

CSR BULLETIN FOR THE ICT SECTOR



The ASK-Verité ICT Newsletter is a periodic platform created for discussion and sharing of world-wide initiatives, happenings, and viewpoints on the sector's social responsibilities. This issue provides information about corporate initiatives taking place in the ICT sector in India, and highlights global ICT initiatives.

PROGRESS REPORT FROM INDIA: NEWS SUMMARY

This section of the bulletin provides a summary of developments taking place in the Information & Communications Technology (ICT) sector in India and also offers insights into events that are shaping the direction of this sector.

...ON ITES

For the past many months, the issue of the need for unionisation of the BPO sector has been the topic of serious debate between leading trade unions like CITU and the government. A recent UNI report also highlights the issue of growing unions in India, with an emphasis on the need for a union in the IT sector. At the same time, recent media reports highlight the high stress levels amongst BPO professionals; however, the government has responded by announcing that the BPO sector does not need a regulator for overseeing labour conditions.

GROWING UNIONS IN INDIA

<http://www.union-network.org/uniflashes.nsf/unireport?openpage>

A recent report by UNI on the increase of unions in India, places an emphasis on the need for a union in the IT sector. Additionally, the report indicates that despite the challenge to organise workers in the IT sector, it is imperative, due to the high stress levels in the industry. The report highlights that UNITES is reaching out to the sector in new ways, for instance through skills building. ■

TAKING UNIONS TO MOBILE PHONE WORKERS IN INDIA

<http://www.uniglobalunion.org/uninetnews.nsf/58f61ccf5875fe90c12567bb005642f9/83f9ca07c61b4c28c12573910054f6ad?OpenDocument>

In October 2007, Indian telecom delegates discussed plans to organise workers in the private mobile phone companies in India. Although unions are well established in public telecom companies, private companies have yet to unionise. ■

CITU 'HELP' FOR IT STAFF

<http://www.hindu.com/2007/10/18/stories/2007101852680300.htm>

The Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU) will help employees working in IT and BPO companies should they choose to collaborate with the union. The CITU all-India secretary, K. Hema Latha, is of the opinion that the young professionals in this industry should understand the need for appropriate means to address their grievances. Dr Latha indicated that the UPA Government will soon be asked to implement labour laws in this sector.

Dr. Latha reported that the CITU would oppose separate labour laws for Special Economic Zones (SEZs), stating that, "Promoters of all the SEZs across the country have been enjoying many sops but failed either in generating employment avenues or earning revenue from exports." ■

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About ASK-Verité

Founded in 1992, the **Association for Stimulating Know-How (ASK)** is one of the few non-profit organizations in India working extensively in the field of corporate social responsibility. ASK functions as the South Asia Regional Program Office for Verité, undertaking social audits and research on CSR issues and facilitating factory-level remediation and trainings. ASK also supports programs as diverse as finding alternatives for child laborers in the brass industry in India, and working with indigenous communities in rural South Asia.

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Verité is an independent, non-profit social auditing, research, and training organization based in Amherst, Massachusetts, USA. Founded in 1995, the organization helps to improve the lives of workers and assists the corporations that employ these workers to better balance profitability with social responsibility. Verité provides social audits, factory remediation, corporate training, labor research, and worker education in over 60 countries worldwide. Verité is a winner of the 2007 Skoll Award for Social Entrepreneurship.

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The **ASK-Verité** partnership undertakes research and capacity building programs focused on India to improve working conditions. We also collaborate to build capacity among corporations globally to assess and remediate factory-level labor problems.

COMING SOON, HEALTHCARE NORMS FOR BPO STAFF

http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/Infotech/ITeS/Healthcare_norms_for_BPO_staff_coming_soon/articleshow/2433354.cms

As a result of growing concern for IT-BPO workers, Health Minister Anbumani Ramadoss stated that the Ministry is looking into setting health related guidelines for the industry. Ramadoss reported that workers as young as 24 are dying of heart attack and diabetes. However, major stakeholders in the IT and ITeS industry, including president and COO of ExIService Holdings, Rohit Kapoor, and Nasscom president-designate, Som Mittal, resist the Minister's efforts, indicating that every industry has its difficulties, and business will meet the minimum should guidelines be set. ■

