

Feature

Environment

An Enlightening TV Programme on Environment

by Masud Hasan Khan

ENVIRONMENTAL action programmes should remain above politics and be implemented by the united efforts of the people — because it is the question of our existence.

This was the view that was emanated from a discussion on the protection and improvement of the environment at the 'Aimat' — a live programme on current affairs of Bangladesh Television recently.

Conducted by Muhammad Jahangir, the discussion on "What Can We Do To Protect and Improve Our Environment" was participated by Member of the Parliament from BNP and a member of the Parliament's Standing Committee on Forest and Environment M. Abdus Salam Pintu, Forest and Environment Secretary Abdullah Harun Pasha and Dr. Saleemul Huq, Executive Director of the Bangladesh Centre for Advanced Studies (BCAS) and environmental scientists.

Speakers at the discussion also observed that people at the grassroots level should be closely involved in all the planning and implementation of the environmental programmes.

Opening the discussion, Muhammad Jahangir noted out that people's awareness about the protection of the country's ecology has increased because of the continued efforts by both the government and the private sector.

However, he pointed out that planting trees do not protect the environment alone and there were many other components.

Abdus Salam Pintu MP listed that, besides the population control and poverty alleviation, many programmes like reduction in the use of chemical fertilizers, encouraging the use of natural fertilizers, stopping the dumping of wastes in the Bay of Bengal, hill-cutting were also the need of the hour.

He also suggested that environment should be included in the national curriculum to increase awareness among the

students.

The Environment and Forests Secretary listed different government programmes in protecting the ecology and biodiversity of the country including the Environment Policy and National Conservation Strategy — which was now under consideration of the government.

Rasha said that a draft law for protection and develop-

the bottom-up policy so that the people's perspective is reflected in the planning and implementation of the environmental programmes," he said.

Replying to questions received from the audience by telephone, the Forest and Environment Secretary said that the government was keeping a vigil against the dumping of wastes by foreign ships in the

Some of the audience also highlighted the need for strict enforcement of environmental laws and creation of public awareness to combat pollution. One suggestion said that bank loans should be denied to those industries polluting environment. Emphasis should be given more on the use of surface water than ground water in the irrigation sector and land use should be made scientific, said one audience. Another audience suggested co-ordinated pest attack management and reduced dependency on chemical fertilizer.

ment of the environment has recently been prepared by the government and the Forestry Sector Master Plan was now under active consideration.

Besides, the Department of Environment has been monitoring both industrial and air pollution over the last 20 years, he added.

Dr. Saleemul Huq said that the government alone cannot solve all the environmental problems in the country and private efforts were required to achieve the goal.

"We should also talk with the developed countries on pollution control and environmental protection," he suggested.

Dr. Huq mentioned the National Environmental Management Action Plan (NEMAP) as an example of the joint exercise of the government and the NGOs.

Abdus Salam Pintu added that the government was equally concerned about the people's participation in the environmental programmes.

"Earlier, such programmes were imposed from above, but now the government pursues

Bay of Bengal.

Responding to a question on the role of the NGOs in redressing the adverse impact of the Farakka Barrage, Dr. Saleemul Huq said that the government should immediately start negotiation with India to settle the issue of water sharing.

Abdullah Harun Pasha, while answering to a question, however, admitted that the government ban on the use of plastic bags have been postponed.

The government has restricted further installation of plastic bag company for the environmental interest of the country, he pointed out.

A total of 117 suggestions made by the audience on the topic were received by the BTV authorities.

Some of the suggestions recommended formation of environmental laboratories, charting environment-friendly planning and economic programmes and setting up of industries with approval of the environment ministry.

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enforcement of environmental laws and creation of public awareness to combat pollution. One suggestion said that bank loans should be denied to those industries polluting environment. Emphasis should be given more on the use of surface water than ground water in the irrigation sector and land use should be made scientific, said one audience. Another audience suggested co-ordinated pest attack management and reduced dependency on chemical fertilizer.

The block supervisors at the union level should be trained so that they could aware the people on the environmental problems. Environment should be made compulsory in the secondary and higher, secondary level education programme. The role of press and media should be broadened to highlight the environmental issues. Strict measures should be taken to control black smoke emission by the automobiles. Solar and air energy should be exploited reducing the use of carbon-based fuel. The use of Chloro Fluoro Carbon (CFC) gas should be restricted and alternatives be devised. Measures should be taken to popularise the use of jute and jute goods. New shrimp cultivation techniques be evolved to reduce the adverse effect of shrimp cultivation in the coastal areas.

