

India, China urged to change stand at climate summit

Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI: A group of analysts and activists are urging emerging nations like India and China to change their stance at the U.N. climate summit that begins in Durban on Monday and be willing to consider binding commitments under a future climate regime. They also accused the Indian elite of "hiding behind the low carbon emissions of the poor."

"I believe it is no longer possible for the BASIC (Brazil, South Africa, India and China) to say we will never accept binding emission targets, now or in the future," said Praful Bidwai, speaking at the launch of his book, *The Politics of Climate Change and the Global Crisis: Mortgaging our Future*.

Girish Sant, energy and environment analyst with the Prayas group, sought to demolish the myth that India needed to continue on its fossil-fuelled growth path for the sake of 400 million villagers still living without electricity. "It would take 20,000 MW, at the most 30,000 MW, to light up all our villages. How much coal do we need for that?" He argued that India must uphold the principle of equitable carbon space not just in the international arena, but domestically as well. "Why do

we think of photovoltaics only for remote villages, not in Delhi? If you want an A/C in your house, use photovoltaics...It is the rich who should be paying for renewables. Let the coal be reserved for the poor, for those in rural areas."

National Advisory Council member Aruna Roy spoke on the important links between paradigms of development and carbon emissions, and urged grassroots activists to learn about the impact of climate change on daily life.

"There's a danger of elite environmentalists imposing their agenda," warned Rohan D'Souza of the Centre for Studies in Science Policy at the JNU.

India's former Ambassador to the United Nations Nirupam Sen said Mr. Bidwai's book grounded the climate debate in an ongoing class struggle. India's stance that developing countries could not afford to take on climate commitments because poverty eradication was their top priority was false. "This is hiding behind the poor, while the rich continue with their lifestyles."

Mr. Bidwai said, "We must avoid the Copenhagen temptation to oppose an ambitious global deal [at Durban] and support a weak deal simply because it involves lighter obligations for the BASIC."