

# CSR TODAY

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## STATE OF THE CLIMATE: GROWING EL NIÑO THREATENS MORE EXTREME HEAT IN 2023

This year is shaping up to be one of top four warmest years on record  
— and has a modest chance of being the warmest on record

### CSR INITIATIVE

Usha Silai School women showcase their designs on the ramp at the 5th edition of East India Fashion Week

### CSR TRENDSETTER

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### CSR OPINION

How one Indian village is lighting the way in green energy drive





# CSR TODAY

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# Clean energy investment is extending its lead over fossil fuels



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**Global investment in clean energy is on course to rise to USD 1.7 trillion in 2023, with solar set to eclipse oil production for the first time**

Investment in clean energy technologies is significantly outpacing spending on fossil fuels as affordability and security concerns triggered by the global energy crisis strengthen the momentum behind more sustainable options, according to a new IEA report. About USD 2.8 trillion is set to be invested globally in energy in 2023, of which more than USD 1.7 trillion is expected to go to clean technologies – including renewables, electric vehicles, nuclear power, grids, storage, low-emissions fuels, efficiency improvements and heat pumps – according to the IEA's latest World Energy Investment report. The remainder, slightly more than USD 1 trillion, is going to coal, gas and oil.

Annual clean energy investment is expected to rise by 24% between 2021 and 2023, driven by renewables and electric vehicles, compared with a 15% rise in fossil fuel investment over the same period. But more than 90% of this increase comes from advanced economies and China, presenting a serious risk of new dividing lines in global energy if clean energy transitions don't pick up elsewhere. "Clean energy is moving fast – faster than many people realise. This is clear in the investment trends, where clean technologies are pulling away from fossil fuels," said IEA Executive Director Fatih Birol. "For every dollar invested in fossil fuels, about 1.7 dollars are now going into clean energy. Five years ago, this ratio was one-to-one. One shining example is investment in solar, which is set to overtake the amount of investment going into oil production for the first time."

Led by solar, low-emissions electricity technologies are expected to account for almost 90% of investment in power generation. Consumers are also investing in more electrified end-uses. Global heat pump sales have seen double-digit annual growth since 2021. Electric vehicle sales are expected to leap by a third this year after already surging in 2022.

Clean energy investments have been boosted by a variety of factors in recent years, including periods of strong economic growth

and volatile fossil fuel prices that raised concerns about energy security, especially following Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Enhanced policy support through major actions like the US Inflation Reduction Act and initiatives in Europe, Japan, China and elsewhere have also played a role. Spending on upstream oil and gas is expected to rise by 7% in 2023, taking it back to 2019 levels. The few oil companies that are investing more than before the Covid-19 pandemic are mostly large national oil companies in the Middle East. Many fossil fuel producers made record profits last year because of higher fuel prices, but the majority of this cash flow has gone to dividends, share buybacks and debt repayment – rather than back into traditional supply.

Nonetheless, the expected rebound in fossil fuel investment means it is set to rise in 2023 to more than double the levels needed in 2030 in the IEA's Net Zero Emissions by 2050 Scenario. Global coal demand reached an all-time high in 2022, and coal investment this year is on course to reach nearly six times the levels envisaged in 2030 in the Net Zero Scenario.

The oil and gas industry's capital spending on low-emissions alternatives such as clean electricity, clean fuels and carbon capture technologies was less than 5% of its upstream spending in 2022. That level was little changed from last year – though the share is higher for some of the larger European companies.

The biggest shortfalls in clean energy investment are in emerging and developing economies. There are some bright spots, such as dynamic investments in solar in India and in renewables in Brazil and parts of the Middle East. However, investment in many countries is being held back by factors including higher interest rates, unclear policy frameworks and market designs, weak grid infrastructure, financially strained utilities, and a high cost of capital. Much more needs to be done by the international community, especially to drive investment in lower-income economies, where the private sector has been reluctant to venture. 

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# CSR NEWS

## Fast&Up continues to provide essential instant hydration to the frontline heroes



India's active nutrition brand, Fast&Up, is committed to providing hydration for all the unsung heroes across the country who work under severe temperatures to mitigate the effects of the heat wave this summer. Over the past three years, Fast&Up, under different summer campaigns like #HealPrayLove or #ApneLiyeNahiApnoKeLiye has provided over 5 lakh doses of electrolytes to frontline workers. Varun Khanna, Co-Founder, Fast&Up, quotes, "We

want to thank all the hardworking heroes who have been working tirelessly under the sun, risking their health and leaving their comfort to aid ours. At Fast&Up, we are eager to do everything we can to support them. Bestseller on Amazon and leading marketplaces in its category, Reload maintains Hydration and Electrolyte Balance to help you beat the heat and prevent dehydration while you work, train, travel, or perform any activity. It assists the body

in staying cool during the summer and maintains the correct pH balance in the blood. Whether engaging in outdoor activities or simply trying to survive the scorching temperatures, it's crucial to replenish the fluids and electrolytes your body loses through sweat. We hope this small gesture entuses others also to find their own ways to recognize and contribute to the efforts of these heroes."

Fast&Up as a brand has been committed to providing their signature electrolyte product to aid instant hydration of the police, frontline workers, construction workers, taxi drivers, coolies, sweepers, and bus conductors, who brave the scorching heat every day to make our lives easier. The month-long initiative was started with the Goa Police, the Goa traffic cell department, and several Mumbai frontline workers. Throughout the season, the initiative will span across states to offer the most required support to beat the heat.



# Infosys Foundation Collaborates with GoSports Foundation to Launch 'Girls for Gold' Program for Aspiring Women Athletes across India

**I**nfosys Foundation, the philanthropic and CSR arm of Infosys, is collaborating with GoSports Foundation to build the 'Girls for Gold Program', a high-performance excellence program for junior and emerging women athletes. This program, spanning an initial term of four years, will identify and support progression of talented Indian women athletes between 13 to 19 years of age through collaborations with high potential academies and coaches in India. The program will include scholarships, coaching, access to academies, and performance recognition.

The program will follow a three-pronged approach. First, it will establish a strong cohort of women athletes who will be equipped to compete at the international level, help them build sustainable careers, and nurture them to become role models for the next generation. Secondly, it will build a pipeline of qualified and capable coaches who will help realize the aspirations of athletes and create an atmosphere of sustained sporting excellence. Third, it will help tech-enable the identified academies to make them world class training centers.

The first cohort of supported academies range across five sporting disciplines, that comprise shooting, boxing, weightlifting, table tennis and badminton. The academies identified as the inaugural beneficiaries of the program are:

- Lakshya Shooting Club
- Mary Kom Regional Boxing Foundation
- Sathish Sivalingam Weightlifting Foundation
- Raman TT High Performance Centre

- Yadav Pro Badminton Academy
- More academies may be considered for support as the program expands. A Champions Advisory Board has been created, comprising sports personalities that include former Indian shooter and Arjuna awardee Suma Shirur, former national table tennis champion B Bhuvaneswari, and amateur boxing champion and Padma Vibhushan awardee MC Mary Kom.

"We truly appreciate Infosys Foundation's commitment to creating cutting-edge avenues for girls and young women to become sporting champions for India. The holistic model of the 'Girls for Gold Program' builds the ecosystem by investing in human and institutional capacity and creating talent pathways for future generations. We are confident of the impact that this unique program will have on the lives and careers of women athletes we will support and, more broadly, on Indian sport", said, Deepthi Bopaiah, CEO – GoSports Foundation.

Sumit Virmani, Trustee, Infosys Foundation, said, "At Infosys Foundation, a deep-rooted focus on education and women empowerment have been a key priority over the years. Collaborating with GoSports Foundation furthers this long-standing commitment to empower aspiring women athletes with a holistic ecosystem that can help nurture their dreams. Excellence in sports is a driver of social change and we are confident that this collaboration will help these talented young women realize their potential in sports, in an environment amplified with scientific, and tech-enabled processes."

## Tata Capital screened over 2 lakh individuals under Project Aarogyatara: A primary eye care initiative

**T**ata Capital, the financial services arm of the Tata Group, has launched Project Aarogyatara- an initiative to eradicate curable blindness through inclusive primary eye care facilities. The purpose is to improve eye health of low-income group families, help diagnose eye disorders, provide timely treatment and increase awareness about regular eye check-ups. The project has been successfully implemented in the states of Maharashtra, Bihar, UP, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka. Tata Capital, under Project Aarogyatara has partnered with six NGOs in five years and has facilitated more than 23,000 cataract surgeries. The project provides support to diagnose and treat refractive errors through community mobilisers and healthcare workers.

### Project Aarogyatara has impacted:

- Over 2 lakh individuals screened for eye related ailments.
- Over 1600 camps conducted
- Of the people screened, more than 9900 people were provided with spectacles.
- Conducted over 23,000 cataract surgeries

Speaking about Tata Capital's CSR initiatives, Sridhar Sarathy - Chief Ethics Officer and SVP- L&D, Engagement and CSR said, "We are committed to giving back to the communities we serve. Access to health-care services is a basic human right, and we are proud to be able to help underprivileged individuals who may not have access to quality eye care. We are expanding this initiative to cover another half a million people in the next 3 years. Our commitment to strengthen availability and accessibility of quality eye care for the local communities will continue grow."

# Sports and Society Accelerator host the inaugural edition of the Making Sport Work Forum

**S**ports and Society Accelerator (SSA), a non-profit ecosystem-builder working to have every child playing and every adult active in India by 2047, hosted the inaugural edition of the Making Sport Work Forum 2023, with Meraki Sport & Entertainment, and research partner Pacta. The event saw Rahul Dravid, former India captain and current head coach of the Indian cricket team, engage in a discussion with Kiran Khalap, chairman of the board, Meraki Sport & Entertainment, sharing his views on the benefit of sport as an effective health, education, and economic tool, driving social outcomes at population scale. “Sport is a universal tool with tremendous transformative potential, and the need of the hour is collaborative work in the sports ecosystem, whether towards achieving excellence, societal goals or just towards getting everyone physically active and playing,” remarked Rahul Dravid during his address.

Speaking at the event, Desh Gaurav Sekhri, co-founder, Sports and Society Accelerator said “The preliminary research report by Pacta-SSA found that sports as a CSR category ranks lowest in terms of received funds, with less than 1% of cumulative CSR from 2014-21. Only a minority of companies contribute to sports CSR. Our endeavour through this forum was to showcase the emerging trends from the Indian sports CSR landscape, and their broad implications. We see the potential for private sector organizations to contribute in important ways to holistic sports development in India while simultaneously achieving many of their own strategic goals.”

The forum also served as a backdrop for SSA & Meraki Sport & Entertainment to launch India’s



**Pic 01 - From (L-R): Tahsin Zahid (CEO, Sports, Physical Education, Fitness & Leisure Sector Skill Council); Kanishka Bhattacharya (Sports and Society Accelerator); Ms. Nivedita Krishna (Pacta) and Nandan Kamath (Sports and Society Accelerator) at Making Sport Work Forum 2023 hosted by Meraki Sport & Entertainment, and Research Partner PACTA**

first - research, impact & assessment backed, Sports CSR Advisory service. Ajit Ravindran, co-founder & managing director, Meraki Sport & Entertainment said “Apart from the fact that sports CSR can be used as a powerful instrument impacting community, health, education, empowerment, and inclusion, we are convinced about its potential to be a strategic tool, to enhance brand salience. Supported by SSA’s proprietary assessment frameworks, Meraki will focus on working with private sector organizations and enterprises, enabling them to unlock the full potential of sports CSR.”

The event brought together a diverse set of attendees from government, corporations, non-profit organizations, and advisory firms in attendance for a round table discussion on the role of sports CSR in addressing a variety of India’s developmental needs, going forward.

The round table commenced with an introductory address from Tahsin Zahid, the CEO of the Sports, Physical Education, Fitness & Leisure Sector Skill Council.

“There is a real opportunity for us to effectively use CSR extensively for sports endeavours. The positive impact on communities and society through sport is visible to all. We must do our best to enhance awareness about the opportunities that fall within the entire spectrum of sports CSR, and the private sector and government must work together to create meaningful outcomes which creates a true sporting nation” said Tahsin Zahid.

The common consensus was the need for more research and understanding of the sector, and to build institutional capacity and systems that can enable sports CSR.

Participants for the roundtable included Hindustan Zinc, Infosys Foundation, ASK Asset and Wealth Management, Tata Trusts, JSW Sports, HCL Foundation, BPCL, IndusInd Bank, Piramal Foundation, NSDC-Sports Skills Council, GoSports Foundation, Omidyar Network India, Sportz Village Foundation, ELMS Foundation, Brahmaputra Volleyball League, Pro Sport Development, Lakshyaa, and Rugby India.

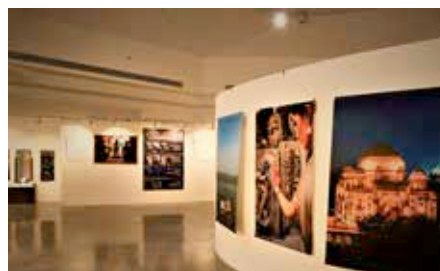
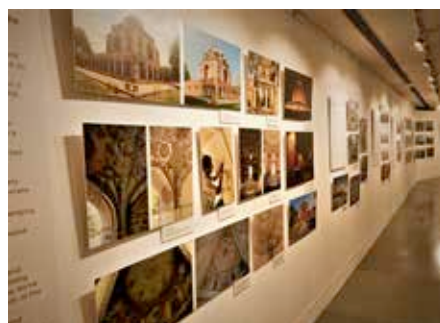


# InterGlobe Foundation unveils ‘Tangible Conversations, Intangible Heritage’, an exhibition to promote India’s cultural heritage

InterGlobe Foundation (IGF), the philanthropic arm of InterGlobe Enterprises, in collaboration with India International Centre (IIC), unveiled its 10-day exhibition, ‘Tangible Conversations, Intangible Heritage’ at the Art Gallery in IIC, Delhi. The event was inaugurated by Shyam Saran, President, India International Centre, and Rohini Bhatia, Chairperson, InterGlobe Foundation. ‘Tangible Conversations, Intangible Heritage’ showcases photographs, videos, installations, and visual demonstrations highlighting India’s diverse cultural heritage. The exhibition focuses on society, tangible, and intangible heritage as the three core pillars of cultural heritage and highlights how InterGlobe Foundation has been working relentlessly towards strengthening these pillars by engaging local communities, mapping cultural assets, and preserving fragile heritage across the country.

The exhibition, which will be open to the public from 26 May to 6 June 2023, from 11 am to 7 pm, also emphasises that public-private partnerships between businesses, civil society, and the government help create an environment where both heritage preservation and conservation thrive and generate livelihoods for communities. The exhibition will focus on three key themes:

**Exploring the unexplored:** InterGlobe Foundation launched the ‘InterGlobe Heritage Fellowships’ in 2022 to bring together a cross-section of the public in documenting and researching the cultural heritage of India. The exhibition showcases the



projects undertaken and research conducted by the selected fellows on the topics of “Reviving the Lesser Known and Sideline Musical Instruments: Shreekhhol, Taus, and Nafiri” and “Beyond the Geological Magnanimity: Cultural Landscape of Lonar Crater.”

**Collaborations and Communities:** The exhibition displays InterGlobe

Foundation’s journey of work, including how it integrated multiple stakeholders to preserve, conserve and promote community-driven built, cultural and natural heritage in different regions. It highlights major projects such as the conservation and restoration of Abdur Rahim Khan-I-Khanan’s tomb in Delhi; the restoration of ‘Indra Kund’, a



heritage stepwell in Rajasthan; 'My City My Heritage' campaign across the country; and more.

**Diversity and Inclusivity:** This theme highlights culturally and aesthetically significant sculptures, lost dance forms, and how women have been represented throughout India's history. A series of photographs, a short demonstration of various dance mudras and installations are on exhibit.

Rohini Bhatia, Chairperson, InterGlobe Foundation, said, "At InterGlobe Foundation, we not only recognised the need but also embraced the responsibility of safeguarding our heritage. We are

delighted to commence our first exhibition, 'Tangible Conversations, Intangible Heritage', which aims to celebrate India's rich and diverse culture and also showcase our efforts in heritage preservation, conservation and promotion. We hope that the endeavours of InterGlobe Foundation will serve as a catalyst, inspiring individuals and organisations to actively champion the cause of protecting, preserving and promoting our invaluable heritage."

InterGlobe Foundation is committed to its vision of building pride in communities through providing sustainable livelihoods, by conserving the environment, and promoting

heritage and culture of our country. It partners with organisations that are committed to conserving history by implementing structural restoration at India's heritage landmarks. The revival of craft skills and cultural legacies is also an integral part of all its restoration projects, enabling the foundation to not only protect India's built, cultural and natural heritage but also help create job opportunities within local communities. In the last nine years, InterGlobe Foundation has implemented over 25 projects with the leading NGOs in India and successfully impacted the lives of over 7 lakh people.

## Mukul Madhav Foundation's Coffee Table Book Released

*The Coffee Table Book showcases the 25-year inspiring journey of Mukul Madhav Foundation (MMF).*

To commemorate Mukul Madhav Foundation's 25 years in community building and social responsibility, a Coffee Table Book was launched at the Raj Bhavan in Mumbai. Chronicling the inspiring journey of MMF, this beautifully designed book was released at the hands of Ramesh Bais, Governor of Maharashtra, Devendra Fadnavis, Deputy Chief Minister, in the presence of prominent dignitaries and industrialists. The book was presented to Vijay Gurnani, Trustee, MMF and Shom Hinduja, MMF representative.

Envisioned in 1998, Mukul Madhav Foundation (MMF) has been actively engaged on-ground in India, spearheading and supporting initiatives across education, healthcare, environment, reducing inequalities and rural development. Partnering



with government and non-government organizations, corporates and individuals, with a formal on-boarding in 2014 as CSR partner to Finolex Industries Ltd. This book attempts to elucidate this long and fulfilling commitment. Ritu Chhabria, Managing Trustee of MMF, said, "We are deeply moved by this fitting tribute to our 25-year journey of making a positive impact on society. This book represents our unwavering commitment to creating a sustainable and equal future for all. As we look back on our journey, we are filled with

immense pride and gratitude for the countless individuals, organisations and corporates who have partnered us along the way."

