

A new opportunity in Kuwait

Dr R K Pachauri, February 22, 2012

I have just come back from a one day trip to Kuwait where we signed a contract with the Kuwait Oil Corporation (KOC) for cleaning up oil contaminated soil in Kuwait. This is by far the largest project that TERI would be executing, and certainly the most complex in terms of the managerial challenge that it presents. It would have been easy and quite valid on our part to have not bid for this project, but we would then have foregone an important opportunity. Overall, this KOC project will be funded to the extent of 10.9 million Kuwaiti Dinars (approx. Rs.200 crores) and provides a unique opportunity to take our technology overseas.

The reason why TERI is taking on such a complex activity is because firstly we have developed a technology through painstaking research, trials and actual implementation, which has enormous potential for dissemination across the world. Secondly, this project, if implemented successfully would give us enormous visibility in the Gulf region and in other parts of the world as well where oil spills and oil sludge deposits are adversely affecting soil to different degrees. The net revenue from this project would be limited, because TERI would have to incur significant expenses for implementing it, but as an exercise from which we would gain experience, the value of the project would be extremely high.

I believe there is also an important strategic dimension that we as an Indian institution should not lose sight of. Kuwait as a country generates huge revenue surpluses from oil exports. They have been very wise investors for the last 40 odd years, and have ensured that they not only get reasonable returns from their investments, but also achieve a high level of security which is not always the case with countries and societies with substantial amounts of capital to spend. If we get into a relationship with appropriate Kuwaiti organizations, not only would this open up avenues for funds inflow to TERI, but it would also bring Kuwait and India closer together with major strategic interest in the socio-economic and political arenas. During the course of my brief stay I not only met the Chairman of KOC, but also the Minister of Oil and two ministerial level advisors to the Amir of Kuwait. They are now, at least according to their words, looking at India as a partner and a destination for investments rather than going to the west for all their business deals. I believe TERI can play a role in changing perceptions and priorities in Kuwait by which our two countries can come closer together and TERI could open up some new opportunities in that country.

While conveying this news, may I acknowledge with gratitude the remarkable role that Dr Banwari Lal has played not only in developing the Oilzapper technology, but also in pursuing the Kuwait opportunity most diligently. He has of course received enormous help from Air Cmde. Joshi and other colleagues but Dr Banwari Lal clearly stands out prominently for his phenomenal contribution.