

The Ecologist

January/February 1997

**CAMPAIGNS
& UPDATES**

Siberut Plantation Opposed

International environmental and human rights groups have called on the Indonesian government to reject plans for a 70,000 hectare oil palm plantation in the buffer zone around Siberut National Park — a World Biodiversity Reserve. The project also involves the transmigration of settlers from Indonesia's main islands.

The National Park, which occupies nearly half of the island of Siberut, off Sumatra, was created to conserve Siberut's rich flora and fauna. Creating an oil palm plantation in the buffer zone would replace the high biodiversity of the existing forest with a monoculture, severely reducing the habitat for wildlife. In addition, forest clearance in the island's watersheds would disrupt hydrological cycles, causing water shortages and flooding. The construction of roads to support the plantation scheme would also exacerbate soil erosion and result in silt being deposited along the coast, killing coral reefs in an area designated to become a Marine Reserve.

The project is also predicted to have a severe adverse impact on Siberut's indigenous peoples. The plantation and trans-

migration sites would be established on land traditionally used by the Mentawai people. Conflicts over the project are already fragmenting the community.

The productivity of oil palms on Siberut is unproven and economic failure would leave many settlers with little option but to encroach on the traditional lands of Mentawai, including the National Park.

Critics have urged the Indonesian government to consider an alternative scheme involving the "small-scale cultivation of crops based on the rich biodiversity of the indigenous flora of Siberut." They have also called for participative mapping of the whole of Siberut to determine the extent of indigenous people's land rights and for genuine consultation with all Siberut people.

WRITE TO: Dr. Abdul Latief, Minister of Manpower Affairs, Jl. Gatot Subroto Kav. 51, Jakarta 12950, INDONESIA: Djamiludin Soerjohadikoesoemo, Minister of Forestry, Gedung Manggala Wanabakti Blok I Lt. IV, Jl. Gatot Subroto, Senayan, Jakarta Pusat, INDONESIA: Dr. Hasan Basri Durin, Governor of West Sumatra, Jl. Jend. Sudirman No. 51, Padang 25113, Sumatera Barat, INDONESIA. Ask that the scheme be reconsidered and that a full survey of impacts be made public before any decision is reached.

CONTACT: Down to Earth, 59 Athenlay Road, London SE15 3EN, UK. Tel/Fax: +44 (0)171 732

Pressure Mounts on Aracruz

The Tupinikim and Guarani Indians of Brazil have requested international support in their campaign for the demarcation of their traditional lands, much of which have been taken over by Aracruz Celulose and planted with eucalyptus (see *The Ecologist*, Sept/Oct 1996).

The claim, which has wide local support, is being fiercely resisted by the company, which argues that the Indians have no rights to the land. In January, a working group of FUNAI, the government de-

partment responsible for Indian affairs, has examined the claim and reported in favour of the Tupinikim and Guarani. The Ministry of Justice has until 13 July 1997 to make a judgement on the case.

WRITE TO: Erling Sven Lorentzen, Aracruz Celulose SA, Rua Lauro Müller, 116-21 e 22 andares, 22299-900 Rio de Janeiro-RJ, BRAZIL. Fax: +55 21 295 7943: Nelson Jobim, Minister of Justice, Esplanada dos Ministerios, Bloco T, 70064-Brasilia-DF, BRAZIL. Fax: +55 21 295 7943. Sample letters are available from *The Ecologist*.

CONTACT: CIMI-ES, Caixa Postal 30, 29190-00-Aracruz-ES, BRAZIL. Tel/Fax: +55 27 256 2374.

7984; E-mails: <dte@gn.apc.org> or <dtecampaign@gn.apc.org>

• Three UK NGOs — Tapol, the World Development Movement and the Campaign Against the Arms Trade — are seeking leave for Judicial Review of a recent government decision to grant licences for the export of water cannon and other hardware to the Indonesian authorities. The groups have evidence that UK-supplied equipment has been used to suppress peaceful demonstrations. Funds are urgently needed and donations are sought from supporters.

CONTACT: Tapol, 111 Northwood Road, Thornton Heath, Surrey CR7 8HW, UK. Tel: +44 (0)181 771 2904; Fax: +44 (0)181 653 0322.