The Coffee Table Book not only captures the golden moments of MMF but also reflects on the impact - the countless individuals and families whose lives they have touched, bringing them hope and a chance for a better future. This book is sure to be a source of inspiration for others to begin their own journey in making a positive and sustainable impact on communities.

## GreenLine contributes to ESG missions of JK Lakshmi Cement, Dalmia Cement & UltraTech Cement

**G**reenLine (Green Planet Logistics Pvt Ltd), green mobility pioneer, announced that it has become the first freight transportation company in India to issue CO2 emissions reduction certificates to its clients, JK Lakshmi Cement, UltraTech Cement & Dalmia Cement, in recognition of their commitment & efforts to reduce emissions by promoting use of sustainable transportation. This groundbreaking initiative, being undertaken in collaboration with ESG Risk Assessments & Insights Ltd., a subsidiary of Acuite Ratings & Research Ltd. and India's first ESG rating provider, will enable GreenLine's clients to officially account for their emissions reductions in their statutory & ESG reporting.

Commenting on the initiative, Mr. Anand Mimani, CEO, GreenLine said, "We are committed to enabling the ESG agenda of Indian corporates, and our green certificate program is part of our commitment to promoting sustainable mobility and reducing our collective carbon footprint. We believe that by working together, we can create a cleaner, healthier, and more sustainable future for everyone. I would like to congratulate our green mobility clients on their achievements and thank them for their commitment to sustainability. We hope that their example will inspire others to take similar actions and contribute to a greener, more sustainable future."

GreenLine is on a mission to decarbonize heavy trucking in India and is paving the way for widespread adoption of LNG-powered freight transportation by showcasing its immense advantages for corporates. GreenLine has collaborated with multiple organisations to create India's first & only integrated ecosystem to make low emission LNG trucking a reality in India.

GreenLine's fleets, comprising state-of-the-art LNG-powered trucks manufactured by Blue Energy Motors, have been instrumental in helping its clients significantly reduce the carbon footprint of their respective logistics operations by upto 30%, compared to diesel-powered trucks.

GreenLine is socially responsible and committed to improving working conditions for its drivers. An air-conditioned cabin, air suspended seats and 30% lower noise pollution ensure driver comfort while a Level 1 ADAS (Advanced Driver Assistance System) and Driver State Monitoring ensure improved driver behavior and on-road safety.

## KASHISH QDrishti Film Grant 2023 to offer Rs.3,50,000 cash grants

**I**n its 8th year now, the path-breaking KASHISH QDrishti Film Grant, which has already facilitated production of 8 LGBTQ+ short films, is offering Rs.2,50,000 to a LGBTQ+ identifying filmmaker to make their next queer short film, sponsored by Lotus Visual Productions that exclusively produces and promotes LGBTQ+ movies.

What's more two runner ups stand to receive Rs.50,000 cash award each supported by noted film actress Renuka Shahane. The call for submission of screenplays to the KASHISH QDrishti Film Grant 2023 is open now, and all filmmakers who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, asexual, queer or non-binary, can apply.

"The KASHISH QDrishti Film Grant is a necessary step to empower emerging Indian LGBTQ+ identifying filmmakers to make films that are bold and true. The 8 films that have been produced so far through this initiative are exemplary in content and style and have won awards internationally", said Sridhar Rangayan, festival director of KASHISH Mumbai International Queer Film Festival.

"This year we plan to up the game by having a live pitching for the five shortlisted scripts at the KASHISH 2023 on-ground physical festival in front of an eminent jury panel", he added.

Neeraj, producer who is sponsoring the grant said, "KASHISH QDrishti film grant provides an opportunity to LGBTQ+ voices to tell their own stories. It promotes movie making that goes beyond token representation that uses the queer or trans narrative for profit mongering by differentiating between tokenism and authentic storytelling."

Renuka Shahane, well-known actor & director who was on the jury last year said, "I think it is important to support community filmmakers to tell their own stories. That's why I decided to contribute with my little might and support two runner-ups with cash awards and mentorship. Hope this helps the filmmakers reach closer to their dreams".

Past awardees of the KASHISH QDrishti Film Grant are Arvind Caulagi (Taps), Preeti Kanungo (Malwa Kushan), Bhargav Lahkar (The Caress), Arun Fulara (My Mother's Girlfriend), V.Ramanathan (Physicality), Debadrita Bose (Languages), Siddharth Chauhan (Catch The Light) and Sudipto Kundu (Tales of Another Radha).

The 14th edition of KASHISH Mumbai International Queer Film Festival will be held from June 7 – 11, 2023 at Liberty Cinema and online from June 16-25, 2023. The line-up of films for KASHISH 2023 will be announced soon.



# Dettol launches new campaign #DettolProtectsTomorrow, encourages children to explore and learn for a better, brighter future

**D**ettol, India's most trusted germ protection brand, unveiled a new campaign #DettolProtectsTomorrow, to motivate children to explore the world without the fear of disease-causing germs. With a strong belief that children's curiosity should be encouraged to achieve their true potential, Dettol aims to empower mothers to build a better and safe future for their kids. To bring this thought alive, Dettol launched India's first-ever personalized foaming handwash, encouraging consumers to capture precious moments showcasing their kids exploring their talents, and create their own customized Dettol foaming hand wash packs.

The campaign was launched with a video showcasing the brand philosophy by reiterating the promise of providing safety and protection of Dettol foaming handwash to children as their hands get dirty while they dive into the world of opportunities to build a better future. The philosophy was also brought to life through partnership with Better India by recognizing and celebrating 20 inspirational stories of kids from across India, who are making an impact on not just their lives, but also their local communities to build a better world.

Dilen Gandhi, Regional Marketing Director, South Asia – Health & Nutrition, Reckitt stated, "Curiosity and learning behaviour amongst



## Showcases inspirational stories of 20 young stars

## Launches new campaign #DettolProtectsTomorrow with a personalized pack option

children must be nurtured to help them reach their full potential. With #DettolProtectsTomorrow, and the inspirational stories of these children, we want to empower mothers to encourage their children to pursue their natural curiosity, without any fear of germs. Dettol Foaming handwash provides 10x better germ protection and is gentle on young skin, with moisture-rich foam. Personalised packaging of Dettol foaming handwash will have

pictures and stories of these kids and we hope it serves as a reminder for all, to go out exploring and get their own personalised packs"

Mitesh Kothari, Co-founder and Chief Creative Officer, White Rivers Media said, "The thought-provoking campaign #DettolProtectsTomorrow, puts forth the message of strengthening inquisitiveness among children to go out and explore the world. To ensure the campaign reaches a wider audience and brings a positive change, we have conceptualized a film, displaying Dettol's philosophy and highlighting the innovative personalized pack. We at White Rivers Media are delighted to associate with a brand like Dettol that focuses on the health and growth of its consumers."

Children are naturally inquisitive and need to be able to explore the world even if that means getting messy. Dettol believes that this curiosity and play should be encouraged and hence aims to empower mothers to be able to build a better future for their kids. Its foaming handwash with 10X better protection vs other handwashes is also extremely gentle for young hands and hence is designed to offer the best protection and care. Consumers can order and get personalized labels by scanning the QR code on the Dettol foaming handwash packs and uploading their picture on Dettol's website.

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## The Habitats Trust Invites Applications for its Annual THT Grants, Highlights Success over the Years

**T**he Habitats Trust, a not-for-profit organization working towards the protection and conservation of India's natural habitats and their indigenous species, is inviting applications for its annual Habitats Trust Grants 2023. The portal for submission of applications can be accessed from <https://www.thehabitatstrust.org> and will remain open till 05th June, 2023. The Grants were instituted to encourage and promote conservation efforts by supporting organizations and individuals doing seminal work toward protecting and conserving India's threatened wildlife and natural habitats. To connect with conservationists across India, symposiums will be organized in five cities including Pune (Fergusson College on 12th May from 3:30pm to 5:30pm), Hyderabad (B Hub, Banjara Hills on 19th May from 6 to 8pm), Bangalore, Kolkata and Dehradun. These symposiums will be held from 12th to 27th May 2023 aiming at guiding prospective applicants on the grant's initiative and selection processes.

Talking about the success of the THT Grants, Rushikesh Chavan, Head of The Habitats Trust said, "We are happy to witness the impact that these grants are having on the conservation efforts. From the start of recovery of critically endangered species to the restoration of degraded habitats, we have witnessed progress in projects that have received the support. The grant provided to Nature Conservation Foundation (NCF) in the year 2020 is a prime example, that led to achieve zero deaths of elephants in the Valapari region in Tamil Nadu in the last year and a half. These results show that our strategic investments in conservation are making a real difference on-ground." Prospective grantees and not-for-profit organizations working to conserve India's biodiversity can apply for the Grants under the below grant categories. A total prize purse of Rs. 3.20 Crore (three crores and twenty lakhs) will be given

• **THT Conservation Grant of Rs. 1 crore each to two organizations:** The Habitats Trust Conservation Grant will support organizations working towards the conservation of

lesser-known species and critical habitats. It will assist the grantees in addressing critical conservation challenges of India such including but not limited to habitat degradation and destruction, loss of biodiversity, conservation of endangered species, solutions for human-wildlife conflict. This grant is only open to organizations that have a proven record of working in wildlife conservation for a minimum of five years. The selected projects will have to be executed over a three-year period. This is aimed at allowing sufficient time for the winners to make the most of the Grant and create a deeper impact on ground.

• **THT Action Grant of Rs. 25 lakhs, each for three organizations / individuals:**

The Habitats Trust Action Grant will support three individuals or organizations or both, working on-ground on lesser-known species and/or habitats that require urgent conservation intervention. The selected individuals or organizations should have been working in the field of wildlife conservation for a minimum of two years. The selected project will have to be executed over a period of two years.

The total grants amount awarded to grantees and finalists in 2022 was Rs. 3.32 crore. Four THT Action Grant, grantees received Rs. 25 lakh each (HT Lalremsanga, Bombay Natural History Society, The ERDS Foundation and ATREE) two THT Conservation Grant grantees received Rs. 1 crore each (The Forest Way and Gurukula Botanical Sanctuary. Six finalists received Rs 2 lakh and four finalists received Rs. 5 lakhs. These included:

• **THT Action Grant Finalists (INR 2,00,000):** Indian Grameen Service, Maharashtra Education Society, Pankaj Joshi, Rajni Mani, The Shola Trust and Zoo Outreach Organisation

• **THT Conservation Grant finalists (INR 5,00,000):** Care Earth Trust, Madras Crocodile Bank, Sahjeevan Trust and Wildlife Protection Society of India


### Evaluation Process

Applications for the Grants will be evaluated through a multi-level screening process by a

panel of experts from the field of conservation including scientists and subject-matter experts. These experts, who are also the sub-jury, will screen and shortlist 30 or more applicants across the two categories and will further assess these shortlisted projects through a field evaluation round. 20 applications overall will move to the final Jury Round. The five recipients of The Habitats Trust Grants 2023, two from THT Conservation Grant and 3 from THT Action Grant, will be announced by an eminent jury towards the end of this year. Applications will be measured on relevance, expected conservation impact, stakeholder engagement, scalability, replicability, and sustainability of the proposed project.

In 2022, The Habitats Trust also introduced another category – THT Seed Grant, aimed at supporting applicants with Rs 3 lakhs, each. This Grant supports organizations and individuals working on small, limited duration projects or conservation research efforts tackling issues related to lesser-known species/ habitats, or pilot projects in relatively unexplored landscapes or data deficient species. Applicants who are testing new methodologies and/or conducting rapid surveys would be eligible for this grant. The winners in this category in the last one year included:

• **Feather Library:** identified a novel opportunity to populate a new bird specimen collection by collaborating with bird rescue organisations that help thousands of injured birds every year, some of which unfortunately died. They intend to utilize this currently wasted resource, curate it and house it both online and in a museum collection, and make it available for science, conservation and education.

• **Nagpur Centre for Peoples' Forum:** The project aims to create a community-led grassland conservation movement in Vidarbha region, Maharashtra through Biodiversity Management Committees in 3 villages of Wardha district. The project also aims to create prospects of scientific documentation of flora and fauna of this region, along with building a well-informed community for the protection of grasslands and its eco-system. 



# CSR INDIA UNITED

## To contribute to our country's overall mission of good hygiene Kamats restaurant has started installing Sanitary Napkin Vending Machines



Sanitary Vending Machine in Kamats Washroom

**H**ygienic and clean washrooms have been a prominent issue in the rural parts of our country. When we travel on the highways from one city to another, the one problem every woman and child faces is finding a hygienic washroom in between their journey. There are many public washrooms that we pass through, but hygiene is something that we cannot count on. To eradicate this problem once and for all, Kamats Restaurants, being a highway restaurant brand made it

a mission to become a pit-stop with having a clean washroom, changing rooms, and pocket-friendly fresh food, keeping the quality of food persistent. When asked Dr. Vikram Kamat about his thoughts on the



same, he said, "Kamats has always been serving fresh and hygienic food to all its customers but when I joined the business, the first thing I tried focusing on, was the hygiene factor of our washrooms. A lot of road travelers in our country choose internationally famous brands for using their washrooms while they crave eating hot and fresh Indian meals. This made me think about the importance of clean washrooms for Indian road travelers along with great food. Therefore trying to bridge this gap we have ventured into making all Kamats provide not only hygienic food but also clean washrooms so that our guests can eat and freshen up in comfort at the same pit stop."

He further added saying, "Along with clean washrooms, beginning from Kamats Karad, we have also



Dr. Vikram Kamat, Chairman, The VITSKamats Group

started installing sanitary napkin vending machines at our women's washrooms. This will not only help our business but also improve us as a community and make Indian highway restaurants a preferred option too. This initiative is also aimed at our country's overall mission towards good hygiene and promoting local businesses and Kamats being an iconic brand it only makes us proud to contribute towards our own country and society."

# USAID-IACC sign MOU to enhance development collaboration, focus on mental health during signing

The ongoing Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the US Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Indo-American Chamber of Commerce in India (IACC) has been renewed, marking a continuation of their partnership. The signing of the MoU also served as an opportunity to launch a mental health program, specifically focusing on mental health in the post-COVID era. A session on mental health in post-COVID was also held where panelists pointed out that more than 50% of the items listed in the MoU concern mental health.

The scope of the USAID-IACC collaboration has expanded to encompass crucial areas, such as mental health, global health security, gender issues faced by youth, climate change, agriculture, and education. According to a National Mental Health Survey in 2015 and 2016, almost 13% of Indians have some mental health disorder, which increased significantly during COVID.

Experts at the session pointed out that there is a need to increase expenditure on healthcare as it is only one percent of the GDP in India, whereas Bangladesh spends more than us. Highlighting the seriousness of the issue, Dr. Sunil Mittal, senior psychiatrist, Cosmos Institute of Mental Health & Behavioural Sciences, & vice president, World Federation for Mental Health (WFMH), pointed out, "India accounts for one-third of global female suicide, one-fourth of male suicide, and in real terms every three minutes an Indian commits suicide. We have over 9000 psychiatrists, which is an abysmal ratio; clinical psychologists numbers

**Experts at the MoU signing pointed out that more than 50% of the items listed in the MoU concern mental health while talking about the importance of tackling mental health in India that accounts for one-third of global female suicide, one-fourth of male suicide, and every three minutes an Indian committing suicide.**

**There was a 35% increase in mental health issues in India during COVID, but there was not much hue and cry as the government was prepared to tackle," said Dr Rajesh Sagar, professor of Psychiatry, AIIMS.**

are even lesser with around 2000; the barriers in India are stigma, lack of awareness, accessibility, and affordability of care."

On India's improved mental health tackling in post-COVID and during the pandemic, Dr. Rajesh Sagar, professor of Psychiatry, AIIMS, said, "There was a 35% increase in mental health issues in India during COVID, but there was not much hue and cry as the government was prepared to tackle. There were reforms in India after COVID to improve mental health programs; India provided services during COVID, while it was not working in other parts of the world. Also, unlike several other countries we have National Mental Health Policy; National Suicide Policy has also come up. We need collective

efforts, and work on multiple levels to improve the situation further. The need is to look at physical and mental health for better outcomes."

Dr. Anuradha Jain, senior advisor, Health Systems Strengthening, USAID, said, "We approach it through integrated solutions; not only the communities, but the healthcare workers also got affected during the pandemic, and we addressed it through various programs to help them overcome the health issue.

The panelists, while pointing out the loss to GDPs to bring home the importance of tackling mental health issues, said estimates are showing that loss to GDP in the US is USD 1 trillion, and the losses to the UK due to mental health is 118 billion pounds.

Talking about what lies ahead for India in tackling mental health issues, Dr. Sandeep Govil, Psychiatrist, said, "As per a NIMHANS report, there is a large gap of about 70% in treatment; COVID came as a blessing as app-based treatments came to the fore, and government recognized tele-consultation helping the reach of treatment to remote areas. Post-COVID, there was a rise in numbers due to a lack of guidance and treatment, but the positive part was the rise in innovative ideas and e-platforms. WHO predicts that India will be the suicide capital of the world, but we have to work to ensure that this should not happen by raising awareness, increasing the reach of treatment, and minimizing the stigma. COVID has given hope to various mental health treatments and modalities that we can work upon to tackle the issue."



# BYJU'S Co-founder Divya Gokulnath meets NGO partners in New Delhi to discuss efforts for digital literacy and amplify impact

In India, access to quality education is still a privilege that only a few can afford. However, BYJU'S Education For All, the not-for-profit initiative of BYJU'S, is changing this narrative. Education For All is a unique model of corporate social responsibility that collaborates with over 175 NGOs across the country to provide free access to BYJU'S premium learning content to children in underserved areas.

BYJU'S Education For All currently reaches and teaches 55 lakhs beneficiaries in collaboration with 175 NGOs. To achieve this, it has adopted a multi-stakeholder approach where it collaborates with NGOs, schools, and government bodies to ensure that quality education reaches the most marginalized communities. This revolutionary model is spearheaded by Divya Gokulnath, the co-founder of BYJU'S, who is a passionate advocate for making digital learning equitable and accessible to all.