NO PLANS TO APPOINT REGULATOR IN BPO COMPANIES: GOV'T

http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/Infotech/ITeS/No_plans_to_appoint_regulator_in_BPO_companies_Govt/articleshow/2559288.cms

As a written response to questions in Rajya Sabha, Labour Minister, Oscar Fernandes, has stated that the government has no plans to appoint a regulator for overseeing labour conditions in BPO companies. Fernandes reported that the working conditions in Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) companies are regulated by provisions of the Shops and Establishments Act of respective state governments and work hours of BPO employees are governed by provisions within this Act. Fernandes indicated that complaints of individual workers would be handled by the appropriate authorities. ■

...ON IT SOFTWARE

IT companies are developing 'green' and community oriented initiatives. The Secretary General of ISO stated that India should be more proactive in leading and setting new international standards. Jairam Ramesh, Union Minister of State for Commerce, and Jakshmi Narayanan, NASSCOM chairman, express their views on the state of the IT industry.

IT'S TIME FOR TECHIES TO GO GREEN!

http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/Infotech/Software/Its_time_for_techies_to_go_green/articleshow/2572968.cms

Most IT companies in India are undertaking eco-friendly initiatives and going the 'green' way, not only because of cost effectiveness but also because most international clients want to be environmentally friendly, resulting in considerable acclaim for eco-friendly initiatives.

For instance, Wipro is encouraging its employees to circulate used paper to cut down on paper consumption. Microsoft has linked up with an NGO, working with school children in the tribal areas of Nagarahole, to distribute notebooks made by binding together used office sheets. Others like Unisys are using campaigns like 'Vanishing Tree' to spread awareness on reducing paper waste among its employees. With the issue of e-waste gaining enormous significance, some companies are also partnering with NGOs like Saahas and E-Parisara for e-waste disposal. ■

HIV TESTING AT BPOs MAY BE ILLEGAL

http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/Personal_Finance/Savings_Centre/HIV_testing_at_BPOs_may_be_illegal/articleshow/2338422.cms

In June 2007, some BPOs announced they were considering introducing HIV testing at call centres. Immediate concern was raised as to the legality of the testing, and whether such testing would create discriminatory hiring and employment practices. The government indicated that there is no "public health rationale" for mandatory HIV testing; and further indicated that HIV testing should not be a precondition for employment in private firms. ■

ANOTHER KILLING HIGHLIGHTS CALL CENTRE SECURITY

<http://www.uniglobalunion.org/uninetnews.nsf/58f61ccf5875fe90c12567bb005642f9/83f9ca07c61b4c28c12573910054f6ad?OpenDocument>

Another young BPO female employee has been raped and killed in India. The driver has been implicated as an accomplice, an incident similar to those which took place in Bangalore two years ago. Security is a major issue at call and BPO centres with staff being transported to remote sites around the clock. ■

TRAINING SCHOOLS FOR IT PROS

<http://www.nasscom.in/Nasscom/templates/NormalPage.aspx?id=52802>

International School of Information Technologies (ISIT), promoted by US-based Indian software firm, A-Cube Soft, has launched a finishing school that bridges the gap between potential workers' current skills and employability. This industry-oriented training programme was developed for technical and management graduates, and has been aligned with industry needs. ■

NEW IBM CENTRE TO OFFER SOLUTIONS FOR DISABLED

<http://www.efytimes.com/efytimes/fullnews.asp?edid=23078>

Human Ability and Accessibility Centre, launched by IBM India, seeks to make technology and information easily accessible to people in India with various disabilities. The centre is located in New Delhi's India Research Lab and will focus on "social, economic and physical disadvantages and create opportunities for every individual to realise the potential of their abilities." ■

IT IN INDIA: BIG SUCCESS, LARGE GAPS TO BE FILLED

<http://www.nasscom.in/Nasscom/templates/NormalPage.aspx?id=52652>

In his address to the Nasscom Executive Board on September 19, 2007, the Union Minister of State for Commerce, Jairam Ramesh, stated that growth of the IT industry in the past decade has been notable, although mostly in the export sector. Ramesh indicated that the IT industry's "multiplicative impact will start becoming visible and tangible."

