

# Greenhouse gang hits rough weather

by Susan Maitra

The “global warming” bandwagon rolled into New Delhi on Feb. 21 for a high-powered three-day conference, “Global Warming and Climate Change: Perspectives from Developing Countries.” The meeting was cosponsored by the Tata Energy Research Institute, an Indian energy think tank, and the Woods Hole Research Center, the U.N. Environment Program, and the World Resources Institute (WRI) of Washington, D.C., and sported all the top names among India’s government bureaucrats on its “organizing committee.”

It was the greenhouse gang’s first foray into the developing sector to scare up takers for the global warming thesis and the program for halting development—which is its proponents’ not-so-hidden agenda. Shifting to windmills and drastically cutting population are, after all, among “all the things we would do anyway,” WRI chief Gus Speth, and one of the stars of the show, insisted repeatedly to the 50-100 participants at the Delhi meeting.

The developing country “perspective,” as it were, emerged only gradually, first in the form of persistent questions whose cumulative effect was to almost totally undermine the credibility of the “global warming” scenario.

It was brought out, for instance, that even accepting the “greenhouse gas thesis” and alleged evidence of actual warming, no one has any idea what the effects might be locally or regionally, say for South Asia, or when they might occur—obvious points of interest for a government being told it must change its energy and economic policies radically.

Dr. Sultan Hafeez Rahman, head of the Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies, said that the models used so far to predict the global warming and associated rise in sea level (which is projected by the greenhouse gang to destroy 12% of Bangladesh’s agricultural output and displace 8 million people) need to be examined. The fact is, that Bangladesh lies on the flood plains of three major rivers, with 2 billion tons of siltation annually, and that this lower Gangetic delta area constitutes a dynamic system which has to be understood as such. Perhaps the predictions of Bangladesh’s submersion will not hold, he said.

In the view of Dr. A.P. Mitra, head of the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), who spoke on the panel dedicated to “addressing the problem in a policy context,” the most important need is for *monitoring*—what

changes are occurring and how are they occurring. “You notice I am not using the term *warming*,” Dr. Mitra added pointedly. Mitra later noted that the role of the Sun was a missing parameter in many of the discussions of the greenhouse theory.

## ‘I see something dangerous happening’

As the agenda moved to “energy issues” and on into “policy options,” the thin soup of scientific evidence and even thinner stuff of ecological preaching by the *sahibs* paled further still against the Third World realities of massive energy shortages and living standards less than one-tenth the level of the United States or Europe.

The greenhouse gang leaders were impatient with the inclusion of the director of India’s Nuclear Power Corporation, who outlined the country’s program for a significant expansion of nuclear power, side by side with the solar spokesman.

But impatience veered toward apoplexy when the Chinese representative, who had been unctuously referred to from the podium a number of times, announced in his speech that his government has concluded that the only alternative to the disastrous prospect of continued heavy coal burning was the rapid introduction of nuclear energy. Professor Lu described China’s two-point program: development of the “inherently safe reactor,” and introduction of the high-temperature reactor with ceramic fuel element.

“I see something dangerous happening here,” the rabidly anti-nuclear Dean Abrahamson of the University of Minnesota intoned.

But it was on the last day of the meeting that the North-South divide finally surfaced in stark terms. Tata’s director, R.K. Pachauri, unceremoniously buried the greenhouse gang’s illusions that some kind of “draft treaty” would be forthcoming from the New Delhi meeting, and proceeded to try to knock some sense of reality into the heads of his cosponsors.

## Power equations

In India today, Pachauri reported, to add just 100 kilowatts of power to each of our country’s 600,000 villages would require 100,000 megawatts of installed capacity—two times our present capacity! And I am talking about meeting only the most basic requirements of our people for light, water, and so on, he emphasized. If every second family had a television, that would require 80,000 MW of power, Pachauri continued. Now, you may say peasants don’t need TV, and burning dung is quite appropriate technology, but just forget it; these are very basic things whose demand you cannot legislate. Without these very basic, minimal inputs of massive amounts of energy into the rural sector, we will not survive as a nation.

Most of that additional capacity will have to be from fossil fuels, Pachauri continued. Renewable is just fine and we

support it at the Tata institute, he pointed out, but most of the solar technologies are so capital-intensive at the front end that it could actually exacerbate our economic problems. What is more, he reported, the institutional framework to maintain and manage the decentralized systems doesn't exist. The real story of India's huge bio-gas program is that, for lack of this infrastructure, some 40% of the plants are non-functional at any given time.