In this regard, Divya recently organized a roundtable discussion with ten key NGO partners, including Anukulan, Friends Union for Energising Lives (FUEL), Indeed Foundation, Smile Foundation, Udayan care, Border Security Force, Tech Mahindra Foundation, Rotary India Literacy Mission-Rotary India Humanity Foundation, SOS Children's Village, and Sshrishti Trust, in New Delhi. In an interactive session, she took their data-driven feedback and asked them what else they needed to make education more effective for their beneficiaries. Another aim of the meeting was to discuss the increasing benefits of technology in education and how amplifying its

## NGO partners of BYJU'S got together at the BYJU'S ImpactED NGO meet to discuss how to increase digital literacy across New Delhi, NCR, Gurgaon, and nearby border regions

use can help more students in the next phase of the partnership. This bottom-up approach, along with the commitment from the topmost level, makes BYJU'S Education For All a unique and scalable initiative.

BYJU'S Education for All has pledged to transform the lives of over 10 lakhs children in Delhi, NCR, Gurgaon and nearby border regions through digital learning. The organization continues to work tirelessly towards its goal, with a team of dedicated educators and professionals who are committed to creating a brighter future for India.

The roundtable discussion was a resounding success. Some of the key highlights from the event include BYJU'S extending additional offerings to NGO partners, including skill-based and English learning courses. The Foundation Skills Academy by Great Learning, which is a subsidiary of BYJU'S, will provide support to EFA beneficiaries to upskill and be job-ready, while enhanced mentorship from BYJU'S will help reduce school dropouts. In addition, the implementation of more English language training through the NGO partners and the incorporation of multi-language curriculums will help bring down the language barrier in many communities. BYJU'S has also pledged to help with capacity building and

teacher training programmes for NGO partners, recognizing the importance of providing educators with the tools they need to make a difference.

Looking ahead, BYJU'S is set to launch special programs in the coming months that will focus on adult literacy and create a deeper impact on border areas and wards of security forces. With these initiatives, BYJU'S is demonstrating its unwavering commitment to creating a more equitable and accessible education system, where every student has the opportunity to succeed.

Commenting on the occasion, Divya Gokulnath, Co-founder, BYJU'S said, "At BYJU'S, we believe that every child deserves access to high-quality education, regardless of their background or circumstances. Quality education is the cornerstone of harnessing human potential and development and our mission under Education For All is to empower underprivileged children with the same quality content and provide equal learning opportunities with the digital tools and resources they need to succeed. The recent roundtable with our partnered NGOs was a valuable opportunity for us to evaluate our impact, listen to the needs of our partners, and chart a path forward. We are grateful for the ongoing support of our partners and excited to expand access to BYJU'S content in the upcoming academic year. Together, I am confident that we can make a real difference in the lives of children, one day at a time."

The meeting ended on a high note, with the exciting announcement of a National NGO Partners' Meet aimed at bringing together stakeholders and student beneficiaries to deliberate how BYJU'S Education For All can be made even more effective. This crucial event is expected to help BYJU'S take another leap forward to bridge the educational gap between the haves and have-nots and make digital literacy accessible to more children in need.

# OPPO India and Telangana Social Impact Group (T-SIG) join hands to uplift migrant labourers in Sangareddy District

OPPO, a leading global smart device brand, has announced its partnership with T-SIG (Telangana Social Impact Group) to support the UDAAN project, which aims to transform the lives of Odia migrant workers in Sangareddy district, Hyderabad in Telangana. UDAAN seeks to empower these workers by improving their overall well-being, including their health, nutrition, children's education, wages, and living conditions. As a sponsor of this initiative, OPPO, along with T-SIG & Aide et Action (NGO) will positively impact the lives of more than 2500 migrant workers and 400 children who will be residing in the Sangareddy district for six months (October 2023 to March 2024).

Adopting a holistic approach for ensuring the welfare of the labourers, OPPO and T-SIG will work in tandem on various levels. The Project will involve conducting surveys to gather information about the brick kilns and identify specific requirements of the workers. The UDAAN project will have seven government departments working together, namely the District Collectorate, Labour Department, Department of Women and Child Welfare, Department of School Education, Department of Primary Health, Dept of Civil Supplies and Sangareddy District Police. They will come together to ensure the successful implementation of initiatives and entitlements. The entire process will be moderated by T-SIG under the able leadership of Mr. Jayesh Ranjan IAS, Principal Secretary, Dept of Industries, Commerce, I&T, TS Govt. Commenting on the

partnership, Tasleem Arif, VP and R&D Head, OPPO India, said, "We are delighted to announce OPPO's collaboration with T-SIG to support the UDAAN migrant labour project in Sangareddy district. As OPPO stands strong with its philosophy of 'Technology for mankind, kindness for the world', this partnership marks a significant milestone in our ongoing CSR efforts journey. By teaming up with T-SIG, we are proud to play a part in empowering more than 2500 migrant workers and create a meaningful impact in their lives by addressing critical aspects such as health, education, wages, and living conditions. This collaboration builds on OPPO's commitment to drive social change and sustainable development in India, and we are determined to create a positive and long-lasting impact in the entire Sangareddy district community."

Speaking at the launch, Mr. Jayesh Ranjan, IAS, Principal Secretary, Industries & Commerce, IT, E&C said, "We are pleased to announce this

CSR collaboration between T-SIG and OPPO. As the world's leading smart device manufacturer and innovator, through this initiative, OPPO is empowering thousands of brick kiln workers in their journey in Telangana. We look forward to strengthening the partnership as the project unfolds."

As part of the initiative, all workers will be registered so that they become eligible to receive financial benefits and access to subsidized rice through the Public Distribution System (PDS). More than 400 children of the workers will be enrolled in regular Odia medium schools and Child Care centres will be set up with an intent to abolish child labour. Health camps and awareness programs will be conducted to provide health services, and brick kiln owners will be sensitized to promote better practices benefitting about 2500 migrant including 1200 women workers. Regular meetings between departments will promote better coordination, and efforts will be made to improve health and safety measures, thereby improving the living and working conditions of migrant workers.

Recently, OPPO has also signed an MoU with Andhra Pradesh Innovation Society (APIS), the State Nodal Agency for promoting the growth of the entrepreneurship ecosystem, to support deep tech startups in the state of Andhra Pradesh. Also, OPPO has entered a year-long partnership with the UNDP (United Nations Development Programme) to engage young social entrepreneurs to join the effort to address social sustainability issues through innovation.

**OPPO has entered a year-long partnership with the UNDP (United Nations Development Programme) to engage young social entrepreneurs to join the effort to address social sustainability issues through innovation.**

# Signature spearheads the replenishment of Mangrove plantations in Odisha

## *Signature Packaged Drinking Water gives back to the community by fronting the Mangrove Restoration Project in Odisha*

**B**ack in 1995, Michael Jackson questioned, “What about the seas? What about us?” It’s been almost 3 decades hence. While we may not have gotten all the answers, we live in hope, thanks to the momentum of collective action. The promise to live good and do good.

Signature Packaged Drinking Water is proud to announce The Mangrove Replenishment Project, an initiative to regenerate the mangrove plantations in Odisha and restore the delicate natural balance of the coastal regions for climate resiliency. There has been a sharp decline in the mangrove cover that protects the shores of Odisha over the past few years, owing to cyclones and erosion, making it an important geography to focus on which is why it is worth mentioning.

Signature has always been vocal about giving back to nature through all our activities. As a brand, we are consciously making efforts to create awareness of reviving nature. The Mangrove Replenishment Project, announced by Signature Packaged Drinking Water, aligns with our brand’s future-back vision of weaving progress with purpose.

Orissa is hit by cyclones owing to climatic changes and its unique topography. Once plentiful, there has been a steady decline in the number of mangroves in this coastal stretch over the years due to several

reasons. Mangrove regeneration is a necessity as community livelihood depends on the sea and the habitat around it. Mangroves all along the Odisha coast are increasingly threatened due to the high density of population and competing demand for land for agriculture and coastal prawn farming. Rapid expansion in settlements and tourism has also affected natural mangrove regeneration.

### Did you know?

- 1 hectare of mangroves can sequester up to 8 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>, 2-4 times faster than a mature tropical forest.
- Mangroves protect the coast from cyclonic storms.
- We lost 50% of the world’s mangrove cover in the last 50 years.
- Mangroves comprise 0.7% of the global forest area but may

out across 61 acres in 5 villages near Puri, Odisha, over a period of 3 years to begin with.

Ruchira Jaitly, Executive Vice President and Portfolio Head, Marketing, Diageo India, said, “The Mangrove Replenishment Project has been launched to build coastal climate resiliency in Odisha. Signature Packaged Drinking Water believes in living good while doing good. We want to give our consumers the chance to celebrate life every day, everywhere, while being associated with deeds that are making a ‘sea change’ on the ground, for local communities, for flora and fauna – all for the planet. Mangroves form a natural barrier that stem erosion, prevent flooding, help offset carbon and increase food security. We are committed to partner with local communities in Odisha to do good for nature.”

**The Mangrove Replenishment Project has been launched to build coastal climate resiliency in Odisha. Signature Packaged Drinking Water believes in living good while doing good.**

store 20 billion tonnes of carbon worldwide, roughly equivalent to 2.5 times current annual global greenhouse gas emissions

The project will not only aid revive the mangroves but also engage with local communities by educating them and making them part of the process. In the initial stages, the restoration efforts will be spread

The Mangrove Replenishment Project will aim to reduce the carbon footprint, empower local communities, and create a lasting impact. To drive meaningful distinction and in keeping with our belief of Living Good while Doing Good for the planet, Signature Packaged Drinking Water is committing to an inspiring ‘Good for Nature’ act.



# Dr Basu Eye Hospital medical camp benefits over 150 people with eye issues

Continuing its endeavor to sensitize people on the natural and herbal methodologies to treat cataracts, Dr Basu Eye Hospital, a leading player in ayurvedic eye cure, organized an eye disorder prevention medical camp in association with the Bina Operation Motiyabind Dhirishti Dosh Nivaran Samithi. The medical camp was organized at Dr Basu Eye Hospital and Cataract Prevention Center at Jasola in New Delhi on 30 April 2023.

As many as 150 beneficiaries received free treatment for cataract-related eye disorders at the medical camp, which boasted the fact that treatment to cataracts and other eye disorders can be treated in a completely natural process without any surgery. Key dignitaries present at the camp included Health Minister of Delhi, Saurabh Bhardwaj as Chief Guest and Municipal Councilor, Chirag Delhi, Krishan Jakhar as the Special Guest.

“It is an honor to be part of such a noble initiative which advocates the natural and herbal treatment of key eye diseases. Cataract has been a major concern among several individuals across the country in recent years, mostly driven by the increasing numbers of diabetic cases. The endeavor of Dr Mahender Singh Basu, Founder of Dr. Basu Eye Hospital is especially laudable at this time considering the pressing need for Ayurvedic health care for a sustainable lifestyle,” noted Health Minister of Delhi Saurabh Bhardwaj.

Special Guest at the occasion Municipal Councilor, Chirag Delhi Krishan Jakhar highlighted how eye treatment through ancient Indian medication like Ayurveda can be more effective than modern medication involving operations. “This medical camp will indeed foster a



change of mindset among people, who are now getting more and more aware of treatment through sustainable methodologies. I really appreciate Dr. Basu Eye Hospital for organizing the medical camp, not just because it significantly helped several people today but also because this will be phenomenal in revamping the eye treatment procedures across the country in the long run,” mentioned Jakhar.

The special eye disorder prevention medical camp was organized in line with Dr. Basu Eye Hospital’s mission to provide solutions to eye treatment methodologies that are advanced and researched in detail. Recently, the Hospital announced the results of a retrospective observational study conducted by Prof Yamini of Banaras Hindu University, Uttar Pradesh, on the use of Isotine herbal eye drops – one of

the effective remedies for cataract-induced vision impairment. The study, which included 308 cataract patients treated between 2017 to 2019, showed significant improvement in uncorrected distance visual acuity (UDVA) and uncorrected near visual acuity (UNVA) after treatment with Isotine.

“Our aim has always been to continue advanced medicinal research and develop solutions that will provide the best medical benefit to the maximum number of people. The huge number of people preferring to get treated for cataracts through natural methodology without any surgery at the medical camp today is a testament to how people are getting more aware of natural and herbal treatment, which can be the best way to maintain a healthy living,” said Dr Mahender Singh Basu, Founder of Dr. Basu Eye Hospital.



## CM's word in vain, Panvel lake makeover near Mumbai 'killing' natural beauty

**D**espite Chief Minister Eknath Shinde's intervention, the biodiversity at the 400-year-old Vadale Lake at Panvel near the satellite township of Navi Mumbai is being threatened under the guise of artificial beautification of the natural surroundings, environmentalists alleged. Tragically, real wildlife is sought to be replaced with artificial LED back-lit deer and birds, the green groups have alerted the Chief Minister afresh.

Several exotic birds such as painted snipe which roosted and nested on the grass in the lake now are endangered as the Panvel Municipal Corporation is set to clear the grass and weeds as part of the beautification, the environmentalists said.

Responding to emails from NatConnect Foundation, the CM has directed twice over the Principal Secretary- Environment, Praveen Darde to look into the issue. Yet, there is no sign of halting the work, a third mail to the CM said. "The continuing work on the pond, also

known as Ballashwar Lake, has now endangered the birds, their eggs and fledglings," said Jyoti Nadkarni of Kharghar Hill and Wetlands forum.

Grass and weeds are their habitat on which they survive feeding, nesting, resting and hiding from predators, avid birder Madhav Athavale said. The removal of the grass would lead to exposing the birds to the danger of predation and destruction of their home, he pointed out and regretted the civic authorities are not heeding to the nature lovers' pleas.

The lake supports rich flora and fauna and is home to almost 80 species of local and migratory birds such as Painted Snipe and waterhen.



Some such as the comb duck have made reappearance after nearly ten years. Some birds not only roost there but also breed and nest there, Nadkarni said. The acts are against the letter and spirit of the Wildlife Preservation Act 1972 and PCA 1960 as the destruction causes suffering to the birds, she said.

Illuminating the place with so many LED lights, laser beams create light pollution and is not natural for birds both diurnal and nocturnal causing serious health and behaviour disorders also making them vulnerable to the predators, NatConnect Foundation director B N Kumar pointed out. Light is the enemy number one of birds and the glitter inside and outside the lake will make the entire area uninhabitable for the flying guests, Kumar said.

Incidentally, Kumar said, the theme for the World Migratory Bird Day 2022 was Light Pollution and the event focused on protecting the avian guests from bright lights which have become common at various gardens and lakes.

The nature groups have sent appeals and reminders through our emails and even met the Panvel Municipal Commissioner several times suggesting him to install information boards around the promenade about the flora and fauna found at the lake for public awareness instead of this wanton destruction. "But what we see now is the artificial beautification being done by installing lights, LED back-lit deer and birds," Nadkarni said.

Artificial grass mounds are used as floaters to install fake LED lit birds, whereas raised islands required for the living birds to shelter during high water levels in monsoon are not being provided.

It is not clear whether the Panvel biodiversity committee has been consulted about the project, the activists said and called for immediate intervention from the CM to conserve the biodiversity.

## World Bank Approves \$82 Million for Prevention of Zoonotic, Endemic Diseases in India

The World Bank's Board of Executive Directors approved an \$82 million loan towards the adoption of global best practices for animal health management to prevent, detect, and respond to endemic zoonotic, transboundary, and emerging infectious diseases. It will strengthen India's One Health approach, which recognizes that people and animals are connected with their shared environment. Animal disease outbreaks globally continue to pose risks to public health systems and have enormous economic costs. With India having the largest livestock population in the world, these risks are particularly high. For example, foot and mouth disease alone costs the country more than \$3.3 billion annually. The Animal Health System Support for One Health Program will support India's Livestock Health and Disease Control Program, which seeks to control animal diseases and zoonoses.

"The new program will help reduce the risks of animal disease outbreaks by improving disease surveillance and veterinary services in the livestock and wildlife sectors," said Auguste Tano Kouame, the World Bank's Country Director for India. "At least 2.9 million livestock farmers will have increased access to improved animal health services in the participating states of Assam, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Odisha, and Madhya Pradesh."

Through state-of-the-art laboratories, the program will also strengthen collaboration and data sharing with the human health sector. It will also enhance food quality and safety in animal products, especially in livestock and wet markets.

"In India, around 68 percent of the workforce relies on farming and remains in close contact with domestic animals and poultry, thereby becoming frequently exposed to sick or infected animals," said Hikuepi Katjiuongua, Adarsh Kumar and Anupam Joshi, the Task Team Leaders for the program. "By supporting evidence-based policies on animal disease and zoonoses management, the program will address food safety in livestock value chains."

The \$82 million loan from the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) uses the Program-for-Results (PforR) financing instrument that links disbursement of funds directly to the achievement of specific program results. The loan has a maturity of 11.5 years with a grace period of 4.5 years.

## Tata Capital screened over 2 lakh individuals under Project Aarogyatara: A primary eye care initiative

*Aarogyatara gears up to cover more than 5 lakh individuals in the next 3 years*

Tata Capital, the financial services arm of the Tata Group, has launched Project Aarogyatara- an initiative to eradicate curable blindness through inclusive primary eye care facilities. The purpose is to improve eye health of low-income group families, help diagnose eye disorders, provide timely treatment and increase awareness about regular eye check-ups. The project has been successfully implemented in the states of Maharashtra, Bihar, UP, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka.

Tata Capital, under Project Aarogyatara has partnered with six NGOs in five years and has facilitated more than 23,000 cataract surgeries. The project provides support to diagnose and treat refractive errors through community mobilisers and healthcare workers.

