

CSR TODAY

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Rising temperatures and extreme weather hit Asia hard



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The State of the Climate in Asia report highlights the changes in key climate indicators such as surface temperature, glacier mass and sea level, which will have major repercussions for societies, economies and ecosystems in the region.

Asia is currently warming nearly twice as fast as the global average, fuelling more extreme weather and wreaking a heavy toll on the region's economies, ecosystems and societies, according to the World Meteorological Organization (WMO). The WMO's State of the Climate in Asia 2024 report says that 2024 was the warmest or second warmest year on record (depending on the dataset), with widespread and prolonged heat waves. This comes as a major cause of concern for India.

The warming trend between 1991–2024 was almost double that during the 1961–1990 period. In 2024, heatwaves gripped a record area of the ocean. Sea surface temperatures were the highest on record, with Asia's sea surface decadal warming rate nearly double the global average. Sea level rise on the Pacific and Indian Ocean sides of the continent exceeded the global average, heightening risks for low-lying coastal areas.

Reduced winter snowfall and extreme summer heat were punishing for glaciers. In the central Himalayas and Tian Shan, 23 out of 24 glaciers suffered mass loss, leading to an increase in hazards like glacial lake outburst floods and landslides and long-term risks for water security. Extreme rainfall wreaked havoc and heavy casualties in many countries in the region, and tropical cyclones left a trail of destruction, whilst drought caused heavy economic and agricultural losses.

"The State of the Climate in Asia report highlights the changes in key climate indicators such as surface temperature, glacier mass and sea level, which will have major repercussions for societies, economies and ecosystems in the region. Extreme weather is already exacting an unacceptably high toll," said WMO Secretary-General Celeste Saulo.

"The work of National Meteorological and Hydrological Services and their partners is more important than ever to save lives and livelihoods," she said.

The report included a case study from Nepal, showing how strengthened early warning systems and anticipatory action enable communities to prepare for and respond to climate variability and change, thereby helping to protect lives and livelihoods. The State of the Climate reports are flagship reports of WMO and provide policy-relevant information for national and regional decision-making.

In 2024, Asia's average temperature was about 1.04°C above the 1991–2020 average, ranking as the warmest or second warmest year on record, depending on the dataset. Asia is the continent with the largest land mass extending to the Arctic and is warming more than twice as fast as the global average because the temperature increase over land is larger than the temperature increase over the ocean.

In 2024, most of the ocean area of Asia was affected by marine heatwaves of strong, severe, or extreme intensity – the largest extent since records began in 1993. The northern Indian Ocean and in the ocean area adjacent to Japan, the Yellow and East China seas were especially affected.

Large parts of the Arctic Ocean experienced significant sea ice melt, with the ice edge shifting far northward by the end of the season. The High-Mountain Asia (HMA) region, centred on the Tibetan Plateau, contains the largest volume of ice outside the polar regions, with glaciers covering an area of approximately 100,000 square km. It is known as the world's Third Pole.

Over the last several decades, most glaciers in this region have been retreating. 23 out of 24 glaciers in the High-Mountain Asia region showed continued mass loss during 2023/2024. Reduced winter snowfall and extreme summer heat in the central Himalayas and most of the Tian Shan intensified mass loss for most glaciers. Urumqi Glacier No.1, located in the eastern Tian Shan, recorded its most negative mass balance since measurements began in 1959. 

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Scientists and monks perform last rites for a Himalayan glacier



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CSR NEWS

Signify and Madhya Pradesh Tourism Board Partner to Illuminate 61 Villages, Empowering Local Communities Under 'Har Gaon Roshan' CSR Initiative



Signify, the world leader in lighting, announced a collaboration with the Madhya Pradesh Tourism Board to bring sustainable outdoor lighting infrastructure to 61 tourism-led villages across the state under its 'Har Gaon Roshan' CSR Program. This initiative prioritizes tribal communities and regions near national parks, aiming to enhance safety, visibility, and the overall tourist experience in these underserved areas.

The project will be implemented in partnership with Signify's long-standing NGO partner, Haritika, providing energy efficient outdoor lighting solutions in these remote villages. By supporting local

infrastructure development, the project will also enable in creating a well-lit environment for tourists and locals, while fostering economic opportunities for the communities.

The official Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was exchanged at a formal event in Bhopal, graced by the Hon'ble Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh, Shri Mohan Yadav, and Signify's leadership, highlighting Signify's commitment to sustainable development and community empowerment through innovative lighting solutions.

Commenting on the partnership, Nikhil Gupta, Head of Marketing, Strategy, Govt Affairs, and CSR, Signify Greater India said, "At

Signify, we believe in bringing the best of innovations to the communities across India, through our Har Gaon Roshan CSR initiative. For this project, we are thankful to the support of Madhya Pradesh tourism board for aiding our collective mission to strengthen rural communities through tourism. By illuminating these villages, we are enhancing the safety and visibility of these areas. This partnership reflects our commitment to using light to positively impact lives in the most underserved regions of India, fostering sustainable growth and community empowerment."

Madhya Pradesh Tourism Board representative added, "This partnership with Signify marks a significant step toward realizing our collective vision of transforming rural tourism in Madhya Pradesh. Providing lighting to these villages will not only improve safety and infrastructure but also unlock new avenues for community-based tourism, economic development and enhance livelihood activities especially during evening hours such as showcasing local artifacts, promoting handloom and handicraft work, selling local produce such as spices and organic goods, and organizing cultural performances and evening village tours."



Dalmia Bharat Foundation and Red Carpet Join Hands to Empower Women Through Skill Training in the Automotive Sector

In a significant step towards empowering women through skill development, Dalmia Bharat Foundation (DBF), the CSR arm of Dalmia Cement (Bharat) Ltd., signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Red Carpet Learning Institute a leading training and skilling partner at Noida, New Delhi today. The collaboration falls under DBF's flagship initiative DIKSHa (Dalmia Institute of Knowledge and Skill Harnessing), which focuses on equipping youth and women with industry-relevant skills. As part of this partnership, DBF and Red Carpet Learning Institute will jointly train 300 women across 10

batches for job roles in the automotive sector, focusing on three specialized roles: Automotive Showroom Host, Automotive Tele-Caller, and Two-Wheeler Service Assistant. The initiative, set to roll out in Assam, West Bengal, and Jharkhand, aims to enhance employability for women from underserved backgrounds. Training will commence in August 2025 and conclude by the end of the year 2025, with counseling support provided to encourage participation. Eligible candidates must be 18 years or older and have passed Class 10. The expected minimum monthly wage is around Rs.10000, helping women

secure sustainable entry-level jobs in the sector.

Speaking on the occasion, Ashok Kumar Gupta, CEO, Dalmia Bharat Foundation said: "At Dalmia Bharat, we are committed to building a more inclusive and skilled workforce for India. Our partnership with Red Carpet Learning Institute underlines this commitment - bringing together practical training, industry relevance and a shared vision to support women to build sustainable careers and become active contributors to their communities."

Bitan Roy, Partner, Red Carpet Learning Institute, added: "We are pleased to partner with Dalmia Bharat Foundation in this important initiative that places women at the forefront of India's growing automotive sector. At Red Carpet Learning Institute, our focus has always been on delivering practical, industry-aligned training that leads to real jobs."

The training centres will be fully equipped with classroom infrastructure, computer labs, and projectors, meeting the standards set by the Automotive Skills Development Council (ASDC). Assessments will be conducted in three phases: an online test after the first month, a second online assessment after 90% of the course (by an external agency), and a final physical assessment at the training center post-course completion. The initiative aims to offer 90% placement assistance, with trainees expected to be placed within 50 days of completing the course.

DBF, through its DIKSHa initiative, continues to champion impactful programs that bridge the gap between skill development and sustainable livelihoods at the grassroots. With a sharp focus on women empowerment and inclusive growth, DIKSHa trained 23,624 till date, with more than 50% of them being women. The initiative remains central to DBF's mission of building resilient, self-reliant communities.

IIT Madras partners with State Govt to boost Tamil Nadu's Agri-Food Ecosystem

The Institute has entered into a Strategic Partnership with TN Agri Business and Food Processing Export Corporation for several efforts, including enhancing market access and export potential

Indian Institute of Technology Madras (IIT Madras) is partnering with the State Government to boost Tamil Nadu's agriculture and food processing sector. The collaboration will focus on sustainable rural development, agri-business innovation, and inclusive economic growth in Tamil Nadu.

Towards this, IIT Madras signed a Strategic MoU recently with Tamil Nadu Agri Business and Food Processing Export Corporation (TNAPEX), which acts as an apex body for the promotion of Food Processing and Agri Export. The signing took place at the TN Secretariat in the presence of Dr. Atul Anand, IAS, Additional Chief Secretary, MSME Department, Government of Tamil Nadu.

Welcoming the expertise brought in by IIT Madras, Dr. Atul Anand, IAS, Additional Chief Secretary, MSME Department, Government of Tamil Nadu, reaffirmed the State Government's commitment to transforming rural supply chains, reducing post-harvest losses, and increasing farmer incomes through innovation and collaboration.

Looking forward to this collaboration, Prof. V. Kamakoti, Director, IIT Madras, emphasized the Institute's multi-disciplinary strength in solving real-world challenges. He laid out IIT Madras' plan to improve operational efficiency, marketability, and sustainability in Tamil Nadu's agri-business ecosystem through research, training, technological, and marketing interventions.



(L-R) Prof V Kamakoti, Director, IIT Madras, Dr Atul Anand, IAS, Additional Chief Secretary, MSME Department, Govt of Tamil Nadu & Dr K Alagusundaram, MD & CEO, TNAPEX

The MoU covers joint efforts in:

- Skilling rural youth in agribusiness
- Optimising supply chains and reducing food wastage
- Enhancing market access and export potential
- Improving packaging, branding, and product marketing
- Evaluating government schemes for greater impact

Dr. K. Alagusundaram, Managing Director and CEO, TNAPEX, highlighted the strategic importance of connecting Tamil Nadu's rural micro-enterprises to global markets and leveraging academic collaboration to boost capacity and competitiveness in the food processing sector.

Other IIT Madras Faculty present on the occasion include Prof. Manu Santhanam, Dean (IC&SR) and Dr.

Saji Mathew, Head, Department of Management Studies. Prof. Arshinder Kaur, along with Prof. G. Arun Kumar and Prof. Vaibhav Chawla from the Department of Management Studies, IIT Madras will lead the research, training, and consulting efforts in collaboration with TNAPEX for the food processing and agri-based MSMEs in Tamil Nadu.

Prof. V. Palanimuthu, Director, National Institute of Food Technology, Entrepreneurship and Management – Thanjavur (NIFTEM-T), Dr. N. Felix, Vice Chancellor, Tamil Nadu Dr. J. Jayalalithaa Fisheries University (TNJFU) and Dr. K. N. Selvakumar, Vice Chancellor, Tamil Nadu Veterinary and Animal Sciences University (TANUVAS) were also present.



Courtyard By Marriott Aravali Resort Sets A New Benchmark In Sustainable Hospitality With 368 Kwp Solar Power Plant

Courtyard By Marriott Aravali Resort announced a significant leap in its sustainability journey with the successful installation of a 368 kilowatt peak (KWp) solar power plant. This landmark initiative reinforces the property's deep-rooted commitment to environmentally responsible hospitality while paving the way for a cleaner, greener future.

Nestled amid the scenic Aravali Hills, the hotel is now harnessing the abundant solar potential of its surroundings to generate over 1,272 kilowatt-hours (kWh) of clean energy every day. The solar plant substantially reduces the hotel's

reliance on conventional energy sources, bringing down its carbon footprint and operational emissions. Over the course of a year, this renewable energy system is expected to offset a considerable amount of greenhouse gases, equivalent to planting thousands of mature trees or removing hundreds of cars from the road.

The solar panels have been strategically integrated into the architecture to maximize energy yield while maintaining the natural harmony of the property. This clean energy powers several core functions, including air conditioning, lighting, kitchen operations,

and water heating, allowing the hotel to function more sustainably without compromising its elevated guest experience.

“At Courtyard By Marriott Aravali Resort, we believe that the future of hospitality lies in responsible innovation,” said Anuj Chaudhry, General Manager, Courtyard By Marriott Aravali Resort. “The installation of this solar plant reflects our unwavering dedication to sustainability, not just as a concept, but as a continuous commitment to action. We want to offer our guests an experience where luxury meets mindfulness, and where their stay contributes to something larger, something greener. Our vision is to transform Courtyard By Marriott Aravali Resort into a benchmark for eco-conscious hospitality. This solar initiative is just the beginning. We are working toward implementing a range of environmentally friendly practices, from water conservation and rainwater harvesting to waste segregation and local sourcing of produce. Sustainability, for us, is not a checkbox, it's our culture.”

“The Courtyard By Marriott Aravali Resort's solar installation is a powerful demonstration of how premium hospitality and sustainability can — and must — coexist,” said Dr. Sanjay Sethi, MD & CEO of Chalet Hotels Ltd. “We view every green milestone not just as an operational win, but as a step toward a more resilient and responsible future. This project reflects our commitment to Net Zero 2040 and our investment in innovation that serves both our guests and the planet.”

As the world reflects on the importance of ecological harmony and sustainability initiatives, Courtyard By Marriott Aravali Resort invites its guests, partners, and community members to be part of its journey towards a more sustainable future, one solar panel at a time.

Shiv Nadar School Grade 12 Student wins prestigious CREST Gold award by British Science Association for Innovation in Sustainable Farming

In a proud moment for Shiv Nadar School, Gurgaon, class 12 student Navya Goenka has been awarded the CREST Gold Award, one of the UK's most prestigious science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) accolades, for her groundbreaking project titled "Agroventure: Soil Analysis & Agrochemical Optimization IoT Device." The project was a collaborative effort with fellow students Aayush Anand, Gaurvica Gupta, and Simayah Jhingran, with Navya leading the initiative and representing the team on the international stage. This award recognises outstanding innovation and research by young minds around the world.

Congratulating Navya on this achievement, Sameer Arora, Principal of Shiv Nadar School Gurgaon said, "We are immensely proud of Navya's remarkable achievement in winning the prestigious CREST Gold Award. Her project exemplifies the spirit of innovation and social impact that we strive to nurture at Shiv Nadar School. We congratulate her and look forward to seeing her continue to make meaningful contributions to society."

Inspired by daily struggles of India's farmers, this students-led initiative, Agroventure introduced Mati Rakshak, a device that provides real-time soil analysis for Indian farmers. It stands 5 ft tall



Navya Goenka

with solar panels attached at the top, powering the battery inside the IP tested box. When inserted in the soil, the three probes analyse the soil's chemical composition and display the reading on an LED screen. The reading are then sent to their bilingual Agroww app to display soil data and provide fertilizer and irrigation recommendations.

Expressing her views on this achievement, Navya said, "Agroventure addresses a critical issue in Indian agriculture: over-fertilization and delayed soil testing. By providing instant feedback through a bilingual app, Agroww, and leveraging solar power and sustainable materials, Mati Rakshak has the potential to



redefine soil health monitoring in rural India. I'm incredibly grateful to the school for creating an environment that encourages curiosity, innovation, and real-world problem-solving. Winning the CREST Gold Award is an honour, and I owe so much of this achievement to the school's encouragement."

