

'Not enough for anyone's greed'

Consumption-related issues merit attention, say experts at conference of Indian Society for Ecological Economics

PARAS K JHA

The fifth biennial conference of Indian Society for Ecological Economics (INSEE) kicked off at Gujarat Vidyapeeth here on Wednesday. Most of the participants touched upon various dimensions of the theme of the conference — environmental governance.

The three-day conference will have many speakers from academia, industries, government and other policy-making bodies sharing their views. The speakers will broach the policy-making issues related with environment. The meet was inaugurated by the governor of Gujarat, Naval Kishore Sharma.

Prof R Parthasarathy, director of Gujarat Institute for Developmental Research, Prof Sudarshan Iyengar, president of INSEE and vice-chancellor of Gujarat Vidyapeeth, Prof YK Alagh, chairman of Irma, Nitin Desai, former undersecretary general of United Nations, N Sundaraman, former general secretary International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), Prof Gopal Kadekodi, former director of Institute for Social and Economic Change, Bangalore, and Prof Kanchan Chopra, director of Institute of Economic Growth, Delhi are among the experts who would be discussing the various issues and aspects of Environmental Governance.

Prof Iyengar emphasised on the need



to work substantially on 'consumption' in the study of ecological economics. He said, "Like all sub-themes of economics, ecological economics has also focused mainly on production. This focus should be shifted. We need to raise and tackle important conceptual issues in the context of consumption, such as 'What exactly is consumption?', 'Which consumer activities are ecologically most significant?' and 'What strategies actually work for changing consumer behaviour?'"

He also talked about the Gandhian thought in this regard, "Gandhi said that there is enough for everybody's need, but there isn't enough for even one person's greed. Wants have to be limited, and limiting wants and limiting choices would definitely solve a lot of problems that have arisen

Sudarshan Iyengar

vice-chancellor, Gujarat Vidyapeeth

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in the present-day functioning of the economies."

Prof YK Alagh talked about the scenario in water and energy governance. He showed with statistical data that governance in the water and energy sector has worsened over time.

We need to act fast to halt climate change

The contribution of Nitin Desai cannot be ignored when speaking about the environmental aspect of the economic development of the world. He has served as under-secretary-general for economic and social affairs at the United Nations as well as deputy secretary-general of the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED). Desai was in Ahmedabad on Wednesday to inaugurate the three-day biennial conference of the Indian Society for Ecological Economics (INSEE) at Gujarat Vidyapeeth. On the sidelines of the conference, Desai spoke with *Paras K Jha* about global environmental challenges, their impact and what can be done to ensure a better future.

What do you mean when you say that environmental challenges today are global?

When wood or coal is burnt on a *chulha* to cook food, the carbon dioxide generated from it not only harms the family, but also the entire world. Such carbon emissions are taking place across the world.

You said that climate change is real and we need to work on the cautious side from today rather than in the future...

If we begin treatment of a disease in the early stages, there are possibilities of it being cured. Delaying will only create more complexities and complications. After a period of time, it could be irreversible.

Does this imply that the present generation should do this for benefits that will accrue in the future?

I would say 'for the benefit of future genera-



PHOTO BY DNA

Nitin Desai

ex under-secy-gen, eco and social affairs, UN

“We should understand and identify our activities that harm the environment and add to climate change.”

vehicles in Delhi instead of fossil fuels. This generates less carbon dioxide and hence, Delhi's environment has changed. There is less pollution there today as compared to the past. The same or better environment can be passed on to our future generations.

When you were a part of Our Common Future Team, how did you visualise the future and what is the reality today in terms of the future visualised then?

We have succeeded in influencing policy-making. At present, whatever we had visualised is touching most of the basic sectors' policies. Today, nobody will talk about an energy policy without considering environmental issues; the same is with forest policy, agriculture policy. But, we have not had much success in putting this visualisation into action, which is much needed.

tions' are bad words. We should say, do this to avoid harming the future generations. I am not saying we should make sacrifices for the betterment of the future generations, but must ensure that we do not harm them.

Why should the present generation do so?

We should understand and identify our activities that harm the environment and add to climate change. For example, CNG is used to run

'Don't take rising sea levels lightly'

Yogesh Chawda

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Ahmedabad: Imagine if Gujarat breaks into six to seven islands due to floods with sea water gushing inland through the Gulf of Kutch, Gulf of Khambhatt and other coastal areas. Former UN undersecretary general, Nitin Desai put forth this possibility of 200 years later, while highlighting perils of global warming at his inaugural address at the fifth biennial conference of Indian Society for Ecological Economics (INSEE) at Gujarat Vidyapith.

"Each Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) assessment has been more alarming than the earlier one. IPCC takes steps to get governments to act now," said Desai. Adding that, "There has to be systematic procedure to handle uncertainties. The challenge is that scale interactions have increased from local to regional to global impacts."

He compared mitigating climate change to taking insurance. "Lower costs now for greater benefits tomorrow. There are chances of things being worse than being better," he said. According to him balancing diversities of impact, domestic compulsions, poverty, energy requirements is a global governance challenge. Instead of looking at historical culpability, there has to be fairness in handling available environment



Alagh (L) and Desai at Vidyapith

space in future.

Signs were already showing with the net sown area of the country dropping even where canal network existed, as Professor YK Alagh of Institute of Rural Management,

Anand (IRMA) warned. "In the 1990s it was hoped that 141 million hectares of net sown area would increase with better irrigation facilities, but it has failed," said Alagh. According to him, "With the eleventh plan the crisis is now official. Without a dynamic agriculture, inclusive growth becomes a mirage."

India's net sown area is under stress, area under canal irrigation has fallen for the first time in history. The irrigated area under shallow tubewells is falling and groundwater is under stress, he added.



