# Selling the Montreal Protocol to developing sector nations

by Marjorie Mazel Hecht

Why would any nation, especially a developing nation, jeopardize its food supply and the health of its population by agreeing to give up the safe, cheap, efficient substances, such as freon, that are now used as refrigerants? This was the question I sought to answer in a series of interviews with environment ministers of developing countries that have participated in the Montreal Protocol, the 1987 treaty that mandates the phaseout of chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs). These nations, which are striving to raise their living standard to be appropriate for the 21st century, stand to lose the most from the ban on CFCs, because the replacements are costly as well as caustic and require new production equipment, thus draining funds from necessary development activities.

Interviewed here is India's Minister of the Environment Shri Kamal Nath, who was elected president of the Montreal Protocol nations group at the group's November meeting in Copenhagen. Nath's responses make it clear that the U.N. Environment Program (UNEP), under which the Montreal Protocol was organized, has presented only one side of the ozone story to member states—the scare story. The statements and research of experienced atmospheric scientists who have analyzed the ozone hole as a natural, seasonal phenomenon have not been allowed to appear in U.N. reports and science journals, and therefore have not been part of the decision-making process. Similarly, the statements of those scientists who have been measuring ozone and ultraviolet radiation (UV) for years and who see no global decline in ozone and no increase in UV do not appear in the U.N. documents.

Nath also says that India's compliance with the phase-out schedule is entirely dependent on the Montreal Fund (set up to "help" developing nations comply with the Protocol) providing the funding necessary to cover the additional costs to the Indian economy of developing CFC substitutes. Should the technology transfer for substitutes not be made available "at a time and price which allows India to achieve the intended phaseout," Nath says, "we naturally cannot be held responsible."

To cover its deliberate omissions of scientific evidence, UNEP's argument is, as Nath states, if we don't know for sure, "it's better to be safe than sorry." But exactly this philosophy is likely to backfire. Business and government officials are beginning to realize that there are no safe "drop-in" replacements, and that the costs involved are even more enormous than estimated. Simultaneously, the U.S. national press has finally begun to reveal the truth: The ozone hole scare is a hoax.

A lengthy front-page article in the April 15 *Washington Post* described the ozone layer accurately as a "renewable resource," and noted that even environmentalist leaders concede that there is no catastrophe. A *Detroit News* editorial on ozone on April 18 began, appropriately, "The apocalypse has been canceled. . . ." And as the *Washington Times* summed it up in a May 19 article, "Evidence is mounting that ozone depletion is not a problem, and the Chicken Littles of the media are beginning to eat crow."

As the signers of the Montreal Protocol realize that they've been "had," it will be clear that safety lies in overturning the Montreal Protocol before billions of dollars and millions of lives are lost in order to comply with a big lie.

## Interview: Shri Kamal Nath

# India's program to replace CFCs

*Shri Kamal Nath is Minister for Environment and Forests for India and serves as the president of the Montreal Protocol group. He was interviewed in April by Marjorie Mazel Hecht, managing editor of* 21st Century Science & Technology *magazine, and he submitted his answers in writing.*

**Q:** What is the impact of the phaseout of chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) for India? What effect will this have on the food supply, by making refrigeration more costly? What impact will it have on plans for industrial development?

**Nath:** The total demand for ozone-depleting substances in India in 1990 has been estimated by the Task Force to be 4,700 million metric tons. This includes Group I and II substances. For refrigeration/air conditioning, the figures for 1990 and 2010 are 2,100 million metric tons and 18,000 million metric tons, respectively. Compared to the rest of the