Agroventure's vision doesn't stop here. The team is already planning to integrate drones and autonomous rovers for large-scale, precision farming. Their ambition is to transform Indian agriculture into a more data-driven, sustainable sector—empowering farmers and protecting the environment.

This international recognition through the CREST Gold Award not only celebrates Navya's individual excellence but also exemplifies the Shiv Nadar School's commitment to nurturing innovation, research-based learning, and purpose-driven young leaders.



◀ Seen at the event are (L to R) Mr. Pradeep Kumar Sinha, Chairman, ICICI Bank, Dr. Sudeep Gupta, Director, Tata Memorial Centre and Mr. Sandeep Batra, Executive Director, ICICI Bank

ICICI Bank and Tata Memorial Centre (TMC) lay foundation stone for advanced cancer care block in Visakhapatnam

ICICI Bank, in collaboration with Tata Memorial Centre (TMC), today announced commencement of the construction of a new building at the Homi Bhabha Cancer Hospital and Research Centre (HBCHRC) in Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh.

With a commitment of over ₹550 crore, the Bank is funding the construction of a state-of-the-art facility spanning nearly 3.9 lakh square feet, equipped with cutting-edge medical technology.

Once operational, the eight-storied new building-- ICICI Foundation Block for Child and Blood Cancer—will serve 3,000 patients annually. Currently, HBCHRC, Visakhapatnam has a capacity of handling 6,200 patients annually.

Designed as one of the largest specialised cancer facilities in Eastern India, the new building will house over 215 beds. It is expected to be completed by 2027, subject to necessary approvals. ICICI Foundation for Inclusive Growth, the CSR arm of ICICI Bank, will oversee its implementation.

The foundation stone was unveiled by Pradeep Kumar Sinha, Chairman, ICICI Bank; in the presence of Sandeep Batra, Executive Director, ICICI Bank; and Dr. Sudeep Gupta, Director, Tata Memorial Centre, Mumbai.

Mr. Sinha also inaugurated the N.K. Rao Auditorium in the presence of other dignitaries. ICICI Foundation has supported TMC with

infrastructure and equipment for the new auditorium.

Mr. Pradeep Kumar Sinha, Chairman, ICICI Bank said, “We are honoured to partner with TMC in a mission towards cancer care, that aligns with our philosophy of strengthening critical healthcare infrastructure in the country. This project reflects our commitment to enabling accessible and high-quality medical care for individuals in need. This project, one of the largest in eastern corridor for child and blood cancer, will serve patients from Andhra Pradesh and nearby eastern states, helping address the growing need for cancer treatment.”

On the occasion, Sandeep Batra, Executive Director, ICICI Bank stated, “At ICICI Bank, healthcare remains a focus of our CSR initiatives. Two years ago, we announced our partnership with TMC, an institution that has made a profound impact on cancer care in India, by committing ₹1,200 crore to set up three new blocks at TMC’s centres in Visakhapatnam, Navi Mumbai, and New Chandigarh. Recognising TMC’s latest requirements, we are pleased to enhance our commitment to ₹1,800 crore. Spanning a total area of 10.7 lakh square feet, these new blocks are designed to be equipped with state-of-the-art medical facilities and research wings. These blocks will together accommodate 19 LINACs* and 555 beds. Once fully operational, they will serve as regional hubs.”

Dr. Umesh Mahantshetty, Director, Homi Bhabha Cancer Hospital & Research Centre, Visakhapatnam said, “We are grateful to ICICI Foundation for their generous donation, which will significantly contribute to the advancement of cancer treatment

and research in Pediatric and Hematolymphoid Cancers in this region. The partnership with ICICI Foundation is a testament to the collective efforts of our institutions in providing top-notch care and improving cancer outcomes for patients across the country."

Dr. Girish Chinnaswamy, Professor & Head, Paediatric Oncology, Tata Memorial Hospital, Mumbai said, "Paediatric & Hematolymphoid Cancers require specialised care in terms of diagnosis, evaluation, treatment, support services including blood centre, nutrition, rehabilitation etc. and expertise. At HBCRC Visakhapatnam currently, we have been registering approximately 200 new Paediatric cancer and 350-400 Hematolymphoid cancer patients every year in the past 3 years. With the new block added we will be able to augment the existing services substantially including expansion of bone marrow transplant programme and also initiate immunotherapy. This will also provide ample opportunities to undertake research related to patients in this region."

ICICI Bank's commitment of ₹550 crore for the Visakhapatnam hospital is a part of the expanded contribution of ₹1,800 crore.

The ICICI Foundation Child and Blood Cancer Block at Visakhapatnam will offer comprehensive treatment options, including:

- Intensive chemotherapy, bone marrow transplantation, and advanced radiation therapy
- Cutting-edge immunotherapies like CAR-T cell therapy
- High-end medical imaging and diagnostics, including three LINAC*, MRI, and CVT-PET scans
- 14 BMT (Bone Marrow Transplant) Rooms, 14 ICUs, 5 Operating theatres
- There will be research laboratories and joint discussion facilities for treatment planning and training

Duroflex repurposes 2 million PET bottles into sustainable mattresses

Duroflex, India's leading sleep solutions brand, announces the milestone of recycling 2 million discarded PET bottles into mattresses over the past three years. This initiative, shared on World Environment Day, represents the company's commitment to addressing India's plastic waste challenge while creating sustainable sleep solutions for consumers. Each mattress in Duroflex's Energise collection incorporates fabric made from recycled PET bottles, giving potential marine pollutants a second life as a comfortable, durable sleep solution.



Sea turtle installation made from PET bottles at Duroflex' Indiranagar Experience Centre

To commemorate this achievement and amplify awareness about marine plastic pollution, Duroflex has unveiled a striking sea turtle installation crafted entirely from PET bottles at its Indiranagar Experience Centre. The installation serves as a powerful visual metaphor for the company's commitment to transforming waste into meaningful solutions that benefit both people and the environment.

Sridhar Balakrishnan, Group CEO at Duroflex said, "Over 500 billion PET bottles are used globally each year, yet less than 10% are recycled. This leaves the vast majority to end up in our oceans, posing a grave threat to marine life. In line with our commitment to sustainability at Duroflex, we have adopted innovative technology that recycles these PET bottles into usable fabric used in our Energise mattress line. While this is just one step in addressing a much larger challenge, we hope our approach encourages other companies to explore how their operations can contribute to environmental solutions."

Duroflex utilises anti-stress fabric derived from discarded PET bottles in its fully backward integrated manufacturing facilities. With production units across India including South India's largest foam manufacturing unit in Hosur, the company leverages its advanced manufacturing capabilities to scale sustainable innovation. The Energise collection—designed for active individuals with power-packed lifestyles—combines this environmental innovation with signature sleep technologies including 3-zoned NRG Layer, QUBE Cell technology, and copper ion cooling systems, proving that sustainability and premium quality are not mutually exclusive but rather complementary in creating superior products.



Energise mattress by Duroflex made of fabric made from recycled PET bottles

The Silent Revolution: Agri Entrepreneurs Transforming Farm Income

The Rise of India's Horticulture Heroes

In the heartlands of India, a quiet yet powerful revolution has been transforming the way the nation grows its fruits and vegetables. Since the economic liberalization of the 1990s, Indian agriculture has steadily shifted from traditional farming to more precise, sustainable, and profitable horticulture—driven not just by policy, but by farmers and agri entrepreneurs who dared to dream big.

This transformation is most visible in the numbers: in 2023–24, India produced over 112 million metric tons of fruits and vegetables, a milestone made possible by the adoption of precision inputs like FCO-grade soluble and liquid fertilizers. These innovations—introduced in the 1990s and formally regulated by 2002—have boosted yields, improved quality, and extended shelf life while reducing environmental harm & use of subsidised fertilisers.

Having talked about the statistics, this story belongs to people who have brought change in the farming sector. A new breed of agri entrepreneurs—engineers, technologists, policy experts and innovators—who have turned their focus to the soil.

Stanford-educated mechanical engineer Mahesh Damodare, based in Pune, left his corporate job in 2007 to launch an agri-tech venture with a mission to transform Indian farming. Under his guidance, farmers like Dinesh Bendre in Pune, Tushar Maruti Avohad, Brahma Jadhav in Shambhajnagar, and Vikas

Prabhakar Zope in Jamner have successfully cultivated crops such as tomato, banana, ginger, chili, and other vegetables. For these farmers, the journey has been nothing short of life-changing — improving their farm incomes manifold and enabling self-sufficiency. They unanimously credit Damodare for the transformation in their livelihoods.

Similar success stories resonate across the country. In Kurnool, pomegranate grower Maheswar Reddy; in Sangli, Sarang Dad Mali; and in Coimbatore, Loknath Natarajan—all attribute their agricultural transformation to D.V. Ramaraju, an agri-entrepreneur from Hyderabad. With over 30 years of experience, Ramaraju's deep knowledge of transformative agriculture has impacted the lives of thousands of farmers nationwide. Another pioneer, Mr. R.R. Shah, now 80, fondly recalls leaving a well-paid government job in Punjab decades ago to pursue agri-entrepreneurship. His journey took him across the globe in search of the most advanced farming techniques, which he later taught to Indian farmers, helping them transition from subsistence to profitable agriculture. Among the progressive thinkers of their generation, veteran agri-entrepreneurs like Jitendra Gami in Gujarat, Vinod Goyal in Uttar Pradesh, Dr. Swapnil Bachhav and Balasaheb Thombare in Maharashtra have devoted their lives to transforming Indian agriculture—empowering farmers, championing sustainable practices, and redefining the very meaning of rural prosperity.

A handful of highly motivated agri-entrepreneurs across India

have quietly transformed millions of lives. Changing the deeply entrenched mindset of farmers—convincing them that using a Rs 135 per kilo water-soluble fertilizer could be more profitable than relying on Rs 5 per kilo urea—was only one of many challenges these pioneers faced. In a tightly controlled sector like fertilizers, even importing small quantities of high-value, next-generation nutrients meant braving accusations of smuggling and fighting long-drawn legal battles.

Despite the odds, they persevered—supported by a few, young, techno legal strategic thinkers who worked behind the scenes to engage with the Ministries of Fertilizers, Revenue, and Agriculture. Their efforts culminated in a landmark breakthrough: the inclusion of water-soluble fertilizers in the Fertilizer Control Order (FCO) in 2002 and their recognition as Open General License (OGL) items for import.

Mr. Rajib Chakraborty, who pioneered this movement by registering the first water-soluble fertilizer (19-19-19) in the FCO in 2002, recalls the uphill battle of policy reform in the early 2000s. His journey continued into 2023 with the successful development of indigenous technology for manufacturing soluble fertilizers in India. He credits not only his team's perseverance but also visionary bureaucrats like Mr. Dharampal, retired Commissioner of INM (Ministry of Agriculture), who introduced ease-of-doing-business reforms in 2002, and Shri V. L. Kantha Rao, Secretary, Ministry of Mines, for recognizing and supporting indigenous scientific advancements in 2024 that

laid the foundation for self-sufficiency in water-soluble fertilizers.

Inspired by the vision and perseverance of early pioneers, a new generation of agri-entrepreneurs has emerged—now numbering over 10,000 across the country. These

changemakers are equipped with the knowledge of soluble, organic, micro-nutrients, biologicals and stimulants are expanding their reach beyond horticulture to field crops, helping millions of farmers triple their incomes while steadily reducing their

dependence on subsidized fertilizers. Their collective mission is bold and transformative: to build a residue-free, environmentally safe, high-profit farming model that is non-subsidized, independent of rainfall, and sustainable for the future.

Greenply Industries Crosses 50 million Tree Plantations Under Its Green Vision Initiative, Sets Sights on 100 million by 2028

Greenply, one of India's leading interior infrastructure brands, firmly adheres to principles that emphasize taking as little as possible from the environment while giving back more. The company believes that sustainable business success must be closely aligned with environmental responsibility and inclusive growth, benefiting not only the company but also the communities and ecosystems it touches. This ethos is embodied in Greenply's flagship initiative, the Green Vision.

Launched as a comprehensive plantation drive led by Greenply, Green Vision has successfully planted over 50 million trees across India, a milestone that reflects the company's dedication to restoring and enriching the nation's green cover. Building on this achievement, Greenply is now targeting the next ambitious milestone of 100 million plantations by 2028, underscoring its long-term vision for a greener future.

Taking the vision forward under its Green Rise initiative, Greenply has actively involved influencers in the plantation drive. By planting saplings on behalf of the architects, the company not only increases tree numbers but also nurtures meaningful social impact, with proceeds supporting community welfare programs in regions like Tizit, Nagaland.

Greenply has extended its environmental efforts to engage the wider public. Seed kits have been distributed to trade partners and influencers.

In addition, Greenply launched an interactive online tool [Link: <https://www.greenply.com/greenvision/>] that enables individuals to calculate their ecological footprint and discover how many trees they should plant annually to offset their lifestyle impact, empowering everyone to contribute to environmental preservation.

In a major product-linked commitment, Greenply introduced the 'One Tree Plant for One Plysheet Sold' promise, where one sapling is planted for every plywood sheet sold. This initiative allows customers to directly support the brand's environmental mission, turning every purchase into a positive ecological action.

"At Greenply, we believe that business success and environmental responsibility must go hand-in-hand. Our Green Vision reflects this commitment — not only to plant millions of trees but to nurture a sustainable future for generations to come. Crossing 50 million plantations is a proud milestone, and we are excited to set our sights on 100 million by 2028. Together with our partners, customers, and communities, we are building a greener tomorrow," said Manoj Tulsian, CEO & JMD, Greenply Industries Ltd.

Behind the scenes, Greenply is equally committed to sustainability within its manufacturing operations. Its plants in Vadodara, Kripampura, Rajkot, and Sandila are adopting cleaner production methods. The Vadodara plant meets over 50% of its energy needs through renewable sources and operates coal-free boilers, while the Sandila facility utilizes electric forklifts and EV-charged vehicles to reduce emissions. Across its plants, the company is investing in biofuel-powered boilers, solar and wind energy, water recycling systems, and electric mobility, steadily minimizing its environmental footprint.

Greenply remains steadfast in driving measurable environmental impact, from afforestation and sustainable product innovation to community engagement and responsible manufacturing. With every milestone, Greenply strengthens its role as a catalyst for positive change, building not just better interiors, but a greener, more resilient future for all.



Tata Power's Anokha Dhaaga Smart Circularity programme Converts 5,000 Kgs of Plastic Waste into Livelihood Opportunities for Women

In a compelling demonstration of circularity in action, Tata Power's micro-entrepreneurship initiative under the Anokha Dhaaga Smart Circularity programme has transformed over 5,000 kgs of single-use plastic waste into high-quality, recycled fabric products. Spearheaded by women across six centres, the initiative not only addresses the urgent challenge of plastic pollution but also empowers local communities—generating over INR 20 lakhs in fair-trade earnings for women entrepreneurs.

The programme strengthens Tata Power's commitment to make #SustainableisAttainable. It also integrated denim donations, giving

a renewed purpose to pre-loved garments and extending the lifecycle of used clothes.

Launched in alignment with the Tata Group's Project Aalingana and Tata Power's commitment to circular economy solutions, this initiative resonates strongly with the spirit of World Environment Day 2025 and its theme—"End Plastic Pollution." It reinforces the #BeatPlasticPollution campaign by spotlighting how sustainable innovation and community empowerment can jointly address the plastic crisis, restore ecosystems, and generate lasting socio-environmental impact. As World Environment Day 2025 calls for a global rethink of plastic use—rooted

in growing scientific evidence on its harm—this initiative embodies the call to refuse, reduce, reuse, recycle, and rethink plastics use.

