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Swapn Dasgupta Calls for Balancing Economic Growth with Environmental Stewardship in Bengal

Discover Swapn Dasgupta's vision for an 'Unnato Bangla,' balancing economic growth with environmental stewardship. Learn about new policies for sustainable development, urban resilience, and the restoration of the Adi Ganga in West Bengal.

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A developed Bengal can emerge only through a careful balancing of economic aspirations and environmental stewardship, according to Swapan Dasgupta, journalist-turned-politician and a minister in Bengal's first BJP government, whose portfolios are yet to be announced.

Addressing an environment conclave in Kolkata themed "**Unnato Bangla: A New Vision for Bengal's Future**", Dasgupta stressed that sustainable development must be rooted in public participation and ecological awareness.

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Speaking at the conclave organised by the Indian Institute of Social Welfare & Business Management (IISWBM), Climate24 and Climate Trends, he said vigilant citizens are the strongest custodians of the environment.

"People themselves must decide whether they want a shopping mall or a high-rise built by filling up a pond, or whether they wish to preserve the water body. Ultimately, citizens have to be the decision makers," he observed.

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Revisiting the perennial debate between urban expansion and environmental conservation, Dasgupta also underlined the importance of what he termed "responsible tourism". Referring to Darjeeling, long celebrated as the "Queen of the Hills", he remarked that unchecked tourist inflow had transformed the iconic destination into "a nightmare and a horror".

Drawing upon international experiences, he pointed to the growing global discourse around "excessive tourism" and called for policies that ensure tourism growth does not come at the expense of fragile ecosystems and local communities.

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The minister also raised concerns over the prolonged failure to restore the historic Adi Ganga, or Tolly's Nullah, despite substantial public expenditure.

"Nearly Rs 600 crore has gone down the drain in the name of rejuvenation and cleaning of the Adi Ganga, but the outcome has been negligible," he said, adding that the issue warrants a comprehensive financial audit. He assured that the new government would pursue the restoration project with seriousness and clarity of purpose.

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The conclave brought together experts from leading academic institutions, research bodies and industry organisations, who deliberated on themes ranging from industrial decarbonisation and green finance to Net Zero transitions and urban resilience through sustainable infrastructure.

Prof. K.M. Agarwal, Director of IISWBM, said the conference aimed to identify the policy, investment and regulatory reforms necessary to accelerate industrial decarbonisation in Bengal. Another key objective, he noted, was to explore avenues for unlocking green finance to facilitate the state's long-term and sustainable economic transformation.

The discussions underscored a growing consensus that Bengal's developmental ambitions and environmental responsibilities must advance together.

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