisis with *real* solutions. And maybe, just maybe, even with unsuspecting new heroes too.

Indigenous Rights continued from front page

Indigenous Peoples have been advocating for years against the violation of sacred spaces and sites not only out of respect for the spiritual traditions and values of our peoples but also because these sites are always important areas for freshwater or other critical resources, or biodiversity preserves. Regrettably despite the frequent reiteration of respect for indigenous peoples' values and heritage, there has been little evidence of such respect in practice.

Despite the very recent ratification of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and the rhetoric that accompanied it, Indigenous Peoples' representatives were not allowed to present their statement at the opening of the present COP.

Statement from the Indigenous Peoples' Forum

Opening Statement – The International Forum of Indigenous Peoples on Climate Change (IFIPCC)

Thank you, Mr President, distinguished delegates, NGOs, Indigenous brothers and sisters. We would like to congratulate those countries, including Indonesia, which adopted the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (DECRIPS). We thank the Indigenous Peoples of Indonesia for warmly welcoming us, the indigenous peoples from all regions of the world, to their ancestral territories.

At this Conference of the Parties, the International Forum of Indigenous Peoples on Climate Change would like to stress that mitigation and adaptation projects implemented by Parties and private sector without the free prior and informed consent of Indigenous Peoples are encroaching on areas of land sacred to Indigenous Peoples, for example the geothermal energy project in the Bedugul Mountains of Bali.

Mr. President, the IFIPCC takes this opportunity to reaffirm the following:

- 1) We demand the creation of an Expert Group on Climate Change and Indigenous Peoples with the full participation and representation of Indigenous Peoples, taking into full account the example of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNFPII) that includes indigenous experts;
- 2) We demand the creation of a voluntary fund for the full and meaningful participation of Indigenous Peoples, such as that which exists in the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD);
- 3) We demand that the conference of the Parties recognize and take action to curb the adverse impacts of climate change on indigenous peoples; and to refrain from adaptation and mitigation schemes and projects promoted as solutions to climate change that devastates Indigenous Peoples' lands and territories and cause more human rights violations, like market based mechanisms, carbon trading, agrofuels and avoided deforestation (REDD).

Indigenous Peoples have suffered the worst impacts of climate change without having contributed to its creation and must not be placed in the position of suffering from mitigation strategies so that over-consumption of industrialised countries can continue.

Mr. President, there are many countries where the rights of Indigenous Peoples are not adequately recognised and we draw the attention of the Conference of the Parties to the recent adoption of the DECRIPS. We ask that the policies and implementation of the UNFCCC be consistent with the rights contained in the Declaration.

Mr. President, the IFIPCC sincerely believes that indigenous peoples have a role to play in this convention. It is time that we all cooperate in our efforts to address climate change. It is only in this way that our world may have a chance of survival. Mr. President, we must do this in a manner that recognizes social justice, environmental integrity, indigenous and other human rights and that creates a climate where greed does not dominate the needs of humanity.

TERIMA KASIH!

Upcoming Events

Today:

Global Justice Ecology Project and Global Forest Coalition Press Conference to launch the report: *"The True Cost of Agrofuels: Food, Forests and the Climate."* 15:30 in the BICC Press Conference Room. This report provides a detailed analysis of the impacts of agrofuels (known also as biofuels) on forests and forest-dependent communities and clearly demonstrates how agrofuels cannot be part of a strategy whose goal is reducing emissions from deforestation.

Wednesday, 5 December:

Global Justice Ecology Project and Global Forest Coalition will hold a side event entitled, "Clashing Strategies: Promoting Agrofuels and Reducing Deforestation" 20:00-21:30 in the Hydro Room of the Grand Hyatt Hotel. Highlighting the contradictions between the promotion of large-scale agrofuel production, and the reduction of deforestation in developing countries (REDD) and the need to protect Indigenous Peoples' Rights.

Thursday, 6 December:

The Gender Caucus will hold a side event: "Women in the Forest: No Fairy Tale," 10:30-12:30 in the Hydro Room of the Grand Hyatt Hotel.

Corner House and Biofuels Watch will be holding a side event titled, "Biofuels, Climate Change and Climate Justice," 15:30-17:30 in the Solar Room of the Grand Hyatt Hotel. Can the use of large-scale biofuel production to address climate change be either effective or equitable?

