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Bugs between us & them

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Toronto, June 27: The divide continues. India and other emerging market economies may have found a seat at the G-20, the world's newest high table, but their lifestyles and responses continue to be so different from those of rich countries as to make them the odd men out among G-8 nations such as Canada or Germany.

Here in Ontario, where summits of G-8 and G-20 are being held back-to-back, the Canadians used sniffer dogs to sweep clean the hotels where guests for the two summit meetings are being put up with.

No, the dogs were not sniffing for explosives or bombs in the VIP suites. They were checking for bed bugs. Hotel executives here would not acknowledge on record any possibility that their properties were vulnerable to a bed bug invasion, but Michael Goldman, who is in the lucrative business of ferreting out bed bugs has no such qualms.

But for reasons of business confidentiality, he too would not name the hotels where his services were requisitioned in the run up to the global summits here.

Goldman who owns Purity Pest Control describes his company as "Canada's leader in K-9 bug and termite inspections." His firm, which owns three canines trained in sniffing out bed bugs, has a catchy motto too: "Let Purity Put Your Pest To Rest."

Goldman's business approach has shades of high level management professionalism and jargons that come with it. He calls the approach an "Integrated Pest Management technique," but some of the Third World delegates who are here for the twin summits are aghast at the extent to which developed countries would go to deal with ordinary problems such as bed bugs which are as old a problem for the human race as anyone can remember.

A delegate from Haiti, who attended the G-8 meeting as part of a special "extended outreach" by the platform during its Toronto summit, said his people would laugh at the thought of using sniffer dogs to deal with bed bugs as pure fiction if he went back home and told them about the Canadian practice.

Haiti, one of the poorest nations on earth, was recently ravaged by a devastating earthquake and many people don't even have access to basic services.

But Goldman says he has been in the pest control business for a quarter century. The senior-most of his bug-sniffing dogs, Kody, rescued from an animal shelter, has been saving Canadians from bed bugs since 2005. In the pest control business, Kody is now popularly known here as Inspector Kody. Goldman has two other similar canines in his brigade. It is not only the Haitians who are surprised by the ways of rich countries attending the summits here. An Indian delegate, who has strong views about judicial activism back home was surprised that civil libertarians regularly seek the help of obliging judges in Canada to push the envelope on issues dear to them. On the eve of the arrival of G-20 leaders here, for instance, Ontario Superior Court Justice David Brown came down heavily on a decision by the local police to use Long-Range Acoustical Devices, commonly known as sound cannons to control protests against the summits.

Third World delegates to the G-20 meeting are generally amused by the uproar on Canadian television and among the general public over a few shop windows which were broken by protesters here yesterday. Four police cars were damaged too, two of them set on fire. Police used teargas to disperse demonstrators, but Torontonians are lamenting that the authorities had to resort to this "extreme step", the very first time in this city's history that teargas was used to contain a protest.

Many Third World delegations simply could not digest the fact that police had never before resorted to teargas in a huge and liberal city like Toronto which was established in 1793.