

Development must be India's first defence against climate change, say experts

They discuss effects of climate change on the Indian economy at Madras Institute of Development Studies

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Developing livelihoods and improving job opportunities must be the country's first defence against climate change as opposed to focus on mitigation strategies, said experts at a panel discussion at the Madras Institute of Development Studies (MIDS) on Thursday.

The discussion on the effects of climate change on the Indian economy was organised by the MIDS and the Reserve Bank of India as part of G20 meetings.

T. Jayaraman, Senior Fellow, M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation (MSSRF); R.R. Krishnamurthy, professor, Applied Geology, University of Madras; A. Arivudai Nambi, Director and Strategy Head, World Resources Institute (WRI) India; and K.S. Kavikumar, professor, Madras School of Economics, participated in the discussion, which drew attention on carbon footprint, adaptation measures, climate change's impact on agriculture and so on.

"Carbon should not be solely looked at as pollution. The question should rather be on the amount of carbon emissions the earth can hold," said Mr. Jayaraman. Emphasising equity in sharing of the global carbon budget, he said India must assert its right to use its fair share of global commons.

Mr. Nambi, referring to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)'s Synthesis Report, said even half a degree rise in temperature could have devastating effects on natural elements. "At 1.5 degrees increase, coral reefs would be affected 70% to 90%. But at 2 degrees, they will be completely wiped out," he said. There is not enough knowledge on the climate-crop-soil-water nexus and climate change's impact on agriculture and livestock productivity, said Mr. Kumar. He added that the gap between prevailing development and adaptation deficit must be bridged.

On Tamil Nadu's latest climate efforts, Mr. Jayaraman said the State's approach was too mitigation-centric and needed more focus on adaptation and development along with increased public funding.

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