The Durban Group for Climate Justice will present "Carbon Trading: Who Profits and Who Pays," a side event that will address the pitfalls of emissions trading and other offset schemes. 20:00-21:30 in the Biofuel Room of the Grand Hyatt Hotel. Refreshments will be served.

Dammed by the CDM

Over 650 hydro projects have now successfully tapped into the Criminal Development Mechanism (CDM) or are well on their way to receive carbon credits from the CDM. If all of these projects were approved the credits would provide hydro developers with extra profits of around a billion dollars per year. Little surprise that hydro projects represent a quarter of all projects in the CDM project pipeline.

Among these are many run-of-the-river dams that have been promoted as renewable energy projects with social and ecological benefits. A closer examination of the real impacts of some of these projects however reveals little evidence of such benefits.

'The market goes where it is cheap.' - Martin Hession, UK DEFRA

Swasti Power Engineering Limited (SPEL) was approved as a CDM project in early 2007 to develop the 22.5 MW hydro electric power project on the Bhilangana River in Uttaranchal, India. The project is a run-of-the-river hydroelectric project, which aims to divert the perennial waters of Bhilangana River – a major tributary of the sacred River Bhagirathi for electricity generation. The company stands to make enormous profits from the CDM as the project is registered to generate credits until 2017. ACRES International, a US company, is part owner of Swasti Power and was convicted for corruption charges in 2002 and black listed by the World Bank.

The project has been lingering for many years: A survey for the dam project was conducted over ten years ago. It reported that there were no villages near the project and that villagers further up river have no need for river water because their agriculture is only dependent on rain water. The communities were not consulted and the construction provoked violence, human rights violations and internal community conflict.

One of the communities overlooked by the survey is the village of Sarona. It is situated on the Bhilangana River, just a 10 minute walk from the dam works. The community cultivates the land in a communal way, growing rice, wheat, mustard, fruits and vegetables. The terraced fields are irrigated in a traditional way by capturing water from the river through small water channels built into the earth. The 80 families that inhabit the picturesque village were never consulted by the Government or by Swasti Power about their views on re-directing the river just upstream from the village.

In 2003 the machines arrived. This is when the community first



Australia Ratifies Kyoto! (whatever)

Australia made the radical move yesterday to reverse their position of doing nothing on global warming to ratifying the Kyoto Protocol, thereby agreeing to do virtually nothing on global warming...

found out about the project. The older women in the village were the first to decide to take action. The decision was to block the machines from working. One villager stated, *'We did not put sand in the petrol tanks, we are non-violent, we want an honest fight.'* Outside police forces were sent to arrest the residents. As of March 2007, villagers have been jailed on three separate occasions and the village has been subject to police raids twice.

In March 2005, 120 villagers were arrested and put in jail for four days, and another 79 were arrested in July 2005, including women. In November 2006 at least 29 people were arrested and forced to sign a document that they would stop their resistance. One village woman stated, *'The children were at school and they took us all to jail. I was so worried for the children being alone for so long with no adults, but the older children cared for the younger ones and they made food together.'* Since then the PAC (armed police) have raided the village two times using brutal force; people have had their clothes torn off and have been beaten, women in the village have been assaulted, dragged by their hair and tortured.

In 2005 the Asian Human Rights Commission requested urgent action. There are three dam projects on the Bhilangana River and 146 in the State of Uttaranchal. The villagers continue to be harassed, the traditional irrigation system has already been damaged, the dam work continues and Swasti Power is counting the profit from selling carbon credits: The Criminal Development Mechanism at work.



US companies do the right thing? - surely there must be a catch?

The U.S. Climate Action Partnership (USCAP), a consortium of 33 prominent businesses and organizations, announced today a commitment amongst its members to a 90% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. The announcement was timed to coincide with the opening of the climate summit.

USCAP has produced a comprehensive set of principles and recommendations for scientifically effective, socially responsible climate policy. This document, titled A Call to Action, has been released by USCAP to underscore the urgent need for a comprehensive policy shift on energy and climate.

More info – www.climateactionpartnership.org