### Project Aarogyatara has impacted:

- Over 2 lakh individuals screened for eye related ailments.
- Over 1600 camps conducted
- Of the people screened, more than 9900 people were provided with spectacles.
- Conducted over 23,000 cataract surgeries

Speaking about Tata Capital's CSR initiatives, Sridhar Sarathy - Chief Ethics Officer and SVP- L&D, Engagement and CSR said, "We are committed to giving back to the communities we serve. Access to healthcare services is a basic human right, and we are proud to be able to help underprivileged individuals who may not have access to quality eye care. We are expanding this initiative to cover another half a million people in the next 3 years. Our commitment to strengthen availability and accessibility of quality eye care for the local communities will continue to grow."



# Fremantle India becomes country's first sustainability warrior in the television industry through partnership with BAFTA's environmental body Albert

With an aim to become 100% sustainable, India's leading production house strives to recycle and reuse plastic, paper and other waste used in shoot, sets and offices

**O**ver the years, production sets are one of the major cause of carbon emissions harming the environment. While many have tried to change their ways, Fremantle India has gone one step forward and collaborated with Albert, a BAFTA-sponsored non-profit initiative - ensuring that all its film and television production units become eco-friendly and they reach their end goal sooner and more efficiently. Founded in 2011, Albert helps global film and television industries produce media with fewer negative environmental effects that promote a sustainable future.

Through this tie-up, Fremantle India became the first production house in the country to deploy the Albert carbon calculator that tracks emissions caused on a production set and actively helps the screen industry reduce its carbon footprint.


Lack of awareness or concern, improper disposal of waste, use of diesel-powered generators, single use plastic items, overuse of plastic and paper items – have been some of the major causes of pollution in television and film sets. Opera-

tions head Rajkumar Patra shares his experience “In my \_\_ years in this industry, I have worked with different companies and been a part of multiple shoot sets. People were not very aware then, including me, as they are now. Having worked at Fremantle for over a year I am highly impressed, inspired and now proud of the practices we have implemented and the impact we are creating. I urge other companies to follow suit”.

In order to drastically reduce carbon emissions on its sets, Fremantle India has put in place a number of new practices, these include replacing plastic water bottles with personal steel bottles; donating leftover food to underprivileged people; replacing heavy volt lights with LEDs; printing scripts on both sides of paper; rechargeable batteries, recycling and reusing set/production material such as cloth, metal, wood and paper; using eco-friendly makeup products, and proper disposal of dry and wet waste and using reusable or bio-degradable cutlery. Rajkumar Patra adds “Our conventional ways of conducting shoots used to be carbon heavy. But we have imple-

mented small steps in our everyday; be it using digital scripts instead of printing or reducing and segregating waste. Also, by undertaking certain initiatives, like implanting the Albert protocols, we have successfully managed to reduce our carbon footprint substantially. Every step goes a long way, and we are constantly learning, evolving and will be improving our ways with the times, to achieve our sustainability goals for the greater good”.

Most recently, during the on-going production schedule of the singing reality show Indian Idol Season 13, Fremantle India had zero food wastage, 80% reduction of paper napkins and 90% reduction in paper cups. Additionally, the post production facility was fully on renewable energy and also the electricity at contestant hotel was partly powered by solar panels, thereby reducing our carbon footprint. Likewise, for the rap show Hustle 2.0, we drastically reduced waste sent to the landfills; out of almost 2000 kg of waste, less than 1% was sent to landfill. This was after deducting the material sent for recycling, reusing and donations. In addition, on the sets of The Inventor Challenge, instead of using artificial decorative items, real plants were used to create awareness amongst crew.

Furthermore, to offset the carbon emissions, Fremantle India shall contribute towards funding the climate crisis solution projects and planting trees around the world. 



Fashion designers along with Usha Silai School Women walking the ramp

# Usha Silai School women showcase their designs on the ramp at the 5th edition of East India Fashion Week

10 Usha Silai School women mentored by five designers from the region, wowed the audiences with the ensembles they created

**W**omen from the Usha Silai Schools had the audiences enthralled as top models from across the country walked the ramp wearing ensem-

bles they made at the East India Fashion Week (EIFW) in Guwahati. Under the mentorship of designers Nandini Baruah and Meghna Rai Medhi from Assam, Tsering Dolma from Sikkim, Arbin Tonjam from

Manipur, and Escape Engmoia from Mizoram, select women from Usha Silai School put their skills to use and designed and tailored 27 pieces of clothing for the show.

These specially curated ensembles retained the local ethos of the Northeast with a unique take on the traditional art and craft of the region – Baku, the traditional Bhutia dress of Sikkim, traditional cuts and weaves for blazers, blouses, kurtas,





**A model in a traditional Manipuri outfit  
by Arbin Tonjam**



**A model in Sikkim Designer Tsering  
Dolma's design**



**A model posing in Meghna Rai  
Medhi's design**

and straight pants from Manipur, dresses using local weaves, but with a modern take from Assam, and designer wear created from upcycled materials were among the show-stealers of the fashion week.

Hailing from rural areas, the 10 Usha Silai School women selected for this initiative included Durga Rani (Pakyong, Sikkim), Lalita Rai (Agrigoan Village), Dharitri Kalita (Bankakata, Assam), Rinki Das (Silchar, Assam), Salam Thoibi Devi (Moirang Village, Manipur), Elangbam Surbala (Manipur), Pinkumoni Devi (Assam), Pallabi Bora (Assam), Ramngaihpuui (Mizoram) and Lalthianghlimi (Mizoram).

Mary Rupa Tete, Vice President – Usha Silai Schools, Usha International, said, “It is truly humbling and overwhelming to see how far these women have come – hailing from remote villages of North East India, to walking the ramp with designers whom they worked with

to create the collections for the East India Fashion Week. It's events like these that provide a stage for the work we are doing, inspiring us to do even more. This event provided real life professional exposure to these women under the mentorship of designers who are as passionate about designing as they are about preserving the cultural ethos of this region. To witness the energy, excitement, and hard work by these women earn the resounding applause from the crowds declaring it a great success, is a feeling that I will cherish for life. It is through platforms like the East India Fashion Week, that we aim to promote the exceptional work done by our women and create long-term opportunities for them.”

Medha Saikia, Founder & spokesperson for the East India Fashion Week, said, “Having Usha Silai School as partners worked beautifully for us, and to see the absolutely

gorgeous work these women showcased just confirms that they were the right partners for us. Usha has created a platform that is bringing about a transformational change to the lives of rural women by providing them with opportunities to earn sustainable livelihoods and become entrepreneurs in their own right. We congratulate Usha International for creating such a powerful narrative of women empowerment through this initiative.”

The two-day fashion extravaganza saw top models from across the country walk the ramp in an array of stunning designs, created by 25 of Northeast's most renowned fashion designers, each of whom promoted local weaves and weavers in their own unique way. 📌

*For more information on the same, please visit [www.usha.com](http://www.usha.com); [www.ushasilaischool.com](http://www.ushasilaischool.com); [www.ushasew.com](http://www.ushasew.com); [eastindiafashionweek](http://eastindiafashionweek)*



# STATE OF THE CLIMATE: GROWING EL NIÑO THREATENS MORE EXTREME HEAT IN 2023

This year is shaping up to be one of top four warmest years on record – and has a modest chance of being the warmest on record, writes By **Zeke Hausfather**, Carbon Brief

**E**xceptionally warm conditions are being driven by the end of a persistent triple-dip La Niña and a rapid transition into warmer El Niño conditions. Taking the first three months of the year, global surface temperatures so far are tied as the fourth warmest on record, after 2016, 2020 and 2017.

March 2023 was the second warmest since records began in the mid-1800s, with record warm temperatures in parts of central Asia, coastal China, and Japan, as well as South America.

Based on the year-to-date and the current El Niño forecast, Carbon Brief estimates that 2023 is very likely to end up between the warmest year on record and the sixth warmest, with a best estimate of fourth warmest. So early in the year, it is difficult to precisely predict where annual temperatures will end up.

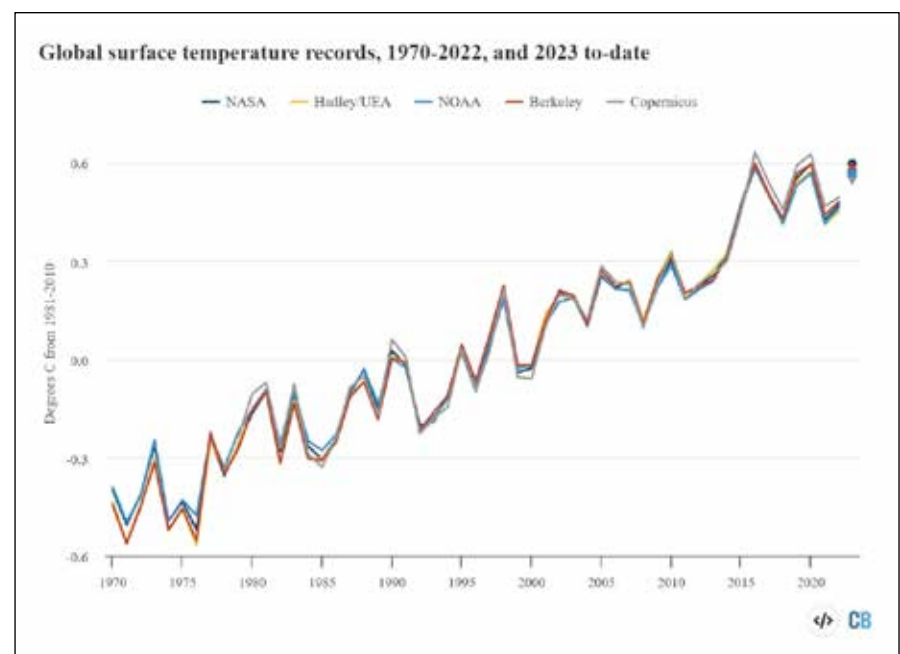
Arctic sea ice extent is currently on the low end of its historical range, while Antarctic sea ice set new all-time low records in the first two months of 2023, with an all-time low summer minimum for the Southern Hemisphere in February 2023.

#### FOURTH WARMEST START TO A YEAR

Global surface temperatures are recorded and reported by a number of different international groups,

including NASA, NOAA, Met Office Hadley Centre/UEA and Berkeley Earth. Copernicus/ECMWF also produces a surface temperature

estimate based on a combination of measurements and a weather model – an approach known as “reanalysis”.



Annual global mean surface temperatures from NASA GISTEMP, NOAA GlobalTemp, Hadley/UEA HadCRUT5, Berkeley Earth, Cowtan and Way and Copernicus/ECMWF (lines), along with 2023 temperatures to-date (January-March, coloured dots). Anomalies plotted with respect to a 1951-2010 baseline. Chart by Carbon Brief.



The chart below compares the annual global surface temperatures from these different groups since 1970 – or 1979 in the case of Copernicus/ECMWF. The coloured lines show the temperature for each year, while the dots on the right-hand side show the year-to-date estimate for January to March 2023. Values are shown relative to a common baseline period – the 1981-2010 average temperature for each series. Surface temperature records have shown around 1C warming since the year 1970, a warming rate of about 0.19C per decade.

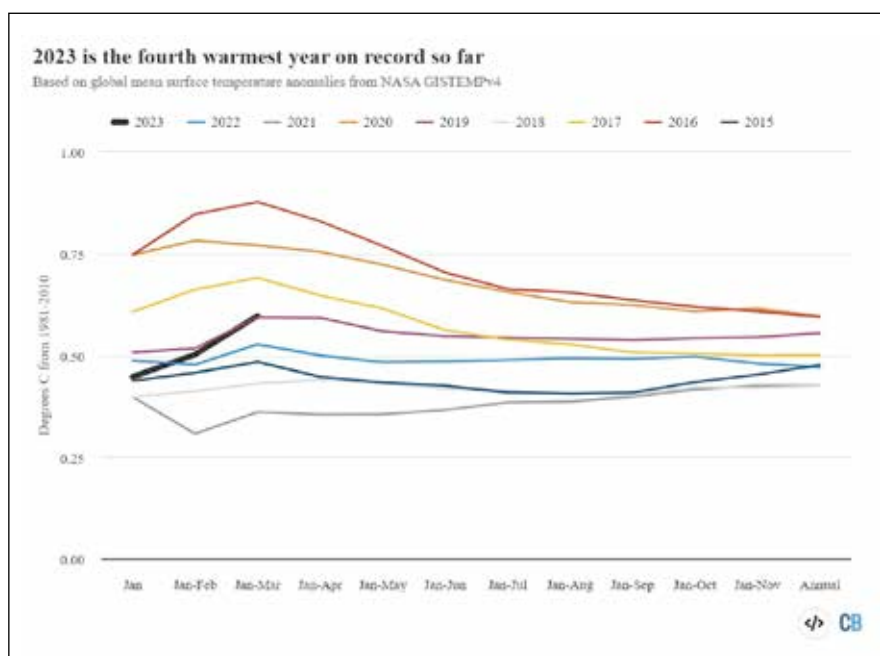
Year-to-date values are only shown for NASA, NOAA, Berkeley, and Copernicus as data for March is not yet available from Hadley/UAE. The year-to-date values will be updated when the data becomes available.

The temperatures in the first three months of 2023 were fairly warm, with year-to-date values in some records (NASA, Berkeley, NOAA) roughly tied with the warmest annual temperature anomaly on record.

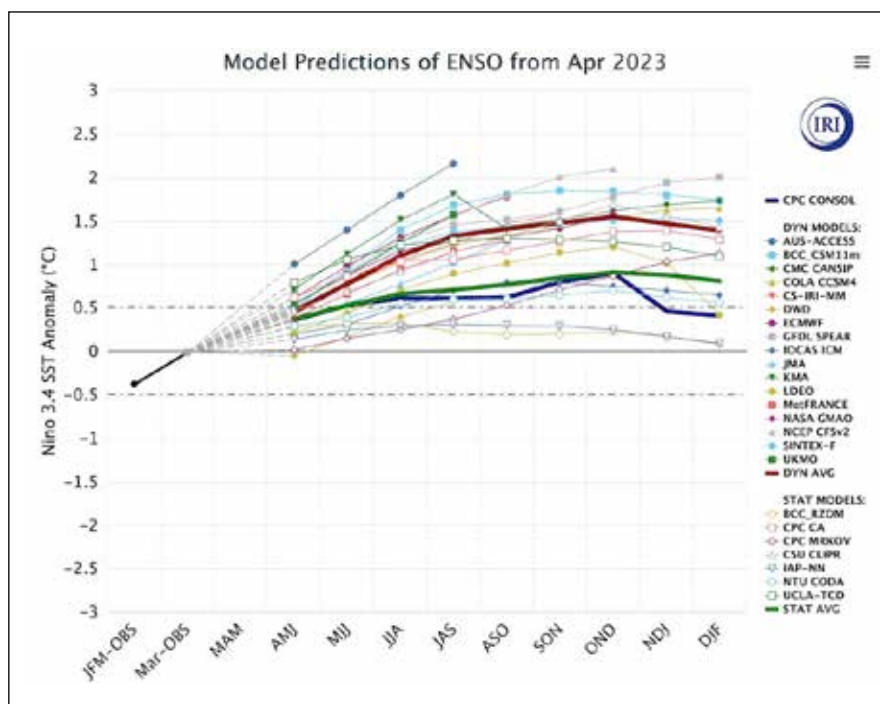
However, higher temperature anomalies tend to occur in the early part of the year, so year-to-date temperatures may be somewhat higher than annual temperatures in some of the records.

The figure below shows how temperatures to-date in 2023 compare to prior years in the NASA dataset. It shows the temperature of the year-to-date for each month of the year, from January through to the full annual average.

Despite a near-record warm March, 2023 is still running behind 2016, 2020 and 2017 in terms of year-to-date temperatures. The winter months were particularly warm in 2016 – 0.89C above the 1981-2010 average in the NASA GISTEMP dataset. The start of 2016 was boosted substantially by an extremely strong El Niño event, whereas early 2023 saw lingering La Niña conditions



Year-to-date temperatures for each month from 2015 to 2023 from NASA GISTEMP. Anomalies plotted with respect to a 1981-2010 baseline. Chart by Carbon Brief using Highcharts.



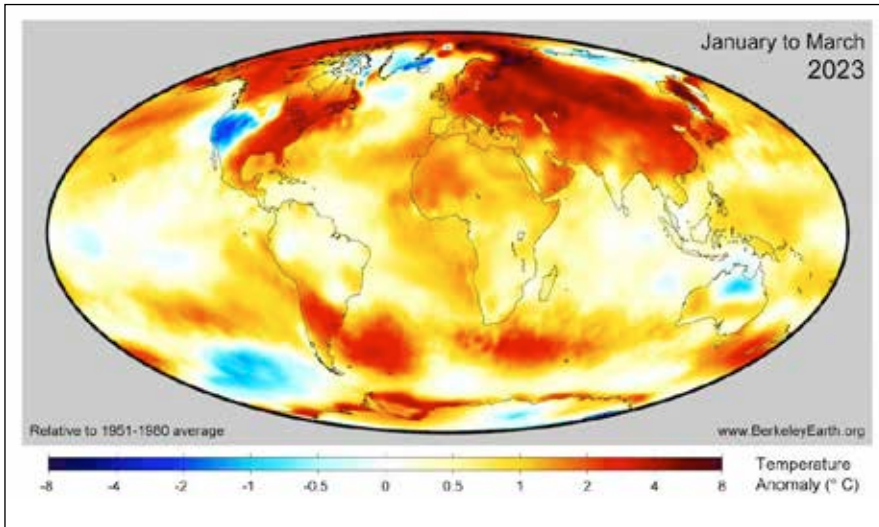
El Niño Southern Oscillation (ENSO) forecast models for three-month periods in the Niño3.4 region (February, March, April - FMA - and so on), taken from the IRI/CPC ENSO forecast.

that only began dissipating in March.

