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## A call for de-growth



• [NIKHIL VARMA](#)

*A healthy debate on the impact of unbridled development was a key takeaway from the launch of Amitav Ghosh's latest book*



Concern about the climate was the focus Photo: Bhagya Prakash K.

The launch of Amitav Ghosh's collection of essays, *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable* (Penguin, Rs. 399) saw conversations and discussions on the impact of climate change. The response of the scientific community in India and abroad to the increasing danger of rising sea levels and freak weather conditions were also talked about. At the Indian Institute of Science in Bangalore, Ghosh was in conversation with Rohini Nilekani (chairperson of the Arghyam Foundation), R. Sukumar (professor, Centre for Ecological Sciences, IISc), J. Srinivasan (professor, Centre for Atmospheric Oceanic Sciences, IISc) and Karthik Shanker (director of the ATREE and Dakshin Foundation).

At the launch, Rohini said, "I felt this book is a call for action to combat climate change. I hope the issues that are talked about here are taken seriously by institutions and public bodies. I have also wondered on the manner in which literature can change itself, when dealing with issues of climate change and talk more about the collective efforts needed to combat the issue."

Ghosh pointed out, "It is not a call for action. I do not think it is my place to tell other writers what to write about. I would like to think that it is a meditation on the art of writing. Climate change is a collective concern. I hope that it helps authorities to be prepared to tackle the vagaries of the weather."

Professor J. Srinivasan said, "In India, climate change is occurring due to a confluence of factors. It may not have an immediate impact. We have always tended to blame big energy companies and carbon emissions for the spectre of climate change. However, factors such as the population explosion and aerosol usage has also contributed to it. It is a mostly a human-induced phenomena."

Biologist R. Sukumar said, "One of the biggest concerns is that no one actually knows the impact of climate change in India. We know temperatures will rise, monsoons may be affected, but do not have any clear information on the actual impact."

He added, "However, it is encouraging that these issues are being discussed in the public sphere. Climate change was not considered to be a major issue till 2007. That has changed and is an encouraging development."

The panel also focused on the manner in which collective action must be taken for the betterment of the planet.

"The growth at any cost model must be tempered down. Governments across the world must start to scale down. It is going to be a tough ask," said Ghosh. The grand plan of interlinking rivers found no support among the panellists, who felt that it was a far-fetched proposal that will create more problems and will benefit the construction lobby.

Talking about her experiences in Uttarakhand, Rohini said, "Dams were constructed haphazardly without any concern about the larger picture. This contributed to the huge disaster in the state following the flash floods in 2013."

To a query on whether the failure to communicate the science behind climate change was because of scientific language being tough to