With apologies to India's Dean of Appropriate Technology, Prof. A.K.N. Reddy, who was present, Pachauri said he felt compelled to "tell it like it is." In concluding, he threw the ball back into the American environmentalists' court: You are telling us to stop using fossil fuels, but you haven't done anything about it in your own country, where some 25% of the carbon emissions originate. The emperor was shown to be scantily clad.

## No deal

Poor Gus Speth. He made an earnest effort—aided by an earnest young Indian on Dr. Woodwell's leash—to convince the Asians in the room that if they joined the "negotiating process" for a global treaty to stop the warming threat, they could use their participation to "leverage" their other demands, such as debt relief. But the effort was blown to bits when the trigger-happy Richard Benedick, mastermind of the precedent-setting Montreal Protocol to ban substances that deplete the ozone layer, openly threatened India with trade sanctions under the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade if the government continued to refuse to sign the protocol.

"I presume you are telling what might happen to those who do not conform," panel chairman Eric Gonsalves, a former Indian diplomat, responded icily. "Maybe they would like to give their view." (Both India and China boycotted Benedick's Montreal Protocol show, because of its gross bias against the developing sector, it turns out.) Hands shot up across the room. "Don't give us these carrot and stick threats," an Indian delegate thundered. It was the end of the phony camaraderie.

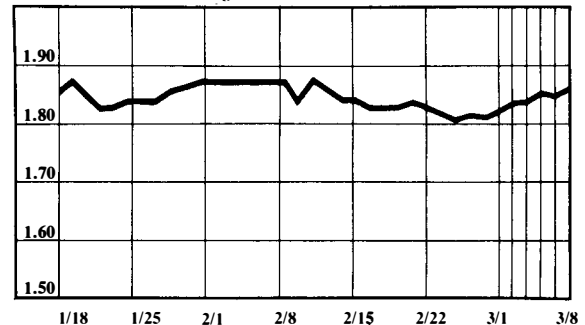
Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's chief economic adviser Montek Singh Ahluwalia was scheduled to speak on the concluding panel, but "unfortunately was not able to come." In the event, Dr. A.C. Ray of India's Environment Ministry and the Indian representative of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, made the government's position on the matter of "global warming" fairly clear. "The gaps in knowledge are very great," he said, "such that we do not yet have a firm basis to talk to each other usefully about the subject."

There is little doubt that one South Asian delegate put the "perspective from the developing sector" at this point in time most succinctly: "In light of all that we have heard, I propose that we do not join any negotiation process for at least the next 10 years, during which time we will monitor and analyze the problem."

# Currency Rates

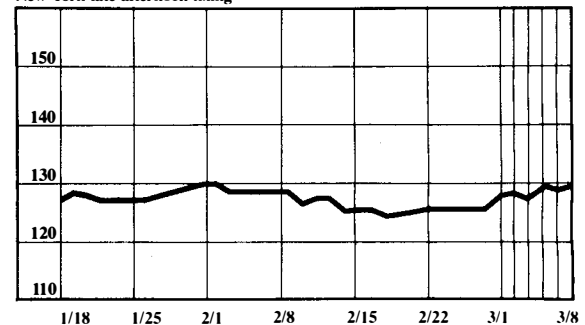
## The dollar in deutschemarks

New York late afternoon fixing



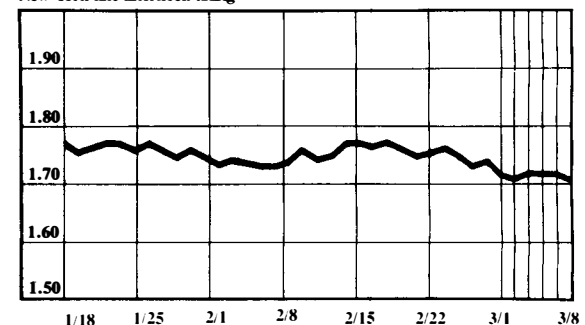
## The dollar in yen

New York late afternoon fixing



## The British pound in dollars

New York late afternoon fixing



## The dollar in Swiss francs

New York late afternoon fixing

