

Fishing for climate change

Experiences and recommendations on climate change will be submitted to world leaders at the Copenhagen Climate Change summit

Linah Baliga

The effects of climate change spares none and the worst hit are the poor who have limited resources to adapt to changes in weather patterns.

Over 200 urban poor — including fishermen, homeless people, slumdweller and ragpickers amongst those displaced in Mumbai — shared details of the impact of climate change on their lives in the first session at St Xavier's College in Fort. Their testimonies will be submitted to the world leaders for deliberation at the Copenhagen Climate Change summit in December, this year.

The recommendations will be presented by panelists comprising Prof Shyam Asolekar, senior scientist, IIT Powai, Girish Raut environmentalist, Darryl D'Monte, independent analyst on climate change and Aditi Kapoor, lead specialist (economic justice), Oxfam.

"The climate change is a reality for sure in Mumbai. It's a peculiar city, as 15 kms from Mahim Creek to the airport is below the main sea level, which means water will enter into the land. So flooding is inevitable in Mumbai. It can become more frequent and worsen the situation in Mumbai," said Asolekar.

Asolekar added that the poor are affected more in the face of disaster and pollution. 'According to the Chitale fact finding committee, it's a serious condition. Our hearing with the poor indicated that problems were compounded due to increased frequency of rains, floods and temperatures. The government's insensitive to their long term problems and they are marginalised where health and education is concerned,' he said.

He pointed out that their access to resources is denied due to lack of respect and recognition.

"Even if in Copenhagen, the individual nations continue to scrupulously implement the protocol, the poor will never be counted by the government," he added.

Commenting on the impact of public transport (commuters) on the environment D'Monte said, "All over the world it is stated that 80 per cent of the greenhouse gas emissions come from the city and buildings. The real villain is private motorised vehicles. The slumdweller occupy 89 per cent of the geographical area and 55 per cent of them walk to work but are still demonised."

"The climate changes are due to excessive carbon emissions. But when it comes to the impact of climate change, it is the poor who work closely with land and water (fishermen) for their livelihood who are most affected. When policies are made they are voiceless without addressing the concerns of these people," said Kapoor.

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IIT Professor Shyam Asolekar interacts with fisherwomen on issues impacting climatic change in urban areas

City warms up to a cause

Individuals from all walks of life came together on Marine Drive to address the issue of climate change

Surekha S

Marine Drive was abuzz with activity as a number of artistes and professionals came together to address the issue of climate change. The event was initiated by a global campaign called 350.org. The idea was to ask the world leaders to take the right decisions at the UN Climate Negotiations in Copenhagen being held in December this year.

October 24, earmarked as the International day of climate change, witnessed over 4,500 events across different countries. Mumbai too actively



participated and a large human chain of over 300 people was seen at Marine Drive. Organisations like Greenpeace, Kids for Tigers, Indian Youth Climate Network and We Are The Scene joined 350.org. The events included performances like kickboxing and street theatre.

Rashi Jain of We Are The Scene said, "We wanted to use art for a cause. Music and theatre can capti-

vate people's attention."

The people acting as dead bodies lying around with messages like drought, flood, famine and rising sea level caught the people's attention. "The need of the hour is to have a renewable energy law in the country. The world leaders can save thousands of people by making the right decision at Copenhagen and by keeping the carbon emissions below 350 ppm. People can start off by switching over from the yellow incandescent bulbs to energy saving CFLs (Compact Fluorescent Lamps)," said Deven Digwal of Greenpeace India.

According to Ruchi Jain, India coordinator, 350.org, the idea of this event was not only awareness but also to ask every individual to take action. "It was about reaching out to a large number of people. We want to ask for Change."

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