

NOTE

The Meaning of IPCC's Nobel Prize

BJ writes :

The Inter-Governmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has been, honoured with the Nobel Prize for peace for 2007. The Panel was set up under the aegis of the United Nations to assess the change in climate that is taking place and to suggest remedies for averting the harmful consequences. The Panel has estimated that the earth's average temperature may rise 2-5 degrees Celsius in the coming 100 years. This will lead to the melting of large amounts of ice deposited on the North and South Poles. The mean sea level is expected to rise and large areas of countries like Bangladesh, India and Maldives are likely to get submerged. More ultraviolet radiations from the sun are likely to reach the earth's surface leading to an increase in diseases. Extreme climate events like droughts, tsunamis and hurricanes are likely to become more intense. The Panel has launched a successful campaign under the Kyoto Protocol to restrict Carbon-di-oxide emissions that are thought to contribute to this global warming.

Leading economic powers like United States and Australia have not supported the efforts of the Panel. American President George W Bush concedes that global warming is an important issue but is unwilling to sign the Kyoto Protocol because restricting CO₂ emissions would mean higher costs for American industries and lead to lower economic growth. This approach of the US, has been condemned across the world. The honour bestowed upon the Panel by the Nobel Committee is one more challenge to this economic fundamentalism of the US. The message is that the developed countries need to become more sensitive towards rivers, clouds, forests, animals and poorer countries who may find it difficult to cope with such massive climate change. For this reason IPCC's Nobel Prize is well timed and well deserved.

But many scientists have expressed doubt about the alleged link between CO₂ emissions and global warming. For example, Canadian climatologist Timothy Ball, who has a Ph D in climatology from the University of London and has taught at the University of Winnipeg for 28 years, believes the main reason for the increase in earth's temperature is increased activity in the Sun and only a small contribution is made by CO₂ emissions. The Kyoto Protocol "is a political solution to a nonexistent problem," he says in an interview to *Tribune-Review*. John Carlisle of the Washington-based 'National Center for Public Policy Research' states in a 1998 article that over the last 700,000 years, people have had 100,000-year glaciation cycles. Each cycle typically has 90,000 years of cooling, known as an ice age, followed by an abrupt warming period, called an interglacial, which lasts 10,000-12,000 years. Earth is currently in a warm interglacial that began 10,700 years ago. There have been about seven major warming and cooling trends in this short period of warming. Of the six major warming trends prior to the current era, three produced temperatures warmer

than the present average temperature of 32.7° C. Around 8700 BC the average global temperature was about 3.3° C cooler than it is today. By 3500 BC the temperature increased to 34.4° C-1.7° C warmer than present. This is the warmest the Earth has been in this interglacial. It was during this period that the Agricultural Revolution began in the Middle East. Carlisle may have added that the foundations of the Indus Valley Civilization too were laid at this same time. The implication is that the rise in temperature predicted by IPCC may be substantially due to 'normal' warming of the earth in this interglacial. Most scientists agree that CO₂ emissions have contributed to this rise but the level of contribution is hotly debated. □□□