According to Ramesh, the IT industry will employ up to a third of the growth in the urban labour force over the next three to four years. However, the problem lies in the slow geographical spread of IT. Ramesh emphasized that "infrastructure and connectivity will have to improve but some entrepreneurial endeavour will not be out of place." For example, NASSCOM should engage regional governments currently not involved in the IT sector to enhance the geographical reach of the industry. ■

ANY SLOWDOWN IN THE IT INDUSTRY CAN HAVE A CASCADING EFFECT: LAKSHMI NARAYANAN<http://www.hindu.com/2007/10/20/stories/2007102056571300.htm>

In an online question and answer session, Lakshmi Narayanan, NASSCOM chairman and Cognizant Technology Solutions Vice Chairman, indicated that not only are States within India competing for IT and BPO investments, but countries including China, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, and those in Latin America are competing for these substantial employment opportunities. Narayanan expressed the need to review national IT policies and regulations to ensure that the intent of encouraging the IT and BPO industry is reflected in the regulations and their implementation, as well as to ensure that policies are changed to be competitive in a global scenario.

Of concern to many is India's ability to compete given the rapid appreciation of the rupee. Narayanan is of the opinion that the government can ensure that the interests of the industry are protected. With regard to the issue of unions in the IT industry, Narayanan indicated that "self-regulation is the best form of regulation" for any sector and "any administered regulation in any form is not the answer." ■

INDIA SHOULD DRIVE NEW STANDARDS: SECRETARY GENERAL ISO<http://www.mait.com/homeitnews1.jsp?id=433>

Alan Bryden, Secretary General of ISO (International Standards Organisation) stated that India should shift from following standards already in place to driving and setting new international standards. This has come in the wake of India's booming economy and rapid strides made by the country in the IT sector. ■

...ON IT HARDWARE

TFI's December 2006 report indicates that technology companies remain wary of India's ability to support major manufacturing operations. DELL is shutting down its India hardware R&D unit, leading to loss of employment for its staff. ELCINA is demanding that the hardware sector not be overlooked by the industry and government, at a time when imports are swarming the domestic market. The EICC has been making progress towards CSR goals in recent months.

DELL TO SHUT DOWN INDIA HARDWARE R&D UNIThttp://www.eetindia.co.in/ART_8800492949_1800000_NT_61a90109.HTM

Dell Inc. is about to shut down its hardware research and development unit in Bengaluru, India, and will move the work to centres in Texas, USA and Taiwan. It is estimated that two dozen to 170 staff members will lose their jobs; staff have been given 45 days to find new employment. ■

ENERGY CONSERVATION FINDS NEW URGENCYhttp://www.eetindia.co.in/ART_8800490850_1800008_NT_aab5cebc.HTM

In a December 2007 article, Ramesh S., Chairman of Powertronix Systems Pvt. Ltd., explains that the demand for energy is expected to grow twice as fast in India over the next 20 years. As a result, improvements in energy efficiency and management will significantly contribute to efforts at keeping competitive with the growth of the global economy. Ramesh S. suggests that improvement in electrical systems may result in energy conservation; additionally, engineers can undertake certain steps to improve energy conservation. ■

ELECTRONICS INDUSTRY CODE OF CONDUCT—PROGRESS UPDATEhttp://www.eicc.info/downloads/EICC_Progress_Update_oct_07.doc

The Electronics Industry Code of Conduct (EICC) group reports progress on achieving its goal to improve social and environmental performance in the electronics sector.

Key areas of progress reported include:

- Completion of the pilot phase of 17 audits of electronics manufacturers conducted by certified third party monitoring organizations.
- Completion of a new online tool that allows members to share self-assessment surveys; these self-assessment surveys measure compliance with the EICC.
- Reporting on the collaboration between the electronics industry, and government and non-government organizations on improving supply chain conditions in China.
- Creation of a weblog to foster greater collaboration and interaction between various IT stakeholders.

Additionally, a new working group has been formed to research and develop reporting mechanisms for the group's progress. ■

ELCINA DEMANDS LEVEL PLAYING FIELD FOR LOCAL ELECTRONIC INDUSTRY<http://news.webindia123.com/news/Articles/India/20071207/843390.html>

ELCINA has requested that the government impose certain conditions that encourage the domestic production of components. ELCINA President A. G. Rohira reported that the IT industry, which has the greatest potential for job creation, is struggling to survive, largely due to higher interest rates, energy costs, and taxes. Rohira indicated that the quantity of imports in the market also contributes to the industry's difficulties. ELCINA officials are warning that the situation may become worse if the industry is not "given a level playing field." ■