An environmental cell should be set up at the Planning Commission. The Farakka issue should be settled politically to stop the on-going desertification process in the northern region of the country. Recycling and purification plants be established in the industrial sector.

Provisions be made so that every house has one garden. This has to be ensured during approval of the plan, including the high-rise buildings. The number of cattleheads in the private dairy farms in the residential areas should not exceed more than 10. The respective government, office, where a sapling is planted, should nurture the tree.

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Indeed, an independent evaluation of the GEF by a team picked by fund chairman and World Bank official Mohammed El-Ashry reported in November 1993 that "no further allocation of funds to new projects should be made" until proper strategies are developed.

A recent internal memo from UNDP said the GEF "has to a large extent failed to take into account input from the other implementing agencies" (other than the Bank). It detailed six meetings that these agencies held on this subject, where it complained that the GEF chairman "impose consensus" on the other agencies.

The memo also accused the World Bank of trying to pull wool over the eyes of governments in order to wrest control of the GEF by advocating that the fund be legally set up by the Bank.

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Said a UN official who asked not to be identified: "I have yet to hear anybody talk about the environment here. It is money that is talking."

EDF staff economist Korinna Horta added, "The new GEF has postponed decisions on essential matters like access to information and participation of affected communities. The deal should have been postponed."

Cameraman Scott Fights to Save Game Reserve

by Keith Somerville

FOR 17 years Jonathan Scott has made the Masai Mara National Reserve in Kenya his photographic studio, his artist's canvas. It is also his home and he worries for its future.

The survival of the Mara as a protected area depends on continued tourist income. However, in recent years fears about security in Kenya have reduced the number of foreign tourists who see it as a crime-ridden country. That image worsened when adverse publicity throughout Europe arose from the murder of British tourist Julie Ward and then allegations of a cover-up of the case by Kenyan government officials.

In many ways the security problem has been blown out of proportion. The number of attacks on tourists in Kenya pales compared to the totals in other crime-ridden destinations around the world. Crime elsewhere, however, does not seem to attract the morbid fascination of a killing in Africa.

To save Kenya from the vagaries of the tourist industry that could damage the long-term future of the Mara and other parks or reserves, Scott says there is a need to ensure the economic viability of the area for the Masai people.

The wildlife sanctuary that provides tangible material profit is going to be the one that survives," Scott writes in Kingdom of Lions, his latest photographic and narrative publication on the wildlife of the Masai Mara. "For as long as the Masai see a financial return for the hundreds of thousands of visitors who drive annually across their land, there is hope.

Photographer Jonathan Scott has made his name and a home on the Mara game reserve in Kenya. Its protection depends on visitors to the area and lately these have all but dried up. The causes are fears over security in the country, bad publicity and concern that the reserve may be taken over by the government in Nairobi. Gemini News Service talks to Scott about his fears for the reserve's long-term survival.



Jonathan Scott: Masai Mara man

Only by removing poverty can the wilderness be saved."

The book, his fifth in a series of different aspects of life on the reserve, pulls together much of his existing work to give an overall picture of the Masai Mara. It is a comprehensive view of the daily life, annual cycles and future prospects of one of Africa's most spectacular and important ecosystems.

He shows the savage and the social sides of the predators and

the prey of the Mara. In his next project, Scott plans to look at the future of the Masai and Masailand as a whole.

Scott is now also increasingly concerned with the wider picture of the Masai people themselves. They own the Mara. For decades they have lived alongside it or in the reserve, but they perceive threats to their control, he says.

The recent killing of a female rhino, Scott adds, was likely to

have been a political gesture by the Masai to warn of the consequences of taking control of the land away from them in favour of officials in Nairobi. The Masai have generally killed only to protect their livestock or their families. They have not been major poachers. Now they could be willing to kill wildlife to protect their land.

On the tourism issue, Scott opposes a totally materialistic approach. He is wary of the southern African pattern of linking conservation inextricably with highly-priced hunting safaris, trophy production and game ranching. He is also concerned about the idealistic view of many non-African conservationists that somehow reserves should become fortresses cutting off the wildlife from the population and from materialistic needs.

