

GREEN TALK

Chhattisgarh climate change can hit Chennai

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Feb. 18: With all-powerful coal lobby in the country almost getting permission to go for "phased mining" of lakhs of hectares of forest areas in Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand, environmentalists have sounded alarm bells about an impending ecological disaster. "India in general and Tamil Nadu in particular will see the mercury crossing all previous records and rains coming to naught. If Chhattisgarh or Jharkhand sneeze, Tamil Nadu will catch a cold," said Dr. Nanditha Krishna, noted environmentalist and director, CPR Environmental Education Centre, Chennai.

Mr G.M. Pillai, director general, World Institute of Sustainable Energy, Pune, a global think-tank on renewable energy, pointed out that the ministry of environment and forest had declared the 203 coal blocks under forests as 'no-go-zones' for coal mining. "But the coal lobby managed to get the issue transferred to a group of ministers and the Planning Commission has come up with a suggestion for 'phased mining'. Whether it



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is phased or usual mining, the results are the same. India is in for a major ecological disaster," Mr Pillai told *Deccan Chronicle*.

He said the construction of the hydro power project in Kerala's Idukki district in 1975 led to frequent monsoon failures. "Kerala was a rain-surplus state. The destruction of rain forests in Idukki is the reason for the state becoming a rain-deficit state," said Mr Pillai.

According to Dr Krishna and Dr Arivudai Nambi of

M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation, Chennai, cutting down trees, even if it is from a 100 metre stretch, would be suicidal. "The areas they are planning to mine are dense jungles with perennial water sources," said Dr Nambi, an expert in climate sciences. He said any kind of mining would be like opening a Pandora's Box.

Mr Pillai pointed out that coal-based power projects have been termed "factories of death" because of the amount of carbon dioxide they emit. "Sadly, the expert committee appointed by the Union government to evolve a low carbon strategy for inclusive growth in India, too, has come out with a report which is supportive of the coal lobby. Even as a consortium of companies has formed a strategy to harness and transport solar energy from Africa and transport the power to European countries, in India we are yet to formulate an action plan on a war-footing to exploit the sun," he said, adding that coal-powered thermal power stations would put the country in more trouble because of high emission levels.