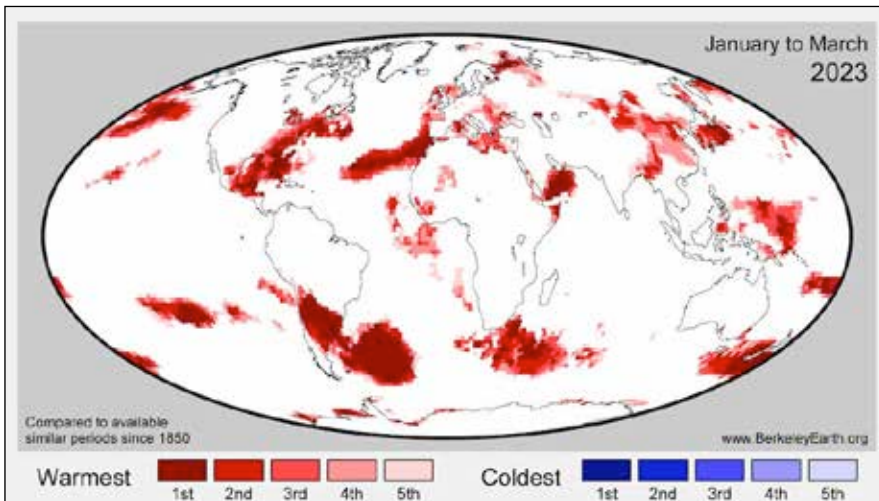
El Niño and La Niña events – collectively referred to as the El Niño Southern Oscillation, or ENSO – are the main driver of year-to-year variation in global surface temperature

on top of the long-term warming trend. ENSO events are characterised by fluctuations in temperature between the ocean and atmosphere in the tropical Pacific, which help to make some years warmer and some cooler.

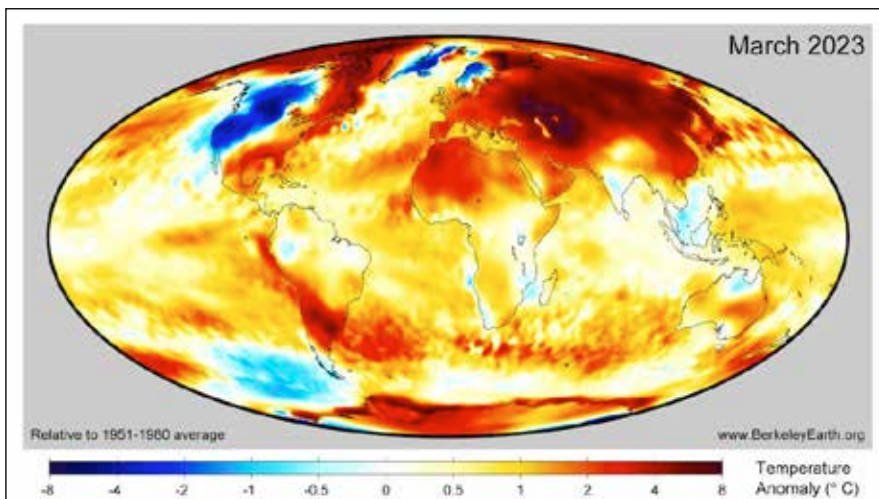




Global surface temperature anomalies for the first three months of 2023 compared to a 1951-1980 baseline period, taken from Berkeley Earth.



Locations setting record warm temperatures in the first three months of 2023 based on data back to 1850, taken from Berkeley Earth.



Global surface temperature anomalies for March 2023 compared to a 1951-1980 baseline period, taken from Berkeley Earth.

Nearly all forecasts for El Niño/La Niña suggest that El Niño conditions will develop by early summer in 2023, with a number of models projecting strong El Niño conditions (if not quite as strong as the super El Niño events experienced in 1998 and 2016).

The figure below shows a range of ENSO forecast models produced by different scientific groups, with the average for each type of model shown by thick red, blue and green lines. Positive values above 0.5C reflect El Niño conditions, while negative values below -0.5 reflect La Niña conditions.

## PATTERNS OF WARMING IN 2023

While global average surface temperature changes are an important indicator of long-term climate change, any month or year will have important regional warm or cool patterns in different parts of the world. The first three months of 2023 saw particularly warm temperatures over eastern Europe and Asia, as well as the eastern US and parts of South America.

The figure below shows the difference between temperatures in the first three months of 2023 and the baseline period of 1951-1980, taken from Berkeley Earth (using their new high-resolution temperature product).

Approximately 4 per cent of the Earth's surface experienced record high temperatures for the first three months of 2023, while virtually nowhere experienced record cold temperatures.

The month of March was particularly warm, clocking in as the second warmest March on record. There were record-breaking warm temperatures in March across parts of central Asia, coastal China, and Japan, as well as South America. Western parts of the US and southwestern Canada saw unusually cold temperatures, with some parts of

coastal California even setting an all-time low temperature record.

## PREDICTING GLOBAL TEMPERATURE IN 2023

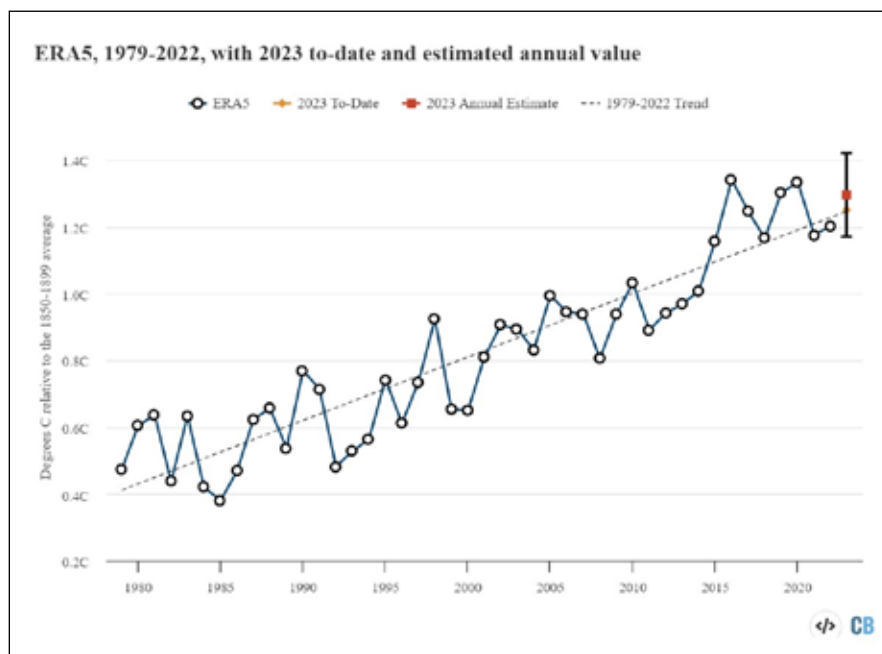
The first three months of 2023 can give some sense of what to expect for the entire year.

By looking at the relationship between the first three months and the annual temperatures for every year since 1970 – as well as ENSO conditions for the first three months of the year and the projected development of El Niño conditions for the remaining nine months – Carbon Brief has created a projection of what the final global average temperature for 2023 will likely turn out to be.

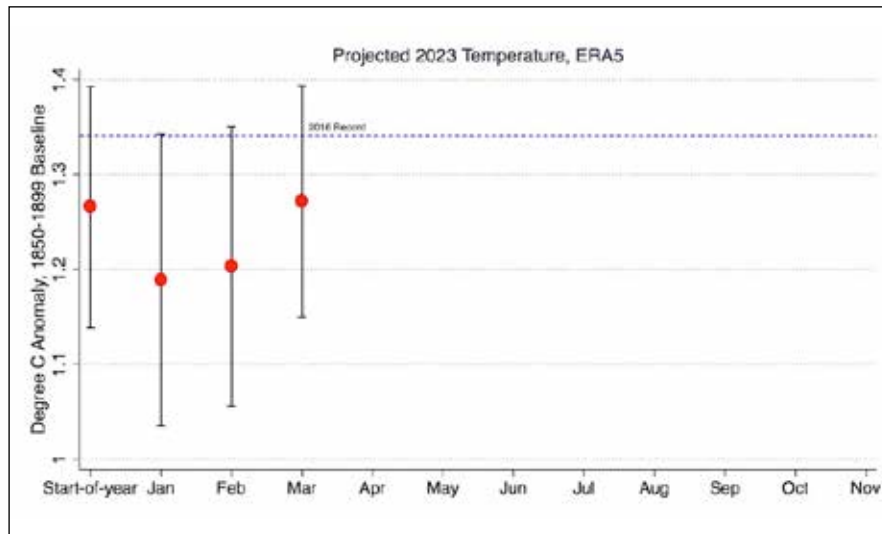
The analysis includes the estimated uncertainty in 2023 outcomes, given that temperatures from only the first quarter of the year are available so far. The chart below shows the expected range of 2023 temperatures using the Copernicus/ECMWF global atmospheric reanalysis product (ERA5) – including a best-estimate (red) and year-to-date value (yellow). Temperatures are shown with respect to the preindustrial baseline period (1850-1899).

Carbon Brief's projection suggests that 2023 has the best chance of ending up as the fourth warmest year on record – and is very likely to be somewhere between the warmest year and sixth warmest year on record. We estimate that there is currently a modest chance (roughly 22 per cent) that 2023 will end up exceeding 2016 as the warmest year on record (though if El Niño conditions continue to develop it is increasingly likely that 2024 will set a new record).

The figure below shows Carbon Brief's estimate of 2023 temperatures using ERA5, both at the beginning of the year and once each month's data has come in. While January and February estimates were a bit lower, the March estimate has increased due to its exceptional warmth and



Annual global average surface temperature anomalies from the Copernicus/ECMWF global atmospheric reanalysis product (ERA5) plotted with respect to a 1850-1899 baseline, with data from HadCRUT5 used to determine values prior to 1979. To-date 2023 values include January-March. Estimated 2023 annual value based on relationship between the January-March temperatures and annual temperatures between 1970 and 2022. Chart by Carbon Brief using Highcharts.



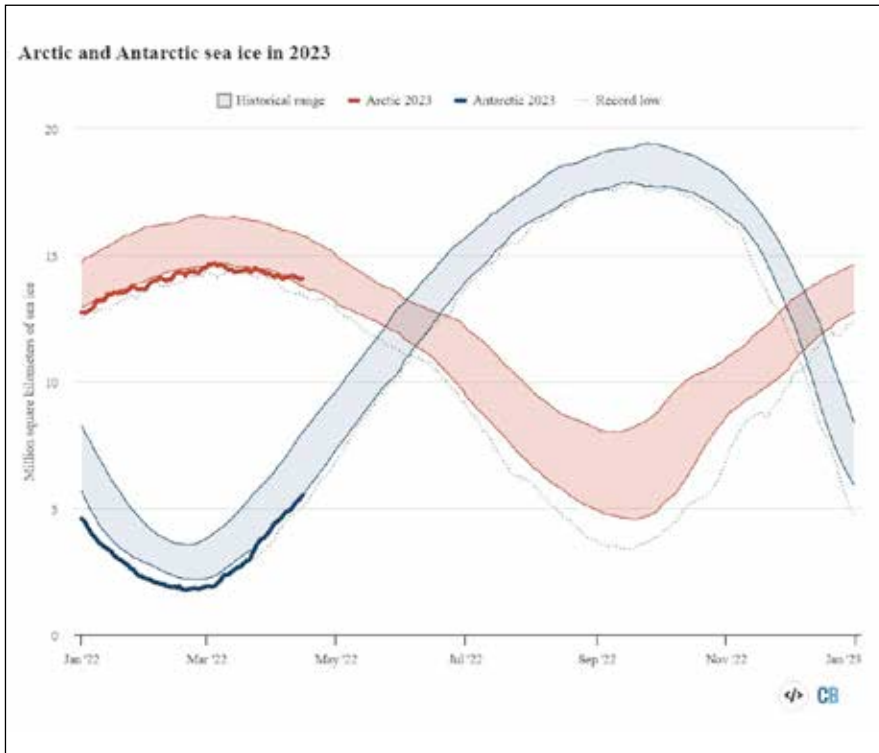
Carbon Brief's projection of global temperatures at the start of the year, and after January, February, and March ERA5 data became available.

the growing consensus that strong El Niño conditions are likely to emerge in the latter half of 2023.

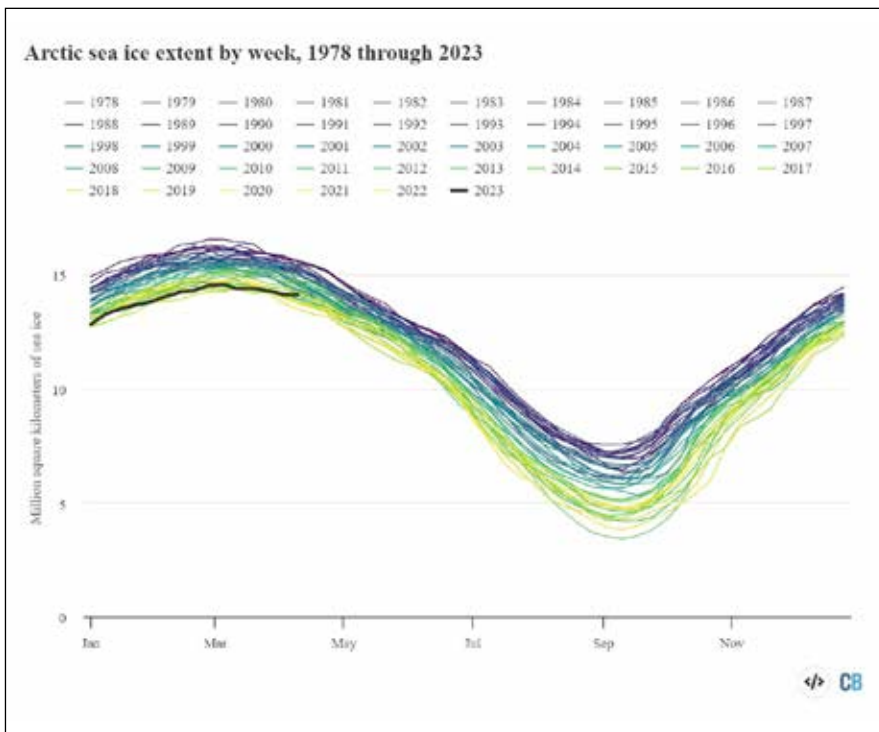
## ANTARCTIC SEA ICE HITS RECORD LOW SUMMER EXTENT

Arctic sea ice extent spent much of early 2023 at the low end of the

historical 1979-2010 range, and set a few new record low values for individual days in February and March. Since northern hemisphere winter conditions remain cold enough to refreeze sea ice, there tends to be less variability in extent year-to-year in the winter than in the summer.



Arctic and Antarctic daily sea ice extent from the US National Snow and Ice Data Center. The bold lines show daily 2023 values, the shaded area indicates the two standard deviation range in historical values between 1979 and 2010. The dotted black lines show the record lows for each pole. Chart by Carbon Brief using Highcharts.



Arctic weekly sea ice extent from the US National Snow and Ice Data Center. Chart by Carbon Brief using Highcharts.


Antarctic sea ice, on the other hand, saw new record low levels for the first two months of the year, as well as the first half of March. Antarctic sea ice set a new all-time southern hemisphere summer minimum of 1.77 square kilometres on 19 February.

The figure below shows both Arctic and Antarctic sea ice extent in 2023 (solid red and blue lines), the historical range in the record between 1979 and 2010 (shaded areas) and the record lows (dotted black line). Unlike global temperature records (which only report monthly averages), sea ice data is collected and updated on a daily basis, allowing sea ice extent to be viewed up to the present.

The figure below shows how Arctic sea ice has evolved over time, with each coloured line representing a different year. There is a clear decline over time, with prior decades showing much higher sea ice extent than more recent decades.

Unlike the Arctic, the long-term trend in sea ice extent in Antarctica is less clear. There is an active debate in the community about the relative role of climate change versus natural variability in the record lows experienced over the past two years, though it is clear that warming is driving at least some of the recent decline.

With the majority of the year still to go, a warm start and an El Niño gearing up in the Pacific look set to put 2023 among the top four hottest years on record, according to Carbon Brief's analysis.

Depending on how things shape up for the remaining nine months, a new record hot year is not off the table. 

*This story was published with permission from Carbon Brief.*

(SOURCE: <https://www.eco-business.com/news/state-of-the-climate-growing-el-nino-threatens-more-extreme-heat-in-2023/>)





A flock of jungle roosters have been recruited to provide on-site security.

Image: Kate Pedley/Flickr

# Singapore media company pioneers 'office in nature' concept, relocates staff to the jungle

A Singapore-headquartered media company is relocating its offices in India, China, Hong Kong, Malaysia and the Philippines to forested areas to embed its journalists in the ecosystems it reports on, writes **Robin Hicks** and **Sheri Goh**

**E**co-Business, Asia Pacific's largest media and intelligence organisation dedicated to sustainable development and environmental, social and governance (ESG) performance, will be moving its offices to jungle locations around the region as it looks to pioneer a new "office in nature" concept.

Its headquarters in Singapore and satellite operations in China, India, Hong Kong, Malaysia and the Philippines will be upping sticks to "regenerative work spaces" in the jungle, where office workers will share their leafy work space with wild pigs, monkeys, and pangolins.

No cubicles, no air conditioning, no water cooler, and no walls, the office-in-nature concept was borne out of the idea of "embedded journalism" that emerged during discussions about reporting from nature's frontlines.

"Our journalists must be in nature to report on nature," said Ee Bee, the

company's newly-appointed sustainability consultant, who added that moving to the jungle might help the company get to the finish line for B Corp status, a certification process that has taken some time.

"We decided to take our advocacy for sustainability to the next level and into our day-to-day office lives," she said.

### Cycle to work

Eco-Business's offices-in-nature will run entirely on clean energy, powered by the staff themselves.

Rostered staff will ride spin bicycles hooked up to electrical generators that provide most of the company's energy needs.

Employees who spin the most on any given day receive prizes of insect-based energy bars, seaweed underwear and group hugs. Disciplinary matters will be settled by additional spin shifts.

Eco-Business' new office in Singapore from 1 April will be located in a forested area off North Buona Vista Road, a short walk from the subway station.

"We did not want to fell any forest for our new office, so we will be using an existing clearing and the nearby trees as natural furniture for our employees," said Ee. "It is an open office concept with no assigned seating – employees will be hot-desking depending on what they are currently working on."