In an interview, Scott said the conservation lobby opposed to any form of ivory sales may have backed itself into a corner. While agreeing a total ban was necessary to bring an abrupt halt to the elephant slaughter in countries such as Kenya and Tanzania, he says, there is a need in country such as Zimbabwe to cull the animals to reduce their numbers and to generate funds for conservation.

He wants to balance economic hardheadedness with a certain idealism about the environment.

— Keith Somerville is a writer and broadcaster on African affairs. He is the author of *Angola: Politics, Economics and Society* and is a regular contributor to the BBC and the New African.

Openwater Fisheries Under Threat

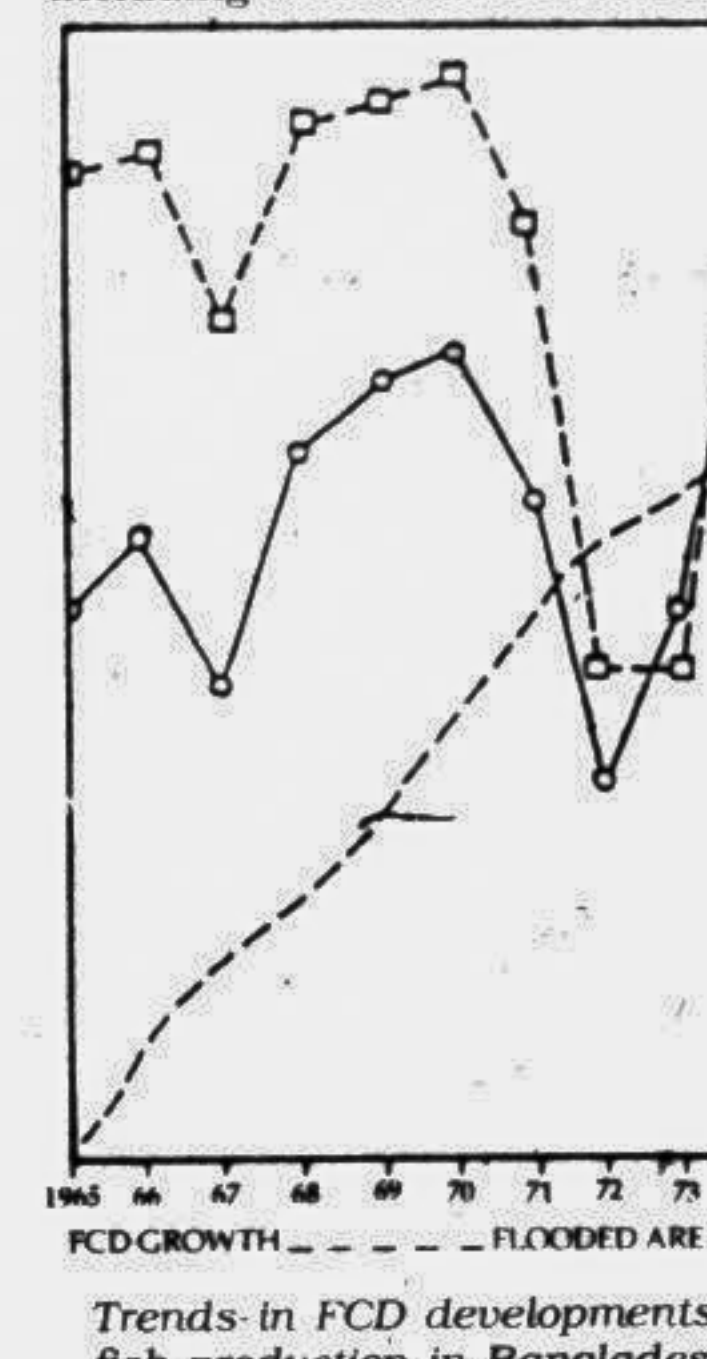
THE inland openwater fisheries of Bangladesh co-exist mainly of the rivers and their floodplains have been the major source of fish production in the country for decades supporting up to 10 million people in their livelihoods and providing the main source of animal protein for the poor. However, in recent years the production of fish from the openwaters has decreased drastically.