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The Ecologist

CAMPAIGNS & UPDATES

Send news, campaigns and updates for inclusion in Campaigns & Updates to: The Ecologist (Campaigns), Agriculture House, Bath Road, Sturminster Newton, Dorset DT10 1DU, UK, E-mail: ecologist@gn.apc.org, Fax: +44- (0)1258 473748.

No copyright on campaigns.

Umbilical Cords Patent Protest

Representatives from the No Patents on Life! coalition protested in London for International Women's Day against the patenting by Biocyte, a US-based company, of umbilical cord blood cells from foetuses and newborn humans. The patent, which has been granted by the European Patent Office, gives the company complete control over the extraction and use of the cells and over any therapies developed in connection with them. The cells can be used without permission of the "donors". No consent is required for their extraction.

The action follows a legal challenge to the patent, filed in February by several concerned organisations. Under current European legislation, patents are only granted for novel processes or inventions. No Patents on Life! point out, however, that Biocyte has invented nothing. "All the company has done is to confirm that the blood cells can be isolated, deep frozen and thawed without losing their properties. Nature, not scientists, invented the cells."

The scope for future legal challenges to patents on life will be severely curtailed if a new European Directive is approved by the European Parliament in mid July. A previous Directive was thrown out by the Parliament in March 1995, following a Europe-wide campaign by NGOs. The new draft is almost identical to the 1995 Directive.

WRITE expressing concern about the draft Patent Directive to European Members of Parliament, 97-113 rue Belliard, B-1047 Brussels, BELGIUM. Call on them to vote in amendments which

will protect life and exclude all plant, animals, genes and body parts from patenting.

CONTACT: No Patents on Life!, c/o Women's Environmental Network, 87 Worship St, London EC2A 2BE, UK. Fax: +44 (0)171 247 4740

- The UN Codex Committee on Food Labelling, the international body which sets food safety standards, will meet in April to consider regulations on the introduction of genetically-engineered food. The biotech industry is lobbying Codex to pass internationally binding legislation that would permit the marketing of genetically-engineered foods in every country, without labelling or extensive testing, and mixed in with other foods. Decision making within the committee is heavily dominated by industry.

WRITE to your country's representative at Codex, expressing your concerns and demanding the labelling of genetically-engineered foods.

Details of country representatives are available on the international web at <<http://www.fao.org/waicent/nutritio.htm>>

- Groups opposed to genetically-engineered foods are collaborating to hold worldwide "Days of Action" during April. NGOs in more than 20 countries have already agreed to hold simultaneous press conferences and protests during the week of April 20th to 27th to oppose the forced introduction of Monsanto's herbicide-resistant soybeans and Ciba Ceigy/Novartis' Bt-spliced corn — the world's first genetically-engineered grains.

CONTACT: Women's Environmental Network, 87 Worship St, London EC2A 2BE, UK. Fax: +44 (0)171 247 4740. The Pure Food Campaign, USA. Tel: +1 218 226 4164; Fax: +1 218 226 4157.

Mozambique Tourist Project Approved

US millionaire James Blanchard III has won approval to set up a \$800 million "eco-tourist" project in Mozambique, according to local newspaper reports. The project, which will cover 225,000 ha on the Machangulo Peninsula and Inhaca Island, has been widely criticised (see *The Ecologist*, March/April 1996).

At least 580 households live in the area, which is rich in wildlife and includes saline and freshwater lakes. These householders will be contacted "in order to integrate them in the project or to propose their transference to other regions."

Blanchard's representative in Mozambique is quoted as saying that "the existence of several hundreds of families is the most important obstacle to the project, as there are people who have acquired rights in the area."

Blanchard intends to fence the area shortly. He will receive the land on a 50 year lease (all land in Mozambique is state-owned) and will divide the area into plots of 10 ha. These will then be sub-leased for between \$300-400,000 a plot. Those most likely to buy the leases are wealthy foreigners.

Sheep Dip Scandal

A report issued by the UK Soil Association reveals that some 200 million litres of organophosphate sheep dip — enough to fill 450 municipal swimming pools — are disposed of every year at 50,000 dipping facilities in Britain. Although the location of the dipping facilities is known to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF), the information is not available either to the public or to pollution regulatory authorities. Organophosphates (OPs) are a nerve poison and have been linked to nerve disorders in farmers and Gulf War veterans.