Employees can choose to use the trees as standing desks, or sit on existing tree branches or the ground if they feel more comfortable.

"The office will be open-air to take advantage of the wind and air circulation, which is the most sustainable of all," Ee explained.

### Dress code: as nature intended

"We are aware that our staff spend a considerable amount of water



Stationary bicycles fitted with dynamos can be used to generate electricity without fuels. Image: Midjourney.



The fashion industry is often linked to issues such as excessive water use and labour exploitation. Image: Midjourney.

and energy on doing their laundry and ironing their clothes. Also, the textile industry is highly pollutive, while fast fashion leads to a colossal amount of waste and often have exploitative labour practices, not to mention the amount of water that's wasted in laundering office wear and energy while ironing it," said Ee.

"In our new office, clothing will be optional, but only in the name of environmentalism. Of course, this dress code will not be applied to cli-

ents or those who are visiting the office – unless requested."

"We hope that this new relaxed dress code will help staff who are concerned about their rising utilities costs to be assured that coming into the office will not add to their living expenses."

Eco-Business will also be introducing a clothing rewear policy, where staff are encouraged to wear the same set of clothes for at least three days a week, to save on water.

### Foraging for lunch

Staff will be given a two-hour lunch break so that they can forage in the jungle for food to eat.

Company cooking stoves will be powered by biogas sourced from the staff toilets, which are made up of a network of trenches dug by staff themselves.

Leftovers from lunch will be upcycled into material to make shoes for export to Indonesia in partnership with Cow Chemical.

"We will be organising a training session with a certified horticulturist so that staff can learn to recognise the wild plants which are safe to eat," assured Ee. "The jungle around the office is also known to have wild durian trees, and a number of our staff are durian lovers who are keen to harvest their own."

"Our staff are thrilled by our new green office initiatives and are looking forward to our move on 1 April. The leadership team, too, is excited by this new era in Eco-Business' journey, and hope that we can pioneer a way forward for offices-in-nature around the region."

Security will be provided by a flock of staff jungle roosters. 🐓

(Source: <https://www.eco-business.com/news/singapore-media-company-pioneers-office-in-nature-concept-relocates-staff-to-the-jungle/>)





# The World Bank in a new world

The World Bank is uniquely equipped to mobilise the financing needed to tackle global poverty and global warming, but efforts to mitigate climate change must not come at the expense of development. To address the root causes of poverty and economic slowdown, the Bank must undertake reforms in four areas.

**Wempi Saputra, Erivaldo Alfredo Gomes and Abdoul Salam Bello** throw light on the issue.

**T**he Spring Meetings of the World Bank Group (WBG) and the International Monetary Fund, which kicked off on 10 April in Washington, provide an opportunity to reflect on the Bank's ongoing evolution. As development confronts both longstanding and

emerging challenges, the Bank needs to reform itself in ways that enable it to provide more ambitious solutions.

Over the past half-century, the WBG has worked with developing countries to help hundreds of millions of people rise out of poverty. But global progress ground to a halt in 2020, after five years of slowing

gains, as the COVID-19 pandemic pushed 70 million people into extreme poverty. If left unchecked, climate change could do the same to 132 million more by 2030. According to WBG estimates, the number of people living in extreme poverty (on less than US\$2.15 per day) will increase to 600 million by 2030, and more than three billion people will live on less than US\$6.85 per day.

The WBG is uniquely equipped to mobilise the financing needed to address these global challenges. But the Bank must ensure that its ambitions, strategies, and financing mechanisms align with developing countries' needs and realities. While we are pleased with the Bank's progress on internal reforms, at least four areas require more work before its annual meetings in October.

First, the WBG must reaffirm its commitment to promoting sustainable, inclusive, and resilient economic growth. Boosting growth remains the best way to create quality jobs and opportunities and achieve the Bank's twin goals of ending extreme poverty and fostering shared prosperity. But, as the Bank's own research finds, "nearly all the economic forces that powered progress and prosperity over the last three decades are fading." With global growth slowing, the WBG now estimates that the international community is unlikely to meet the goal of ending extreme poverty by 2030.

Addressing the root causes of poverty and economic slowdown would require adopting new instruments and ways of working, increasing staff capacity, and setting targets that would enable the Bank to play a greater role in fostering a healthy business environment and unleashing private investment. This would require a less risk-averse approach and improved coordination with the WBG's private-sector arms. It also means listening carefully to Global South members' needs and concerns when defining



and selecting criteria for the “global challenges” the Bank will focus on over the next decade.

Second, the WBG must ensure that low-income countries can exercise more agency in shaping the development agenda. A key principle underlying the WBG’s operating model is country-driven engagement: the borrowing government leads in coordinating and monitoring its own portfolio. This client-centered model has helped ensure that the Bank’s strategies for borrowing countries align with national priorities and have the political support they need to sustain investments over time.

One proposal currently being considered is to create stronger incentives for countries to invest in global public goods, such as reducing greenhouse-gas emissions. While this is a positive step, the Bank must refrain from compromising countries’ “ownership” of policies by imposing excessive or burdensome conditions on them. Moreover, the Bank must ensure that concessional loans or grants aimed at encouraging such investment do not lead to higher borrowing costs or trade-offs between middle-income countries and low-income countries. Nor should they come at the expense of official development assistance (ODA). If the goal is to promote investments that benefit the international community, then the international community – particularly advanced economies – should bear the costs.

Third, to achieve the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, WBG shareholders must do more to increase the Bank’s financial capacity. To that end, shareholding governments and other partners must meet their existing commitments, such as developed countries’ pledge to provide 100 billion per year for climate-mitigation and -adaptation efforts, private-sector commitments to mobilise US\$1

trillion for climate action, and the G7’s commitment to raising US\$600 billion for global infrastructure investments.


But more is needed. For example, early estimates suggest that adjusting the WBG’s capital-adequacy framework could make available US\$50-200 billion over the next decade. While some financial innovations have shown promise, it is important to consider their full effects. For example, raising hybrid capital could increase the Bank’s borrowing costs at a time when clients are facing historically high interest rates and unsustainable debt burdens.

A capital increase could be one way to leverage available resources and the clearest sign of strong shareholder support. But this must be accompanied by an overhaul of the Bank’s cost pass-through model to enable it to make greater use of low-interest, long-term debt instruments, thereby ensuring that countries can tackle development challenges without incurring unsustainable debt. The need for more ambitious ODA replenishments over the coming years must be met.

Lastly, reducing poverty would be a daunting (perhaps even impossible) task without access to clean,

affordable, and reliable energy sources, as well as emissions-generating investments in manufacturing and transportation. Letting the climate effort overshadow the World Bank’s broader objectives would be a grave injustice – and might not be the most efficient strategy. If, say, Sub-Saharan Africa (excluding South Africa) were to triple its electricity consumption overnight by relying on natural gas to power the increased demand, it would add only 0.6 per cent to global carbon emissions.

Attempting to tackle poverty and climate change simultaneously could lead some governments to make costly and counterproductive decisions. Instead, it would be more efficient – and fairer – for WBG shareholders to find the right balance between focusing on reducing emissions in upper-middle and high-income countries and focusing on adaptation in order to help vulnerable communities and countries build climate resilience.

The Global North and South have a historic opportunity to reinvigorate the multilateral development-bank system. Building on the World Bank’s legacy of innovation and progress is the best way to advance the goal of a more sustainable, resilient, and inclusive world. 

**To achieve the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, WBG shareholders must do more to increase the Bank’s financial capacity.**

*The authors’ views are their own and do not necessarily reflect those of the World Bank Group or its member countries.*

*Wempi Saputra is Executive Director of the World Bank Group of Southeast Asia. Erivaldo Alfredo Gomes is Executive Director of the World Bank Group representing Brazil, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Haiti, Panama, the Philippines, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago. Abdoul Salam Bello is Executive Director of the Africa Group II on the World Bank Group Board of Directors representing 23 African countries. Copyright: Project Syndicate, 2023.*

*[www.project-syndicate.org](http://www.project-syndicate.org)*

*(Source: <https://www.eco-business.com/opinion/the-world-bank-in-a-new-world/>)*

# After four wet years, complacency and El Niño risk Southeast Asia's haze preparedness as fires choke northern nations

The likely return of the El Niño weather phenomenon risks a repeat of something like the great haze of 2015, when fires from burning peatlands choked Southeast Asia. Experts say the regional bloc, which is already suffocating in the north, needs to prepare itself for another bad haze outbreak, write **Robin Hicks**



Haze lingers over farmland in northern Thailand, where seasonal crop burning has been exacerbated by high temperatures and dry weather. Image: Leif Alnes/Flickr

**F**or the past four years, Southeast Asia has largely escaped the thick bouts of smoke that enshroud much of the region known as “the haze”. But the likely return of the El Niño dry weather phenomenon is testing the fire preparedness of the regional bloc as northern Asean experiences some of the worst air pollution of the last decade.

Smoggy skies in northern Thailand have led to levels of PM2.5 – fine particle air pollution that penetrates deep into the lungs – rocket to 22 times the recommended limit by the World Health Organisation – and hospitalised nearly 2 million people with respiratory illnesses since the start of the year.

Laos, southern Myanmar, and northern Vietnam have experienced similarly poor air quality. This week, Luang Prabang, Yangon and Hanoi ranked among the cities with the world’s worst air pollution, according to IQAir, a community air pollution monitoring firm.

Seasonal agricultural waste burning has shouldered some of the responsibility for northern Asean’s smog.

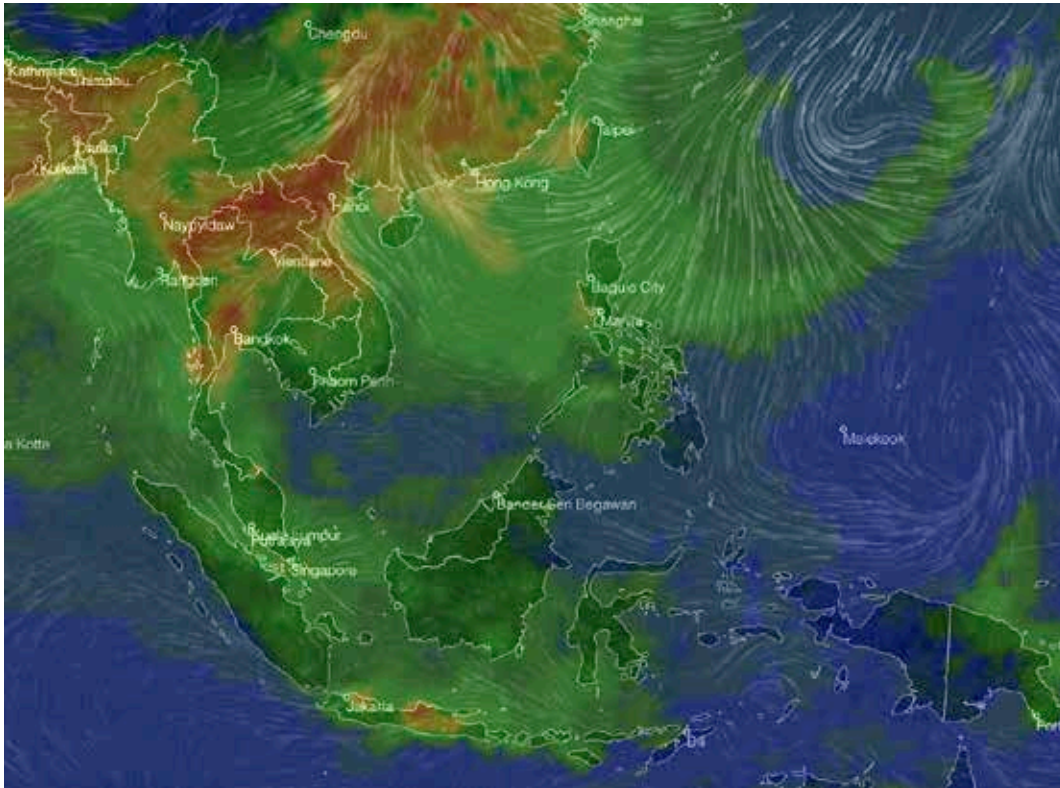
“It is too early to blame a particular company or industry [for the haze in northern Asean], but previous episodes have been linked to the expansion of maize contract farming to supply regional and global livestock feed supply chains,” said Faizal Parish, director of Kuala

Lumpur-based nonprofit Global Environment Centre (GEC).

“There is also the burning of rice straw and other agriculture residuals [that contributes to the haze],” he told Eco-Business.

Now, scientists worry that the likely return of El Niño could mean smoky skies in the rest of the region as the dry season approaches.

The last few years have seen an unusual run of consecutive La Niña events, meaning wet weather in much of the region. But now the weather pattern could switch to El Niño conditions, said Professor Ben Horton, director of the Earth Observatory of Singapore, a unit of Nanyang Technological University that monitors climate change.



The red areas across northern Thailand, southern Myanmar, Laos and northern Vietnam indicate unhealthy air quality. Green areas in Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and most of Indonesia indicate better air quality.

Image: IQAir Earth

El Niño and La Niña are opposite phases of the El Niño Southern Oscillation (ENSO), a change in temperature between the ocean and the atmosphere over the east-central Tropical Pacific. El Niño is a warm phase, La Niña is a cold phase.

The last El Niño spell, in 2016, exacerbated forest fires in Southeast Asia, mainly on Indonesian peatlands drained for palm oil and pulp and paper production, which killed an estimated 100,000 people prematurely from smoke inhalation and cost US\$35 billion to bring under control.

Horton said projections that the region is heading into an El Niño are “not concrete enough yet”.

However, a returning El Niño could result in unprecedented heatwaves, making 2023 hotter than 2022, Horton projected. Such heatwaves could result in food and water insecurity and poverty for millions of people, he noted.

### Fire ready?

Faizal Parish, director of Kuala

Lumpur-based nonprofit Global Environment Centre (GEC), said that the intensity of the fires and haze this year will depend on the severity of the drought as well as fire prevention measures.

He said there was a risk that some Asean countries have become “complacent” after successive wet years.

However, he said Indonesia should be better prepared than in 2015, after which the government agencies responsible for fire and peatland management were strengthened and efforts were taken to prevent fires from breaking out in vulnerable areas.

Many of the fires were caused deliberately by farmers, as burning the land is a cheaper way of clearing it for planting than using machinery. Peatlands drained to grow crops by industrial plantation companies are vulnerable to fire and will continue to burn long after they catch fire, as the carbon-rich soil burns underground.

“I believe that Indonesia is preparing well for El Niño. However for

other Asean member states, I am not sure as budgets and capacity for fire prevention are still very limited in other countries as evidenced by the massive fires and haze in northern Asean,” Parish said.

Parish said his organisation is not expecting a drought and haze as severe as 2015, adding that such phenomena are hard to predict.

GEC is helping the Asean secretariat develop an investment framework for haze-free sustainable land management intended to be completed by September.

In February, Indonesian officials said there was a 50 per cent chance of an El Niño event this year and warned farmers and plantation firms to be on guard. Plantation firms have reportedly spent millions on fire prevention and suppression since the 2015 haze outbreak.

Indonesia has suffered particularly severe haze outbreaks that have affected the rest of the region, including neighbouring Malaysia and Singapore, in 1997, 2015 and 2019. 📍





# Southeast Asia must retire 5.5GW of coal plants per year to meet climate goals

Indonesia, Vietnam and the Philippines have cancelled almost 13GW of coal projects in 2022, but this is far from what is needed to phase out the fossil fuel over the next two decades, a new report from Global Energy Monitor has revealed, according to **Hannah Alcoseba Fernandez**

**S**outheast Asia must retire more than five gigawatts (GW) of coal plants per year, enough to light up around four million homes, over the next two decades to phase out the fossil fuel in the region, according to the latest report from a non-governmental organisation which monitors fossil fuel infrastructure globally.

Indonesia, Malaysia, Vietnam and the Philippines—the top coal-consuming countries in the bloc—are cumulatively operating about 90GW of coal power, despite cancelling 12.7GW of proposed projects in 2022, revealed a study released on Thursday by the Global Energy Monitor (GEM), a San Francisco-based non-profit that monitors fossil fuel and renewable energy projects

worldwide. This figure is conservative, as it ignores coal capacity under construction and likely to come online in the next few years (25.6GW) and coal capacity that is still under active consideration (10.3GW), said Flora Champenois, the report's lead author and project manager for GEM's Global Coal Plant Tracker.

To date, less than 1GW of coal capacity has been retired in the region since the year 2000 at a handful of units in Thailand (Mae Moh) and the Philippines (Naga and Toledo City). So an average of 5.5 GW of capacity retired by year will require a “dramatic increase” from the region's historic closure rate, Champenois told Eco-Business. “The typical useful life of coal-fired

power plant equipment is around 40 years, and many of Southeast Asia's plants are brand new, so a 2040 coal exit translates to a transition at record speed and brings up important equity considerations," said Champenois.

"The international community must continue to support the region in moving away from coal through provision of public and private clean energy finance, support to develop flexible grid infrastructure, and technical and capacity assistance to bolster regulatory and policy frameworks that accelerate the transition from coal to clean."

Indonesia's operating coal capacity increased three per cent to 40.6 GW in 2022, and had 18.8GW of coal power under construction at the end of the year—an amount exceeding all other countries globally except China and India.

Even with the Just Energy Transition Partnership (JETP) agreement aimed to catalyse the country's goal of doubling its renewable energy sources, the scheme has put a moratorium only on "new" coal power generation, but allows exemptions for "captive coal plants" which provide electricity for power-intensive industries like nickel ore production, aluminum smelters, steel and chemical plants.

Announced at the G20 summit in Bali in November last year, JETP is a funding mechanism where several G7 member countries will provide funds amounting to US\$20 billion for Indonesia's energy transition.

Industrial parks at three of Indonesia's nickel mining hotspots – Obi Island, Morowali and Weda Bay – aim to install 14 coal power plants equivalent to 12,579 megawatts, according to GEM data.