The decrease is due to a number of reasons. The share of inland openwater capture fishery production has decreased to 49.5 percent in 1990-91 from 61.84 percent in 1983-84, a decrease of 12.34 percent within the span of a relatively short period. A reduction of the floodplain area due to man-made interventions such as embankments for flood control and drainage projects (figure) is a major cause. Pollution of waters from agrochemical run-off especially in the flowing streams and rivers also contributes to the decline. There has also been an increase in the fishing pressure in the openwaters as more and more people take to fishing as the openwaters are the only common property remaining which the poor can access with a boat and simple fishing net.

One of the main results has been a rapid decrease in the proportion of indigenous major carps in the floodplains. These include rui (Labeo rohita), catla (Catla catla) and mrigal (Cirrhinus mrigala) which used to constitute up to 20 per cent of the openwater fish catch. In recent years this has come down to less than 1 per cent. The rapid depletion of these species has caused the government of Bangladesh to try to stock the floodplains. A number of other well-known species such as bachi (Eutropichthys vachal), ghonia

(Labeo gonius), nandil (Labeo nandina) which were common some years ago are no longer being reported.

The inland openwater fisheries of Bangladesh are among the largest and most complex fisheries in the world with over 260 species of fish and prawn, over 50 different fishing gears and millions of full-time and part time fishermen including women and children.



Trends in FCD developments, floodplains loss and floodplains fish production in Bangladesh

Practically every household in or near the openwaters has a boat and net and carries out fishing at some time of the year particularly during the monsoon.

The major fisheries known as 'jalmahals' or water estates are under the control of the Ministry of Land and are leased out usually on an annual basis but also on 3 or more years' leases. The leases are supposed to go to fishermen cooperative societies but such cooperatives are often controlled by a few relatively pow-

erful people. The government has recently introduced the New Fisheries Management Policy (NFMP) with the view to identify the genuine fishermen and issue them with annually renewable licences to fish through the Department of Fisheries. Although the results of the NFMP have been positive where it has been applied it has yet to be applied in most of the jalmahals mainly due to

the reluctance of the Ministry of Land to hand over jurisdiction of the jalmahals to the Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock.

Until very recently the inland openwater fisheries have been neglected both in terms of research as well as development interventions. However, there have been a number of recent major projects to try to stock the floodplains with funding from the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and World Bank (see box story). The DOF collects data on pro-

duction through the Fisheries Resource Survey System (FRSS) but they do not have adequate manpower and funds to cover the whole country in depth.

Recently some studies have been carried out to estimate the production in the floodplains including by the Bangladesh Centre for Advanced Studies (BCAS), the Fisheries study under the Flood Action Plan (FAP-17) funded by ODA and the Ford Foundation.

All these studies point to the fact that the productivity of the openwater fisheries, particularly the floodplains is probably much higher than previously estimated. It was previously thought to be around 50 kg per hectare but a number of more thorough recent studies indicate that the productivity is more likely to be over 200 kg per hectare and in some cases may be over 600 kg. Other studies done by FAP-16 have shown that the so called miscellaneous species which constitute more than 50 per cent of the catch are the main source of animal protein for the poor people living in and around the floodplains. These indigenous species are therefore far more important in nutritional terms than the more high priced indigenous major carps usually used for stocking.

The results of the research indicate that the openwater fisheries are still an extremely important natural resource of the country which are rapidly undergoing threats from different quarters including flood control and drainage projects. Steps are needed to protect the openwater fisheries and the millions of people who depend on them for their livelihoods and nutrition.

— Bangladesh Environmental News Letter

Seeing Red Over Green Fund

A new two-billion-dollar global fund is ready and waiting for governments around the world keen on going green, but environmentalists are hardly in the mood to rejoice.

The Global Environment Facility (GEF) was launched at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 and seeks to finance nature-friendly development. It will be managed by the World Bank, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

Recipient countries have been guaranteed a say in the decisions made by the GEF governing council, but green groups say it is a 'marriage of convenience' and not enough.

Juliette Majot of the California-based International

Donor countries pour two billion dollars into a global green fund, but environmentalists are still upset. Pratap Chatterjee of Inter Press Service explains why.