The project began with a city-wide plastic collection drive across Tata Power's Trombay plant, residential colonies, and Tata Group and Tata Power offices in Mumbai. Employees and families actively participated, helping divert a significant quantity of plastic waste from landfills. Through a collaboration with ReCircle, a leading circular waste management social enterprise, and their 'Safai Saathis' (sanitation workers), the collected waste were converted into RPET (Recycled Polyethylene

Terephthalate) fabric. Women associated with Anokha Dhaaga were then trained to design and produce sustainable goods from the recycled fabric. Their craftsmanship resulted in thousands of finished products, offering a diverse range, including T-shirts, tote bags, and haversacks. The initiative successfully fulfilled major institutional orders through large-scale B2B synergies.

Under its flagship initiative #SustainableIsAttainable Tata Power has been leading the movement towards sustainable living, inclusive growth, and climate-conscious innovation. By making green energy solutions accessible and easy to adopt, Tata Power is ensuring a seamless transition to sustainable living in the country, and has also



popularised the availability and benefits of green energy adoption. The Anokha Dhaaga Smart Circularity programme is a natural extension of this. It promotes a vision where circular innovation and grassroots

empowerment converge, offering scalable solutions to minimize waste, regenerate ecosystems, and pave the way for a more resilient, inclusive, and sustainable future, bringing to life the theme of World Environment Day 2025.

Part of Tata Power's larger CSR framework, Anokha Dhaaga empowers over 30,000 women across 9 states, offering training, market linkages, and entrepreneurship opportunities. What began as a small micro-collective in Mulshi, Maharashtra, has grown into a national movement instilling confidence in community women and enabling them to create eco-friendly indigenous products—from home décor and office stationery to nutritious millet-based cookies.

Srijan Realty Partners with Mukti NGO to Build Disaster-Resilient Homes Under CSR Initiative #EkGharAisaBhi

Srijan Realty, Kolkata's leading real estate developer has collaborated with Mukti, a well-known NGO, to transform the housing needs of the vulnerable communities of Sundarbans with the recent CSR initiative #EkGharAisaBhi. With this initiative, Srijan aims to create disaster-resilient homes for the vulnerable communities frequently affected by natural calamities.

The Sunderbans, has been facing recurring challenges from natural disasters like cyclones, floods, and tidal surges which often devastate homes and livelihoods. Despite such hardships, the community's resilience and determination to rebuild their lives remain unwavering.

With #EkGharAisaBhi have constructed disaster-resilient homes in Purbasridharpur village located in the Mathurapur-II block of South 24 Parganas. These homes are designed to withstand cyclonic winds up to 150 km/h and floodwaters up to 15 feet

ensuring the safety of residents during extreme weather events using eco-friendly and sustainable construction techniques that are cost-effective and replicable across other cyclone-prone areas in West Bengal and other parts of India.

Key objectives of the initiative include:

- Ensuring access to safe shelter for every individual in vulnerable villages
- Safeguarding lives and livelihoods from cyclonic destruction
- Promoting sustainable and eco-conscious building methods
- Offering cost-effective housing solutions with uncompromised safety
- Creating livelihood opportunities through training and capacity building for local residents
- Developing a replicable disaster-resilient housing model for wider implementation

Speaking about the initiative, Mr. Keshav Agarwal, Director, Srijan Realty, said, "The people of the Sundarbans have shown extraordinary courage in the face of adversity. Through #EkGharAisaBhi, our goal is to offer not just homes, but hope that stands strong when everything else gives way. We believe in development that uplifts and protects, and we are grateful to Mukti NGO for walking alongside us on this journey. Recognition from the Times Business Awards, WB 2025, only strengthens our resolve to scale this effort further."

Srijan Realty's commitment to the society goes beyond this initiative, with ongoing efforts in education, healthcare and environmental conservation. The #EkGharAisaBhi project reflects the company's dedication to make a positive impact on society and contribute to the resilience of communities in the Sunderbans.

ibis India Champions Marine Conservation with Coastal Clean-Up Drive on World Ocean Day 2025

In celebration of World Ocean Day 2025, ibis India reaffirmed its commitment to sustainability with a nationwide coastal clean-up initiative. Ten ibis hotels across Mumbai, Chennai, Goa and Kochi united with local non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to carry out large-scale beach clean-ups, mobilising more than 600 volunteers and collecting over 500 kilograms of waste in a single day.

Reflecting this year's global theme, "Wonder: Sustaining What Sustains Us", the campaign highlighted the importance of protecting marine ecosystems and preserving the natural environments that support life on Earth.

With several ibis hotels located near beaches and waterfronts, the brand sees firsthand the effects of ocean pollution. The clean-up not only removed harmful waste, but also raised awareness within local communities and supported wider efforts to restore ocean health.

"At ibis, sustainability is not just an initiative; it is part of our brand DNA," said Tejus Jose, Director of Operations, ibis and ibis Styles India. "This clean-up drive was about more than removing waste; it was a meaningful step towards preserving marine life and inspiring conversations that lead to lasting change. We believe hospitality can and should make a difference."

In addition to the clean-up, ibis hotels facilitated public awareness sessions on marine pollution and hosted interactive activities with school children, fishermen and tourists to encourage long-term behavioural change and collective environmental responsibility.





NeoGrowth Powers Sustainable Livelihoods for 137 Underprivileged Women through Skilling Programme, Delivered by Times Employ India Foundation

NeoGrowth, a purpose-driven NBFC, has successfully concluded a high-impact Skilling Programme that has trained and certified 137 underprivileged women from the suburbs of Mumbai – including Kalyan, and Nalasopara – for training them in the BFSI & Retail sector.

In collaboration with its CSR implementation partner, Times Employ India Foundation - A CSR solutions arm of TimesPro; NeoGrowth has enabled these women, many from below-poverty-line households, to build employable skills in Retail Sales and Business Correspondent Business Facilitator (BCBF) roles. The FY 2025 intervention included structured classroom training of 120+ hours, professional assessments, and certification through the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC).

“At NeoGrowth, we believe that uplifting communities by empowering women is critical to achieving inclusive economic growth. NeoShakti reflects our vision and long-term commitment to creating meaningful, sustainable impact in India’s growth journey. Through NeoShakti, we are investing in the potential of multiple women who can become catalysts of change within their families and communities through their entrepreneurial abilities. In the coming years, we aim to significantly scale this initiative by expanding our outreach and fostering sustainable livelihoods, while giving back meaningfully to society. Our partnership with Times Employ India Foundation has played a key role in empowering women through this transformative intervention,” said Arun Nayyar, MD & CEO of NeoGrowth.

The programme didn’t just stop at training. With a commitment to sustainable livelihood, the initiative has achieved 100% certification. Additionally, as an extension to this training the NGO is trying to create placement opportunities for the women. For many participants, this marks their first opportunity to build industry-relevant skills to enter the workforce and contribute financially to their families.

Speaking on the initiative, Arun Kabra, President – Enterprise Business and CFO, TimesPro said, “At TimesPro, we are committed to creating impact-led skilling interventions that uplift underserved communities and foster inclusive growth. This initiative with NeoGrowth is a testament to the power of strategic partnerships in unlocking the potential of women from disadvantaged backgrounds.



By delivering holistic, placement-linked training, we are not just building skills—we are transforming and empowering women to participate meaningfully in the formal economy and lead change within their families and communities.”

Delivered at Indala College of Engineering in Kalyan and a dedicated centre in Nallasopara, the

initiative was implemented by the Times Employ India Foundation with excellence and empathy—covering every aspect from mobilisation and pre-assessment to training delivery, and reporting.

Beyond its immediate impact, the initiative aligns with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, addressing:

- SDG 5 – Gender Equality by empowering women to lead financially,
- SDG 8 – Decent Work & Economic Growth through formal job placements.

With opportunities also extended to NeoGrowth employees to contribute meaningful to the lives of the women—through sessions conducted on communication skills, cyber safety and workplace readiness, the intervention fostered a culture of collective responsibility and impact-driven learning.

This partnership between NeoGrowth and Times Employ India Foundation demonstrates how strategic investments in women’s skilling can yield lasting social and economic dividends. These 137 empowered women are now equipped not only with job-ready skills, but with a sense of agency - and that is the true success story.

IIT Guwahati Develops Fluoride Removal System that treats 1000 Liters Water for Rs. 20 Rupees

Indian Institute of Technology Guwahati have developed a community scale water treatment system that removes fluoride and Iron from groundwater. The efficient system can treat up to 20,000 liters of contaminated water per day, offering a low-cost solution for areas with poor access to safe drinking water.

The findings of this research have been published in the prestigious ACS ES&T Water journal in a paper co-authored by Prof. Mihir Kumar Purkait, along with Post-Doctoral Research Associates, Dr. Anweshan,

and Dr. Piyal Mondal, and research scholar Mr. Mukesh Bharti from the Department of Chemical Engineering, IIT Guwahati.

Fluoride, a mineral generally used in dental care products, pesticides, fertilizers, and some industrial processes, can enter groundwater either naturally or through human activities such as agriculture and manufacturing. Consumption of water with excess fluoride presence can lead to skeletal-fluorosis, a serious health condition in which bones harden and joints become stiff, making physical movement difficult

and painful. In India, states including Rajasthan, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Haryana, and Gujarat, among others, face high levels of fluoride in groundwater.

The IIT Guwahati research team developed a 4-step system that ensures a cost-effective and energy-efficient technology for contaminated water treatment. In this, the contaminated water goes through the process of –

- **Aeration** – which starts with a specifically designed aerator that adds oxygen to the water, helping remove dissolved iron



(L to R) Dr. Piyal Mondal, Prof. Mihir K. Purkait, Mr. Mukesh Bharti, and Dr. Anweshan

- **Electrocoagulation** - the water then moves into the electrocoagulation unit, where a mild electric current passes through aluminum electrodes. This process releases charged metal particles (ions) that attract and bind with contaminants
- **Flocculation and setting** – in this process, the charged ions bound with contaminants form large clumps. These clumps are thickened in the flocculation chamber and allowed to settle
- **Filtration** – after settling of the aggregations, the water passes through a multi-layer filter made of coal, sand, and gravel to remove remaining impurities

Speaking about the developed technology, Prof. Mihir K. Purkait, Department of Chemical Engineering, IIT Guwahati, said, “In the electrocoagulation process, an electric potential is applied to dissolve a sacrificial metal anode, typically aluminum or iron, generating coagulant species directly in the solution. Simultaneously, hydrogen gas evolves at the cathode. These coagulants help aggregate

suspended solids and adsorb or precipitate dissolved contaminants. The hydrogen and oxygen bubbles produced during electrolysis interact with air bubbles, assisting in lifting pollutant particles to the surface. The selection of electrode material depends on factors like low cost, low oxidation potential, and high electro-positivity after dissolution. Among available options, aluminum has proven highly effective, particularly in the removal of iron, arsenic, and fluoride under optimal operational conditions.”

The research team tested the developed system under real-world conditions for 12 weeks and recorded consistent performance. The results have shown removal of 94% iron and 89% fluoride from the wastewater, bringing the levels within safe limits set by Indian standards.

A key feature of the developed system is its cost effectiveness, with Rs. 20 per 1000 liters of treated water, making it highly affordable.

The developed technology requires minimal supervision and has a projected lifespan of 15 years with

electrode replacement scheduled every six months. The study proposes a method to estimate electrode life using a built-in safety factor to ensure timely maintenance.

As a pilot project, in support with the Public Health Engineering Department of Assam, the developed technology has been successfully installed by Kakati Engineering Pvt. Ltd. in Changsari, Assam.

Speaking about the future scope of this research, Prof. Purkait added, “We are also exploring the use of solar or wind power to operate the unit and to utilise the hydrogen gas generated during electrocoagulation process. By integrating smart technologies such as real-time sensors and automated controls, we will be able to further reduce the need for manual intervention, making the system more effective for remote and underserved areas.”

Additionally, the research team aims to combine this system with other water treatment methods to enhance its performance and making it a decentralised water treatment solution. 📍

Hinduja Foundation signs MoU with Dr. Mane Medical Foundation to launch free cancer screening program for underprivileged women in Shirdi



With a view to promote preventive healthcare for underprivileged women in rural Maharashtra, the Hinduja Foundation, the philanthropic arm of the 110-year-old Hinduja Group, has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Dr. Mane Medical Foundation & Research Centre, a reputed Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) based in Ahmednagar, Maharashtra. The partnership marks the launch of

a comprehensive cancer screening and awareness program, offered entirely free of cost, in Shirdi and other districts of Maharashtra.

This grassroots initiative aims to screen 10,000 ultra-poor women for cervical and breast cancer by December 2025. The first screening camp was held on June 8 at Rahuri, 60 kms from Shirdi, where nearly 350 women were screened.

Focused on early detection and timely intervention, the program

addresses a critical gap in access to preventive healthcare for marginalised groups who often go undiagnosed due to financial and geographical barriers.

Dr. Mane Medical Foundation will lead on-ground implementation, supported by community outreach efforts. All women will undergo Pap Smear and Clinical Breast Examination (CBE), and where needed, additional health checks including Haemoglobin, Blood Sugar, and Cholesterol tests.

Speaking on the initiative, Namrata Hinduja, Member, Steering Committee of Hinduja Foundation, said, "Empowering women through health is the foundation of building stronger communities. This initiative reaffirms our unwavering commitment to closing critical healthcare gaps and ensuring that no woman is denied care because of her economic circumstances."

Paul Abraham, President of Hinduja Foundation, said, "Cancer has emerged as the fastest-growing health concern in India, with over 1.7 million new cases reported in 2025. Projections indicate that this number could rise to 2.5 million by 2030. Early detection through screening is key to managing costs and survival chances. This initiative is not just about early detection & treatment, but also about education, empowerment, and building a culture of preventive care. We are committed to creating a lasting impact in communities that need it the most."

Women with positive findings will receive free-of-cost treatment at Dr. Mane's Charitable Cancer Hospital in Rahuri, Shirdi. The program also includes training for community health workers to build long-term healthcare capacity in local areas. Supported by Reliance Life Insurance, the initiative is currently being implemented in Shirdi and is planned to expand to other cancer hotbeds such as Osmanabad and Ahilyanagar districts in the near future.

Hyundai Motor India Foundation strengthens rural water infrastructure for Pennalur and Kaduvancheri villages in Sriperumbudur, Tamil Nadu

Hundai Motor India Foundation (HMIF), the CSR arm of Hyundai Motor India Limited (HML) has strengthened rural water infrastructure in Tamil Nadu by handing over dedicated water supply systems - including the construction of two overhead tanks [Total Capacity: 90000 Liters], borewells, pipelines and pump rooms to Pennalur and Kaduvancheri villages in Sriperumbudur in Kancheepuram district.

Gopalakrishnan C S, Trustee - Hyundai Motor India Foundation and Karunanidhi S D, Panchayat Union Chairman – Sriperumbudur formally handed over the potable water supply system projects to Senthil Rajan S, Panchayat Union Councillor, Kalpana Yuvaraj, Panchayat President at Pennalur and to Vasantha Chithirai, Panchayat President at Kaduvancheri in Sriperumbudur respectively.

