Technology can be used to balance environment, development. MoS for MoEFCC

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Mr. Babul Supriyo, Minister of State for Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Government of India, today said that climate change is a major global challenge and technology can be used to balance environment and development.

Speaking at the 'National Conference on Recent Trends in Environment Pollution and Disaster Risk Reduction', organised by FICCI and Indian Institute of Technology, Dhanbad, Mr. Supriyo said, "Climate change is one of the biggest global challenges that we are facing."

Highlighting the importance of using modern technologies to check environment degradation during developmental activities, the Minister cited the example of coal mining where large tracts of land are dug to extract coal, but more than half of the reserves are left untapped as it requires deeper digging.

Mr. Supriyo said that if one can use today's technology to approach coal horizontally instead of vertically, the top layer of the earth along with trees can be saved. He also cited the example of the Thames river and how it was cleaned. He wished for getting the same technology to clean the Ganga river.

Appreciating India's efforts in protecting the environment, he said that the United Nations Environment Programme in its Emissions Gap Report in 2016 has recognized India as one of the countries on track to achieve its voluntary goal.

"In order to bring a true change in environment, you should take inspiration from the fact that India is one of the eight to nine countries in the world where greenery has gone up, forest cover has gone up by about 1.2 percent," he added.

Mr. GVV Sarma, Member Secretary, National Disaster Management Authority, said, "People are broadly aware of disaster risk reduction and environmental pollution but there is a danger and the danger is that when it comes to our actions, sometimes there is a tendency that our actions do not match our words."

He said that during natural disasters like cyclones both power lines and mobile towers get disrupted, and even when the mobile towers become functional there is no way to charge the mobiles. Here, he urged the industry to come up with simple solutions.

Further, he invited FICCI to host an exhibition of products and technological options that can be used in various disaster and hazard situations at the National Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction in the first week of May in New Delhi.

Major General Manoj Kumar Bindal, Executive Director, National Institute of Disaster Management, said, "Climate change, degradation or environmental pollution in one geographical region is not restricted to that region. It is global and it is likely to affect us wherever we are."

Prof Rajiv Shekhar, Director, IIT (Indian School of Mines), Dhanbad, said, "When we are talking about environment and development, we have to take the whole life cycle – coal to power, coal to steel. We are developing a template for a sustainable mining plan which can be monitored and this monitoring part is extremely important."

"We will provide you a roadmap so that we can walk the delicate balance between environment and economic development," the professor told the Minister.

Mr. Santosh Kumar Singh, Senior Vice President, Adani Power Ltd, said that the issue threw up many challenges and obstacles but equally many opportunities, and that big data and artificial intelligence would be the game-changer with its predicting powers about pollution and disaster, and the best way of management.

Dr. Sangita Reddy, President, FICCI, said, "India's role in environment is extremely critical not only because of our landmass but because of the tremendous population and the state of evolution we are in terms of our economy, our manufacturing, our growth and the opportunity we have to make the right choices."

An MoU was signed between FICCI and IIT(ISM), Dhanbad, during the event. The two-day national conference will hold several technical sessions.

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