The French government, with backing from Germany, had suggested that the Bank set up a financing facility for global environmental issues. The Bank subsequently invited the UNDP and UNEP to a meeting with 17 donor countries in Paris in March 1990 where an agreement was forged to set up a pilot project for such a facility.

At the 1992 Earth Summit, the future GEF won approval as the interim financial mechanism to pay for the convention on biodiversity and climate change.

Three meetings of the participant's Assembly have since been held to shape the new

international waters.

GEF money, however, was not supposed to simply pay for any biodiversity or climate change project but simply for those that would not normally be funded that would have an impact on the global environment, or for the incremental costs of a project that has both local and global effects.

Two-thirds of the money is allocated to the World Bank and a third to the UNDP. The World Bank money in turn is given for two types of projects: free standing grants and those associated with other World Bank loans.

This is a major area of contention for activists like

wants to give US\$5 million to Laos for forestry protection. The catch is that it only comes with the loan from the Bank itself, which requires that Vientiane fulfill certain conditions. This would include a new law that would have the country's forests divided up into Resource Management Areas for logging.

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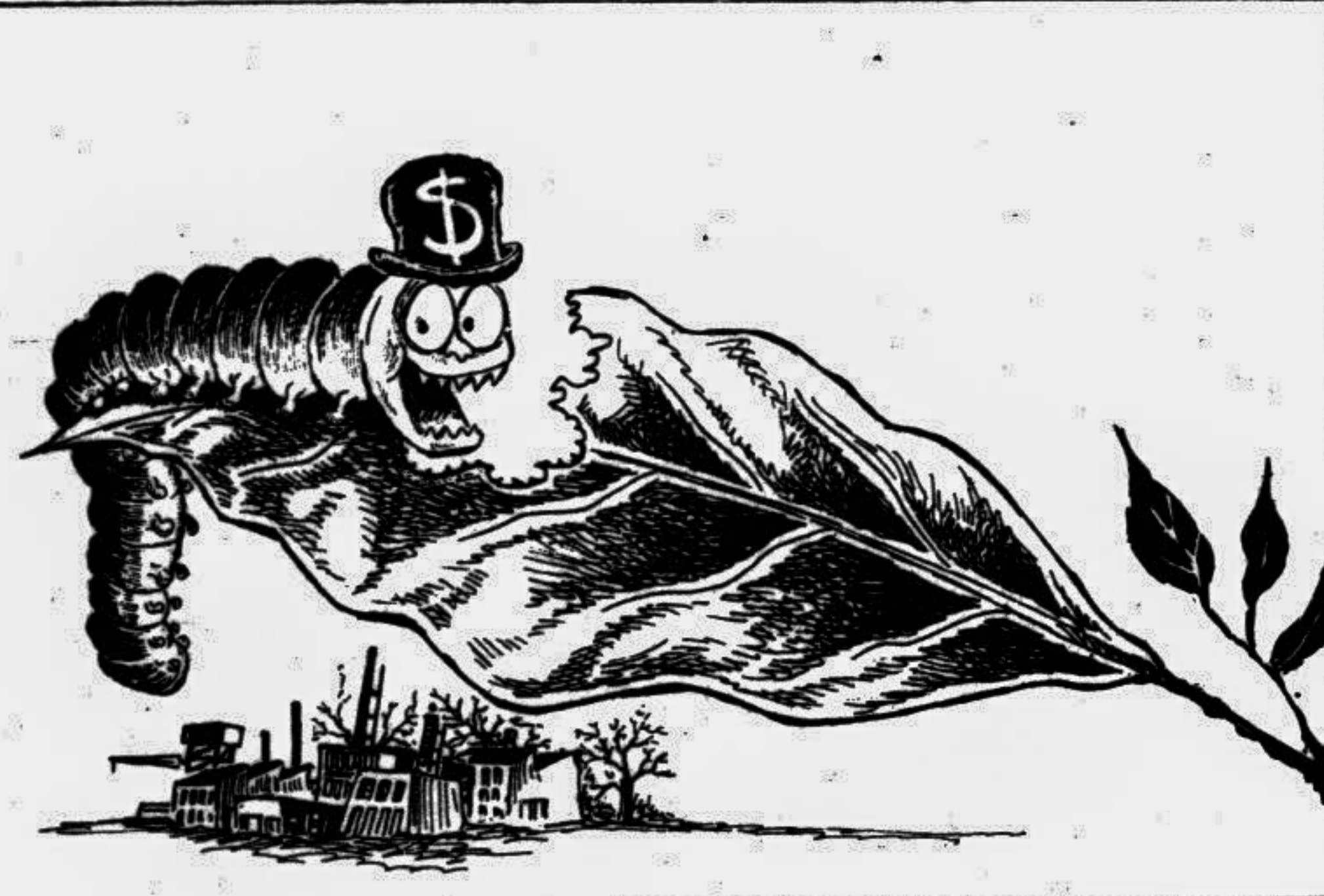
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Inter Press Service