"The exceptions made for Indonesia's new coal-reliant industrial parks could mean carbon lock-in for the country's industrial sector at a time when a coal phase out is a priority for its power sector," said

Champenois. "It is time for Indonesia to finalise and implement a bold no-new-coal plan to ensure energy and economic development plans are in line with its climate commitments," she added.

In the Philippines, coal capacity in pre-construction declined from 10.1GW in 2019 to 1.6GW in 2022, with estimated completion dates for the remaining capacity steadily slipping as conglomerates like Ayala Corp have been selling off its coal assets, along with government initiatives to replace coal with nuclear energy. However, the country also added 1.3GW of coal capacity, ranking it sixth in the world in terms of new coal capacity last year. The contentious Mariveles (600MW) and Concepcion (135MW) plants are still being built, for a total of 0.7GW coal power underconstruction, along with an existing coal fleet equivalent to 11.9GW.

Like Indonesia, Vietnam struck a JETP deal, where it would receive US\$15.5 billion to cap its greenhouse gas emissions. One of the requirements was to install less than 6GW of additional coal capacity, down from over 12GW previously targeted as the country switched to gas and adding more renewables.

Five power stations, including the controversial Vung Ang 2 and Van Phong projects, equivalent to the entire 6GW new coal capacity target are already under construction. If they go into operation, the remaining capacity must be cancelled to align with the JETP agreement. "The country's 2050 net-zero target is achievable, but it requires thoughtful deployment of JETP funds and an upgrade to the country's transmission grid to accommodate its rapidly-growing renewables sector," read the study.

### **World's coal capacity soars despite decarbonisation pledges**

The world's capacity to burn coal for

power soared in 2022 despite global promises to curb the biggest source of man-made greenhouse gas emissions, the report added.

The global coal fleet grew by 19.5GW last year, with more than half of all newly commissioned coal projects found in China. The increase comes at a time when the world needs to retire its coal fleet about five times faster to meet climate goals, noted the study. World leaders, including China, agreed to phase down the use of coal to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius at the United Nations climate summit in 2021.

China added 26.8GW while India put in about 3.5GW of new coal power capacity to their electricity grids in 2022. China also gave clearance for nearly 100GW of new coal power projects with construction likely to begin this year.

After the European Union retired a record high of 14.6GW of coal capacity in 2021, the gas crisis and Russia's invasion of Ukraine prompted a slowdown in coal retirements, with only 2.2GW retired in the last year.

Meanwhile, the United States led coal retirements with 13.5GW of coal power no longer operating, along with those of Germany and Australia.

"The more new coal projects come online, the steeper the cuts and commitments need to be in the future," said Champenois. "At this rate, the transition away from existing and new coal isn't happening fast enough to avoid climate chaos. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and the United Nations have both renewed the marching order to wind down coal power globally in what may be our last chance to avoid the worst of a warming planet's harms." ■

(Source: <https://www.eco-business.com/news/southeast-asia-must-retire-55gw-of-coal-plants-per-year-to-meet-climate-goals/>)





Major hydroelectric facilities being built across other Himalayan areas and regions of India have sparked huge protests from residents due to the environmental and social impacts.

Image: sandeepachetan, CC BY-SA 3.0, via Flickr.

# How one Indian village is lighting the way in green energy drive

A pumped hydro storage project (PSP) in Hengbung village in Manipur state is the first in India to power the tech with solar pumps.

**T**ucked away in the Himalayan foothills of northeast India and frequently battered by strong winds and landslides, the isolated village of Hengbung is well-accustomed to prolonged power cuts.

But the village's challenging terrain - it is mountainous, hard to reach, and criss-crossed by streams - is now proving an opportunity to ensure reliable electricity for

the community. A pumped-storage hydropower system fitted with solar-powered pumps started operating in the village last July - the first such project in India to integrate hydro with solar.

Built on a stream, the facility features two interconnected reservoirs and essentially acts as a giant water battery, which stores renewable power for release later during grid outages or when demand is higher. At least 350 people in Hengbung -

located in Manipur state - now have consistent lighting in their homes and streets as a result of the system, said the Foundation for Environment and Economic Development Services (FEEDS), an NGO involved in the initiative.

"The project has made a sea change in the lives of our villagers by fighting out darkness while keeping the environment clean," said FEEDS founder, Haokholet Kipgen, who is a Hengbung resident and the wider area's local political representative.

The project - a collaboration between FEEDS, the NB Institute for Rural Technology (NBIRT) and Visva-Bharati University, with central government funding of 29 million rupees (US\$353,195) - is part of a drive to boost India's renewable energy capacity.

One of the top global emitters of greenhouse gases, India wants to increase its renewable generation to 500 gigawatts (GW) by 2030, from an output of about 120 GW, government data shows.

Hydropower has been earmarked as a key part of this, as it can provide continuous power when other green power sources - such as solar and wind - are limited by poor weather conditions. But as renewable energy generation grows, particularly from solar power, energy storage is also needed to ensure the nation's grid remains stable around-the-clock and outages are avoided.

India's total operational battery storage capacity is about 50 megawatt hours (MWh), according to the India Energy Storage Alliance (IESA). A recent study by the Council on Energy, Environment and Water (CEEW) estimated that the country's need would be 327 gigawatt hours (GWh) by 2030.

Energy experts say that pumped-hydro storage projects (PSP) could be a key solution, and India's power ministry recently published draft guidelines to promote the technology.



Currently, there are eight operational PSPs in India with about 4.7 GW capacity overall, most drawing their main operating power from the national grid. But India's government has identified about 120 sites for the technology, with the total storage potential of 103 GW.

Nine further PSPs have been commissioned, with three now under construction, and energy analysts said private power firms are now looking to combining hydropower with clean energy, following the example of the landmark system in Hengbung. "Such projects show the way in transitioning to a sustainable energy future by integrating renewable energy with hydroelectric power and storage," said Santi Pada Gon Chaudhuri, NBIRT's founder and an energy advisor to the central government.

### India promotes pumped hydro storage

The PSP in Hengbung has two interconnected reservoirs with a total capacity of 1.9 million litres of water, equivalent to about three-quarters of an Olympic swimming pool. During power outages - which are often caused by snapped transmission wires or transformer breakdowns during monsoon rains and in winter - the upper reservoir releases stored stream water to operate a turbine, feeding green power to the grid. That released water then accumulates in the lower reservoir, until it is later pumped back upstream, using solar power, to make it available for power generation again.

During monsoons, when there is plenty of stream water to drive the turbine and restock the upper reservoir, excess solar power is fed into the national grid.

Energy experts said PSPs have a longer lifespan, lasting for at least six decades, than lithium-ion or lead-acid batteries. "Pumped water storage systems can be a dependable option ... especially when renew-



**Such projects show the way in transitioning to a sustainable energy future by integrating renewable energy with hydroelectric power and storage.**

**-SANTI PADA GON CHAUDHURI**

Founder, NB Institute for Rural Technology

able sources such as the sun or the wind may not be available to match the electricity demand," said Disha Agarwal, senior programme lead at CEEW, a think-tank.

Major hydroelectric facilities being built across other Himalayan areas and regions of India have sparked huge protests from residents due to the environmental and social impacts.

Yet Arun Kumar, a professor of hydro and renewable energy at the Indian Institute of Technology Roorkee (IITR), said PSPs require far less space than big hydro plants and tend to be located away from rivers and communities or settlements.

Nevertheless, he acknowledged that PSPs faced challenges including maintaining required water levels, getting land clearances and attracting investment.

The power ministry's draft guidelines on PSPs say Indian states should consider concessions, subsidies and tax relief for such projects, and call for the use of climate finance options including sovereign green bonds.

Kumar said his team of researchers reviewed more than 50

PSPs in different stages of development, and found that their average cost per kilowatt unit stored was about 3 rupees (US\$0.04) - around half that of other storage options.

Although the systems need capital investment of between 50-60 million rupees (US\$608,000-730,000) per MW of capacity, he said they are cost-effective storage solutions in the long run.


### Sustainable energy transition

The Hengbung project has lit up the homes of between 350-400 people so far and powered 84 street lights in the village. The next phase aims to cover a further 1,100 inhabitants.

Residents said power supplies are now far more stable than in previous years when bad weather and landslides led to power cuts, with repairs taking days to carry out in the village. FEEDS said it has trained local young people to maintain the system, and pays villagers to do repairs when problems arise.

"The system is in our hands now; we can run and maintain it ourselves," said Romi Rai, a 32-year-old who makes a living farming poultry.

Rai and his wife Jeena said the system had improved their family life by giving her light to do stitching and household chores more hours of the day, and helping their 6-year-old son do his homework without worrying about the lights going out. The couple said they are also proud their community is providing an example for the rest of the nation.

"We are happy to be a part of the country's green energy drive, even from our remote village," Rai said. 

*This story was published with permission from Thomson Reuters Foundation, the charitable arm of Thomson Reuters, that covers humanitarian news, climate change, resilience, women's rights, trafficking and property rights. Visit <https://www.context.news/>. (Source: <https://www.eco-business.com/news/how-one-indian-village-is-lighting-the-way-in-green-energy-drive/>)*



Bangladesh's garment factories have long been known for producing low-cost garments in often harsh working conditions, but international pressure for more green and sustainable clothing production is starting to change that.

*Image: International Labour Organization ILO, CC BY-SA 3.0, via Flickr.*

# As buyers demand it, Bangladesh garment factories go green

A decade after the deadly Rana Plaza disaster, Bangladesh is home to nine of the world's top 10 sustainable garment factories.

**W**hen Shefali Akter first sought a job at a garment factory near Bangladesh's capital, the crowding, heavy workload and poor salary led the 19-year-old to resign after a year and return to her rural home in northern Bangladesh.

But when she came back to the garment factory region west of Dhaka with her new husband a few years later, she found conditions at some factories had dramati-

cally changed for the better. At the Snowtex Group plant where the 26-year-old now works, she earns 13,500 taka (US\$1,350) a month, gets extra pay for overtime, a nutritious free lunch and a day off each week. The well-ventilated factory - along with a sister facility nearby - has seen solar panels installed, cutting energy costs by half. Rainwater storage facilities and measures to cut waste have slashed water consumption by 30 per cent, factory officials say.

The plant's grounds, heavily planted with trees, also have their own vegetable gardens, offering employees the chance to buy inexpensive organic tomatoes, cabbage, cauliflower and red amaranth.

Bangladesh's garment factories have long been known for producing low-cost garments in often harsh working conditions, but international pressure for more green and sustainable clothing production is starting to change that.

Bangladesh now has 186 factories certified as green by the U.S. Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) standard, up from three in 2014.

Of those, 62 have earned a platinum rating, 110 a gold rating and 10 a silver rating, for progress toward lowering carbon emissions, water and energy use, and waste, and making transport and materials more sustainable, according to the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA).

Points are also awarded for improvements in worker health and the quality of indoor work environments. Business analysts say that after the collapse of the Rana Plaza garment factory, which killed more than 1,130 people in 2013, factory owners facing foreign and domestic criticism have stepped up efforts to provide a safer working environment. As part of that push, some have also become interested in creating more environmentally friendly factories - a shift that is spreading, particularly as international buyers trying to meet their own green commitments seek out more climate-friendly factories. Today, Bangladesh has the highest number of eco-friendly factories among the world's garment-exporting countries, according to the BGMEA.

## Going green

At Snowtex Group's pair of LEED-platinum-certified factories about 25 km west of Dhaka, workers now enjoy grounds set with a water-storing pond, nutritionist-approved free lunches, salaries paid online and well-ventilated factory floors.

"We ensure the safety and security of workers," said S.M. Khaled, managing director of the firm, which sells to brands such as Colombia, Decathlon and C&A and has 19,000 workers and an annual turnover of US\$250 million.

Khaled said workers, through an app, can message management if they face problems and "we investigate the issue with the highest priority". While greener factories help the environment, he noted, the company has also found they save

money, with energy use 50 per cent lower compared to more traditional factories Snowtex Group owns.

Khaled said solar panels on the factories can generate 25 megawatts of energy a month, providing about 10 per cent of energy needed to run the facilities. Another 86 per cent of power for the Snowtex plants is bought from other solar providers, with just 4 per cent coming from fossil fuels such as diesel, he said.

Building green factories is 30-35 per cent costlier than building a traditional factory, he noted - but utilities are then cheaper each year and buyers easier to line up. Other garment factory owners are also making changes.

Fazlul Haque's Plummy Fashions plant south of Dhaka, for instance, has one of the largest factory solar plants in Bangladesh and transparent glass walls and skylights that cut lighting costs and create more natural light for workers.

Such shifts have cut the plant's carbon emissions by 35 per cent compared to a more traditional factory, and water-saving faucets and rainwater-capture reservoirs have reduced the factory's water demand by 40 per cent, Haque said in an interview at the factory.

"The Rana Plaza incident shocked me. At that time I promised that if I started a factory it would not be a high-rise building but it must be a green factory", he said. A larger number of clothing brands seeking climate-smart and worker-friendly products are also making investments in better factories pay off, said Haque, whose factory sells to fashion labels such as Calvin Klein, Tommy Hilfiger and Next.

"Big brands are interested in buying clothes from green factories," Haque said. Now "we are in an advantageous position in bargaining". Shima Akter, a labourer at the Plummy Fashions plant, said her workforce wasn't "suffocating like other factories around" - and other

parents in her community envied her job at a "green factory".

## Buyer demands

Md. Ashraf Al Amin Khan, Bangladesh manager of GIII Apparel Group, a buyer for fashion brands such as Calvin Klein and Tommy Hilfiger, said his firm had signed long-term contracts with some of the green factories. "We often visit those factories and are satisfied with the workers' wages and the working environment," he said, noting that "every prominent brand is considering the green garments issue and Bangladesh is really doing well."

Faruque Hassan, president of the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association, said the country already had more LEED-certified garment factories than any other country with 52 out of the top 100 rated factories.

One, a Green Textile Limited factory in Mymensingh, in February was named the highest-scoring LEED-certified garment factory in the world, according to the BGMEA.

Altogether, Bangladesh is now home to nine of the top 10 LEED-certified garment plants in the world, the association said.

Ridhwanul Haq, a business administration professor at Dhaka University, said manufacturing of ready-made garments had dominated Bangladesh's economy for four decades but greener plants were positioning the country "for the next level of competitiveness" - and helping Bangladesh meet its own climate goals. 

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*(Source: <https://www.eco-business.com/news/as-buyers-demand-it-bangladesh-garment-factories-go-green/>)*



# ‘WHEN WASTE WORKERS ARE SATISFIED, THERE IS NO RESISTANCE’:

CDC Group’s Shivangi Sultania on fair treatment for India’s ‘*safaai sathis*’, writes **Madhur Singh**

The Jaipur-based waste management NGO had faced resistance when it first tried to work with informal workers to solve the city’s sanitation problem. As its CSO, Sultania looked into providing better social security for the workers.

**A** background in accounting isn’t an obvious qualification for running a waste collection and management outfit. But when Shivangi Sultania quit her job at professional services firm KPMG Consulting to join her marital family’s social enterprise, she brought along not only her business acumen and technology know-how, but also a commitment to team-building.

Sultania dedicated her initial meetings with workers or sanitation partners - *safaai sathis* in Hindi - to understanding their problems, from



Shivangi Sultania transitioned from a consultancy to an NGO, introducing technology and workers’ welfare measures at her marital family’s waste management trust.

poor wages to lack of childcare and healthcare facilities. “We decided to put up a display board at the facility with the current wages in the market, and updated it regularly in order to increase transparency,” she told Eco-Business. This simple step enabled her to onboard 164 *safaai sathis* in Jaipur, the city in western India where CDC Group, the non-governmental organisation her family runs,

is headquartered. The team also started primary education classes at work sites where volunteers taught workers’ children with the aim of getting them enrolled in government schools. Next came a tie-up with an NGO involved in preventing food waste – kits made from surplus food would be distributed among the *safaai sathis* frequently, improving their families’ nutrition and saving

them money on food rations. Some doctors were roped in to organise quarterly health camps, and all workers were enrolled in the government-run social security programmes for provident fund and employment-related health insurance.

“My true satisfaction came from knowing that I had converted some informal rag-pickers to self-employed entrepreneurs involved in the business of handling plastic waste,” Sultania said. As CDC Group’s chief sustainability officer and chief financial officer, her efforts in empowering waste collectors across cities in India earned her a spot on the Eco-Business A-List 2022, which recognises sustainability professionals making an impact in Asia Pacific.

According to one estimate, India is home to more than 5 million sanitation workers. These largely informal workers, who are the backbone of traditional waste management in most cities, are often marginalised and at the very bottom of the socio-economic chain. In Jaipur, the project that CDC Group took over had previously faced resistance from workers due to a disagreement regarding wages. Sultania recognises that paying fair wages and ensuring constant communication with the workers are crucial.

Across the various cities that CDC Group works, Sultania also led the deployment of the latest available technologies. In the federally-governed territory of Diu, she introduced app-based monitoring of all waste collection vehicles, complete with route mapping and geofencing, so that the supervisors would always know the drivers’ whereabouts. “Before we used the software, the collection was not optimal and hence the authorities were penalising the project by Rs 33,000 (USD 400) per month. But with the software, things changed dramatically,” she said.

Now, CDC is in the process of implementing RFID-based moni-

toring, tagging all households to ensure that their waste is picked up. The project currently processes 30 tonnes of waste per day. Sultania says this ensures no waste reaches the landfill or the ocean.

Sultania has also led efforts to raise awareness about at-source segregation of waste and circularity. Her team is reaching out to schools to educate students about waste management. In Delhi, for instance, a behavioural change drive is cur-

section(s) of society comes with its own challenges. Resistance from workers is common in our sector.

We believe that the resistance is on account of the lack of social inclusion and opaqueness in the industry. It is important for us as service providers to understand the basic needs of our workers, and work towards meeting these needs; if workers are satisfied, there is no resistance.

For instance, in Mathuradas Pura in Jaipur, Rajasthan, the Centre for



**Informal sanitation workers, form the backbone of traditional waste management in India.**

*Image: UNDP\_India/ Twitter*

rently under way in 935 government schools, in which students from Classes 1 to 12, aged 6 to 18, are taught about the various types of waste, and to recognise that waste can be an asset.