Official advice on disposal is contradictory and the "preferred methods" — disposal by a "reputable specialist waste contractor" — is prohibitively expensive. Most dip is spread on to the land, a practice which MAFF itself admits to be a pollution threat. A recent study by the Tweed River Purification Board in Scotland found damage to river ecosystems downstream of sheep dips. The levels of dip chemicals were below those deemed safe by the UK Environment Agency. Forty per cent of the 795 sheep dips investigated were deemed a pollution threat.

The Soil Association urges MAFF to consider organic methods for controlling sheep scab and other diseases. The organization has also welcomed a report by MAFF's Veterinary Products Committee which recommends stricter controls on disposal.

CONTACT: The Soil Association, 86 Colston Street, Bristol BS1 5BB, UK. Tel: +44 (0)117 929 0661; Fax: +44 (0)117 925 2504.

- New research has confirmed a link between organophosphate exposure and BSE (see *The Ecologist*, March/April 1992). Tests by the Institute of Psychiatry reveal that levels of OPs as low as 2 parts per million can induce abnormal movement of prion protein within living cells. This could indicate that OPs either act as a trigger for BSE or increases susceptibility to the disease. The possibility of a link between BSE and OPs was first suggested 12 years ago by Mark Purdey, an organic farmer, but has been consistently dismissed by the authorities, despite mounting evidence of a connection.

CONTACT: Mark Purdey, High Barn Farm, Elsworth, Taunton, Somerset TA4 3PX, UK. Tel: 01984 56104.

Japanese Wetland

Japanese environmental groups are calling for international support to oppose plans by the Japanese Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries to build a sea-wall across Isahaya Bay, the country's largest tidal wetland. The sea-wall was due to be completed in mid-March but protests have delayed construction.

The project is intended to control floods, reclaim 1,600 hectares (ha) for agriculture and create a 1,700 ha freshwater reservoir. An internal Ministry report, however, reveals that the seawall will exacerbate, rather than relieve, flooding. The report was suppressed for ten years but was leaked to the Japan Wetlands Action Network.

Isahaya Bay is a rich fishing ground and spawning site, as well as an internationally important stopover for migratory waterbirds. Local communities opposed the project for 20 years before accepting compensation in 1981. Citizens' groups are now calling for a review of the \$2 billion project and have submitted an alternative plan.

WRITE, opposing the project and supporting the alternative plan to the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, Department of Land Reclamation, Tokyo, JAPAN. Tel: +81 3 3501 3768; Fax: +81 3 3502 6007.

CONTACT: Japan Wetland Action Network International Liaison. Tel/Fax: +81 879 33 6763; E-mail: <BYG05310@niftyserve.or.jp>

Norway Blockade

In March, activists from Nature and Youth, a Norwegian environmental group, and other European countries stopped delivery of all timber to the Oslo factory of Norske Skog, Norway's biggest pulp and paper company. The activists demanded that the company cease using trees from old growth forests.

Norske Skog processes the vast bulk of Norway's annual timber harvest and is the third largest paper manufacturer in Europe, supplying newsprint to *The Times*, *The Observer*, *de Telegraaf* and other major newspapers. It also supplies fibre and building materials.

The action is part of an ongoing campaign by the Taiga Rescue Network to protect the last old-growth forest of Scandinavia. Activists charge that Norske Skog has failed to implement its own environmental policy which commits the company to ensuring "environmental responsibility with respect to the utilisation of raw materials in its production process, by imposing requirements on all its suppliers." The company has also been logging in the last remaining fragments of old-growth forest in Norway.

WRITE urging Norske Skog to stop using timber from old growth forests. Fax: +47 67 59 91 97.

CONTACT: Nature and Youth. Fax: +47 22 20 45 94. E-mail: <natung@sn.no>

Katse Earthquake

The filling of the giant Katse dam in Lesotho has triggered a series of earthquakes in the region. The 182-metre-high dam is one of five that make up the World Bank-sponsored Lesotho Highlands Water Project (LHWP). The project will divert water from Lesotho's rivers to South Africa (see *The Ecologist*, Sept/Oct 1994).

Houses in seven villages beside the reservoir of the dam have been damaged by tremors. In late January 1997, 12 families left the village of Mapeleng, abandoning homes which were damaged or destroyed by quakes more than a year ago. According to the World Bank, tremors continue to strike the area.

