

World Environment Day

Inauguration of 36th World Environment Day Celebration Organised by KIIT University and Orissa Environmental Society at Auditorium, Krishna Campus, KIIT University, Bhubaneswar on 5.6.2008

It is a matter of great pleasure to be here this morning to inaugurate the 36th World Environment Day Celebration organized by KIIT University in association with Orissa Environmental Society. As you are well aware, today the 5th of June is celebrated every year around the globe at the initiative of United Nations as part of its Environment Programme. The very purpose of the observance is to enhance global awareness on the environment and the urgent need for its protection. Eradication of poverty and protecting environment are the two of UN Millennium Development Goals. It is very encouraging as well as positive sign that the interest in World Environment Day is growing each year as evidenced by the number of countries lending their support to the purpose of this important United Nations Day.

By celebrating the Day, the people in different corners of the globe come together in expressing their solidarity for redressing this issue of serious concern. I appreciate the effort of KIIT University and Orissa Environmental Society in joining hands on the most threatening issue of environmental degradation that puts into risk the very survival of humanity and other life forms on Mother Earth. In doing so, KIIT University, besides focusing on creating future human resource of the country, has shown its commitment to strive for a better and healthier future. Similarly, Orissa Environmental Society, a state level forum which consists of educationists, scientists and eminent people in different fields, is working actively in multi-disciplinary fields related to environment. I had the pleasure of participating in its 25th Foundation Day last year and becoming aware of its dedicated work.

World Environment Day is also meant to be an intellectual event, providing opportunities for seminars, workshops and symposia on preserving the environmental health of our planet for the benefit of the present generation as well as of generations to

come. This annual event seeks to draw global attention on a particular theme. The theme or slogan for this year's World Environment Day has been "Kick the Habit : Towards a Low Carbon Economy." With the growing need to realize the serious impact of climate change on earth and on different life forms, the theme selected for this year is very much relevant and appropriate also. We have to put special focus on the emission of greenhouse gas and also to think seriously on how to reduce them. The need of the hour is to find out means to promote low carbon economy with a view to shape a better and healthier future. I stand before you today to share my views on this issue of highest priority.

Challenges facing mankind on the environmental front have become truly global and pressing. It is increasingly realized that the human race stands at the cross roads in choosing the options it has in the areas of environment and development. Before we reach a point of no return, we must take tangible steps and follow a road that leads to sustainability.

Decades ago when environment was not a buzzword like today, father of the nation, Mahatma Gandhi had said, "There is enough to satisfy every man's needs, but not every man's greed". This is a statement with profound social and economic relevance. The way we are encroaching upon the environment with our development processes and luxurious lifestyle we on the other hand are becoming responsible for its degradation. One of such effects on environment is the rapid change witnessed in the climate all over the globe. Climate change is emerging as one of the greatest environmental as well as social and economic threats.

Now-a-days one often comes across people talking how the weather is getting different than it was few years ago. Even we are noticing the changes in the weather. The earth's climate has changed many times over millions of years. Then what makes climate change different today? The world's scientists and environmentalist have agreed that human activities contribute a lot to climate change in the manner of burning fossil fuels and land use changes like deforestation. These cause emissions of carbon dioxide, the main

gas responsible for the climate change as well as other greenhouse gases. These result in global warming, which later leads to extreme weather events like flood, draught, windstorm and hurricane. World Disasters Report, 2008 states that in 2007, 414 natural disasters were recorded in the world whereby 201 million people were affected and it shows a 40% increase from the year 2006. In this context, the issue of climate change demands a sense of urgency from all quarters before it is too late. Environmentalist and scientists have stressed the need to bring in changes the way we co-exist with the environment.

A change over is necessary from non-renewable and polluting energy systems to those that are renewable and non-polluting. Much of the pollution of today that causes the generation of greenhouse gases, resulting change in global climate and sea-level rise, owes its origin primarily to non-renewable energy utilization. In fact, choosing a good energy strategy is actually choosing a good strategy for environment. So, if the energy options are right, then environmental aspects and more particularly the aspect of climate change will surely be taken care of. Adoption of solar energy is a better option, as it is non-polluting and perpetual. Time has come for the renewables to come into mainstream of energy and policy makers have to give a boost to this option in concrete form.

In other areas as well, a change over is needed from the present resource-intensive and pollution-prone technologies to environment friendly technologies where less resources including energy are used. The indicator of such technology is maximum output of usable product with the use of minimum energy and generation of minimum pollution. Eco-labeling of products has to become an integral part of technology and business. In doing this, we can be able to check the emission of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases into the atmosphere and restrict their ill effect.

There is urgent need for collective effort to tackle the seriousness that arises from environment degradation. At the global level there is need for a transition for nations from fighting environmental problems alone to fighting collectively on a regional basis. It

becomes necessary because of the inherent regional / global character of environmental problems. Besides this, there has to be a voluntary curb on the part of every individual to restrict his / her ever growing wants. If we change as individual then society will change.

So let us commit ourselves to care for our Mother Earth and take pledge to promote low carbon economies in the form of improved energy efficiency, alternative energy sources, forest conservation and eco-friendly consumption with a view to shape a better and healthier future. So before time runs out let us act quickly by pressing the panic button and kick the habit and contribute to greenhouse gas reductions and make our planet beautiful for all life forms to live in happily.

With these words, I have great pleasure being with you on this World Environment Day and wish our sincere efforts will aim for the preservation of the environment.

Let Orissa take the lead for restoration of green and serene environment.

Jai Hind