MANUFACTURING IN INDIA: PICKING UP THE PACE DESPITE THE SPEED BUMPS<http://www.emsnow.com/npps/story.cfm?id=23738>

A recent research report released by Technology Forecasters Inc. (TFI) in December 2006 finds that, of 400 companies surveyed, the number of electronics companies selling products in India will increase by 24 percent in the next two years. Additionally, 21 percent of those surveyed indicated that they are planning to outsource to India within the next two years. Most companies look to India as a potential market for sales, not as a potential export hub, as is the case with China. Despite this growth, the report indicates that many technology companies remain wary of India's ability to support major manufacturing operations. ■

...ON E-WASTE

The newly drafted Hazardous Materials (Management, Handling and Transboundary Movement) Rules have received criticism from NGOs, environmentalists, and civil society organisations. This section also highlights findings of recent studies done in the area of e-waste, as well as new initiatives of industry associations like ELCINA in the area of environmentally friendly manufacturing.

DRAFT HAZARDOUS MATERIALS (MANAGEMENT, HANDLING AND TRANSBOUNDARY MOVEMENT)

<http://www.toxicslink.org/pub-view.php?pubnum=182>

A branch of the Indian government, MoEF, has announced the release of the Hazardous Materials (Management, Handling and Transboundary Movement) draft legislation. The legislation is aimed "at enabling the recovery and/or reuse of useful materials from hazardous materials generated from a process, thereby reducing the hazardous wastes destined for final disposal and to ensure the environmentally sound management of all hazardous materials." ■

A copy of the draft legislation is available at the above web address.

'SAFE BURIAL' FOR E-WASTE IN CITY SOON

<http://www.hindu.com/2007/10/05/stories/2007100561990100.htm>

Hyderabad will soon see the first safe disposal facility for discarded electronic items in the city of Maheshwaram in the E-waste Management Facility. This facility is the first of its kind in the State and is the second one in the country. ■

GO GREEN, JOIN ELCINA Eco-DESIGN CLUB!

<http://www.efytimes.com/efytimes/22893/news.htm>

In order to encourage environmentally friendly manufacturing in India, the Electronic Industries Association of India (ELCINA) has formally launched its Eco-Design Club (EDC) for stakeholders in the electronics industry. The Eco-Design tool contains updated information on various legislation world-wide, checklists, and other information that can help electronics companies practice environment-friendly manufacturing and develop green products. ■

The Eco-Design tool can be accessed at www.cfsd.org.uk/aede.

STUDIES ON E-WASTE**KOLKATA EMERGING AS A MAJOR HAZARDOUS ELECTRONIC WASTE RECYCLING HUB**

<http://toxicslink.org/mediapr-view.php?pressrelnum=83>

Delhi-based Toxics Link has released a study mapping the e-waste scenario in Kolkata, revealing that not only is the city fast joining other metropolitan areas in generating e-waste, but is also emerging as a major centre for recycling hazardous e-waste imported from overseas and other parts of India.

The study, *E-waste: Flooding the city of joy*, places the figure of e-waste generated in Kolkata at 9,000 tonnes annually. This only includes the waste generated from computers, television sets, and refrigerators, implying that the figure is much higher if other electronic items are added.

Besides establishing estimates of e-waste generated, the study also reflects the low level of awareness of the health impact that unorganised recycling has on health and the environment. ■

ENVIRONMENTALISTS: INDIA'S PROPOSED WASTE LAW TO OFFICIALLY TURN IT INTO GLOBAL WASTE DESTINATION

<http://www.toxicslink.org/mediapr-view.php?pressrelnum=86>

The draft Hazardous Materials (Management, Handling and Transboundary Movement) Rules, 2007, announced in November 2007, has generated considerable debate and criticism amongst environmentalists and leading civil society leaders, who are concerned that the draft legislation will create an environment in which hazardous waste will be "dumped" in India, under the guise of recycling. The draft Hazardous Materials (Management, Handling and Transboundary Movement) Rules, 2007, proposes redefining "hazardous waste" as "hazardous material." Critics note that such changes are semantic in nature, and are contrary to the international rules of the Basel Convention, which India is obliged to uphold. According to some environmental groups, the draft law changes the existing hazardous waste Management and Recycling Rules; these changes are allegedly in contradiction to Supreme Court judgments. ■

POLICE ARREST GREENPEACE ACTIVISTS, GOVERNMENT IGNORES ILLEGAL E-WASTE IMPORTS

<http://www.greenpeace.org/india/press/releases/stop-illegal-e-waste-imports>

Greenpeace reported evidence of the ongoing illegal import of electronic waste into India, in the name of reuse and charity. Greenpeace activists blocked the entrance to Udyog Bhavan with a display depicting obsolete and scrap computers and their components being imported into India, ostensibly for 'reuse.' Police filed charges for unlawful assembly against five Greenpeace activists even as the Ministry of Commerce asked for one month to look into the issue of illegal waste imports.

According to import records from a Chennai port procured by Greenpeace, old cables, mouse pads, printed circuit boards, printers, batteries, keyboards, RAM chips, and hard disks are being imported, in addition to monitors and processors. Records indicate that approximately 628 tonnes of E-waste were imported through the Chennai port between January and June 2007. ■

FIRST MAIT-GTZ STUDY REVEALS EXTENT OF E-WASTE CHALLENGE<http://www.mait.com/pressupdate16.jsp?cboid=77>

MAIT, the apex body representing India's IT hardware, training, and R&D services sectors, together with GTZ, the German Technical Cooperation agency, has conducted a study on e-waste assessment in the country. The study, a first-of-its-kind in the country, revealed that India generated a total of 3.3 lakh (330,000 tonnes) of e-waste in 2007, and that e-waste was expected to reach 4.7 lakh (470,000 tonnes) by 2011. The study indicates that e-waste recycling, especially processing, remains concentrated in the informal sector and contributes significantly to pollution and environmental degradation, due to poor processing technologies and very small capacities. The study emphasises that eco-friendly recycling is the industry's greatest need. ■

GLOBAL BYTES

This section contains news and views from around the world in order to see the emerging trends, and enhance the global perspectives regarding ICT.

MASSIVE "VIRTUAL STRIKE" AGAINST IBM<http://www.ituc-csi.org/spip.php?article1447>

Almost 2,000 people joined a "strike" in the internet virtual world "Second Life" against IBM. The action, organised by Global Union Federation UNI, was undertaken in support of IBM workers in Italy who, having requested a modest salary increase, had their "productive results benefit" cancelled by the company, resulting in a loss of Euros 1,000 income for each worker. "It was kind of like a normal demonstration," said one of the participants. "People were talking to each-other, all united in the same goal - a fair deal for the IBM employees." The ITUC called on IBM to hold proper discussions with the Italian union committee concerned, Rappresentanza Sindacale Unitaria, which organised the virtual strike in conjunction with UNI. ■

SONY ERICSSON TOPS GREENPEACE GUIDE, NINTENDO DEBUTS AT BOTTOMhttp://www.greenercomputing.com/news_third.cfm?NewsID=36322

Greenpeace's latest *Guide to Greener Electronics* shows big improvements by some companies and low starts for others. The sixth edition ranks the toxic chemical and recycling policies of 18 PC, cell phone, television, and video game console manufacturers. This is the first time television and video game companies have been included in the Guide. Microsoft, Nintendo, Philips, and Sharp all entered the list in the bottom four spots, with Nintendo being the first company to receive a score of zero out of 10. At the top of the list, Sony Ericsson, with 7.7 points, took first place from Nokia, which fell to ninth. Sony Ericsson has improved its reporting on recycled cell phones and plans to eliminate brominated flame retardants by the start of 2008. ■

VODAFONE COMMITS \$10 MILLION TO ESTABLISH FOUNDATION IN INDIA<http://www.csrwire.com/News/9854.html>

Vodafone Group announced it is establishing the Vodafone India Foundation, with an initial commitment of \$10 million. This step signifies a further landmark in the development of Vodafone's presence in India and confirms the Group's commitment to invest socially in the communities where it operates. The principal aim of the Vodafone India Foundation will be to make a positive contribution to Indian society by providing direct grants to locally registered charities and global NGOs with suitable social investment aims and objectives. The Vodafone India Foundation will initially focus on projects associated with providing education for young people across India, enabling the development of higher skill sets. ■

LIFTING THE LID ON RECYCLING<http://www.wbcds.org/includes/getTarget.asp?type=DocDet&id=MjcyNzk>