Reservoir-induced seismicity (RIS) is a widely recognized but little understood phenomenon that has occurred near at least 200 reservoirs; 30 of those had quakes larger than magnitude 4 on the Richter scale. The biggest reservoir-induced earthquake occurred at the Koyna Dam in India in 1967, killing 180 people.

Katse began to experience minor earthquakes in November 1995, just one month after it began to fill. According to the project authorities, the dam is built to withstand an earthquake of magnitude 6.5 within a 20-kilometre range. The region has experienced earthquakes as high as 6 on the Richter scale without the dam.

After the first quakes, project authorities installed temporary replacement housing for those whose homes had been destroyed and promised to relocate others who wished to move. The temporary housing was made of uninsulated metal, a poor choice for the area's severe winters.

In August 1996, project authorities said they hoped to have seriously damaged houses rebuilt "within six months". In late January 1997, the Highlands Church Action Group (HCAG), a Lesotho NGO, wrote that the 12 families left Mapeleng to "seek refuge in other villages" because "absolutely no progress" had been made on resettling the village or rebuilding houses. In addition to the destroyed houses, another 50 were cracked by the tremors. Most remain unrepaired.

CONTACT: International Rivers Network, 1847 Berkeley Way, Berkeley, CA 94703, USA. Tel: +1 510 848 1155; Fax: +1 510 848 1008; E-mail: <irn@igc.apc.org>

Czechs Oppose Swiss Incinerator Plan

Opponents of plans by the Swiss multinational Von Roll to build a 96,000 ton a year incinerator near Liberec in the Czech Republic have called on European Union citizens to write to the Czech ambassador in their country to protest against the incinerator.

Children of the Earth, a Czech NGO, warns that the incinerator will cause major dioxin pollution, not only endangering the health of people in Liberec but also of those across the border in Poland and Germany. There are no limits on dioxin emissions from incinerators in the Czech Republic. The company has admitted that emissions will be 12 times higher than permitted in the EU.

CONTACT: Children of the Earth, PO Box 70, 16100 Praha 6, CZECH REPUBLIC. Tel/Fax: +42 2 527123; E-mail: <deti.zeme@ecn.cz>

• A coalition of 40 grassroots groups in Galicia, Spain, is seeking international support to stop the construction of a municipal solid waste incinerator at Coruña. Thousands have signed a petition against the proposed incinerator which will burn some 400-500,000 tonnes of waste a year, threatening severe dioxin pollution. The coalition is calling for an alternative disposal strategy which will ensure that the 800,000 tonnes of waste produced annually in the region is recycled, composted or reused. At present, the bulk of the waste is dumped in uncontrolled landfills.

WRITE opposing the incinerator and supporting the coalition's demands to Xunta de Galicia - COTOP, Edificio San Caltaro, Santiago, SPAIN.

CONTACT: Taler Educacion Ambiental, Campus Universitario, 15705 Santiago, SPAIN. Tel: +34 (0)81 584 321; Fax: +34 (0)81 584533.

Shell to Re-Enter Ogoniland?

Despite promises not to recommence oil operations in Ogoniland, Nigeria, without the consent of local communities, Shell appears to be making plans to re-enter the area regardless. Opponents point to the bribing of local chiefs and an international PR campaign as evidence that the company is paving the way for re-entry.

Shell withdrew from Ogoniland in 1993 following local protests. Since then, Shell has repeatedly stated that the company had "no plans to resume oil operations." Such a step, according to the company, "would be taken only after full discussion and agreement with all Ogoni communities and opinion leaders." Yet no discussions have taken place with MOSOP, the local movement opposed to Shell's operations. Most of MOSOP's leaders and others critical of the environmental and social impacts of oil production in Ogoniland have had to flee Nigeria for fear of reprisals from the military government.

Shell is currently being sued by the families of Ken Saro-Wiwa and another of the Ogonis executed by the government for their opposition to Shell's operations. The families charge the company with having consented to or supported the executions and of conspiring with the government "to violently and ruthlessly suppress any opposition to [Shell's] conduct ... in Ogoni and the Niger Delta."

In January, over 80,000 people rallied throughout Ogoniland to protest against the company's activities. Four were killed

when police fired into peaceful crowds. Addressing supporters in London, acting President of MOSOP, Ledum Mitee, called on activists to step up the pressure on Shell. Winning the Ogoni issue, say activists, is key for all activists fighting for environmental rights in the face of multinational power.