Rivers Network says projects funded by the World Bank have often destroyed rivers, forests and homes by the thousands. She says the Bank is not the right agency to manage the GEF.

N K Singh of the Indian finance ministry adds: "The deal is an innovative risk. The GEF is a hybrid organisation that takes some elements of the multilateral, donor-driven organisations like the Bank, and the more democratic, deliberative bodies like the United Nations."

GEF money is given as grants to countries with a per capita income of less than US\$4,000 a year. This is different from most World Bank money, which is given out as loans that have to be paid back, bringing the Bank profits of one billion dollars a year.

But ever since the idea of the GEF came out of the 1989 joint World Bank-International Monetary Fund annual meeting in Washington, it has been buffeted by North-South wrangling.

GEF — one in Abidjan in December 1992, another in Beijing in May 1993, and most recently in Cartagena, Colombia in December 1993. The number of governments involved has gradually increased at each successive meeting.

The formal legal existence of GEF pilot projects began in November 1990 when donor countries pledged the equivalent of US\$812.7 million to the GEF's core fund.

Because some countries were unwilling to give money directly to the Bank, two other mechanisms were devised — co-financing and parallel financing — which amount to another US\$325 million dollars.

The pilot phase was set to last from July 1991 to June 1994 although the distribution of grants is expected to continue until 1998. GEF projects were invited into four areas: to tackle emissions of greenhouse gases or ozone-destroying chemicals, protect biodiversity, or reduce pollution of in-

Nicholas Hildyard of The Ecologist in London. He says the grants are only intended to "green" the larger loans that are environmentally destructive.

Figures provided by the Bank operations officer Charles Feinstein in 1992 showed that 85 percent of the money of World Bank GEF projects are estimated to be associated with larger loans.

Activists are concerned about projects like last year's GEF-approved US\$30 million dollar grant to India for alternative sources of energy. Months later, the Bank's board of directors approved the first of a series of new loans to India to build up coal fired electricity generating capacity.

The US based Environmental Defense Fund estimates that the new projects will add the single biggest new source of greenhouse gas emissions on the entire planet: 2.5 percent of the total global carbon emissions.

Meanwhile, the GEF also

Forgotten Forests

by Leigh Ann Hurt

A new WWF report reveals that deforestation is not just a tropical topic. Temperate forests demand our immediate attention.

its land is covered with trees. But most of this woodland is actually plantation or intensively managed forests. Primary forest is being cut down so fast that within 15 years, apart from a few reserves, it could be entirely

wiped out. Over the years, conflicts have erupted between timber companies and the Sami, also known as Lapps, over deer grazing rights. Reindeer eat lichen found only on old trees. Plantation trees



are felled young and deer fodder is running out.

In the US, the contentious debate on the fate of the last old growth forests in the Pacific northwest continues. Home to 500-year-old redwood and rare spotted owl, these state- and federally-owned forests are being cut down by timber concerns, backed by powerful government lobbyists.

Chilean government incentives entice loggers to clearcut old woodlands and replace them with tree plantations. Like many monoculture plantation schemes, this one uses non-native species, so Chile loses its endemic species and the landscape is degraded and left open to possible pest infestations.

Air pollution is another culprit. Recognized in the 1970s as the assassin of Germany's Black Forest, acid rain has killed or weakened at least 50 million hectares of temperate trees in Europe alone. Other hard hit areas: China and the eastern US.

Along with the report, WWF, whose target is "sustainable forestry by 1995", is launching a worldwide campaign to urge governments to deal with temperate forests' long-term survival. "Temperate forests have been ignored. We must stop the decades of shortsighted management practices," concludes Elliott.

— WWF