Rich nations continue to dump hazardous electronic waste in Africa. Five hundred shipping containers of used electronic goods from Europe and the U.S. arrived in Lagos, Nigeria in November. Each contained the equivalent of 800 computer monitors or 350 large TV sets. It is estimated that up to 75 percent of the goods will be junk. The United Nations Environment Programme says that most of the 50 million tonnes of electronic e-waste produced globally finds its way to Africa in the guise of "charitable donations." Lagos accepts 500 tonnes of e-waste per day, which includes a monthly tally of 100,000 computers. Most unusable units end up in dumpsites. What little recycling is done usually happens in small, unventilated rooms, by workers for whom health and safety are of little concern. Such activities go against the mores of the Basel Convention, which has 170 signatories, and was set up to regulate the cross-border movements of hazardous wastes. ■

GREEN ELECTRONICS BUYERS ON THE RISE, RESEARCH SHOWShttp://www.greenercomputing.com/news_third.cfm?NewsID=36365

Findings of a new study from Forrester Research, *In Search Of Green Technology Consumers*, indicates that approximately 25 million Americans, or 12 percent of the population, are "bright greens": buyers absolutely willing to spend more for environmentally friendly electronics, or for products that come from a green company. Another 41 percent, about 90 million people, make up the green consumer group: they are concerned about environmental issues but are not yet willing to pay extra for a green product. The remaining 47 percent of the population are "non-greens": those not concerned about the environment or global warming, and not willing to pay more for energy efficient products. ■

ASIA ECO-DESIGN ELECTRONICS<http://www.cfsd.org.uk/aede>

Asia Eco-Design Electronics (AEDE) is a two year European Commission-funded project aimed at raising awareness and capacity in relation to product-related environmental aspects in the Asian electronics sector. As part of the project, conferences have been organised in Thailand, India, China, and Europe, and eco-design tools and a website have been developed. As part of the completion of the project, a series of workshops was held in Bangkok, Delhi, Beijing, and Farnham in November and December 2007. The Farnham workshop gave an overview of the key results from the project and launched a new eco-design tool that will be available in English, Mandarin, and Thai. ■

NON-PROFITS TO STUDY EMISSIONS IMPACT FROM ICT SECTOR

http://www.greenbiz.com/news/news_third.cfm?NewsID=36240&CFID=9424663&CFTOKEN=34403865

A global non-profit working to advance corporate and government climate change leadership is turning its focus on how the ICT sector is impacting the planet. The Climate Group and Global e-Sustainability Initiative will conduct a research study on the carbon impact of the ICT sector and explore the ways in which the industry can aid the transformation to a low-carbon economy. The study seeks to analyze the direct and indirect impact of computing, telecoms, software, and services by delivering a comprehensive emissions picture. The study will attempt to offer methods to limit these impacts, as well as examine ways the sector can fuel efficiencies throughout the world, particularly in developing countries where the sector's growth tops 10 percent. The groups will begin the study this month and release the results in March. ■

DELL PLEDGES CARBON-FREE COMPUTING

<http://www.wbcd.org/includes/getTarget.asp?type=DocDet&id=MjY0MjM>

Dell CEO, Michael Dell, announced today that the company will go "carbon-neutral" next year, using a mix of energy efficiency upgrades, renewable power purchases, and carbon offsets to compensate for the carbon dioxide emissions caused by its operations. The company plans to neutralize its emissions stemming from Dell-owned and Dell-leased buildings and manufacturing facilities, as well as for employee air travel. Much of the carbon dioxide footprint of a typical computer stems from the manufacturing of components that are made by subcontractors, and Dell officials said carbon dioxide emissions associated with subcontracts will not be offset. The company also has programs to boost the energy efficiency of its computer models, helping consumers reduce the CO₂ emissions associated with the electricity required to operate them. Dell management indicated that the company-wide power management system that turns computers off at night, as well as upgraded office lighting and better building insulation, will be used as measures that will be expanded to achieve energy savings. ■

STUDIES AND REPORTS

UNIDO-ASK SME has launched a CSR project aimed at SMEs in IT manufacturing. The EICC group and GeSI conducted a recent study focused on metal mining in the electronics sector. Greenpeace has released a new study on certain hazardous substances found in laptop computers.