The initiative aims to ensure consistent access to safe drinking water for over 5,200 residents in both the villages, reinforcing Hyundai Motor India Foundation's commitment to sustainable community development in the region.

HMIF undertook this infrastructure development and capacity enhancement project at an investment of INR 1.60 crore to address the shortage of potable water in the villages of Pennalur and Kaduvancheri.

Speaking on the occasion, Gopalakrishnan C S, Trustee – HMIF, said, “This initiative reflects Hyundai's global vision of ‘Progress for Humanity’, which guides our



efforts to create lasting social impact. By enabling access to safe drinking water, we are addressing a fundamental need that directly influences the health and well-being of the community. This initiative underscores our commitment to building sustainable solutions that deliver long-term value to the communities we serve.”

Over the years, HMIF has implemented several community

development initiatives in these villages, including the installation of a 1000 LPH Reverse Osmosis (RO) plant, sanitation projects such as toilet construction, evening tuition classes, and health & nutrition awareness programmes for adolescent girls in Pennalur. Additionally, HMIF has supported flood relief efforts and renovation of a government school in Kaduvancheri.



Vedanta's Nand Ghar Joins Forces with John Snow Inc. (JSI) and Rocket Learning to Transform Early Childhood Development at Anganwadi centers in Dholpur, Rajasthan

Nand Ghar, Vedanta's flagship CSR initiative is reimagining anganwadis as modern centers equipped with smart education tools, BaLA (Building as Learning Aid) designs, LED TV, and child-friendly infrastructure to create engaging, safe spaces for children aged 3–6 years. They also facilitate fortified meals, healthcare services, and nutritional support for children and mothers, while empowering women through skill-building programs that promote sustainable livelihoods and community development.

Project Balvardhan is an initiative under Nand Ghar by the Anil Agarwal Foundation. It is focused

on combatting malnutrition among children and enhancing the capacity of anganwadi workers. As per NFHS-5, 31.8% children under 5 years are stunted and 16.8% children are stunted in Rajasthan. Through the project, more than 800 Anganwadi centers will be developed into Nand Ghars across Dholpur in Rajasthan, benefiting over 80,000 children and 14,000 women beneficiaries, while largely impacting lives of more than 1,00,000 community members. The initiative using a 360-degree systems approach focuses on strengthening early childhood care and education (ECCE), addressing all forms of malnutrition, and ensuring the provision

of quality supplementary nutrition as per the guidelines of ICDS Rajasthan. A strong emphasis will be placed on behavioral change practices to create a long-term and sustained impact on health and nutrition status for both children and women.

To build a holistic, community-driven development model focused on sustainability, scalability, and measurable impact, the strategic collaboration with JSI and Rocket Learning will help build a strong foundation for nutrition, health and education interventions at Nand Ghar.

Nand Ghar CEO Shashi Arora reaffirmed the program's commitment and said, "At Nand Ghar, we

believe that real change begins at the grassroots. Project Balvardhan is a significant step towards our dedicated efforts to combat malnutrition among children and empower anganwadi workers. Together with the Government of Rajasthan, JSI, and Rocket Learning, Nand Ghar is committed to drive this change from the grassroots and build a secure future for our future generation.”

Under Project Balvardhan, JSI will lead interventions to improve maternal and child nutrition & health by enhancing the nutritional status of children under 6 years via strengthening Anganwadi services through infrastructural upgrades, digital growth monitoring and tracking (anthropometry), and promoting maternal nutrition awareness through evidence-based practices via systems-driven Nand

Ghar model. These efforts will directly benefit children, pregnant women and lactating mothers, while uplifting the overall health outcomes in surrounding rural communities. Efforts shall also be concentrated towards enhanced capacity building of Nand Ghar Didis (AWWs), front-line workers and communities for sustained impact via behavioural change mechanisms.

Rocket Learning will capacitate anganwadi workers in delivering high-quality Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) by enhancing child attendance and engagement through interactive learning, developing state-aligned educational content, and training workers in modern teaching methodologies.

JSI and Rocket Learning, in close collaboration with ICDS Rajasthan, are uniting their unparalleled

expertise in maternal and child health, nutrition, and early childhood care and education (ECCE) to usher in a transformative era for Anganwadi services. Together, they are poised to deliver an integrated, systems - level approach that not only elevates service delivery standards at Anganwadi centres but also inspires a new vision of holistic child development.

The project is being implemented, with the blessings of Hon'ble Deputy Chief Minister and Minister of Women & Child Development, Smt. Diya Kumari ji—a testament to the government's strong commitment to child welfare and rural development. Project Balvardhan stands as a beacon of collaborative impact—driven by partnerships, powered by community, and rooted in sustainability.

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mjunction completes first Skill Development Program for LGBTQIA+ community

As part of its ongoing efforts to promote inclusion and improve employability, mjunction services limited has successfully completed its first skill development program for the LGBTQIA+ community in Mumbai. The program, run in collaboration with the George Telegraph Training Institute, was designed to provide participants with practical, industry-ready skills.

A total of 120 individuals were trained for roles such as Front Office Executive and IT Help Desk Support. Out of these, 59 participants secured employment following the training. The comprehensive training programme included technical skills development, entrepreneurship training, and a structured mentorship component. LGBTQIA+ participants were paired with mentors from



mjunction who provided ongoing guidance and support throughout the program.

Although certain sectors have taken steps toward inclusion, the overall employment rate for LGBTQIA+ individuals in India, particularly transgender persons remains significantly low. Persistent



challenges such as workplace discrimination, absence of inclusive policies, and limited access to skill-building opportunities continue to impede progress. mjunction's initiative is a noteworthy intervention, aimed at addressing these barriers by offering industry-relevant training and structured mentorship.

Through this effort, participants are better equipped to pursue meaningful employment and integrate into the mainstream workforce.

This initiative was part of mjunction's broader focus on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI), and aimed to offer equal access to opportunities for all, regardless of identity or background. The training helped participants gain confidence, relevant skills, and access to meaningful career pathways.

Speaking on the initiative, Mr Aninda Chatterjee, Vice President, Finance & Chief Financial Officer (CFO), mjunction services limited, commented, "We believe that real



progress happens when everyone gets a fair chance to grow. This program was our small step toward ensuring that members of the LGBTQIA+ community are not just included but empowered. We

are proud of what the participants have achieved and are committed to continuing our work towards a more inclusive and diverse workforce."

Among those who are already employed are Shabo Sheikh and Gargi. Both expressed their immense satisfaction on the contents and mentoring of the programme. "Before this program, we had the skills but lacked direction and confidence. Being part of a structured training where we were seen, respected, and mentored has been life-changing. Today, we not only have jobs but also a sense of belonging and purpose. We are truly grateful to mjunction for this," they said in unison.

NTPC Launches Girl Empowerment Mission 2025 Across the Country

In alignment with the Government's Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao initiative, NTPC Limited, India's largest integrated power utility has commenced its flagship Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiative -Girl Empowerment Mission (GEM) for the Summer Workshop 2025 in its 41 stations across the country. Building on the success of previous years, this edition of GEM will provide residential workshop to over 2600 young girls from underprivileged communities living in the vicinity of NTPC's power plants/stations across the country. At the conclusion of the program, around 10% of the total participants will be absorbed into NTPC-run schools, where NTPC will fully fund their higher secondary education.

The month-long program conducted during the summer holidays aims to provide these girls with holistic development opportunities.

The curriculum includes both basic academics in Hindi / local language, English, Mathematics, Environmental Science (EVS), basic exposure to computers and practical sessions including English communication, computer literacy, yoga, health, hygiene, safety, fitness dance, theatre, sports and public speaking. In addition, the participants will also go for industrial visits. Motivational lectures will be delivered by inspiring dignitaries in different spheres of life to inspire and instill confidence in the young minds.

The primary objective of the GEM initiative is to build confidence and create an environment that supports the learning and development of essential life skills among girls from underprivileged communities. It also aims at reducing gender biasness and promotes gender equality by encouraging young girls to dream, grow and explore their potential. Launched in 2018 as a pilot project

at just three locations with 392 participants, the GEM initiative has evolved into a national movement. Over the years, GEM has expanded its footprint to 17 states, providing life-changing opportunities to over 10000 young girls.

The girls who participated in the program emerged more independent and self-confident, empowered with a strong "can-do" spirit. It helped them discover their interests, develop their skills and broaden their capabilities.

The GEM Workshop has garnered widespread acclaim for its holistic approach to skill development, confidence-building, and mentorship. By equipping girls with essential tools, NTPC aims to pave the way for a brighter future for upcoming generations. It seeks to empower girls to become catalysts of change, influencing not only themselves but also their families, communities, and the nation as a whole.

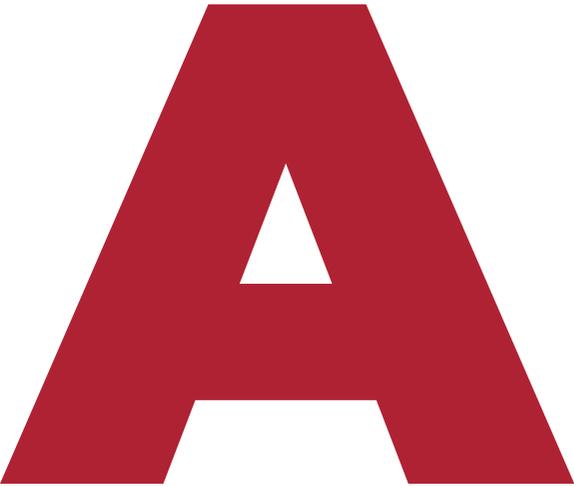
SCIENTISTS AND MONKS PERFORM LAST RITES FOR A HIMALAYAN GLACIER

AN UNUSUAL MEETING OF COMMUNITIES GATHERED TO PAY TRIBUTE TO YALA, ONE OF THE HINDU KUSH HIMALAYAN REGION'S MOST-STUDIED AND FASTEST-DISAPPEARING GLACIERS, WRITES **SHALINEE KUMARI**, DIALOGUE EARTH



As Nepal's Yala glacier nears collapse, a rare ceremony blending science and spirituality offers both a tribute to its legacy and a stark reminder of the Himalayas' climate peril.

Image: Robertino Radovix, CC BY-SA 3.0, via Flickr.



It will join glaciers such as Okjökull in Iceland and Anderson in north-western continental US, both declared dead around a decade ago, having receded to less than 10 per cent of their original size.

Glaciers have been mourned before. But the tribute to Yala was different in how it involved spiritual and traditional rituals of commemoration. Buddhist mantras were chanted during the puja (reverence) organised by the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD), attended by glaciologists from India, Pakistan, Nepal, and China.

Since the 1970s, when it was first measured, Yala has shrunk by 66 per cent and retreated by 784 metres, ICIMOD notes. For years, scientists have visited the glacier, aided by its proximity to Kathmandu, for scientific assessments that have helped advance cryospheric research in the region. Around 100 early career researchers from India, Nepal, China, Afghanistan and Pakistan have trained as glaciologists on Yala since 2011 with the organisation.

t a little over 5,000 metres above sea level, Buddhist monks, members of Nepal's Langtang Valley community, and scientists gathered for an unusual ceremony. High in the Himalayas, just north of the capital Kathmandu, science and faith came together in honour of the Yala glacier, which is set to become among the first Nepali glaciers to be declared dead.

Due to the long-term scientific study of Yala and consequent bank of data, Yala functions as a reference glacier for the region. Its sustained in-situ measurements have been critical for tracking Himalayan glacier health.

Yala was the first glacier that Sunwi Maskey, a cryosphere research associate at ICIMOD, stepped on to conduct research in 2017. When she

next visited six years later she witnessed drastic changes. "Previously, we could walk up to the [glacier's] terminus, [set up] camp and then start walking on the glacier," she recalls. "But in 2023, the same point where we had established as the camp point had receded far beyond, and we had to then climb to get on the glacier, which was not... easy."

She adds: "Witnessing these changes... made me realise that maybe within a decade, Yala might not be there for us to see."

YALA'S CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

The glacier is significant not only to the scientists, but the local community of Langtang Valley. "Our yaks drink the water that comes from Yala; they eat the grass that grows around Yala," says Karma Tamang Lama, the 60-year-old owner of a guesthouse in Kyanjin Gomba, a village in the Langtang Valley.

He recites a Tibetan saying famous in his region: "*Gangri korni mayong, Gangchu thungni yongsong*", or: "I haven't been able to travel to



Due to climate change, glaciers are melting. Many landslides and glacier-related disasters are now taking place. This worries me a lot. We need to focus on prevention and slowing down the melting process.

- KARMA TAMANG LAMA
Guesthouse Owner, Kyanjin Gomba

the Himalayas, but I have had the chance to drink its water.”

Participating in the *puja*, he says, was a strange yet happy experience for him. Although Himalayan communities have often prayed to mountains, many had never gone up to such a height for prayers.

“I had never been able to perform a *puja* so close to a glacier or a glacier-fed river like this. With this *puja*, we were able to worship the gods and goddesses around the Himalayas and the protective deities who look after us,” says Lama. “Because of that, I felt hopeful that no bad events would happen to us in the future.”

The tribute also helped bridge a communication gap between scientists and local communities by encouraging conversations involving

gods, and their traditional customs treat glaciers as sacred.

They seek to minimise their own impacts on mountains through sustainable living practices such as seasonal grazing and protection of the ecosystems around them as an expression of respect. Their faith and spirituality present a unique way of conservation.

Maskey recounts that although the communities had seen scientists visiting the area, local people were not entirely sure what they were doing near the glaciers. This meeting explained things.

“There was a communication gap. They thought that we were around the glaciers drilling holes when we were conducting studies,” she says. Scientists need to continue communicating the reasons for their

Organising the tribute was an essential part of creating awareness around retreating glaciers amid news fatigue around them, Maskey notes. Additionally, she says that scientists mostly talk about glaciers in terms of numbers and hard evidence, which often fails to resonate with communities unfamiliar with the language of glaciology.

A tribute like this offers a powerful visual and emotional representation of what it means to lose a glacier. Scientists brought local communities to the base of the glacier, allowing them to see it up close for the first time, creating a shared moment of reckoning and remembrance.

However, Maskey cautions that such tributes can only be paid in moderation. “If we start giving tribute to all the glaciers like this,

The tribute also helped bridge a communication gap between scientists and local communities by encouraging conversations involving both scientific findings and the lived realities of the communities. For scientists at ICIMOD, visits to Yala had been limited to scientific study. This time, they wanted to involve local communities and pay their respects to the disappearing glacier, as well as to honour the science.

both scientific findings and the lived realities of the communities. For scientists at ICIMOD, visits to Yala had been limited to scientific study. This time, they wanted to involve local communities and pay their respects to the disappearing glacier, as well as to honour the science.

During the conversation, the communities and scientists both expressed and heard about their mutual interest in protecting the mountains through their distinct approaches. For communities in the Langtang Valley, mountains are

interactions with the glaciers to local communities, Maskey adds, noting that this will help explain the importance of such work and minimise misunderstandings.

Another of the challenges, she says, has been the language barrier – local communities primarily speak Nepali and Tibetan, which many of the international team at ICIMOD do not. As a result, discussing the glaciers with the community has proven difficult, but during the ceremony, they had translators on hand.

then that might also create some kind of panic, which we don’t want,” she notes, adding that the “dying of glaciers could just be normalised if you pay tribute to every retreating glacier”.

