

# Green expert: Let Bengal planners have 2110 focus

Subhro. Niyogi  
@timesgroup.com

**Kolkata:** Climate experts have urged city planners in Kolkata and policy makers in Bengal to get out of the Five-Year Plan psyche and take a real long-term view. Or else, they warn, Kolkata will become a ghost town and Bengal a pariah state by the turn of the century.

Speaking to **TOI** on the sidelines of a workshop on the Fifth Assessment Report of IPCC, co-author Joyashree Roy said when flyovers, roads and satellite townships must be designed to resist high-intensity cyclones.

“Urbanization is said to be an adaptive strategy against climate change. But the cities we built must be climate-resilient. To do so, we must plan with 2110 in mind. When re-laying the city’s drainage, make provision for high-intensity rain that will cause frequent flooding. Unless that is done, there will be water stagnation for days at a time. This will trigger diseases,” the Jadavpur University professor said.

Roy called on city architects to keep flooding and extreme temperature variation in mind while designing houses. “It makes sense to look at traditional architecture and learn how buildings were so designed that they got plenty of natural light and air while keeping the heat out. Roof-top gardens can be adopted in a major way. It will keep the house



IPCC Fifth Assessment Report co-author Joyashree Roy says that when re-laying Kolkata’s drainage, provisions must be made for high-intensity rain that will cause frequent flooding

cool and also be a kitchen garden,” she said.

Beyond Kolkata, Roy said the Fifth Assessment Report pointed to food security being impacted in the region. “Bengal, 70% of whose population depends on agriculture that contributes 17.8% of the state’s GDP, is in a high-risk zone. To lower risk, it needs to shift a big chunk of people away from agriculture to agri-processing. Those who farm should embrace agronomic practices to get better yield out of the same land. To hedge risk, they should grow low-duration crops like pulses and wheat. It is important to keep the nutrition basket fixed and not be fixated on paddy.”

West Bengal Pollution Control Board chairman Kalyan Rudra said there was a need to alter the agriculture pattern as farmers in Bengal were increasingly drawing more water from the ground.

In 173 blocks of the state, ground water table is falling at an alarming 20 mm a year.

With Himalayan glaciers retreating fast, Rudra cautioned that Ganga that receives 70% of its lean-season water from snow and ice-melt water ran the risk of losing its seasonality. “Bengal appears water-rich today but there are threats looming large. With sea level rising at 1.73mm per year between 1901 and 2010, the situation has been further aggravated in Bengal as the outer delta or coastal tract is sinking at 4-6.2mm per year. In the 20th century, Bengal has lost 420 sqkm to the sea. With erosion continuing unabated, the loss can be many times more in this century.”

Mihir Bhatt of Climate Development Knowledge Network said the steps Bengal takes to adapt to climate change challenges will be important for all of India.