CSR PRACTICES IN SMEs IN THE IT MANUFACTURING SECTOR: A DIAGNOSTIC STUDY

By Vidhi Aggarwal, ASK

The SME Project is an action-oriented research project through which UNIDO aims to develop a CSR based competitive strategy for the cluster. At present, there is very limited knowledge about CSR in SMEs, so primary focus of the project includes the following questions: What CSR is to SMEs? How SMEs participate in CSR? What factors motivate them? What are the criteria for their CSR activities? What platforms, such as individual and collective field activities, can be carried out in order to meet their needs? The UNIDO SME CSR project, a pilot project conceived by UNIDO and ASK, has been entrusted to conduct a diagnostic study prior to the implementation of the project. ELCINA is one of the clusters that ASK has identified for conducting the diagnostic study. Depending upon the size of the cluster, 10 member units from the ELCINA will be taken into consideration for conducting the diagnostic study. The prime focus of the project is to understand/enhance individual and collective CSR activities in a cluster and build industry competitiveness as per global benchmarks.

The IT sector in India is growing and India has emerged as one of the leading countries in the global IT industry. The leading segment of the IT industry in India is software and service exports, followed by IT-Enabled Services (ITES). India also has a growing hardware industry. This project focuses on small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) involved in the production of electronic goods and aims at achieving the following objectives:

- To conduct a brief diagnostic study of the clusters with respect to Enterprise Social Responsibility;
- To inform the key stakeholders about the UNIDO project on clusters and ESR;
- To assess the willingness of the cluster stakeholders to participate in the initiative meant to infuse a greater degree of ESR among small enterprises; and
- To explore the extent to which the clusters are willing to contribute financially to the initiative outline.

This study is expected to bring forth some important aspects regarding CSR efforts at the SME cluster level. The findings of this study will be shared in the next issue of the ASK-Verité ICT Newsletter. ■

EICC AND GeSI INITIATE ELECTRONICS INDUSTRY METAL MINING STUDY

<http://www.eicc.info/downloads/Extractives%20Statement112707%20.pdf>

EICC and GeSI have commissioned a study, to be lead by GreenhouseGasMeasurement.com's (GHGm) Dr. Steven Young, to help understand how various metals are mined, extracted, recycled, purchased, and used within the electronics sector. Dr. Young has been developing environmental approaches and assisting organizations to become more sustainable since the early 1990s. As President of GHGm, he directs environmental performance evaluations of novel technologies, material supply-chains, and greenhouse gas projects.

The goal of the study is to understand the role the electronics industry currently plays in purchasing, using, recycling, and recovering copper, tin, gold, aluminium, palladium, and cobalt, as well as to understand the social and environmental conditions under which these metals are mined. The outcome of the study will educate EICC and GeSI member companies, and help raise overall awareness of stakeholders (customers, shareholders, governments, NGOs) on the electronics industry metal usage and relevant mining practices. The final report is expected to be released in April 2008.

EICC and GeSI member companies plan to participate in the International Roundtable in Brussels in January 2008 for electronics companies, NGOs, and Trade Unions. The Roundtable will present new research reports on the mining of metals that are used in electronic products and will facilitate discussion on the possibilities for improving the conditions in this part of the supply chain. ■

TOXIC CHEMICALS IN COMPUTERS RELOADED

<http://www.greenpeace.org/india/press/reports/toxic-chemicals-in-computers-r>

In October 2007, Greenpeace released a new study to investigate the presence of certain hazardous substances in laptop computers available for purchase in Asia, Europe, and North and South America. The study also investigates recent legislation in China related to RoHS. ■

EVENTS

The industry association, ELCINA, has initiated the Indian launch of the newly developed Eco-Design tool. Toxics Link organised a meeting to discuss the newly drafted Hazardous Waste Rules 2007.

INDIA LAUNCH OF THE ECO-DESIGN TOOL—ELCINA

The newly developed Eco-Design Tool was demonstrated during a special conference in New Delhi on November 23, 2007. The occasion also marked the formal launch of the Eco-Design Tool which will soon be made available to the Indian Electronics Industry.

Background

The Asia Pro Eco Programme is an initiative by the European Union designed to promote mutual benefit and understanding between the EU Member States and Asia. The programme aims to improve environmental performance and technology partnership in economic sectors, and promote sustainable responsible investment. Asia Eco-Design Electronics (AEDE) is part of the Asia-Pro Eco Programme and is funded by the European Union.