THE UNDERSTUDIED GLACIERS OF THE HINDU KUSH HIMALAYAS

The Hindu Kush Himalayan (HKH) region, often called the Third Pole, holds the largest volume of ice outside the Arctic and Antarctic. Its glaciers feed ten major river systems in Asia, including the Ganges, Brah-

maputra, and Indus, and support the water needs of nearly two billion people across the continent.

Yet, this vital region is warming faster than the global average. A 2023 ICIMOD study showed that glaciers in this region lost ice 65 per cent faster in 2010-2019 compared to the decade prior.

“When we talk about global warming, Himalayan glaciers are very underrepresented. We talk about ice sheets in Antarctica and Greenland, but not the Himalayan belt which has a lot of glaciers [that] are very underrepresented,” says Maskey. “That might also be because very few people have [specific] experiences in this area and very few people speak about this.”

Maskey lists a few reasons why there is a dearth of research on Himalayan glaciers. The region’s remote and rugged terrain, along with unpredictable and severe weather conditions, makes it very difficult for studies. The sparse infrastructure makes transporting equipment, setting up camps, and ensuring the safety of researchers challenging and expensive.

This becomes particularly difficult in the absence of local expertise and funding at the regional level. There are also significant technological gaps, including limited access to advanced monitoring tools – especially as their diverse forms, from “clean” valley glaciers to those that are debris-covered, make data collection and interpretation complex.

But glaciers retreating are not isolated events. As ice vanishes from these regions, communities face growing water-related risks such as reduced water availability, more frequent glacial lake outburst floods (GLOFs), and impacts on agriculture and hydropower in the broader region. Maskey underlines the urgent need to make adaptive and sustainable decisions to help local communities that are experiencing first-hand impacts. “Due to climate

change, glaciers are melting. Many landslides and glacier-related disasters are now taking place. This worries me a lot,” says Lama. “We need to focus on prevention and slowing down the melting process.”

be the end [of any hope], right?” Experts say that a glacier is considered dead when it is too thin and becomes unable to move under the force of its own weight. Maskey emphasises that Yala is not yet dead,

The region’s remote and rugged terrain, along with unpredictable and severe weather conditions, makes it very difficult for studies. The sparse infrastructure makes transporting equipment, setting up camps, and ensuring the safety of researchers challenging and expensive.

Along with the severe ecological implications, threats loom large on Kyanjin Gampo’s cultural traditions as well. Decades ago, when the women of the community visited Mount Tserko Ri in the Langtang Valley as part of religious festivals, they could see snow, ice and the mountain ranges. Today, as they embark on the same pilgrimage, “we no longer see the ice, and many of the mountain ranges have also faded away”, says Lama. “Seeing the hills and ridges naked like that brings much sadness.”

As he tells Dialogue Earth about Yala, Lama shares a Tibetan chant: “*Chuni, Chuni rang zhim bey, Yala gangu yinna zhimbey,*” or: “Water is indeed sweet, but the glacial water coming from Yala is even sweeter”.

Maskey says that the current situation of retreating glaciers and the world moving towards more warming is grim, but that as a young scientist, she is optimistic, and hopes the organisation’s work on Himalayan glaciers reach a global audience. “I know it’s sad, but that doesn’t mean I should stop working on it. If I stop working on glaciers, then it will

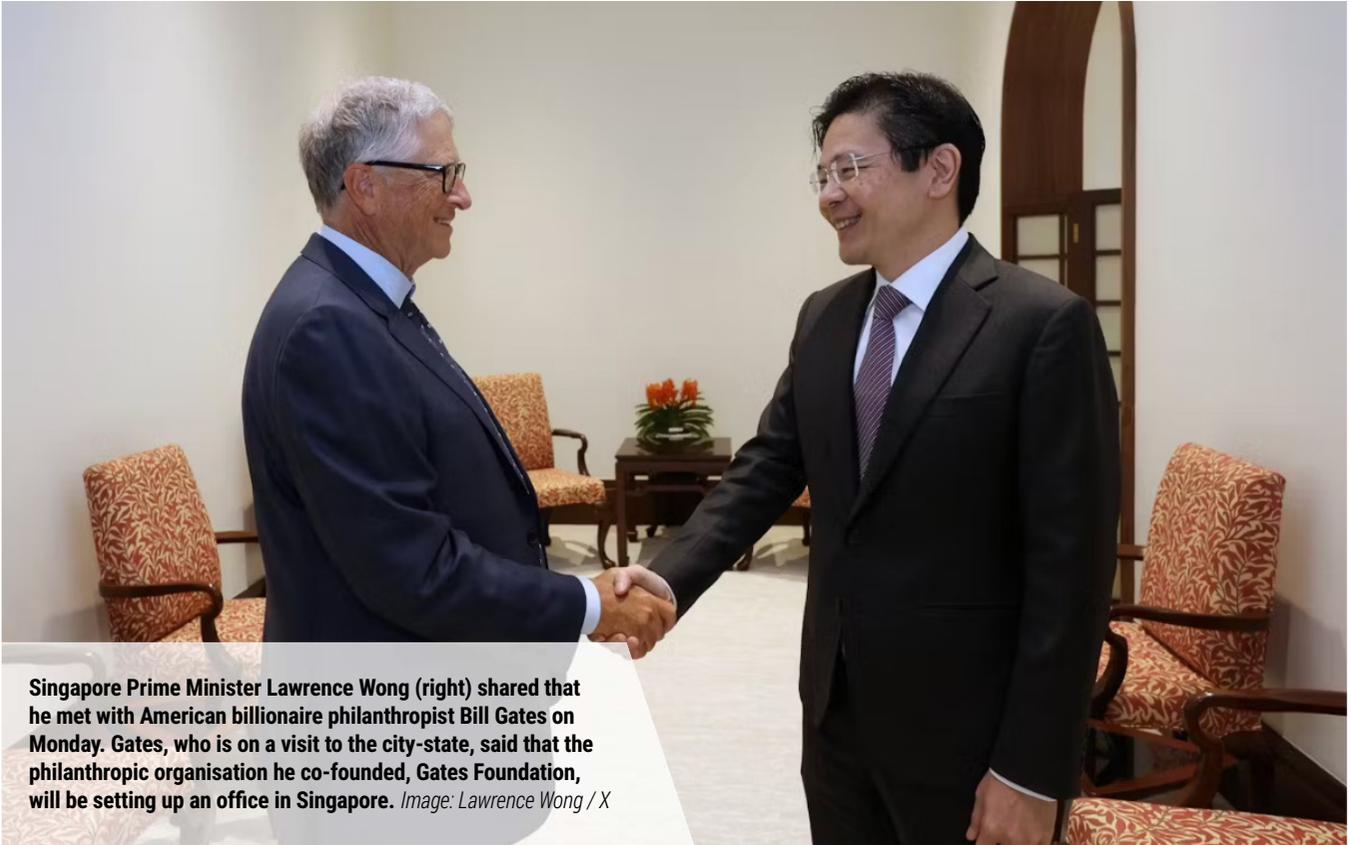
and the monitoring continues. But the ceremony is a tragic reminder of the fragility of the many glaciers in the HKH and beyond in the face of climate change.

By the 2040s, Yala could cease to exist, ICIMOD notes. But at the foot of where the glacier stands today, these words by author Manjushree Thapa, written in English, Nepali and Tibetan, etched on granite, will remain – a reminder to visitors of just how vast and all-encompassing Yala is:

Yala, where the gods dream high in the mountains, where the cold is divine. Dream of life in rock, sediment, and snow, in the pulverising of ice and earth, in meltwater pools the colour of sky. Dream. Dream of a glacier and the civilisations downstream. Entire ecosystems: our own sustenance. The cosmos. And all that we know and all that we love. ☐

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(Source: <https://www.eco-business.com/news/scientists-and-monks-perform-last-rites-for-a-himalayan-glacier/>)



Singapore Prime Minister Lawrence Wong (right) shared that he met with American billionaire philanthropist Bill Gates on Monday. Gates, who is on a visit to the city-state, said that the philanthropic organisation he co-founded, Gates Foundation, will be setting up an office in Singapore. *Image: Lawrence Wong / X*

GATES FOUNDATION SETS UP SINGAPORE OFFICE

Fronts US\$100 million philanthropic effort for regional health initiatives

It will be the foundation's first office in Southeast Asia. Speaking at the annual Ecosperity conference convened by Singapore state investor Temasek, the American billionaire philanthropist also said the Trump-led pushback on climate will subside.

The United States' Gates Foundation – one of the world's largest private philanthropic organisations – will be establishing a physical presence in Singapore, as it opens a new office to deepen partnerships in global health and development in Southeast Asia.

Alongside other private foundations and non-profits such as the Hong Kong-based Institute of Philanthropy, Indonesian family-owned Tanoto Foundation, as well as Singapore's Philanthropy Asia Alliance (PAA), the Gates Foundation will also lead an effort to crowd in over US\$100 million in catalytic funding for projects that will improve health outcomes for people in the region by 2030.

The initiative will first focus on Indonesia, the Philippines and

Vietnam – Southeast Asia's most populous countries – where "important gains (in healthcare) have been made but further progress is needed", said PAA in a media statement on Monday.

The philanthropic group was launched with the backing of Singapore's Temasek Trust in 2023 and counts the Gates Foundation, co-founded by businessman and philanthropist Bill Gates, as one of its early core members.

The new initiative, known as the Health for Human Potential Community, aims to reduce preventable deaths and disease burdens across the region, focusing on maternal and child health. Its other objective is to tackle infectious diseases, including tuberculosis and malaria.

PAA's latest "Communities" initiative will help match funders

and philanthropists to high-impact projects that it has evaluated and approved. The first three Communities launched last year were focused on blue oceans, sustainable land use, as well as inclusive education; this year, PAA also introduced the Just Energy Transition Community with support from its other members such as Tara Climate Foundation and Bloomberg Philanthropies.

Gates, who is in Singapore this week, spoke about plans for the foundation's 12th office at the Philanthropy Asia Summit, on a fireside chat with the republic's president Tharman Shanmugaratnam. He said he was often on the lookout for impactful research and initiatives when visiting the city-state.

"Asian innovation is part of the reason why I am so excited about the progress we can make in health.



In Conversation with Thought Leaders



Businessman and philanthropist Bill Gates (left) and Singapore president Tharman Shanmugaratnam (centre) spoke at a fireside chat moderated by Jennifer Lewis, lead, strategic partnerships, and co-head of collaboration & partnership at Temasek Trust (right), at the Philanthropy Asia Summit 2025. Image: Philanthropy Asia Alliance

Some of the lower-cost vaccines are produced in India and Indonesia, but beyond cost, it is more about the cutting-edge work that can be found in the region,” said the co-founder of software giant Microsoft, citing the application of genomics and artificial intelligence (AI) in Singapore and beyond that can improve the world’s understanding of trends such as disease burden.

Since its establishment in 2000 by Gates and his former wife Melinda

In recent years, Gates has been vocal about how health spending needs to go up to address climate-related health impacts. Last year, the Gates Foundation had announced its largest-ever budget of US\$8.6 billion to be spent on health-related technologies and programmes.

“Seventy per cent of Gates Foundation’s monies is in the research and delivery of global health because we see such tragedy and market failure in this sector.”

governments in the region, financial institutions as well as carbon market players will meet to discuss key challenges the region faces, including how to make the business case for climate in a difficult global environment.

At the forum’s opening dinner on Monday, Gates stressed the importance of “staying the course”, despite US president Donald Trump’s campaign to wind back the climate agenda.

He said: “I do think we are seeing a trend where there is less cooperation going on now but I don’t think that is a permanent thing. On what is happening in the US, we are seeing how that would work against (our climate efforts) but we will get around that. Maybe not overnight, but I think there is still a lot of commitment to the cause, even in the US.”

The Trump administration has made the decision to withdraw the US from the Paris climate agreement again, and has taken a wrecking ball to green policies, pledging to slash international spending on global climate initiatives.

But Gates believe the retreat is unlikely to last. He shared that in the US, some companies are already restating their commitment to the climate cause. Corporates must continue doing what is right and “get some of the resources to come back” to the climate movement, he said.

Gates will travel to Indonesia tomorrow and will meet the republic’s president Prabowo Subianto. Earlier in the week, the president shared that Gates wants to provide support for the country’s universal free school lunch programme. The initiative, launched in January with a budget of US\$4.2 billion, targets at least 80 million children in the country to meet their nutritional needs. 

(Source: <https://www.eco-business.com/news/gates-foundation-sets-up-singapore-office-fronts-us100-million-philanthropic-effort-for-regional-health-initiatives/>)

Since its establishment in 2000 by Gates and his former wife Melinda French Gates, the Gates Foundation has deployed more than US\$77.6 billion in grants until end-2023 to support initiatives in global health, education, gender equality and poverty alleviation.

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According to the World Health Organisation, around 52 per cent of under-five mortality in Southeast Asia is contributed by deaths during the neonatal period. The most common causes are complications brought on by premature births, followed by pneumonia and diarrhoea.

Gates spoke about how at the turn of the 21st century, over 10 million children under the age of five were dying every year, mostly from preventable causes and almost all in poor countries. He said investments in healthcare and nutrition from both the public and private sector have been key in reducing under-five mortality to less than 5 million children a year now.

On his two-day visit to Singapore, Gates met with some of the city-state’s leaders, including Prime Minister Lawrence Wong and Senior Minister Lee Hsien Loong.

Singapore’s Economic Development Board will support the set-up of the Gates Foundation’s office. In a statement, Jermaine Loy, managing director of the government agency, said Singapore is a hub for innovation and that the country’s strategic location and research ecosystem “makes it a strong platform” for the foundation to advance healthcare and AI innovations.

Across Asia, Gates Foundation also has offices in India and China.

Gates: US companies are restating their commitment to climate

This week, Temasek is convening its annual sustainability summit, Eco-sperity, where representatives from

NSE and Climate Bonds Initiative conclude final Consultation Workshop on Draft Climate Finance Taxonomy Framework in Delhi

The National Stock Exchange of India (NSE), in collaboration with the Climate Bonds Initiative (CBI), successfully concluded the final Consultation Workshop on India's Draft Climate Finance Taxonomy Framework today in New Delhi. This marked the last in a series of nationwide consultations held to gather stakeholder feedback on the taxonomy, developed by the Department of Economic Affairs (DEA), Ministry of Finance, to align financial flows with India's climate goals and facilitate credible climate-aligned investments.

The Delhi workshop brought together around 60 participants, including key voices from regulatory bodies, financial institutions, corporates, project developers, sustainability experts, and think tanks.

Chandni Raina, Advisor, Department of Economic Affairs, Ministry of Finance, Dr. Harish Ahuja, Head Sustainability and Issuers relationship, NSE, and Neha Kumar, Head South Asia, CBI - were present on this occasion and opened the dialogue with esteemed industry colleagues.

Raina said: "Climate finance must be predictable, transparent, and targeted. The draft taxonomy will enable market participants to clearly identify and support projects that align with India's development and climate goals. We are committed to

ensuring that the taxonomy remains inclusive, technically robust, and globally coherent"

Ahuja emphasized the need for practical frameworks that unlock capital at scale: "This taxonomy is not a compliance checklist—it's a market catalyst. It converts goals

national priorities are both essential. It must evolve with technology, and stay grounded in practicality, ensuring that capital reaches where it is needed most."

The workshop featured in-depth discussions on the taxonomy's structure, principles, and sectoral

Climate finance must be predictable, transparent, and targeted. The draft taxonomy will enable market participants to clearly identify and support projects that align with India's development and climate goals.

into signals, and signals into flows. Every rupee aligned through this taxonomy becomes a force for resilience—protecting our communities, powering our industries, and preparing India for a low-carbon future. NSE is proud to support its operationalization at scale."

Kumar outlined the taxonomy's guiding role for the future of sustainable finance in India: "The taxonomy is about clarity—for markets, for investors, for regulators. Its interoperability with global frameworks and alignment with India's

classifications. Participants explored challenges and opportunities across power, transport, industry, agriculture, water, buildings, and MSME sectors—providing targeted suggestions on sector annexures, usability, and implementation strategies.

This final consultation consolidates insights gathered from the Delhi and Mumbai workshops, alongside written submissions. All feedback will now be compiled and presented to the Ministry of Finance to inform the finalisation of India's Climate Finance Taxonomy Framework. 



ASEAN POWER GRID NEEDS AT LEAST US\$100 BILLION TO BUILD TRANSMISSION LINES: ADB

The bulk of funding will be used to address intermittency and variability of renewables in off-grid areas, says Asian Development Bank's energy director Keiju Mitsuhashi. The Philippines alone will require \$10 billion to improve its domestic grid, writes **Hannah Alcoseba Fernandez**

A minimum of US\$100 billion would be required to build transmission lines to integrate the power grids of Southeast Asian nations by 2045, according to the Asian Development Bank (ADB).

"The amount stems from the need for interconnectors in

domestic power grids. We have 10 nations in Asean and each country requires a substantial amount of investment in their own transmission line systems," Keiju Mitsuhashi, energy director of ADB, told Eco-Business on the sidelines of the Asia Clean Energy Forum (ACEF) at the multilateral's headquarters in

◀ **Most transmission line power systems in Southeast Asia are state-owned, resulting in a bulk of the funds to be invested through government-controlled organisations in their respective countries.** *Image: ADB*

Mandaluyong City, Philippines. The Philippines alone will need at least US\$10 billion for transmission lines, with larger countries like Indonesia, Vietnam and Malaysia demanding even more financing, said Mitsuhashi, whose expertise covers the energy sector in Southeast Asia and the Pacific.

The investment in transmission lines is essential because renewable energy power plants usually operate in remote areas outside load centres, and need to be connected to new power lines, added the Japanese national who has been an energy specialist for 25 years.

"Unless you have a strong domestic power plant, the grid would not be able to accommodate intermittent and variable energy. Electricity needs to be stable, to match the demand, which is why it is important that grid infrastructure is improved," he said.

Most transmission lines in the region are owned by state-controlled enterprises, which means that the bulk of funds would need to be invested through them in respective countries, said Mitsuhashi.

Brunei, Cambodia, Lao PDR and Myanmar rely mostly on government-controlled utilities. Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand and Vietnam have introduced some level of competition through private independent power producers, yet transmission and distribution remain under state control. Philippines and Singapore are the exceptions in the region, where electricity markets thrive in wholesale competition.

The power grid plan, which has languished for almost three decades as an idea that would allow for cross-border electricity trade in the bloc, was finally made into a formal

commitment at the Asean Informal Summit in Malaysia in 2020.

Two years later, the Lao PDR-Thailand-Malaysia-Singapore Power Integration Project (LTMS-PIP) became operational, ushering the first multilateral cross-border electricity trade involving Asean countries. It showed that cross-border trade was technically and commercially feasible, with about 100 megawatts (MW) of renewable hydropower imported from Lao PDR to Singapore through Thailand and Malaysia using existing interconnections, according to a report released in May by energy think tank Ember.

Other upcoming interconnection projects include the Brunei Darussalam-Indonesia-Malaysia-Philippines Power Integration Project (BIMP PIP), the connection between Peninsular Malaysia, Sumatra, and Singapore, the grid between Sarawak and Brunei, and the lines connecting Lao PDR, Viet Nam, Cambodia and Myanmar.

Rapidly growing electricity demand in the region, spurred by surging demand for energy-intensive data centres to support artificial intelligence (AI) growth have also fast-tracked the initiative. If fully realised, it could unlock projects that

“

The amount stems from the need for interconnectors in domestic power grids. We have 10 nations in Asean and each country requires a substantial amount of investment in their own transmission lines.

– KEIJU MITSUHASHI

Energy director,
Asian Development Bank

can deliver up to 25 gigawatts (GW) of renewable power and energy storage, based on recent studies.

Although the intention for the regional grid is for countries to trade renewable energy, the mix will largely depend on the energy plan of each member state, said Mitsuhashi.

For instance, the Philippines still sources 60 per cent of its energy from

coal, so if it exports electricity to other countries, it would likely be from fossil fuel-based power, he noted.

Philippines to tap offshore wind for Asean power grid

The Philippines aims to utilise offshore wind to contribute to the regional grid, as the nation prepares to become chair of the Asean Summit in 2026, said a Philippine energy official during a panel at ACEF.

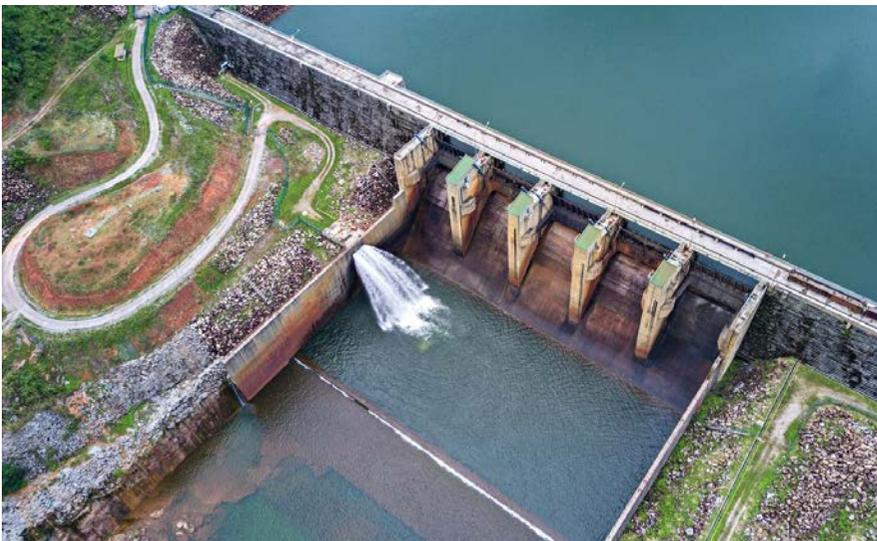
“The Philippines is well-positioned to chair the regional power integration project in the Asean power grid. In the clean energy scenario of the Philippines’ energy plan, we have two scenarios, one being 19 gigawatts (GW) and 50 GW of offshore wind by 2050. With that, we can benefit from being a clean energy hub and export excess renewable energy to Asean,” said Dennis Umlas, senior science research specialist, for the Electric Power Industry Management Bureau at the Department of Energy.

Although the Philippines remains reliant on coal for its energy needs, its latest energy development plan shows that the government is anticipating an increase of 19 to 50GW of offshore wind capacity by 2050, drawing from the current awarded offshore wind service contracts totalling 67.26GW.

The Philippines has set its sights on offshore wind based on the immense potential of the renewable energy resource presented in a 2022 World Bank study, Umlas told Eco-Business. The report estimates that the Philippines has over 178GW of technical offshore wind potential.

The Southeast Asian nation is hoping to generate its first output from offshore wind by 2028 as it bids to diversify its energy mix and reduce its dependence on fossil fuels. □

(Source: <https://www.eco-business.com/news/asean-power-grid-needs-at-least-us100-billion-to-build-transmission-lines-adb/>)



The Nam Theun 2 hydroelectric dam in Laos. In 2022, Singapore announced it will be importing up to 100 megawatts of electricity from Laos through Malaysia and Thailand.

Image: Asian Development Bank



Nepal's female population grapples with a high burden of micronutrient deficiencies caused by poor nutrition and infectious diseases, among other factors. Its maternal mortality remains high at 151 per 100,000 live births. *Image: Eleanor Crook Foundation*

PHILANTHROPY IN AN ERA OF DECLINING DEVELOPMENT AID

Some want philanthropy to fill the gap, and others have shamed governments for stepping back. The former is unrealistic, while the latter ineffective. But even with constrained budgets, governments can provide assistance to scale up proven solutions, notes **William Moore**

Philanthropy will never replace public aid, but it can be a powerhouse if we use it right. With global development funding under strain, European aid budgets being redirected toward defence and rearmament, and the United States rethinking foreign assistance altogether, the aid community has been left scrambling.

The reactions so far have been of two kinds: calls for philanthropy to fill the gap, and moralising statements shaming governments for stepping back.

Unfortunately, the first is unrealistic, and the second is ineffective. Private donors cannot solve systemic global challenges alone, and telling politicians that they are morally bankrupt generally does not bring them around to your side. Instead, we need to meet policy-makers where they are, sharpen our arguments, and focus on what actually works.

The hard truth is that most government aid is not even designed for effectiveness, because it prioritises processes over results. Nor has philanthropy been immune to this impulse. In our early years at the Eleanor Crook Foundation, we funded holistic, multisectoral programmes that tried to tackle all causes of malnutrition simultaneously. But the results were underwhelming. The approach looked good on paper, but produced no measurable improvements in malnutrition.

So, we learnt from that failure and changed course. Now, we direct our funding where the evidence is strongest and the results most immediate. At the recent Nutrition for Growth (N4G) Summit in Paris, we announced a US\$50 million commitment, alongside US\$200 million from other donors, to scale up one of the most cost-effective interventions in global health: prenatal vitamins – known as multiple

micronutrient supplements (MMS). This funding will go toward a US\$1 billion roadmap to ensure access to MMS for pregnant women no matter where they live.

The science on this issue is unequivocal. MMS replaces the outdated iron and folic acid (IFA) tablets that are still given to many pregnant women in low-income countries. With MMS, women receive 15 nutrients, instead of just two, leading to a dramatic reduction in maternal anemia, stillbirth, and low birth weight. The estimated economic returns are substantial – US\$37 for every US\$1 invested – and the human returns even more so, with infant mortality reduced by nearly one-third.

The global inequities in maternal health are profound. In London, a pregnant woman routinely has access to comprehensive prenatal vitamins. In Lagos, she might receive IFA, or nothing at all. The difference reflects a gap in will, not knowledge. Ending such disparities does not require a scientific breakthrough, just greater investment in already proven solutions.

More than two decades of research, three Lancet studies, and multiple World Bank investment cases have identified roughly 10 nutrition interventions that are consistently underfunded despite their proven efficacy. These are not flashy, multisector, utopian initiatives. They are targeted, evidence-based programmes that can be implemented immediately, at scale, to deliver measurable results.

Solutions like breastfeeding support, Vitamin A supplementation, prenatal vitamins, and ready-to-use foods for severely malnourished children belong to a package of interventions that could save at least two million lives over five years if scaled up in nine high-burden countries. Such life-changing results would cost just US\$887 million per year.

Malnutrition is now the leading driver of child mortality globally, contributing to some three million deaths in 2023 alone. These are not mysterious tragedies. They are predictable and in many cases cost little to prevent. In a world that routinely sends tourists to space, we obviously can afford to ensure that all pregnant women have access to a US\$2 bottle of vitamins.

This year's N4G Summit may be the last of its kind. It was part of a summit series linked to the Olympics, which will next be hosted by the US. With the current US administration already signalling that it will not continue the tradition, the recent commitments made in Paris have gained new urgency. Vague pledges and political posturing will no longer do.

At the Eleanor Crook Foundation, we are not asking governments to spend like they used to. Rather, we are urging them to look at the evidence and use their remaining budgets for official development assistance to scale up proven, cost-effective solutions. A modest investment in MMS – representing less than the cost of one week of G7 countries' defense spending – could save 600,000 lives.

Even with constrained budgets, we have a chance to save millions of lives. But only if we stop trying to do everything, and focus instead on what is the right thing to do. 

William Moore is chief executive officer of the Eleanor Crook Foundation and chair of Stronger Foundations for Nutrition. He is former chief storyteller for the United Nations Millennium Campaign, a member of the United States Global Leadership Coalition, and a board member of the UN Foundation's Global Leadership Council.

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(Source: <https://www.eco-business.com/opinion/philanthropy-in-an-era-of-declining-development-aid/>)



Filipino conglomerate Ayala's power generation arm ACEN fully divested from the South Luzon Thermal Energy Corp (SLTEC) coal plant in 2022. Through the use of transition credits, it hopes to decommission and transition the 246-megawatt plant to renewables by 2030, instead of 2040. Image: ACEN

VERRA LAUNCHES WORLD'S FIRST TRANSITION CREDITS METHODOLOGY

The new rules enable the issuance of carbon credits from retiring coal plants and replacing them with renewables. The carbon registry requires at least 2 per cent of expected revenue to be set aside for the developer's just transition plan, writes **Gabrielle See**

Verra, the world's largest carbon credits certifier, has finalised a methodology for generating a novel class of carbon credits from retiring coal plants early and replacing them with renewables, also known as

transition credits. The new rules, which had undergone two rounds of public consultation since 2023, quantify the emissions reductions from early coal phase-out projects by using the counterfactual of what a plant would have emitted over its expected lifetime.

Developed in partnership with the Coal to Clean Credit Initiative (CCCI), which is led by the United States non-profit The Rockefeller Foundation, the framework includes "strengthened just transition requirements" for affected workers and communities, including job

creation, energy access and social protections, according to Verra's press release.

"To meet global climate goals, we need to do more than slow emissions – we need to rethink the very systems that produce them," said Verra's chief executive Mandy Rambharos at Singapore state investor Temasek's annual sustainability summit. "Our new methodology empowers energy providers to make that shift in a way that doesn't leave workers or communities behind and doesn't inadvertently exacerbate energy poverty."

An earlier draft had proposed at least 5 per cent of transition credits revenue to be allocated towards implementing a developer's just transition plan. However, the finalised methodology requires just a minimum of 2 per cent of expected revenues to go towards this, clarified a Verra spokesperson. This amount can be raised from sources outside of the sale of verified carbon credits, he added.

"This approach ensures that the funding is in place when it is needed, in the planning and implementation stages before the sale of credits. And because it must come from other sources, it is not subject to changing market values for these units," the spokesperson said.

The finalised methodology will only be applied to coal power plants with long-term power purchase agreements of at least 20 years, which is what is used to establish a counterfactual scenario to calculate emissions reduction. The latest version has also been expanded to include deregulated electricity markets, in addition to regulated markets, with tightened criteria for assessing additionality and baseline scenarios, Verra stated.

In December 2023, Filipino energy group ACEN announced that its 246-megawatt (MW) South Luzon Thermal Energy Corporation (SLTEC) coal plant will be the first to trial CCCI's draft methodology, in order to

bring forward its decommissioning date by a decade.

Previous estimates suggested that the Philippine plant's early retirement and replacement with renewables and battery storage could potentially slash around 19 million tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions, though it is unclear whether the updated methodology affects this figure.

Transition credits were first mooted as a financing mechanism by the Singapore central bank and consulting giant McKinsey as a way to make early phase-out of Asia's nearly 2,000 coal-fired power plants more economically viable back in September 2023.

Previously, early coal phase-out initiatives in the region had mainly used blended finance, where concessional capital – typically from governments, multilateral development banks and philanthropic investors – is mobilised to de-risk the projects and attract more private capital.

These include the Asian Development Bank (ADB)'s Energy Transition Mechanism, which has been in talks to complete Indonesia's first early coal retirement project since 2022, but has yet to reach a financial close on the deal.

Gold Standard, another major carbon standard certifier, has also proposed its own methodology to shut down coal plants and replace some of their foregone power with renewables, while paying for a just transition for workers. But it has not released its final version.

The ADB is also exploring the use of transition credits to shut down a 200-MW coal plant in Mindanao, the most coal-reliant island in the Philippines. Based on an investment plan prepared by the government, its early closure could avoid 7 million tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions.

ADB's senior public-private partnerships specialist Dion Camangon previously told Eco-Business that it has not decided between adopting the rules by CCCI and Gold Standard

for its Mindanao deal. The entity's choice depends on which of the two will be closer to the principles of ADB's methodology for credits aligned with Article 6.4 – a clause in the Paris Agreement that enables countries to trade offsets to meet their national climate targets.

Additionality concerns

However, critics of transition offsets have previously flagged concerns around determining additionality in methodologies by Verra and Gold Standard, arguing that coal-fired powered plants are becoming so uneconomical that market forces are sufficient to ensure their closures, without the use of carbon credits.

On a separate panel, when asked about the Integrity Council for the Voluntary Carbon Market (ICVCM)'s views on transition credits, the carbon credit industry watchdog's chief executive Amy Merrill said that it launched a continuous improvement stakeholder group last week to look at the requirements for this new class of carbon offsets.

"What we're trying to do right now is to hear from all those actors, including the Monetary Authority of Singapore (MAS) and Traction [MAS-led Transition Credits Coalition], about how it works," she said. "We're trying to understand what it looks like to offer energy transition crediting in a just transition. So those two components, how do you measure it, and how do you ensure it has the justice component."

While she did not share ICVCM's position on transition credits, she said that upon methodologies being published, they will "join the queue" – which currently has a wait time lasting "a few months long" – to be assessed against ICVCM's Core Carbon Principles framework to be deemed eligible for a high-integrity label. 

(Source: <https://www.eco-business.com/news/verra-launches-worlds-first-transition-credits-methodology/>)



In 2010, heavy rain led to flooding of Singapore's main shopping street, which cost businesses thousands of dollars in damage. Detention tanks and flood pumps, alongside other measures, have since been installed to improve flood protection. *Image: Marc / Flickr*

PRIVATE EQUITY EYES UP TO US\$1.3 TRILLION CLIMATE ADAPTATION MARKET BY 2030

While the public sector is expected to account for the bulk of adaptation funding, a new study by Temasek and BCG identifies six investable segments for private investors, from climate risk data providers to flood defense infrastructure, writes **Gabrielle See**

As the climate crisis intensifies, adaptation and resilience are emerging as the next frontier for private investors. A new report by consulting giant Boston Consulting Group and Singapore state investor Temasek estimates the global climate adaptation spending could reach US\$1.3 trillion annually by 2030.

While governments are expected to shoulder most of these funding needs, the study identified six promising segments for private investors: climate intelligence, climate-resilient building materials, flood defense infrastructure, climate-adapted agricultural inputs, water efficiency technologies and emergency medical products and services.

Private equity has been active in the climate intelligence market, which is expected to grow by 15 per cent yearly over the next five years,

expanding into the earlier stages of climate and weather forecasting. For example, United States-based weather forecasting companies Tomorrow.io and Climavision have started to invest in sensors and instruments to collect their own climate data.

Steady acquisitions in recent years suggest strong exit potential for climate intelligence startups. Two examples of such deals cited are credit rating giants Moody's and S&P's purchases of US climate risk data firms Four Twenty Seven and The Climate Service in 2019 and 2022 respectively.

Meanwhile, the climate-resilient building materials sector is projected to expand by between 6 to 8 per cent per annum over the next five years. The report said that facade materials such as glass and fire-resistant materials companies are expected to drive this growth

agricultural inputs market is likely to grow between 4 to 7 per cent each year. Mergers and acquisitions by major agricultural input players are expected, especially in the commercial seeds segment, driven by regulatory changes and customer acceptance of synthetic biology.

The urban and industrial water efficiency solutions market is expected to grow between 6 to 8 per cent annually in the next five years, with the leak-detection segment projected to expand the fastest, spurred by the integration of artificial intelligence and other technologies.

Driven by the growing need for medical relief in the aftermath of extreme weather events and associated health impacts from global warming, the emergency medical services sector is likely to expand between 8 to 10 per cent per annum in the next five years.

The urban and industrial water efficiency solutions market is expected to grow between 6 to 8 per cent annually in the next five years, with the leak-detection segment projected to expand the fastest, spurred by the integration of artificial intelligence and other technologies.

according to the report. The climate risk analytics segment is likely to grow the fastest, followed by the hazard warning space.

Driven by the mandating of International Sustainability Standards Board (ISSB)-aligned climate risk disclosures in markets like Hong Kong, Japan and Singapore, the study also said the number of reporting companies is expected to grow by at least threefold by 2028.

In the hazard warning segment, some companies are increasingly

due to their increasing focus on building energy efficiency.

In terms of human-built flood defense solutions, which range from modular, deployable barriers to flood drains, demand has picked up in the last few years, driven by increasingly frequent extreme weather events, found the report. The segment is projected to grow between 7 to 10 per cent over the next five years.

As food security and affordability come into focus, the climate-adapted

Private ambulance services have emerged as one of the most attractive investment opportunities in the space, with further growth and consolidation foreseen. The world's two largest providers, India's GMR and Denmark's Falck, currently enjoy 20 to 30 per cent market share each, followed by regional players and smaller companies that own less than five ambulances each.

Overall, the report divided the adaptation investment opportunities into two archetypes: early-stage pure-

Segment	2024 market size (USD)	Compound annual growth rate (2024-2030)
Climate intelligence	\$5 to 6.5 billion	15 per cent
Climate-resilient building materials	\$220 to 255 billion	6 to 8 per cent
Human-engineered flood defense	\$16 to 20 billion	7 to 10 per cent
Climate-adapted agricultural inputs	\$113 to 135 billion	4 to 7 per cent
Urban and industrial water efficiency	\$12 to 16 billion	6 to 8 per cent
Emergency medical product and services	\$43 to 54 billion	8 to 10 per cent

Growth potential of six investable climate adaptation and resilience-related subsectors over the next five years, according to BCG and Temasek.

Image: Gabrielle See / Eco-Business

play companies and large diversified players. “These dynamics mirror the climate mitigation industry in its early days,” its authors stated. “Private investors approached that market by buying into large companies with legacy businesses that can provide cashflows as a way of investing in decarbonisation-focused companies. Similarly, many established players are re-aligning their strategies with climate adaptation and resilience as a growth vector.”

The writers also pointed out that the localised nature of the climate adaptation markets allow investors to enter at lower valuations before market expansion can be fully priced in, citing the examples of how global wildfire management solutions were mostly confined to North America until two years ago, where they started to see rapid expansion outside the US.

Rising institutional interest in adaptation

The launch of dedicated climate

adaptation funds in recent years signal rising interest. Global investment platform LightSmith Group, French asset manager Mirova and German government-initiated InsuResilience Investment Fund have all started backing companies in the space.

Temasek’s latest report is also the second to be released in the past week by a sovereign wealth fund that sizes up the private investment opportunities into climate adaptation.

Last Friday, Singapore’s GIC published an analysis estimating that escalating climate change impacts will quadruple revenues from adaptation solutions to US\$4 trillion by 2050. Additionally, corresponding investment opportunities across public and private debt and equity are expected to rise from US\$2 trillion to US\$9 trillion in the same period.

GIC noted that “investors can build conviction in climate adaptation without needing to predict the

precise climate scenario that will unfold between now and 2050,” given the minimal variation in the estimated value of climate adaptation investment opportunities across varying scenarios over the next 25 years.

Addressing the GIC’s recent report, Temasek’s managing director for sustainability Franziska Zimmermann told the audience at the launch event that while GIC’s analysis has set the stage at the macro level, Temasek’s own report aims to “take it one step deeper.”

“So far, when we think about climate adaptation and resilience, everybody’s thinking about infrastructure and big government projects, but nobody is thinking that private equity investors have a role to play. That’s what we wanted to explore (through the report),” she said. 

(Source: <https://www.eco-business.com/news/private-equity-eyes-up-to-us13-trillion-climate-adaptation-market-by-2030/>)

CSR SOARS IN INDIA

India's Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) spending soared to Rs 34,909 crore, according to Fulcrum, a leading consulting, advising and research firm in the social and CSR sectors.

The report reveals a significant increase in CSR spending by Indian corporates, reaching an impressive Rs 34,909 crore in FY 2023–24, a 13% increase since last year, which marks a decade of sustained growth and commitment towards social and environmental development across India.

The Bharat CSR Performance Report FY 2023–24 will serve as an important document. The report reveals a significant increase in CSR spending by Indian corporates, reaching an impressive Rs 34,909 crore in FY 2023–24, a 13% increase since last year. This marks a decade of sustained growth and commitment towards Social and Environmental Development across India.

The report provides an in-depth analysis of CSR expenditures, emerging trends, and geographical distribution of funds, offering invaluable insights for stakeholders across the CSR and social ecosystem. CSR disclosures are typically made with a lag of one financial year due to statutory timelines for reporting and verification. These figures are meticulously compiled from the most recent CSR submissions made by corporates.

Speaking at the launch of the report, Parthesh Vyas, Co-CEO of Fulcrum, stated, "There has been a significant shift in how companies view CSR. It is no longer seen as a mere compliance requirement, but as a strategic and integral part of business. Corporates are increasingly investing in long-term, impact-driven projects that bring tangible improvements to people's lives, rather than opting for one-time initiatives. The 38% rise in

livelihood-focused projects clearly reflects their growing commitment to empowering communities through sustainable livelihood opportunities."

Key Takeaways from the Report:

■ Significant Growth in CSR

Spending: India's total CSR spending surged by 13% in FY 2023–24, reaching INR 34,909 crore. Over 800 new companies joined the CSR ambit during this period.

■ **Decade of Dedication:** From FY 2014–15 to FY 2023–24, corporates have cumulatively invested over INR 2.21 lakh crore (approx. USD 26.63 billion) in CSR initiatives, demonstrating a profound and growing commitment.

■ **Total Projects:** A total of 59,634 CSR projects were implemented nationwide, a 9% increase from last year with an average cost of INR 58.5 lakh per project. Excluding the top 10 companies, average CSR spent by the remaining companies is INR 1.07 Crore (per corporate).

■ **Top Contributing Companies:** The top 10 companies accounted for 17% of the total CSR expenditure, collectively spending INR 5,857 crore. HDFC Bank led the pack with INR 922 crore, followed by Reliance Industries Ltd. (INR 899 crore) and Tata Consultancy Services Ltd. (INR 813 crore).

■ **Dominance of Non-PSUs:** Non-PSU companies contributed 87% (INR 30,136 crore) of the total CSR spent, while PSUs accounted for 13% (INR 4,773 crore), underlining the growing role of the private sector in driving community development.

■ **Alignment with SDGs:** CSR activities are increasingly aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

• **Education (SDG 4):** Received the highest funding with INR 12,135 crore (35% of total CSR expenditure).

• **Healthcare (SDG 3):** Secured the second-highest funding with INR 7,151 crore (20% of total CSR expenditure)

• **Environmental Sustainability (SDG 13 & 15):** INR 2,430 crore (7% of total CSR expenditure) was invested in projects focussed on Environment Sustainability, highlighting a growing focus on climate action.

■ **Social Projects vs. Government Funds:** 97% (INR 33,840 crore) of CSR funds were spent directly on social projects, while 3% (INR 1,001 crore) were transferred to Government Funds.

■ State-Wise Investment:

• **Top 5 States:** Maharashtra (INR 6,066 crore), Gujarat (INR 2,708 crore), Karnataka (INR 2,255 crore), Tamil Nadu (INR 1,969 crore), and Delhi (INR 1,950 crore) collectively received 43% of the total CSR expenditure.

• **Lowest Investments:** Regions like Lakshadweep, Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Mizoram, and Tripura consistently received minimal CSR funding due to factors like limited corporate presence and geographical challenges.

"This year's CSR data reaffirms that Indian businesses are not just fulfilling statutory obligations — they are actively shaping the country's development journey," said Arun Mathai Marett, Co-CEO, Fulcrum. He further added "The surge in projects related to Education, Environmental, and Livelihood investments shows how CSR is becoming a key driver of Viksit Bharat."

This report serves as a vital resource for companies, policymakers, NGOs, and researchers to understand the evolving landscape of CSR in India and to strategize for more impactful and equitable development initiatives. 📄



◀ In 2018, Bangladesh used about 250 tons of single-use plastic tableware and straws per month, while a 2020 study showed the global demand for single-use plastic tableware in 2017 was 640 billion pieces, which was projected to increase over the years. Image: UNESCO-UNEVOC, CC BY-SA 3.0, via Flickr.

BANGLADESH TURNS TO ARECA LEAVES, RICE BRAN TO DITCH SINGLE-USE PLASTIC TABLEWARE

A few local entrepreneurs are now producing tableware like plates and straws from biodegradable and locally available materials including areca leaves for plates and rice bran and jute for straws, writes **Abu Siddique**, Mongabay.com

Bangladeshi people love to throw a party, as the disposable tableware industry has increasingly seen. They get together or organise social gatherings often, be it to celebrate festivals or go on group trips to touristy attractions.

And all these occasions call for food and drinks.

Single-use plastic tableware has become the go-to option at these occasions. However, for the last couple of years, plates made from areca palm (Areca catechu) leaves have been gradually replacing plastic.

As per people involved in the industry, entrepreneurs in Bangladesh are producing about half a million areca leaf plates every month. Though the number is almost negligible compared to the single-use plastic plates, they said they believe that the popularity of such products is increasing among users.

Currently, about 10 local companies produce such biodegradable tableware. Ecovalley, Bright Areca and Shodeshi are some of them.

“As the industry is new and we do not have exact statistics, I assume that, currently, the total monthly plate production is about half a million. My company produces about 100,000 plates in a month based on demand,” said Imran Hossain, one of the partners of the country’s first and largest areca leaf tableware producer Bright Areca.

Similar statistics came from another major producer, Eco Valley, as the company’s director, Md Kamal, told Mongabay that they are producing about 60,000 plates every month.

“We started the production in 2021 with a monthly demand of around 20,000 pieces of plates. In four years, the production [increased] three-fold,” he said regarding the rising demand.

Data shows that, in 2018, Bangladesh used about 250 tons of single-use plastic tableware and straws per month, while a 2020 study showed the global demand for single-use plastic tableware in 2017 was 640 billion pieces, which was projected to increase over the years.

According to a 2021 study, considering the negative impacts on the environment, the European Com-

mission issued a directive in 2019 to its members to reduce the sale of certain plastic products like plates and straws, which have more eco-friendly alternatives.

