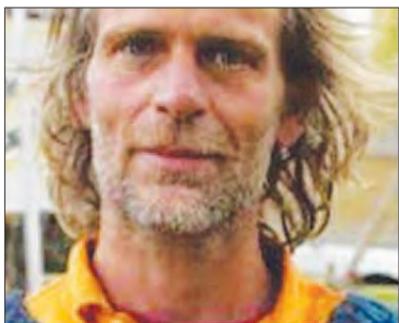


Tackling the threat ahead

While one seminar organised by the Kolkata chapter of a Paris-based organisation came up with suggestions to combat climate changes, another sought to emphasise the need for 'managing the environment' for the sake of sustainable economic growth. Students of the Statesman Print Journalism School report on both events



PRIOR to the meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to be held in Paris later this year, CMP11 Paris has been organising stimulating debates entitled "United for Climate Change" in many cities. The Kolkata chapter took place in collaboration with the Alliance Française and the seminar was primarily held to make people aware of vital global issues.

The event got under way with a documentary film, *The Invisible (R)evolutions*, where sociologist Edgar Mortin, Genevieve Azam, professor of Susa Valley Italy, author Douglas Rushkoff and new technologies sociologist and founder-president of Interactive Brokers, Thomas Peterffy, were introduced. It was followed by a brief session conducted by Philip Borel, director of the film, who also took questions from the audience. The film showcased how some "No Bullet Train" activists were conducting their campaign against the government to protect the pristine beauty of the landscape.

The scene at Wall Street, New York, was depicted in the film in which viewers met Alexandre Lomoniere, author of *6*; Tim Jackson, author of *Prosperity Without Growth*; Pierre Dardot, co-author of *The New Way of the World*; and Michael Leysent, founder of "Measure System". Eminent personalities like George Ferguson, mayor of Bristol, Lionel Astruc, author of *(R)evolution*, Stephen Burke, Ithaca Hours president, and Carol Chernikoff,

founder of the Alternative Union, expressed their views on the film. It was argued that instead of import-based trade communities across the world preferred local healthy ingredients of food.

A panel discussion that followed the film saw eminent speakers from Kolkata pointing out global environmental issues like the sudden rise in sea levels, rising temperatures and uncertainty in rainfall and the consequences. Speakers also suggested ways to combat climate change. Dr Asish Ghosh, eminent scientist and director, Centre for Environment and Development, made a startling revelation that by 2050 a large number of people would be compelled to leave the Sundarbans delta because of its extreme vulnerability. The number of such migrants could be between 1.2-1.4 million and they were likely to move out from the nine most vulnerable blocks of the delta. Dr Ghosh asked the audience whether those affected by environmental catastrophes could be termed environmental refugees or people affected by climate-induced hazards.

The UN Commission on Refugees is yet to recognise this new group. India has no provision for climate-induced migrations under the Prime Minister's National Action Plan on Climate Change. So the question remains: who will take the responsibility of rehabilitation and resettlement? How can they be more productive in the labour force in the receiving areas



A collage from *The Invisible (R)evolutions* (top) and director, Philippe-Borrel

without been empowered with additional skills? They are largely farmers and fishermen and, as such, they have no other option but to work as unskilled labour.

Debashis Kumar, mayor-in-council, parks and gardens, Kolkata, asserted that the present government had taken up initiatives like installing rooftop solar programmes to address the problems of climate change and make the city climate-resilient. Journalist Jayanta Basu was quick to state that the Copenhagen conference in 2009 was the "real game-changer" as people became more aware about global environmental issues.

A similar programme was organised by the Millennium Institute of Energy and Environment Management to spread awareness about the industrial



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and urban environment and possible measures to ensure sustainable development of the Indian economy. The workshop drew environment experts as well as students from engineering, management and mass media colleges. The speakers referred to a United Nations report that said economic growth in countries like China and India had been achieved mainly by drawing on natural resources without allowing stocks to regenerate and by allowing degradation of the ecosystem. This was confirmed by the Environment Performance Index, developed by Yale and Columbia Universities, which ranked India 125th among 132 countries whose environment performance was evaluated.

In assessing the environment hazards in the context of projected economic growth, four trends were identified: rising personal consumption levels; growing urbanization; expanding infrastructure and the increasing demand for all kinds of resources. All this would intensify the demand in different sectors and for raw materials like coal, water, cement, steel and other minerals. But the speakers said that with 80 per cent of the 2030 dream yet to be realised, there were opportunities for course correction. The judiciary, media and civil society have been playing a positive role in promoting environmental awareness and sustainability. The consensus was that it was essential for India to "manage its environment".