The Asia Eco-Design Electronics (AEDE) project aims to support electronics companies in Asia that are required to meet increasingly stringent legal and customer requirements related to environmental and social issues from the EU, Japan, and the US. With more and more outsourcing and contract manufacturing migrating to Asia, there are increasing requirements for suppliers to become more aware of environmental and corporate social responsibility (CSR) issues. However, outside of subsidiaries of transnational corporations, most small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) generally have little awareness and understanding of environmental and CSR issues, and few governments in Asia have started support programmes covering these issues.

The following training and education needs have been identified:

- Education and training to meet the requirements of directives including RoHS, WEEE, and EuP Directives.
- Eco-design training programmes and tools will need to be produced in national languages.
- Many SMEs in Asian countries are disconnected from trade associations – therefore SMEs will also need to be targeted directly.

Objectives

The overall goal of the Asia Eco-Design Electronics (AEDE) project is to assist the Asian electronics, electrical, and home appliance suppliers in meeting the challenges of existing and forthcoming EC and Japanese product-related environmental legislation and emerging CSR developments.

The specific objectives of the project are as follows:

- To provide appropriate and up-to-date information to Asian suppliers on various legislative requirements of the EU, Japan, and the US.
- To undertake a gap and needs analysis for the electronics industry in China, India, and Thailand, and elaborate capacity building plans for these countries.
- To develop a set of training tools developed on the basis of the capacity building plans, needs assessments, and as an outcome of the working conferences in Asia and Europe.
- To facilitate interaction and dialogue between Asian and European stakeholders.
- To create a system for managing and disseminating information to Asian suppliers that can be sustained after the project comes to an end.

The Eco-Design Tool

The Eco-Design Tool developed as part of the programme can be easily integrated and used by electronic hardware manufacturing companies. The tool supports improved decision-making and will enable Indian companies to meet global environmental standards and develop energy efficient and competitive products for success in the market. Special focus has been given to electronic components highlighting the key lifecycle environmental impacts of components manufactured by SMEs. ■

MEETING TO DISCUSS THE DRAFT HAZARDOUS WASTE RULES 2007

<http://www.toxicslink.org/art-view.php?id=123>

On November 28, 2007, a meeting was organised by Toxics Link to discuss the Draft Hazardous Materials (Management, Handling and Transboundary Movement) Rules, 2007. This draft legislation contains many controversial clauses, and the focus of this meeting was to create and garner opinion on the legislation, and plan for the future course of action. Representatives from various NGO groups and environmentalists attended the meeting held at PHDC, Siri Institutional Area, New Delhi.

Action points included:

- All participating groups presented their critique of the draft, which were circulated among those present.
- More partners and groups are to be informed about the Draft Hazardous Materials (Management, Handling and Transboundary Movement) Rules, 2007.
- Selected Parliamentarians are to be informed and sensitized on the issues noted.
- Attendees agreed to the need for more media coverage on the issue. ■

GLOSSARY

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| AEDE -Asia Eco-Design Electronics | IT -Information Technology |
| ASK -Association for Stimulating Know How | ITES -Information Technology Enabled Services |
| BPO -Business Processing Outsourcing | ITUC -International Trade Union Confederation |
| CITU - Centre of Indian Trade Unions | MAIT -Manufacturers' Association for Information Technology |
| CPCB -Central Pollution Control Board | MoEF - Ministry of Environment and Forests |
| CSR -Corporate Social Responsibility | NACO - National Aids Control Organisation |
| EC -European Commission | NASSCOM - National Association of Software and Service Companies |
| EDC - Eco-Design Club | R&D -Research and Development |
| EICC -Electronics Industry Code of Conduct | RoHS - Restriction of Hazardous Substances |
| ELCINA - Electronic Industries Association of India | SEZ - Special Economic Zone |
| EU -European Union | SME -Small and Medium-sized Enterprises |
| GeSI - Global e-Sustainability Association | TFI -Technology Forecasters Inc. |
| GPCB - Gujarat Pollution Control Board | UNI - Union Network International |
| ISIT -International School of Information Technologies | UNIDO - United Nations Industrial Development Organisation |
| ISO - International Standards Organisation | UNITeS -United Nations Information Technology Services |
| | WEEE - Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment |