

'Environment movement in India at a crossroads'

Special Correspondent

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM: With India witnessing a huge upsurge of anger and protests against development projects, the environment movement in the country today finds itself at a crossroads, noted environmentalist and director-general of the Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) Sunita Narain has said.

Delivering the inaugural address at the 49th State conference of the Kerala Sastra Sahitya Parishad (KSSP) here on Friday, she said the last

few years were marked by incredible protests as communities mobilised themselves to fight thermal projects, dams, incinerators, ports, and mines. Terming the upsurge against development as 'Million Pollution Mutinies,' she said it showed that people had understood the connection between the environment and their survival.

Ms. Narain said the track record of managing the environment had become worse at the global level, despite a growing concern for the environment. Ms. Narain said climate change, at its very root,

was linked to the growth model adopted all over the world. "We are doing something fundamentally wrong that will destroy the environment and the planet itself through catastrophic changes." She said Indian cities such as New Delhi were designed only for cars, with little concern for pedestrians and cyclists. "This will only lead to more pollution. People should be encouraged to use public transport and bicycles or walk to work," she said.

Ms. Narain said India's obsession to provide piped water for cities had led to a

losing battle to keep its rivers and canals clean as the sewage problem remained neglected. Ms. Narain said the present growth model meant that cities would drown in garbage and excreta. She called upon Indian scientists to reinvent the flush toilet and make it more affordable and convenient.

The function witnessed the release of the seventh edition of Excreta Matters, CSE's report on the state of the environment in India. Former Forest Minister Benoy Viswom received the first copy of the report.



DOWN TO EARTH: Environmentalist Dr. Sunita Narain at the KSSP conference.

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