In this interview, Sultania shares more on what needs to be done to improve waste management across cities in India, and the challenges she face as a sustainability practitioner working for an NGO.

### **Have you faced any resistance from the workers’ unions? How have you met this challenge?**

Working in an industry that provides the highest number of employment opportunities to the marginalised

Development Communications Trust and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) established a material recovery facility called a *swachhta kendra*. The systematic plastic waste management system segregates, pre-processes, cleans, and dispatches materials to the appropriate registered recyclers.

When CDC took over the project on October 1, 2021, the facility was not operating at its optimal capacity. The *safai sathis* were unwilling to work at the facility because the rates offered were below market rates. Our team set up a meeting with the *safai sathis*, where we talked about the problems they faced. We decided to keep a board at the facility, on

which the current market rates would be displayed and regularly updated in order to increase transparency. Paying fair wages enabled us to onboard 164 *safaai sathis*.

We established that their major concerns fell into three categories: the education of their children, rations (food and essentials) for their homes, and their health. We worked on these issues over time and implemented new policies in the system:

1. We started primary education classes at our site where volunteers provided basic education to *safaai sathis*' children. A few of the children later got enrolled in government schools.
2. We tied up with an NGO involved in reducing food waste to distribute ration kits to our *safaai sathis*.
3. We requested for a few doctors to conduct quarterly medical camps for our employees, free-of-charge.

We also extended the government-run social security benefits under the Provident Fund and Employees' State Insurance Corporation to *safaai sathis*. Once we started taking care of their basic needs, we faced no further resistance in running the project.

### **What can be done to improve waste management in India – at the city, state and national levels?**

The biggest challenge in the waste management sector is that everyone is a stakeholder. There are no exceptions. Hence, action is needed at all levels. To begin with, waste generators should be made aware of the environmental degradation all around, and should start practicing the 5Rs of waste i.e. refuse, reduce, reuse, recycle, repurpose.

There should be a lot more focus on capacity building of our municipal authorities and *safaai sathis* on the latest and best waste management practices.

The government understands that India needs to improve the waste sit-

uation, and has been taking multiple steps. The budget allocations for waste management for the current year and [an initiative called] Mission LiFE that was introduced by our Prime Minister at COP26 also testify to the government's efforts. However, there is a need to address the issue of funding in the sector. There has to be a gentle nudge to banks and financial institutions to provide funds for sustainable projects.

### **How do you like NGO work after your corporate stint? What are the challenges of running an NGO in India?**

After five years of working in a large corporate environment with deep-set hierarchies, it was time for a change. I wanted to leave the consulting world and do something more challenging, and understand business in depth.

NGOs have a pragmatic approach to work and operate in flat hierarchies where the decision-making process is much faster and less complex than in a corporate organisation.

A few challenges that an NGO faces are:

1. Funding, which is always a constraint.
2. Multiple compliances, which sometimes demand a lot of administrative effort. These compliance rules should be in place to support NGOs and not create obstacles. For example, India's home ministry has cancelled the Foreign Contributions Regulation Act (FCRA) registration of various NGOs, which means they can no longer receive fresh foreign funds from donors pending a probe by the home ministry. And the process of approval is very lengthy.

### **What are the leadership qualities one needs to work in the sustainability space?**

As a leader, you need a clear understanding of purpose, and make

sure that all the team members are aligned and know where they want to go. As a leader or entrepreneur, you also need to become a generalist. You have to fill multiple shoes at the same time, and have a holistic perspective.

### **Are there any misperceptions about working as a sustainability practitioner in India?**

We do hear a lot that sustainability is expensive. I believe this is true in the short term, when you are trying to make some short-term changes in your lifestyle. However, in the long run, this is not true. The truth is if you are already living an unsustainable life, you have to spend some money upfront in order to switch to a sustainable practice. For instance, moving from plastic bags to cloth bags would require you to spend more money at the start, but it is durable and saves money in the long run.

### **Have you had to navigate perceptions that you are just helping to run a family enterprise? How do you face that?**

When you are in the process of building something, there are multiple perceptions you will face. It is not necessary that you pay attention to them. It starts affecting your positivity. As a second-generation entrepreneur, I am grateful for the platform given to me by my father-in-law, and I hope to achieve new heights while maintaining the family's legacy. 🌱

*This interview has been edited for brevity and clarity.*

*Shivangi Sultania was one of 10 sustainability leaders selected for the Eco-Business A-List 2022. Read our stories with other A-List winners here.*

*(Source: <https://www.eco-business.com/news/when-waste-workers-are-satisfied-there-is-no-resistance-cdc-groups-shivangi-sultania-on-fair-treatment-for-indias-safaai-sathis/>)*





"The IPCC report tells us that climate change is throwing its hardest punches at the most vulnerable communities who bear the least responsibility, as we just saw in flash floods in Turkey just recently, which killed together hundreds of people," said United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres in his speech before the IPCC on 20 March. Image: International Aid Campaign

# 'Fairness for vulnerable communities': IPCC's 'final warning' on climate spotlights inclusive governance and finance

Communities in Asia and least developed countries that contribute least to climate change are among those 15 times more likely to die from natural disasters, said the IPCC in the final part of its sixth assessment report, write **Hannah Alcoseba Fernandez, Liang Lei and Rhick Albay**

**E**asier access to finance is needed to avert risks for developing countries, which contribute the least to climate change but are most affected by it, according to a new report from the world's top climate scientists.

If climate goals are to be achieved, "both adaptation and mitigation finance would need to increase many-fold", up to three to six times the current amount of financing that would come from public and private funding from all regions, said the report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the international body for assessing the science related to climate change. The final part of the IPCC's mammoth sixth assessment report was released on Monday (20 March).



The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) addresses the media on 20 March 2023. From left, José Romero, head of the technical support unit; unidentified report author; Peter Thorne, coordinating read author; Aditi Mukherji, report author; Abdalah Mokssit, secretary; Hoesung Lee, chairperson; Katherine Calvin, report author; Christopher Trisos, report author; Andrej Mahecic, head of communications and media relations. Image: IPCC

“We must speed up efforts to deliver climate justice to those on the frontlines of many crises that none of them caused. We can do this by safeguarding the most vulnerable communities and scaling up financial capacities for adaptation and loss and damage,” said United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres, when addressing reporters at the IPCC press conference. Countries have agreed to set up a loss and damage fund this year in last November’s COP27 global climate conference. One of the report’s essential findings is the “value of fairness”, said Hoesung Lee, chair of the IPCC at the briefing held in Interlaken, Switzerland.

“People who live in areas highly vulnerable to climate impacts are 15 times more likely to die in floods, droughts and storms,” said Lee. “Money cannot solve everything but it is critical to narrow the gap between those who are most vulnerable and those who enjoy greater security.” Lee also called on governments to reduce barriers that hold back investment for climate change adaptation in developing communities through public funding and sending clear signals to investors: “It is not just about the quantity of money. It is also about how and

where it is allocated.” Most of the affected areas are from low-income households in communities in Asia, Africa, Central and South America, least developed countries, small islands, the Arctic, and Indigenous Peoples, read the report. Among the many actions that Guterres called for, he said rich countries must try to reach net-zero greenhouse gas emissions “as close as possible to 2040”, rather than wait for the 2050 deadline most have signed up to. This takes into consideration “different national circumstances” as

emerging economies might need more help to accelerate their decarbonisation plans, he said.

### Fossil feud

While Guterres spoke about the need for the world to establish a global phase down of existing oil and gas production, he also said that chief executive officers and the leadership teams of fossil fuel companies can be part of the solution. Guterres said the expansion of existing oil and gas fields must stop. The IPCC report said that existing fossil fuel



The Thi Vai LNG Terminal is a proposed LNG terminal in Bà Rịa-Vũng Tàu Province, Vietnam. Image: CNG VIETNAM



infrastructure will all but certainly bust the carbon budget for 1.5°C, unless their emissions can be further reduced. There are some efforts on this front, such as via carbon capture technologies, but these are currently expensive and critics say they distract from the need for more renewables – and for fossil fuels to go altogether.

The head of this year's COP28 global climate summit, Dr Sultan Al Jaber, said in response to the IPCC report that "progress can only happen through partnership, not polarisation". "We need to rapidly build the new energy system and reduce emissions from today's energy mix before unplugging the current energy system," said the summit president-designate, who is also chief of the Abu Dhabi National Oil Company in the United Arab Emirates.

Lidy Nacpil, coordinator of the Asian Peoples' Movement on Debt and Development (APMDD), a regional alliance of 50 member organisations and movements, is critical of how corporates continue to push the narrative that the use of fossil gas and carbon capture can reduce emissions.

The narrative is a "blatant lie and deadly plan" that is only compatible with "capitalist interests", Nacpil said in a statement. "Instead of being primary beneficiaries of urgent climate action from developed countries, Global South countries are being led down a path strewn with new fossil fuel infrastructures that would lock in decades of emissions and lock out any potential to attain energy security and sustainable development through clean, renewable energy systems."

### 'Rapidly closing window'

The synthesis report is the fourth and final instalment of the sixth assessment report (AR6) by the IPCC. It is written by 39 scientists from 24 countries in a culmination of seven years of global and in-depth assess-



**An elderly woman has her lunch in the sun at Adibasi Sahi, India. The extreme heat is impacting hundreds of millions of people in the country. Image: Soumi Das / UNICEF**

ments of various aspects of climate change. While it contains no new science, it draws together key messages from all of the preceding reports to form what Guterres described as a "climate handbook" for governments or a "how-to guide to defuse the climate time bomb". The next IPCC report is not due to be published before 2030.

The report reiterates that the world is now about 1.1°C warmer than during pre-industrial times, resulting in more frequent and more intense extreme weather, causing disruption and suffering for communities worldwide. Several developing countries felt such effects first-hand in recent years, with record flooding in Pakistan last summer, heatwaves in neighbouring India and recurring dry spells in East Africa that have decimated crops.

As temperatures continue to rise, groups like small-scale farmers and people living in coastal regions could face "soft limits" in adapting to natural hazards, solvable with more money and better governance, the report added.

Meanwhile, other efforts could become impossible with a "hard limit" – earlier IPCC studies had given examples such as trying to save tropical coral reefs.

Global warming will exceed a 1.5°C safety threshold this decade without urgent action and steep emissions cuts, with a "rapidly closing window of opportunity to secure a liveable and sustainable future for all", it said. Countries' voluntary targets are nowhere near enough to keep within the limit – with those up till end-2022 estimated to bring warming to 2.8°C by 2100.

The global temperature could be brought back to 1.5°C if there is a brief overshoot, but it will require the deployment of more carbon dioxide removal strategies that come with "feasibility and sustainability concerns", the report said.

Such strategies include the popular forest management and tree planting initiatives today, though the integrity of these projects have been questioned. Mechanical means of sucking carbon dioxide out of the air and shoe-horning the gas into solid minerals are expensive and done at miniscule scales today, while others like pairing carbon capture with plant-based fuels give rise to land and water usage concerns. 🌱

(Source: <https://www.eco-business.com/news/fairness-for-vulnerable-communities-ipccs-final-warning-on-climate-spotlights-inclusive-governance-and-finance/>)





The Arctic is one of the batteries feeding the variations in Indian monsoons, over 7000 kilometres away. In a 2018 study, Vikash Kumar and colleagues showed accelerated glacial melting at Kongsfjorden post-1970s. Image: duncan cumming, CC BY-SA 3.0, via Flickr.

# ARE THE ARCTIC'S WARM, COLD SPELLS CAUSING INDIA'S FLUCTUATING MONSOONS?

Scientists have reconstructed the past 1000 years of climate history from the Arctic, a region that's warming faster than any other place on the planet. Arctic's influence on the short-term changes in the Indian monsoon may become more pronounced as the region experiences further human-driven warming, writes **Sahana Ghosh**

**W**arm and cold climatic spells in the Arctic, over the past 1000 years, imprinted on India's monsoon fluctuations during that period, a climate reconstruction study finds.

Warm Arctic conditions were linked to intense rainfall over the Indian subcontinent while cold conditions in the Arctic were associated with weak spells of rain over the Indian subcontinent over the past 1000 years, say scientists at India's National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research (NCPOR).

In collaboration with Norwegian counterparts, they reconstructed the past climate history from the Arctic region that's warming faster than any other place on the planet. The scientists say the Arctic's influence on the short-term changes in the Indian monsoon may become more pronounced as the region experiences further warming due to human actions.

"Large Arctic variabilities (greater than 1 standard deviation over the past 1000 years) served as a dominant control on Indian monsoon fluctuations during that period."

"We can anticipate that the monsoon will intensify alongside further Arctic warming, and the difference in precipitation between intense and weak monsoon years will also likely change," Vikash Kumar at NCPOR's Past Climate and Ocean Studies (PCOS) division told Mongabay-India.

Faced with the brevity of instrumental weather records from the Arctic (60–100 years), Kumar and colleagues pulled out a 51 cm-long sediment sample from the seafloor at Kongsfjorden, an icy archipelago in Svalbard in the Arctic, to extend the time series for sea conditions 1000 years back in time.

They collected the samples during the Kongsfjorden-Rijpfjorden Cruise in 2014 onboard the research vessel Lance. Back at NCPOR, they looked at the materials trapped in the sediment core. Approximately 2 per cent of the sediment's weight consisted of marine and land-transported organic matter.

Kumar and colleagues analysed the elemental and isotopic compositions of these materials in the lab and measured specific biogeochemical parameters, to reconstruct the region's climate history for the past

1000 years (1107 to 1967). "Presently, the Indian monsoon's year-to-year variations are primarily driven by tropical factors. However, the Arctic's influence on the short-term variability of the Indian monsoon may become more significant as the region experiences further warming. Our study supports this idea," Kumar adds.

Warm/cold Arctic spells most likely modified the temperature profile of the Tibetan Plateau. The Plateau is an elevated heat source to the atmosphere because of its height and can influence monsoons by influencing the prevailing North-South temperature difference that exists in many forms during the monsoon- such as the land-sea temperature contrast. Both natural and anthropogenic factors influenced the warm and cold spells, they said.

"In my understanding, this is for the first time such a teleconnection pattern between the Arctic climate and Indian monsoon using proxies (indirect measurements) is established," monsoon researcher Madhavan Rajeevan and former secretary, the Ministry of Earth Sciences told Mongabay-India.

Rajeevan was not associated with the study. He adds that while

the relationship between the Arctic climate and Indian monsoon is not a surprise because recent observations suggest a possible linkage of Arctic climate to the Indian monsoon through Arctic Oscillation (atmospheric circulation pattern over the mid-to-high latitudes of the Northern Hemisphere), the current study claims that this relationship exists in the past 1000 years record.

“There are some uncertainties involved in this study (as expected from a paleoclimate study). Nevertheless, this study is very interesting and could encourage more studies using observations and models (especially simulating past paleo climates),” adds Rajeevan.

In a recent paper, researchers at the University of Gothenburg argue that the rate of warming will be much faster than projected but “climate models used by the UN’s IPCC and others to project climate change are not accurately reflecting what the Arctic’s future will be.”

### Why the Arctic is important to climate studies

The frigid Arctic is a key indicator of the ongoing shifts in Earth’s climate because it is warming two to three times faster than the global average and losing its sea ice cover.

Svalbard archipelago’s climate sensitivity stems from its setting – it sits along contrasting ocean and air conditions. This group of islands, where samples for the study were collected, is close to the Fram Strait, a deep water channel connecting the Arctic with the Atlantic (Greenland). Exchange of mass, heat, and salt occurs via the channel between Svalbard and Greenland. For example, warm waters flow into the Arctic through this gateway.

“The other reason why Svalbard is of interest to climate and related interdisciplinary researchers is its glacial-marine settings which results in steep gradients (change) in physical and biogeochemical



**The Arctic’s influence on the short-term variability of the Indian monsoon may become more significant as the region experiences further warming. Our study supports this idea.**

**–VIKASH KUMAR**

Researcher, National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research-Past Climate and Ocean Studies

parameters between the glacier head and the oceanic mouth,” explained Kumar of NCPOR.

“Therefore, under climatic stress, changes in glacial discharge and marine influx to the fjord alter these gradients which gets recorded as signals of climate change in core sediments. On top of that, Western Svalbard fjords have high sediment accumulation rates, which means better resolution of reconstructed climate data from these settings.”

The study site, Svalbard and adjoining areas, are a “hotspot within this larger hotspot.”


“To put these rapid modern changes in perspective, it is important to understand their behaviour in the past too. Also, while climate change in the Arctic will continue to remain more spectacular than any other place, other regions will not remain untouched by the rapidly

changing Arctic,” said Kumar. The Arctic is one of the batteries feeding the variations in Indian monsoons, over 7000 kilometres away. In a 2018 study, Vikash Kumar and colleagues showed accelerated glacial melting at Kongsfjorden post-1970s. Changes in remote Arctic such as glacial and sea ice melting, affect Indian monsoons as they contribute to its year-to-year variability that translates into devastating floods and droughts.

“So, it is important that we document and understand past Arctic changes and investigate their pre-instrumental record global connections and ramifications to be better informed for what may come with future Arctic changes,” he said, underscoring that despite being a climate-sensitive hotspot, Svalbard and its surrounding regions are underrepresented in the existing network of Arctic climate proxy archives (indirect measurements).

The paleo interval of the past 1000 years is a good analogue of modern climate conditions.

“The only significant difference between the last millennium and the present is that we humans have pumped a lot of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere in the last 150 years. The knowledge we acquire from studying the climate dynamics of the last millennium offers greater relevance to future climate trends compared to other periods in our geological history.”

“Nonetheless, this does not imply that other paleo intervals lack importance. For instance, the Mid-Pliocene Warm Period, which spans from around 3.3 to 3 million years ago, is also regarded as an ideal analogue for contemporary climate conditions,” added Kumar. 

*This story was published with permission from Mongabay.com.*

*Source: <https://www.eco-business.com/news/are-the-arctics-warm-cold-spells-causing-indias-fluctuating-monsoons/>*



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