WRITE opposing the re-entry of Shell to Ogoniland to Alan Detheridge, Senior Corporate Advisor, Shell International Ltd., Shell Centre, London SE1 7NA, UK. Fax: +44 (0)171 934 7632.

CONTACT: DELTA, Box Z, 13 Biddulph Street, Leicester LE2 1BH, UK. Tel/Fax: +44 (0)116 255 3223; E-mail: <lynx@gn.apc.org>

- **Shell plans to start drilling for gas in an area of rainforest set aside by the Peruvian government as a homeland for the nomadic Nahua and Kugapakori Indians. The 40-year, \$2.7 billion project will be one of the largest gas operations in South America and threatens seriously to disrupt the livelihoods and health of the Nahua and Kugapakori. After Shell conducted preliminary exploration of the region in the mid-1980s, a group of Nahua was exposed to whooping cough and influenza, losing an estimated 50% of their people. The survivors are thought to have fled deep into the forest. The drilling is slated to begin in July.**

WRITE opposing the drilling to Alan Hunt, General Manager, Shell Prospecting and Development (Peru), Av. Nicol s Arriola No. 740, Lima 13 PERU. Fax: +51 12 242 037.

CONTACT Rainforest Action Network, 450 Sansome Street, Suite 700, San Francisco, CA 9410, USA. Tel: +1 415 398 4404. Fax: +1 415 398 2732. E-mail: <amazonia@ran.org>

McDonalds Toys Violate Workers Rights

A Hong Kong-based company producing giveaway toys in Vietnam for McDonalds has been accused of seriously violating its workers' rights.

In February, 220 workers at Keyhinge Toys (Vietnam) became seriously ill and were forced to stop work as a result of acetone poisoning and overwork. Twenty-five workers collapsed and three were admitted to hospital.

In a second incident, 200 workers were illegally dismissed. The company was subsequently ordered to reinstate the workers after an investigation by trade unions and the Department of Labour, War Invalids and Social Welfare.

Keyhinge Toys (Vietnam) Co. is located in Da Nang City and employs 1,872 workers. Wholly owned by a Hong Kong company, it was granted a 25 year licence in 1996 to operate in Vietnam. Workers at the company labour for 9 to 10 hours a day, seven days a week, and earn on 60-70 cents (US) a day, less than the minimum wage. In further violation of the labour laws, the management failed to provide the workers with employment contracts. 722 workers have already resigned in protest against poor working conditions and labour rights violations.

CONTACT: The Coalition for the Safe Production of Toys. E-mail: <hkcc@hknet.com>

IN BRIEF ●●●●●●●●●●

DEATH SQUAD THREAT

Victor Julio Garzon Hernandez, Secretary of the National Federation of Agricultural Trade Unions of Colombia (FENSUAGRO), and a leading peasant activist was assassinated outside his office on March 7th. FENSUAGRO have called on the government to prosecute the assassins and to take action to protect peasant activists against threats from paramilitary death squads.

EXPLOSION AT JAPANESE NUKE PLANT

On the evening of 11 March, an explosion occurred at the bituminization facility of the Tokaimura nuclear plant in Japan. The explosion caused damage throughout the building and exposed a number of workers to radiation. It is possible that an earlier fire in the building caused the explosion.

ECONOMISTS CRITIQUE EMU

Almost 100 Dutch economists have signed an appeal against European Monetary Union (EMU). The economists warn that embracing a single European currency will result in "a further dismantling of national social-fiscal policy and the European public sector". They conclude that the current EMU plans will exacerbate existing problems of unemployment, social exclusion and environmental degradation in the European Union.

LEGAL FIRST

The first ever international environmental lawsuit started in March at the International Court of Justice in The Hague. The case involves the Gabčíkovo-Nagymaros Dam project, which was to have been jointly built and operated by Hungary and Slovakia. However, protests over the environmental impacts of the project led Hungary to withdraw. Slovakia claims this was unlawful and that Hungary is legally obliged to complete and operate the dam.

ENRON AGAIN

The \$13 billion US-based Enron Development Corporation has announced plans for further huge investments in power generation and gas distribution in India. The company is bidding for projects in Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra.