

CSR TODAY

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BRAHMAPUTRA IN LAST SIX YEARS**

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Trends that will shape sustainability in 2022



Rajesh Tiwari
Publisher
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The United Nations (UN)-backed non-profit Science Based Targets initiative (SBTi) is helping companies translate the Paris Agreement's goal into concrete measures by accrediting only companies that have serious carbon-mitigation plans, to eliminate greenwashers.

In the coming year, we should expect to see stricter laws to expose 'greenwashers' and rising demand for clear disclosure and reporting standards.

The prolonged coronavirus pandemic continued to force seismic shifts in public policy and company behaviour. It brought about important fixes in the financial system and altered how businesses reacted to the impacts of climate change.

Before this year's COP26 climate conference in Glasgow, more than 1,000 companies had committed to adopt science-based targets to reduce emissions in line with the Paris Agreement goals. At the landmark summit, governments and businesses put forth more grand pledges and ambitious plans to decarbonise.

These governments and corporates, however, have given scant detail on how they plan to meet their climate pledges. In the year ahead, there would be a need to push for more transparency, to ensure that the promises are matched with genuine action. The key outcomes from COP26 are expected to influence climate action.


Eco-Business identifies seven major trends that will shape business and society in 2022:

1. As net zero pledges become fashionable, data disclosure has to follow
2. Companies' net zero pledges will be put to the test

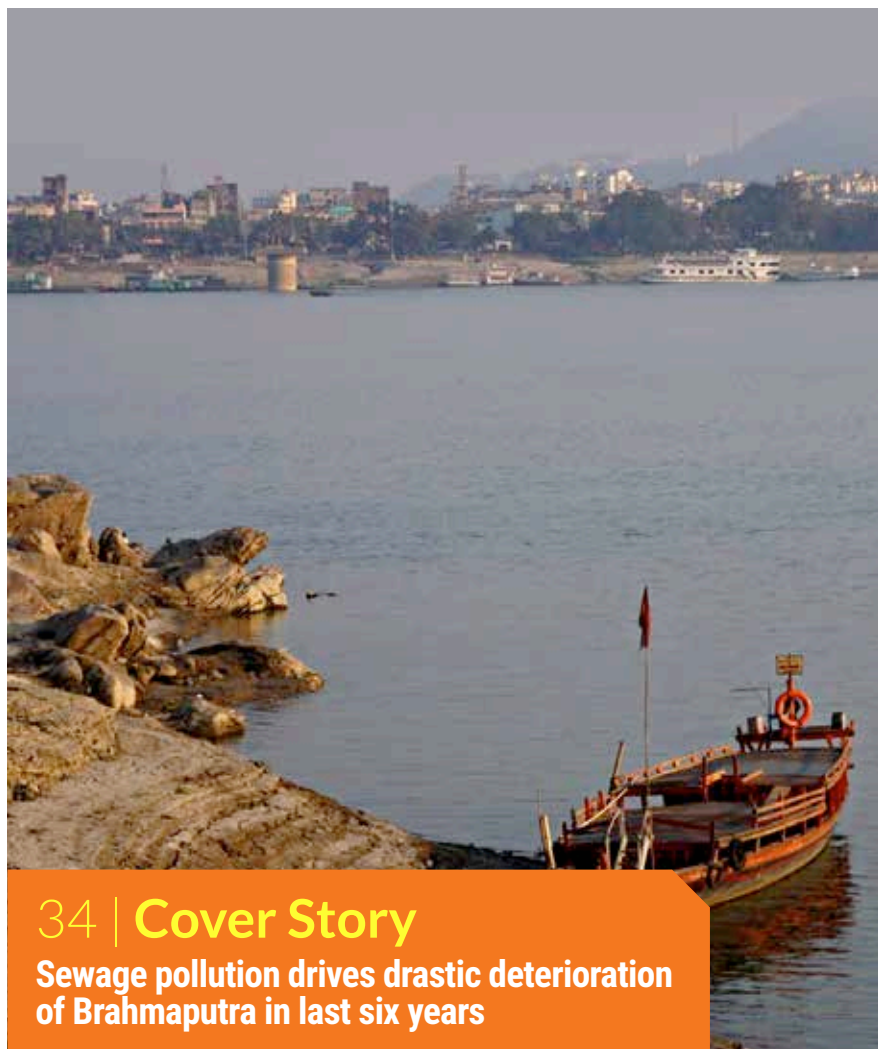
3. Regulation tide moving towards strengthening the 'S' factor in ESG
 4. Illegal fishing at a turning point
 5. Natural gas and nuclear energy poised for a comeback
 6. Electric cars, airplanes and sustainable shipping
 7. Innovation in nature-based solutions
- Advances in regulation will force companies to start getting serious about their net-zero goals, exposing those who are making empty promises

The United Nations (UN)-backed non-profit Science Based Targets initiative (SBTi) is helping companies translate the Paris Agreement's goal into concrete measures by accrediting only companies that have serious carbon-mitigation plans, to eliminate greenwashers.

It will require companies to first collect a comprehensive inventory of their direct emissions (Scope 1), indirect emissions from purchased electricity (Scope 2), and emissions from suppliers and end-users (Scope 3).

Companies must then develop a concrete plan and detail how they will report on and bring about the emissions reductions that will bring their company in line with the level of decarbonisation required to keep global temperature increase below 2 degrees Celsius, compared to pre-industrial temperatures. Most companies will require deep decarbonisation of 90 to 95 per cent to reach net-zero under the standards of the SBTi. 

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Mumbai's Dabbawalas join UMEED 1000 Cyclothon

RBL Bank's flagship CSR initiative is aimed at supporting Inclusive Education

RBL Bank, one of India's leading private sector banks, teamed up with the city's pride, Mumbai Dabbawalas, to cycle for a noble cause – Inclusive education – and enable a bright future for the marginalised communities. Under its flagship CSR initiative UMEED 1000 Cyclothon, 25 dabbawalas cycled alongside RBL Bank cyclists, to promote Education for All.

To help communities cope with the challenges facing education during Covid-19, Udbhav RBL School supported by RBL Bank, is providing access to quality education to children from underprivileged communities. The Bank also plans to adopt a new school for children with special needs under the Udbhav RBL School franchise, in Nallasopara, Maharashtra.

Shanta Vallury Gandhi, Head – HR, CSR and Internal Branding, RBL Bank, said, “We are happy that Mumbai's lifeline – dabbawalas – believe in our cause and have extended full support. At RBL Bank, we give utmost priority to our social responsibility and are committed to serving the marginalised communities through our various CSR initiatives, in Healthcare, Education and Livelihood Opportunities. We



RBL Bank cyclist and Mumbai Dabbawala gather at the ceremony



Ulhas Shantaram Muke, President, Mumbai Dabbawala Charity Trust

are proud to join hands with like-minded individuals and organisations to build a better and brighter tomorrow, for this nation. The Dabbawalas of Mumbai have also been impacted by the pandemic and are striving hard to recreate their livelihoods. Hence, we felt that this association truly represents the mission of RBL Bank's CSR efforts well.” Ulhas Shantaram Muke, President,



RBL Bank Cyclothon welcome ceremony

Mumbai Dabbawala Charity Trust, added, “We are humbled to be a part of RBL Bank's initiative to ensure inclusive education for all. We cannot deny the importance of education in every household. We hope our participation in the Cyclothon will create greater awareness amongst the underprivileged, about the need to educate and skill our young generation, the future of our country.”

43rd Jamnalal Bajaj Awards

The 43rd annual Jamnalal Bajaj Awards 2021, organized by the Jamnalal Bajaj Foundation, was held where four individuals were felicitated and honoured for their humanitarian work. These awards presented on or around the birth anniversary of Shri Jamnalal Bajaj recognises the exemplary efforts of people in the field of humanitarian and social work following Gandhian ideologies.

The four awardees were felicitated in the presence of the Chief Guest, the Nobel Peace Laureate Kailash Satyarthi, Founder of Kailash Satyarthi Children's Foundation, Rahul Bajaj, Chairman and Board of Trustees of Jamnalal Bajaj Foundation, Dr. R. A. Mashelkar, Chairman, Council of Advisors of the Foundation, Chairpersons of the Selection Committees, Members of the Council of Advisor of the Foundation, and the august gathering.

Since the institution of these awards, the Foundation commemorates the birth anniversary of Shri Jamnalal Bajaj every year. As a tribute to the great man on this special occasion, the Foundation felicitated achievers in the field of developmental activities and Gandhian constructive programmes by presenting them with a citation, a trophy and a prize amount of INR 10,00,000/- in each category. The Foundation continues to serve the ideals to which Shri Jamnalalji was dedicatedly been involved during his lifetime.

Bajaj said, "We congratulate all the winners as they have contributed to the society with their exemplary work. It is very important to recognize these individuals and honour their efforts, so that more people get inspired by their unflinching selflessness. The winners have each contributed a lot in their

THE DETAILS OF THE AWARDS FOR THIS YEAR (2021) ARE:

Award Category	Awardee Name and Title	State / Country
Award for outstanding contribution in the field of Constructive Work	Dharampal Saini	Chhattisgarh
Award for Application of Science & Technology for Rural Development	Dr. Lal Singh	Himachal Pradesh
Award for Development and Welfare of Women and Children (Instituted in memory of Smt. Jankidevi Bajaj)	Sister Lucy Kurien	Maharashtra
International Award for Promoting Gandhian Values Outside India	David H Albert	United States of America

own way to the propagation of the Gandhian principles and it is exactly this that Shri Jamnalalji desired. The Foundation is proud and privileged to recognize such people who have touched so many lives and transformed them emotionally, economically and socially."

About the 2021 Winners

Dharampal Saini

Recipient of the Award for Outstanding Contribution in the field of Constructive Work – 2021

A courageous and humble worker, Dharampal Saini was immersed into the ideas and philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi, Vinoba Bhave and Swami Vivekananda from an early age. He has been an activist for education, development and against untouchability. A great believer in Gandhian principles, he has supported the holistic development of the youth, fair price in markets and forest produce.

Following is a brief description of activities undertaken by him:

- Sainiji developed Rupa Kheda village without any government assistance. He started education among women through the discussion of development, shramdan.
- From Rupa Kheda to Machla and

from there Harijan Sevak Sangh in Indore became the area of life and work of Sainiji. As an activist for the prevention of untouchability and organizer of the state's Drug Ban Committee, he was involved in the rallies/padyatra, camps, conferences as well as in writing and organizing them independently.

- During the period from 1962 to 1970 Saini was engaged in constructive work. Then, Sainiji got an opportunity to work as the principal of Panchayati Raj Training School. He also got opportunity to get trained as a Shanti Sena volunteer (peacekeeping force) under the guidance of Narayanbhai Desai at Jayprakash Narayan's village Sokhdevara Ashram.
- From 1970 to 1974, as the official convenor of Bhil Sevak Sangh in the tribal districts of Madhya Pradesh, Sainiji developed the new generation with new ideas and original values by the light of education from Ashram schools.
- In 1976, he established Mata Rukhmani Sewa Sansthan with Bastar district as its centre. Today 2500 boys and girls living in about 600 villages study in 37 ashrams whose thoughts, conduct,

Infosys Science Foundation awards the Infosys Prize 2021 to Winners in Six Categories

The Infosys Science Foundation (ISF), awarded the winners of the Infosys Prize 2021 for their outstanding contributions to science and research in six fields - Engineering and Computer Science, Humanities, Life Sciences, Mathematical Sciences, Physical Sciences and Social Sciences. The work of the laureates this year addresses some of the greatest challenges of our time, studying the effects of climate change on fragile ecosystems and contributing to more effective conservation strategies, designing a robust indigenous platform for rapid testing of deadly diseases like COVID-19 and TB, understanding the nuclear force to better harness nuclear energy for the benefit of humankind, and addressing issues such as sexual violence and jurisprudence in our society. Winners were felicitated by the Chief Guest, Prof. Gagandeep Kang FRS, Professor at CMC Vellore, Infosys Prize laureate 2016, and one of India's leading virologists.

The award comprises a pure gold medal, a citation and a prize-purse of USD 100,000, tax free in India.

The laureates were chosen from a competitive pool of 201 nominations received this year. The winners of the Infosys Prize 2021 were identified by an accomplished jury of scholars and professors from some of the most prestigious universities across the world. The eminent chairs of the jury who announced the winners of the 13th Infosys Prize were:

Prof. Arvind (Massachusetts Institute of Technology) for Engineering and Computer Science, Prof. Kaushik Basu (Cornell

University and former SVP, World Bank) for Social Sciences, Prof. Akeel Bilgrami (Columbia University) for Humanities, Prof. Chandrashekhar Khare (University of California, Los Angeles) for Mathematical Sciences, Prof. Shrinivas Kulkarni (California Institute of Technology) for Physical Sciences, and Prof. Mriganka Sur (Massachusetts Institute of Technology) for Life Sciences.

The Infosys Prize, the highest prize for science and research in India, has a history of recognizing and felicitating exceptional talent for contributions in science, research, and technology. Several laureates of the Infosys Prize – past and present – have gone on to occupy positions of influence in academia and the top echelons of government, and win prestigious international honors like the Nobel Prize in Economics, the Fields Medal, and the Macarthur 'Genius' Grant.

The Infosys Science Foundation believes that, like those before them, the winners of the Infosys Prize 2021 will have a lasting impact on the world stage. By recognizing these researchers and celebrating their achievements, the Infosys Prize hopes to create role models who will encourage young minds to explore science and research as career options.

Mr. Kris Gopalakrishnan, President – Infosys Science Foundation, said, "The Infosys Science Foundation has recognized excellence for the last 13 years. By recognizing and celebrating the creativity and innovation of these remarkable individuals, we hope to inspire and encourage others and

society at large. While results may not always be immediately apparent, we must remember that the long arc of knowledge, discovery, and invention will benefit mankind in unexpected ways as we have seen with mRNA vaccines during this COVID crisis. With the Infosys Prize, we not only reward apparent breakthroughs but also the far-reaching potential of the work of these stellar researchers and scholars."

Among those in attendance at the virtual ceremony were the trustees of the Infosys Science Foundation Mr. Kris Gopalakrishnan (President – Infosys Science Foundation), Mr. Srinath Batni, Mr. K. Dinesh, Mr. Narayana Murthy, Mr. Nandan Nilekani, Mr. Mohandas Pai, and Mr. S. D. Shibulal. In addition to the trustees and jury members, the event was attended by distinguished scientists and academicians from India and overseas, as well as business leaders, young researchers, and students.

On the occasion of the Infosys Prize ceremony, Chief Guest - Prof. Gagandeep Kang said, "In the past few centuries, and certainly in the future, the history of the world has been, and will be shaped by the countries that lead in science and intellectual exploration. For any nation and society, world-leading science is a matter of prestige and a contribution to excellence in the country and the world. Recognition of exploration, innovation, and response to scientific and societal challenges is the goal of the Infosys Prize. Awards such as these create role models of science and scholarship that future generations

CSR INDIA UNITED

Games24x7 partners with Akshaya Patra Foundation; donates 10,000 'Happiness Kits' to beneficiaries of the Mid-Day Meal Scheme



Shri Suhas Wadkar, Deputy Mayor, Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation, Mr. Bhavin Pandya, co-founder and CEO of Games24x7 and Mathan Varkey, National Director and Corporate Partnerships, Akshaya Patra Foundation



L-R Mathan Varkey, National Director and Corporate Partnerships, Akshaya Patra Foundation, Mr. Bhavin Pandya, co-founder and CEO of Games24x7, Shri Suhas Wadkar, Deputy Mayor, BMC

Games24x7, India's largest online skill gaming platform, commenced their partnership with Akshaya Patra Foundation with an aim to provide 10,000 student beneficiaries of the Mid-Day Meal Schemes (MDMS) with 'Happiness Kits'. These kits contain tools to deliver holistic nutrition, education, and hygiene to the doorsteps of children in alignment with the changing requirements of a pandemic afflicted world. The company has announced a commitment of INR 6 crores during the current fiscal with a mission to support children across various verticals including facilitating education, eliminating malnutrition, addressing trafficking and empowering students through scholarship programs.

Suhas Wadkar, Deputy Mayor, Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) graced the occasion with his presence and shared his views on the initiative, "I would like to extend my gratitude to organisations like Games24x7 which support and contribute to society, further strengthening the efforts and various programs institutionalised by the Government. Such contributions have continued to provide support during the pandemic, helping foundations like Akshaya Patra provide holistic nutrition to over 20 crore children."

During the inaugural ceremony, Bhavin Pandya and Trivikraman Thampy, co-founders and CEO's of Games24x7 said, "Ensuring that our children grow up in caring, nourishing and healthy environments where they get the right opportunities to learn, and progress is of critical importance. These must be provided through means that are accessible and can be delivered to their doorsteps. For this, we are delighted to join hands with Akshaya Patra Foundation and join them in their mission to ensure that no child is deprived of education because of hunger." Mathan Varkey, National

NITI Aayog and Bharti Foundation announce the launch of 'Convoke 2021-22'

NITI Aayog in partnership with Bharti Foundation, the philanthropic arm of Bharti Enterprises, launched Convoke 2021-22.

Convoke is a National research Symposium which aims at addressing challenges in imparting education and strengthening its quality with special focus on all teachers, educationists, heads of schools across India. Through this platform, School Teachers/ Heads/Principals of Government Schools and teachers from Bharti Foundation network will be encouraged to use research-based solutions through scientific approach, and showcase their efforts taken at the grass-root level in improving learning outcomes.

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 also recognises and identifies teachers and faculty as the heart of the learning process. It recommends that teachers will be recognised for novel approaches to teaching that improve learning outcomes in their classrooms. NEP recommends to develop platforms so that teachers may share ideas and best practices for wider dissemination and replication.

Teachers over the years have been coming up with innovative solution to help support students and even more during lockdown. Through Convoke they can now share their micro research papers. These research papers will be analyzed by a panel of Educationists. The shortlisted Research Papers will be presented during 'National Research Symposium' scheduled in January, 2022.



Inviting research papers for a National Level Symposium to be held in January 2022

Registration for inviting papers from teachers and principals/Heads of schools opens from 9th December, 2021

Leading Education Institutes and stakeholders participated in the event

The event was chaired by Dr. Rajiv Kumar, Vice Chairman, NITI Aayog and attended by Shri Amitabh Kant, CEO, NITI Aayog, Dr. Prem Singh, Adviser (Education), NITI Aayog, Shri Rakesh Bharti Mittal, Co-Chairman, Bharti Foundation and Ms. Mamta Saikia, CEO, Bharti Foundation and also virtually attended by representatives of Ministry of Education, NIEPA, Officials of Education Departments/ SCERTs of all States/UTs.

Speaking during the event Dr Rajiv Kumar, Vice Chairman, NITI Aayog, said, "There is a need to focus on quality as we have achieved near universal access in elementary education. It becomes an immediate and foremost important task given the learning regression that has happened due to the Covid 19 school closures. I hope that CONVOKE will become a platform which will be pan-India and it will become

SEWAGE POLLUTION

DRIVES DRASTIC DETERIORATION OF BRAHMAPUTRA IN LAST SIX YEARS

A new study finds that huge untreated sewage discharge into the transboundary river, especially in the largest city Guwahati, is affecting the lives of people in Assam and downstream, writes

Deepa Padmanaban, The Third Pole

Brahmaputra river bank.

Image: Neofresco, CC BY 2.0.



everal million people depend on the Brahmaputra River for agriculture, fisheries and as a source of drinking water. But mounting scientific evidence shows that increasing sewage pollution from the cities it supports, particularly in Assam, is threatening the river's health and the ecosystems that depend on it.

Originating in the Tibetan Plateau (where it is known as the Yarlung Tsangpo), the Brahmaputra runs through Arunachal Pradesh and Assam before flowing into Bangladesh. While trash and pollution enters the river throughout its course, the Brahmaputra's water quality worsens severely in Assam, due to the state's poor waste infrastructure which leads the bulk of its liquid sewage to be discharged directly into the river.

A 2021 study analysed water quality at 10 hydrological stations along the Brahmaputra in India for eight water parameters over 17 years from 2003 to 2019. The parameters considered included temperature, pH (acidity), biological oxygen demand (BOD), nitrates and nitrites, faecal coliform bacteria and total coliform bacteria. The study by researchers in Romania concluded that water quality is mainly affected by the high concentrations of coliform bacteria found at some stations along the Brahmaputra, and

that there was an overall decrease in water quality from 2015 onwards.

Coliform bacteria are found in human waste, and while they are not inherently dangerous, their presence is used by researchers as an indication that other harmful organisms likely contaminate the water.

These findings are corroborated by data from the Pollution Control Board of Assam (PCB), seen by The Third Pole. Assessment of water quality at 10 different locations along the Brahmaputra in 2017 showed that faecal coliform levels were high on four different occasions during the year at Assam's largest river port Pandu, and occasionally at others.

Subhankar Datta, a research scholar at the Maulana Abdul Kalam Azad University of Technology at Kolkata, published a book chapter in 2020, reviewing water quality assessments (looking at pH, BOD, conductivity, dissolved oxygen, total dissolved solids and total suspended solids) in the Brahmaputra. He said

the analysis showed that the water was unfit for human consumption.

"There were high levels of sewage pollution mainly due to discharge of waste materials into the river from the nearby industrial areas as well as households," said Datta.

SEWAGE ENTERS THE BRAHMAPUTRA AT GUWAHATI

About 154 million litres of sewage is generated every day in Assam's largest city Guwahati alone, through which the Brahmaputra flows, according to PCB reports.

The city has seen an increase in population at an average annual rate of 20 per cent, which accounts for the increased sewage generation. The main reason for the river pollution is the direct drainage of sewage and wastewater into the Brahmaputra without any treatment.

Shirshendu Sekhar Das, founder of Guwahati-based environmental conservation organisation The Midway Journey, said, "In certain

14 times sustainability was sort of funny in 2021

Another year locked in the jaws of a pandemic did provide the occasional moment of light relief. Robin Hicks looks back at the times when sustainability was almost amusing in 2021.

There isn't anything particularly hilarious about Hellish fires raging in countries from Greece to Canada, the first climate change famine ravaging Madagascar, rain rather than snow falling at the summit of Greenland for the first time, or more than five million people dying of a disease probably caused by the plundering of wild animals. But somehow, the typically depressing business of reporting on environmental and social issues did occasionally cough up a reason to chortle in 2021.

Here are 14 things that made us less likely to reach for the bleach this year.

Greenwash becomes visible from space

2021 was a year when green-



A giraffe was deployed to protest against overseas coal funding in Korea, one of the few questionably comical incidences in the dreary world of sustainability in 2021. Image: Robin Hicks/Eco-Business

washing — that is, companies and governments claiming to be more sustainable than they actually are — became so abundant that it spawned new variants like rainbow-washing (jumping on the lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender bandwagon) and virus-washing (using the pandemic as a platform to pretend you care about your staff). Happily, it gave cartoonists, satirists and memers plenty of material, particularly around the corporate-sponsored jamboree that was COP26.

Sustainability is at the heart of everything we claim

Almost as common as greenwashing this year was companies saying that sustainability is 'in their DNA', or 'at

the heart of everything they do'. If it was, then perhaps global emissions wouldn't break new records every year. Here's one of the trillion times companies spewed this hacked phrase in 2021:

"At Uniqlo, sustainability lies at the core of the brand's operations, with its belief that its clothing has the power to change the world for the better," wrote the Japanese fast fashion brand's PR agency, announcing its participation in a webinar on 'Unlocking the Power of Clothing' in January. Beyond preventing nudity, how is cheap clobber destined for landfill good for society? (Advice to corporates: stop saying sustainability is in your DNA. It's not true and no one believes you.)



A protester holds a placard outside the COP26 climate talks in Glasgow, Nov. 2021. Image: Fraser Morton/Eco-Business

NET ZERO IS NOT ZERO

Recent carbon-neutrality pledges may seem ambitious, but merely serve to promote a new set of false climate solutions under a different guise. Such pledges may persuade many people, but the climate isn't buying it, write **Maureen Santos** and **Linda Schneider**

It may seem as if the world is finally taking the climate crisis seriously, judging by the number of pledges to reach "net-zero emissions." Among the major emitters, both the United States and the European Union have promised to achieve this goal by 2050, while China intends to become carbon-neutral before 2060. Even oil giants Shell and BP plan to reach net-zero emissions by mid-century.