Areca leaf and other biodegradables

The areca palm's nut, also known as betel nut, is commonly consumed across South and Southeast Asia with betel leaves for recreational purposes, and is hence grown widely.

In Bangladesh, areca nut trees are very common in the coastal districts Cox's Bazar, Noakhali, Bhola, Lakshmipur, Patuakhali, Jhalakathi, Bagerhat, Barguna and Khulna.

Previously in Bangladesh, when the leaves died and dropped down from the trees, they were mostly used as fuel for fires or as mulch for soil.

In neighbouring India, many rural communities have traditionally used areca leaves as plates for long. The country is one the largest areca nut producers in the world and entrepreneurs there have been using the leaves to produce tableware large scale since 2012.

Inspired by India's areca tableware businesses, Bright Areca took the first initiative in Bangladesh in 2017 by setting up six machines; their current set-up has grown to 17 machines.

"Most of our products go to different superstores like Unimart and Meena Bazar in Dhaka. From there, the customers who need single-use [tableware] take them. Apart from this, some other buyers, especially event management farms and restaurants that operate events like parties, purchase these plates from the producers," said Hossain.

In recent months, the demand for such products has been coming from abroad, too, and Bright Areca exported its first shipment to the US in April this year.

Besides areca leaf plates, entrepreneurs are also trying to make biodegradable straws, another highly



We are trying to promote the industries that are producing environment-friendly products and reducing the use of plastic. The areca leaf-related industry is newer in Bangladesh, and they are in our consideration for receiving policy privileges.

—SYEDA RIZWANA HASAN

Advisor, Bangladesh Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change

used item in restaurants for serving drinks. Natural Sip Limited, a Bangladesh startup, is developing a straw to give people and businesses like restaurants and cafes a sustainable and healthier alternative to plastic straws. "We are trying to produce straws from rice husk, rice stubble and jute to replace plastic straws," said Fazlur Rahman, co-founder and chairman of Natural Sip.

"Our product is in a trial run, and we believe we could supply about 100,000 pieces in the next couple of months to the restaurants in Dhaka who have already made a commitment to buy them," he said.

The challenges

The much higher pricing of biodegradable tableware compared to the plastic ones is a concern for the growing industry.

As per a market survey, a 25.4-centimetre-diameter (10-inch-

diameter) food-grade single-use plastic plate can be bought for US\$0.06 (8 takas), while an areca leaf plate costs US\$0.08-0.09 (10-12 takas). In the case of non-food-grade plastic plates, the price is as low as US\$0.03-0.04 (4-5 takas).

"Though the raw material is available in Bangladesh and can be collected at a low price, the major cost goes to electricity usage," Kamal said about the reason for higher prices. "A single plate — based on the size — takes at least 3-4 minutes in up to 200 °Celsius [392 °Fahrenheit] of heating pressure to get shape and be sanitised, which ultimately costs more."

"At the same time, as a factory, we are paying the electricity bill like other heavy industries, which makes the difference in the pricing. In Bangladesh, the cost per unit of power for commercial purposes is 12.95 takas [US\$0.10], while for households, it is 4.63 takas [US\$0.03]," he said.

Syeda Rizwana Hasan, advisor to the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, said, "We are trying to promote the industries that are producing environment-friendly products and reducing the use of plastic. The areca leaf-related industry is newer in Bangladesh, and they are in our consideration for receiving policy privileges."

The other important concern is the seasonal dependency to collect the raw material, as the leaves need to be dry and clean for use in the machine. The producers cannot get suitable material during the monsoons (July to September).

"To overcome this hassle, we need to invest more money at a time to store leaves in order to run the machine around the year," Kamal said. ☐

This story was published with permission from Mongabay.com.

(Source: <https://www.eco-business.com/news/bangladesh-turns-to-areca-leaves-rice-bran-to-ditch-single-use-plastic-tableware/>)



Without urgent reform, Article 6 of the Paris Agreement risks enabling large-scale greenwashing and undermining global climate goals. Image: UNclimatechange, CC BY-SA 3.0, via Flickr.

ARTICLE 6: CLIMATE TOOL OR TRAP?

Unless governments act fast to tighten rules on carbon credits, Article 6 could become a dangerous loophole that stalls progress.

As COP30 in Brazil approaches this year, a fault line is emerging in global climate cooperation: the use, and potential misuse, of

Article 6 of the Paris Agreement. Instead of raising ambition and driving deeper carbon cuts, Article 6 risks enabling a new kind of greenwashing: one where countries can ostensibly meet

their carbon-cutting pledges on paper while delaying tangible, real-world action.

Article 6, as shown in this new infographic from the Energy & Climate Intelligence Unit, allows coun-

tries to cooperate internationally to meet their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), including through carbon markets that trade ‘mitigation outcomes’ (typically emission reductions or removals) across borders.

For example, if Country A over-delivers on afforestation, Country B can buy this mitigation outcome and count it towards its own NDC. Done right, such cooperation can help countries go further, faster — cutting emissions more efficiently and ambitiously together than they could independently.

But unless governments act swiftly to tighten the rules agreed at COP29 in Baku, Article 6 could become a dangerous loophole that weakens rather than accelerates progress.

Confusing reductions and removals

A core problem is that, in its current framing, Article 6 does not sufficiently distinguish between emissions reductions (for example installing solar panels) and removals (including direct air capture and reforestation).

To stop global heating we must slash emissions as fast as possible, before removing ‘residual’ carbon dioxide to reach net zero — and sustaining that balance over time.

Without a clear separation, however, countries could use low-quality carbon credits — often from cheap emissions avoidance projects — to offset rising domestic emissions. Some countries are already planning to increase emissions while relying on Article 6 trading to meet their NDCs.

Singapore, for example, expects its emissions to grow, peaking in 2028, even as it scales up Article 6-based carbon credit purchases.

If left unchecked, this blind spot could enable industrial and international-scale greenwashing of NDCs, deepening the ‘credibility crisis’

that has long plagued the voluntary carbon market (VCM).

A market dominated by avoidance credits

Currently over 90 per cent of issued carbon credits in the VCM come from emission avoidance or reduction projects — such as clean energy or efficient cookstoves.

Historically, only about 3 per cent of carbon credits have come from removal-only projects like afforestation or reforestation.

Only a derisory fraction of credits represents durable removals — those that aim to permanently store carbon underground, through methods like Direct Air Carbon Capture and Storage (DACCS) or Bioenergy with Carbon Capture and Storage (BECCS).

Insights into the Article 6 pipeline suggest it is vulnerable to the same patterns that have long plagued the international carbon market, especially the flood of low-cost and low-quality avoidance and reduction credits.

This dynamic risks allowing countries to claim progress while actual emissions remain unchanged — or even increase.

The Net Zero Tracker, the world’s only register of mitigation targets and strategies from all nations, large cities and companies, and major sub-national regions, reveals a gaping accountability gap on the use of carbon credits. Currently only 16 national governments have climate targets that include separate targets for carbon removal.

The path forward: prioritising durable removals

To fix this, governments and companies should:

1. Set separate targets:

Climate strategies should distinguish between emissions reductions (nature-based removals such as reforestation) and durable geolog-

ical-based removals, for example through DACCS. Without separation, countries can misuse cheaper, low-quality mitigation outcomes.

2. Scale up durable Carbon Dioxide Removal (CDR):

Investment in high-integrity removal solutions like biochar, BECCS, and DACCS, must increase to balance out hard-to-reduce emissions. Durable removals are vital, but currently account for only a tiny fraction of global carbon crediting activity.

3. Reform Article 6 rules:

Durable removals should be the standard for crediting under Article 6, while nature-based removals and emission reductions should be managed under separate frameworks — such as Article 5, which is focused on providing finance for nature, and Article 9 on climate finance.

A net zero-aligned path forward

If Article 6 becomes a tool for cheap, low-integrity offsets, it will severely undermine trust in net zero. Worse still, it will lock in higher levels of heating — making global temperature goals harder, if not impossible, to achieve.

Article 6 was designed to make climate targets more ambitious, and their implementation faster, and more affordable. It must not become a backdoor for weak pledges and fake progress. We cannot let countries “NDC wash” as we have seen corporations greenwash.

The world’s governments face a choice: reform Article 6 to ensure it drives high-integrity, durable climate action, or risk turning one of the Paris Agreement’s most powerful tools into its Achilles heel.

The credibility of global climate cooperation depends on getting it right. 

(Source: <https://www.eco-business.com/opinion/article-6-climate-tool-or-trap/>)



As demand for critical minerals accelerates the global energy transition, deep-rooted struggles over resource control, environmental protection and social equity are coming to the fore.

Image: World Bank Photo Collection, CC BY-SA 3.0, via Flickr.

THE GLOBAL SOUTH IS CAUGHT BETWEEN POWERS TRYING TO GET THEIR RESOURCES

Political scientist and author Thea Riofrancos describes to **Fermín Koop** of Dialogue Earth, the challenges of critical minerals extraction for Latin American countries.

Across Latin America, lithium, copper and other resources central to renewable energy technologies are drawing heightened interest from governments and companies alike. But behind the headlines of green progress lies a more complex story – one shaped by long-standing tensions over resource governance, territorial rights and economic sovereignty.

Thea Riofrancos, a political scientist at Providence College in Rhode Island, United States, and a member of the Climate + Community Institute think-tank, has spent over a decade investigating these dynamics across the Americas and Europe. Her research focuses on the intersection of extraction, climate politics and social movements, with a particular interest in how the energy transition is reshaping global power relations.

In her upcoming book, *Extraction: The Frontiers of Green Capitalism*, she explores the conflicts and contradictions embedded in the green economy.

In this interview with *Dialogue Earth*, Riofrancos discusses the dilemmas facing many Latin American governments as they navigate competing pressures: generating revenue from their mineral wealth, while responding to civil society demands for environmental and social protections.

She reflects on the resurgence of resource nationalism in the region, the global competition for supply chain control, and the growing influence of Indigenous and grassroots movements that are resisting the expansion of extractive industries.

Dialogue Earth: How did you become interested in researching the political economy and social conflicts surrounding extraction in Latin America?

Thea Riofrancos: I had a long interest in Latin American politics and social movements in college.



Countries are caught in a competition between multiple powers trying to get their resources, and they could either benefit from this competition or end up having little leverage or power.

–THEA RIOFRANCOS
Political Scientist, Providence
College

It was the early years of the “pink tide” [the region’s widespread turn towards left-wing governments in the early 2000s]. I was following with great interest what was happening with presidents Morales in Bolivia, the Kirchners in Argentina and Chavez in Venezuela.

As a progressive in the United States, it was inspiring to see so many progressive governments in power. After I graduated, I moved to Ecuador, and had already been to Argentina and Bolivia. I started to see some of the complexity of these resources and how important they were to the programmes of those governments: they were trying to do something different to neoliberalism, but also trying to expand investment in those sectors to then fund social programmes and public infrastructure.

This resulted in a conflict in which, on the one hand, there was broad social support for – using the revenues from extraction to address the social debt – and on the

other hand, you had long-standing territorial movements defending their territories and livelihoods. The question that animated me then was what dilemmas extractive sectors pose to Global South governments and societies.

Later, I ended up getting interested in how this question re-emerges in the context of green technology supply chains. We have the climate crisis and the technologies that are designed to decarbonise sectors of the economy, and it turns out that those require mining. The situation can feel like a conflict between addressing climate change and exacerbating an ecological and water crisis on a global scale. That is why I ended up looking at lithium as one of many critical minerals.

What are some of the common denominators you have found in your research in the region, now entering a new extraction phase with critical minerals for the energy transition?

Latin America is playing, and is going to play even more so, a major role in supplying the world economy with minerals that are relevant to the energy transition. There’s also a renewal of resource nationalism in the region, which is a cyclical political concept in Latin America.

Now, there’s an interest in having the state more involved, either through contract negotiation or state-owned companies. The centrality of the region in these markets gives it leverage, and getting involved can be attractive to the state. We also see ambition to move up the supply chain, either through state or private-sector initiatives.

High prices of these minerals can incentivise governments to seek revenue to benefit societies. But there’s a flip side to that: are these going to be volatile boom-and-bust sectors that take the region through a similar pattern of economic insecurity?

riety? Individual countries have little power over prices.

You are promoting the sector, getting the state involved, trying to convince civil society this is a good idea, but there's uncertainty. Are Latin American societies going to benefit from this? This plays into a long history of protest in the region, now with a remobilisation of movements targeted at these minerals.

For your upcoming book, you did fieldwork in Chile, the United States and Portugal to look at lithium extraction. What did you find that is shared between those countries?

Supply chains have become so geopolitically salient that they are part of this new cold war dynamic between the United States, China and Europe. Everyone wants to develop supply chains, but the question is: what about the Global South?

Countries are caught in a competition between multiple powers trying to get their resources, and they could either benefit from this competition or end up having little leverage or power. If you are a Latin American government, and a Chinese company is approaching you with one deal and the United States with another, it may be better to have options and leverage. We see some evidence of that in Indonesia.

It's positioning itself in an interesting way in the supply chain with Chinese investment, but also protecting western investment and upgrading its position in the supply chain. Chile is where this book started and where it was inspired. But then I visited other places in the world. I found a lot of commonalities, in ways that surprised me, in protests and civil society. Indigenous peoples in the United States and Canada have similar demands, grievances and protest tactics to Indigenous peoples in Latin America.

They feel excluded, they protest, they sometimes get repressed, they

ask for clean water and want a voice in the decision-making process. It's a global, transnational movement with direct or indirect coordination, making similar arguments, and with a similar vision on what an ecologically sound energy transition would look like.

In a recent op-ed, you highlighted the importance of having international agreements on environmental and social standards to reduce mineral demand. Colombia has led calls for an agreement on critical minerals traceability, and the UN created a panel of experts to study the issue. Is this making a difference?

They are not enough, but they could be a first step if they solidify a bit more. International and regional-scale cooperation is very important. Global South countries on their own are not very powerful in the world system, but when they can ally with one another, they have a lot more

Supply chains have become so geopolitically salient that they are part of this new cold war dynamic between the United States, China and Europe. Everyone wants to develop supply chains, but the question is: what about the Global South?

power to prevent that “race to the bottom” in [lowering] regulation [to attract investment].

Even beyond economic leverage, there is just a need for some calibration of social and environmental governance. Now, the governance in places like Argentina is extremely weak, and that makes the country and its people vulnerable to predatory behaviour from corporations.

In your 2019 book *A Planet to Win*, you argued that all politics are climate politics, and highlighted the need for urgent climate action, such as dismantling the fossil fuel industry. How far do we remain from that happening?

We could make the argument that there was progress. There was a moment between 2019 and 2022 when civil society mobilisation led to governments adopting new policies on climate. It even seemed that oil companies were starting to get worried. Now that momentum has stalled and geopolitics around energy has strengthened the power of the fossil fuels industry, with record profits following.

However, if you look at the purely technological and economic indicators, there's still progress. We have more deployment of solar panels and wind turbines in the Global South. All of this together is why scholars use the term “energy addition” rather than “energy transition”: it's more of everything, which is not what the climate science tells us to do. It's good that solar panels are cheap and that many people can afford them, but what we are not seeing is a wholesale transition away from fossil fuels. 

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(Source: <https://www.eco-business.com/news/qa-the-global-south-is-caught-between-powers-trying-to-get-their-resources/>)

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