

Response to GP's activity on Websites / Blogs post Tata Steel AGM on 27th August'09

Some shareholders of Tata Steel brought up the concerns raised by Greenpeace about the impact of the Dhamra Port on the nesting habitat of Olive Ridley Turtles at Tata Steel's 102nd AGM in Mumbai on the 27th August'09. The shareholders, Retd. Admiral Ramdas, Ms Lalita Ramdas (Chairperson of Greenpeace International) and Mr Chatterjee, requested the Chairman of Tata Steel, Mr Ratan Tata, to discuss the issue with them and to stop work at the port site till another environment impact study was done.

Mr Tata responded immediately to their concerns and said that my invitation is “ **to you Admiral Ramdas**” and anybody else who would be interested and Mr Muthuraman would make the arrangements for you all to take the time to satisfy yourselves in terms of what we are doing.

Mr Tata also said that “**this year we had**” a normal nesting of turtles “**where the turtle breeding ground is always meant to be, which is quite some distance away from Dharma**” and added further that we do not believe that this port is actually the cause of any nesting problems to turtles.

But despite the openness and spirit of cooperation displayed by Mr Tata, Greenpeace has taken the opportunity to go into a communication overdrive in its websites as well as blogs to say that Mr Tata has agreed for the first time to meet them on the subject. It is indeed ironic that the consultation process was initiated by Tata Steel, L&T and DPCL as soon as the JV started in 2004, and not by Greenpeace. The senior management of DPCL & Tata Steel has met Greenpeace and other environmental organizations at least eight times since the JV started in 2004 and offered prominent environment organizations such as BNHS and WWF-India to conduct a study to ascertain the impact of the port. These organizations asked the company to stop work for a year, which it did. But strangely the organizations backed out from conducting a study without giving any reasons.

Greenpeace was a late entrant and they also decided to do a study but none was done. Instead a study done by the North Orissa University was touted as positive proof of the port harming the nesting of turtles. The university has contested the veracity of the version of the report put up by Greenpeace on its website. In all the eight meetings since 2004, Greenpeace has expressed only emotional outbursts without any scientific basis. In absence of any guidance in the matter from these organizations, Tata Steel requested IUCN to be its environmental advisor for the port construction.

Expressing his anguish on the attitude of the organizations, Mr Tata said in his reply to one of the shareholders that **“We engaged the National Institute of Oceanography to do an assessment of the dredging on the shoreline of Dhamra and Gahirmatha areas of that port.” “... Greenpeace, who has been making most of the issues on this, I understand, has refused to come to meetings.... We would be happy to take them there ... and show them what we are doing and what we believe are all the facts that we have obtained. We standby what we had committed..... to ensure that we safeguard the environment....”**

We are disappointed that Greenpeace has used Mr Ratan Tata’s transparent offer to Tata Steel shareholders as a ploy to generate publicity through its websites and blogs, where they have appealed for funding in the same breadth. We wish they will try to address the issues of turtle conservation rather than use it as a means for one-upmanship and pecuniary purposes