Large tech corporations appear more ambitious still. Amazon has committed to reaching net-zero carbon dioxide emissions by 2040. Microsoft has pledged to be "carbon negative" by 2030, and by 2050 it aims to have removed from the air all the CO₂ the firm has emitted since it

Omicron variant threatens UN talks to seal global nature deal

The rapid spread of the Omicron variant of Covid-19 could throw a spanner in the works of the COP15 talks, which have already been postponed three times due to the pandemic.

A flagship UN conference in China next spring, where governments are set to ink a new global pact to protect nature, could be thwarted by stricter travel restrictions imposed to contain the Omicron coronavirus variant, environmentalists have warned. About 195 countries are set to finalise an accord to safeguard plants, animals and ecosystems - similar to the Paris climate agreement - at the UN summit, known as COP15, scheduled for April 25-May 8 in the city of Kunming.

But the rapid spread of the new Omicron variant of Covid-19 around the world could throw a spanner in the works of the talks, which have already been postponed three times due to the difficulties of meeting face to face during the pandemic.



A giant panda rests on a tree "panda kindergarten", a refuge for baby pandas, inside Bifengxia giant panda base in Ya'an, Sichuan province. Image: REUTERS/Stringer

The next round of in-person technical negotiations on the draft agreement and ways to put it into practice - planned for Geneva in January - was already delayed this month, possibly until March, because of Omicron concerns.

"The upshot... is that COP15 may also need to be postponed again," said Lin Li, director of global policy and advocacy at green group WWF International.

"It is important that governments use any extra time effectively to

ensure an ambitious draft biodiversity agreement is adopted in Kunming," she said in a statement.

Improving conservation and management of natural areas, such as parks, oceans, forests and wildernesses, is seen as crucial to safeguarding the ecosystems on which humans depend and limiting global warming to internationally agreed targets. But forests are still being cut down - often to produce commodities such as palm oil and beef - destroying biodiversity and threat-

How ocean protection improves lives on land

When the ocean is protected, the impacts are felt by people on land. Since ocean conservation laws were enacted in both the Philippines and Timor Leste, the livelihoods of coastal communities have changed for the better.

In the province of Batangas in the Philippines, marine protected areas (MPAs) and seasonal fishery closures have been implemented since 2014 to combat indiscriminate and illegal fishing, which took a heavy toll on fish stocks. While the coastal communities are now on board after witnessing the abundance of fish that came with these new rules, the road to implementation wasn't easy in the early years.

"Many of the community members are fisherfolk, so naturally people objected to MPAs at first. They felt like their livelihoods and rights were taken away from them," Augustus Montebon, marine programme director at Conservation International Philippines, told Eco-Business. "It took a long time to educate and advise the community about the benefits of MPAs because it would be a sacrifice on their part for the medium-term. But we told them that protecting marine areas will pay them back over the long-



Local communities and authorities implementing the traditional law of Tara Bandu at Uaroana, Atauro Island, which helps to protect the ocean, and allows fish populations to recover. Conservation International is working to improve management of Marine Protected Areas in Timor-Leste to improve local food security, fight climate change and enhance livelihoods for local community members. Image: Trudiann Dale/Conservation International

term," he added. While the MPAs and seasonal fishery closure started out as just bay-wide initiatives, they have now been expanded across the entire Verde Island Passage (VIP). The VIP now has 36 MPAs and is regarded as home to some of the most biodiverse coral and fish species in the world, with more than 300 species of corals, underwater reef formations and rock canyons that host around 60 per cent of the world's shorefish species.

In 2013, a pilot study was conducted in Balayan Bay which found that the two primary species of fish—round scad and mackerel—were initially abundant in the area, but were then significantly reduced. With no regulations on fishing,

fishers resorted to catching juvenile fishes and so prevented the population from replenishing itself.

Worried about the decline in fish stocks, fishers gathered and agreed to implement the first seasonal fishing closure in 2014. After the two-month closure of the fisheries, fisherfolk saw the immediate benefits of a higher fish catch than before the closure, and agreed to yearly seasonal closures.

"The best thing that has happened for the local community is that they now understand and they want to implement these fishing disclosures and other related laws," said Rodrigo De Jesus, chairperson of the Bantay Dagat (sea wardens) of Catalagan. The Bantay Dagat is a volunteer-