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NEWS

A spiritual approach to tackle global warming

PARADIGM SHIFT: Meditation can help people fight rapid environmental degradation, writes Veena Babulal

WHEN solar expert Golo J. Pilz and a group of yogis turned up at a climate change conference in Copenhagen, Denmark, in 2009, the scientific community scoffed.

It may have been the yogis' appearance that perplexed them, but men and women of science were quick to dismiss Pilz and his group.

"The scientists were of the view that they only needed money, technology and a strategy to fix the planet's most pressing problem.

"But now, they are asking us to

help them because their strategy is not working," said the yogi, who has embarked on a slew of renewable energy projects to engage the local community in India under spiritual

group Brahma Kumaris.

He said global decision makers had finally agreed that the top-down approach in mitigating climate change had failed.

Scientists had warned of the accelerated effects of climate change, with trends towards a bleak planet for humankind.

"This month has been the hottest month on record.

"Scientists are calling it 'shockingly' hot.

"Even with global warming and the El-Nino phenomenon effects, it is abnormally hot."

The temperature in the Arctic is rising three times faster. If the ice in Greenland melts, seawater can rise up to 10 metres, sinking islands and making coastal cities, such as Sydney, Melbourne, Oslo, New York, Mumbai, Kolkata and London, uninhabitable.

"The cost is beyond evacuating cities. We don't know how fast things are changing.

"There may be erratic changes or triggers that can destroy the natural balance of the environment, such as

an alteration to the Gulf Stream, which warms coastal areas in Europe from experiencing sub-Arctic weather or Tundra-like conditions as in Siberia.

"The scientific community is extremely worried about the future of the world's climate and also the future of humanity because we need a moderate climate to survive."

Pilz said the climate was directly connected to the way power was generated and manufactured, as well as its consumeristic patterns.

Making a fast transition to renewable energies could make a significant difference, he added.

However, he said, a lack of research and development (R&D) had proven to be a major setback.

"Resources meant for R&D are going into arms, fashion, flying to the moon and the film industry.

"In India, land meant for (renewable energy) plants is competing with agriculture.

"But even though the west contributes about 70 per cent of the world's green-house gases, there is hope.

"United States President Barack Obama has called on big companies to help reverse the effects by helping poorer nations develop cleaner energy."

Pilz said organisations promoting sustainable development, such as Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH could help emerging economies, such as Malaysia, make the transition through funding and transfer of technology.

Pilz, who is also India One solar thermal power plant project head in Rajasthan, said the future could see improved expertise in boosting energy storage, a major issue because of the intermittent nature of natural energy.

There is a ray of hope with the trend of disinvestment from oil and gas companies in keeping with the 2015 United Nations Climate Change Conference or COP21's pledge to reduce carbon emissions.

"Many pension and government-backed funds are pulling out, sending shockwaves across the fossil fuel industry, which is set to dry up in 30 years."

He said that despite appearing to be pitted against renewable energy, the oil and gas companies had think tanks to project the future and as a result, they had funded renewable energy initiatives.

Despite the large-scale government and business initiatives, Pilz said the most significant change might come from ordinary people.

"At the heart of all change are people, their awareness and willingness to make a difference.

"We have to bring people into the boat and convince them that a paradigm shift is needed in industry, politics and in all of us," he said.

The most important change, he said, was on global consumeristic patterns and "the way people equate happiness to possession".

"We go into shopping complexes and we follow fashions, trends and buy new cars and new phones.

"We consume all these things," he said, urging people to kick the habit.

"We have to work on our subconscious programming, which influences our behavioural patterns. This means conditioning the mind to meditate on our actions and decisions.

"Scientific research has proven that meditation increases brain density and neuroplasticity, therefore, the technique can be employed as an advanced means to fight rapid environmental degradation.

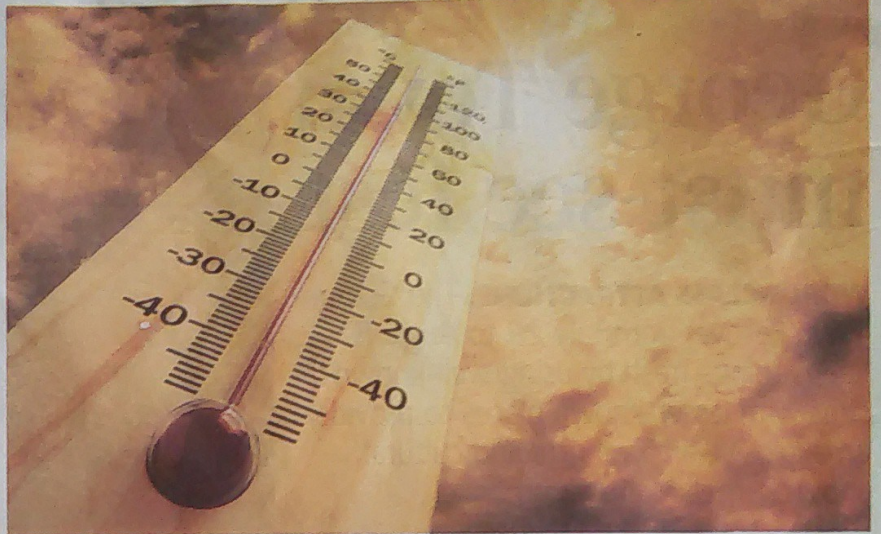
"The idea may sound far-fetched, but evidence of the accelerated effects of climate change was depressing," he said.

"The situation is tricky. Some politicians understand, but do they have the strength to move decisively in time?

"The next five years is crucial. If the temperature rises above two degrees, we will be in uncharted territory with the future of humanity at stake."

Pilz said the planet had lost precious time over the past two decades and the environment was becoming more volatile.

"It's now a toss-up between a crash or a soft landing for humanity, and renewable energy is our best foot forward."



Solar expert Golo J. Pilz says meditation can help people turn away from wasteful consumeristic patterns.

