

# CSR TODAY

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## INDIA'S PARLIAMENTARIANS MAKE A START IN **UNDERSTANDING RIVERS**

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India's renewable energy plants 'not bird-friendly'

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# 66% rise in built up area in less than three decades causing severe heat stress in Mumbai



**Rajesh Tiwari**  
Publisher  
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**The extreme heat that one experiences when strolling through any urban landscape is caused by the Urban Heat Island effect, a micro-climatic phenomenon. This is due to a number of causes, the most prominent of which being the usage of materials such as concrete**

**M**umbai, the urbs prima of India, which is the financial capital, faces many challenges.

A group of researchers from three institutes has found out how changing land use patterns and urban heat island effect has led to a 2-degree Celsius increase in average temperatures from 1991 to 2018.

In fact, it is a big challenge and it's here the CSR can step in to mitigate the problems.

Mumbai has lost 81% of its open land (barren spaces without any vegetation), 40% green cover (forests and scrublands), and approximately 30% of its water bodies (lakes, ponds, floodplains) between 1991 and 2018 while the built-up area (areas developed upon) has risen by 66% during the same period, according to a recent study.

Researchers from Faculty of Natural Sciences, Jamia Millia Islamia University in New Delhi, Osmania University in Hyderabad, and Aligarh Muslim University, Uttar Pradesh through their study - "Urban Heat Island Dynamics in Response to Land-Use/Land-Cover Change in the Coastal City of Mumbai" - published in the peer reviewed Springer Journal of the Indian Society of Remote Sensing found that with this pace of urbanization and landscape transformation, it is expected that the Urban Heat Island intensity will further increase in the city.

"The extreme heat that one experiences when strolling through any urban landscape is caused by the Urban Heat Island effect, a micro-climatic phenomenon. This is due to a number of causes, the most prominent of which being the usage of materials such as concrete," explained Prof. Atiqur Rahman from the Department of Geography, Faculty of Natural Sciences, Jamia Millia Islamia.

Using satellite imagery (USA-NASA Landsat datasets freely available), the authors studied an area of 603 square kilometres of Mumbai region (both city and suburbs) to understand

the land-use and land-cover changes, difference in maximum, minimum and average temperatures (for Urban Heat Island intensity), land surface temperatures, changes in vegetation cover versus urban built-up density between 1991 and 2018. The findings were represented in the form of high resolution maps (see graphics) and attempted to enhance urban planning and policy decisions by mitigating the Urban Heat Island effect.

Shahfahad, Senior Research Fellow at Department of Geography, Jamia Millia Islamia University and lead author of the study said, "We found that rapid uncontrolled urbanisation over the past 5-6 decades attracted a large population by providing better economic opportunities. As a result, natural land use patterns such as vegetation cover, scrublands, wetlands, and open lands have all been transformed on a large scale into the city's built-up surfaces." The study noted that during 1991-2018, Mumbai city lost nearly 40% of its green cover including forests (dense vegetation) and scrubland (sparse vegetation) that fell from 287.76 sq. Km in 1991 to 193.35 sq. Km in 2018. The area of open land fell by more than half from 80.57 sq. Km in 1991 to 33.7 sq. Km in 2018. Mumbai also saw reduction in water bodies from 27.19 sq. Km to 20.31 sq. Km during the same period.

Meanwhile the conversion of open lands, green cover and water bodies to buildable land showed an increase from 173.09 sq. Km in 1991, which almost doubled and reached 346.02 sq. Km in 2018.

Transformation of these areas significantly altered the dynamics of land surface temperature and urban heat island intensity. "We observed that the average temperature in 1991 was 34.08 degrees Celsius. It rose to 36.28 degree Celsius in 2018 (a 2.2-degree Celsius increase) under the heat island zones (vulnerable areas) thus exposing people to higher heat risk," said Shahfahad. ☐

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## Vistara Wellness Initiative impacts 16000+ beneficiaries in second phase

**V**istara, a joint venture of Tata group and Singapore Airlines, announced the reach and impact of the second phase of its flagship CSR program - 'Vistara Wellness Initiative'. The airline has reached out to the most marginalised and vulnerable families with 4,000 wellness kits, comprising hygiene and nutrition essentials, bringing relief to more than 16,000 beneficiaries affected by the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Spearheaded by Vistara, in collaboration with the Tata Community Initiatives Trust, and supported by the volunteers from the local implementing partner, Robin Hood Army, the initiative was implemented in 28 cities in India.

Rashmi Soni, Vice-president & Head of Corporate Communications and CSR, Vistara, said, "Community service and giving back to society are deeply ingrained in Vistara's culture. With support from the Tata Community Initiatives Trust (TCIT) and the volunteers from Robin Hood Army, we are glad to have been able to provide immediate support to communities impacted by the pandemic. This initiative is a reaffirmation of our collective efforts to address the critical needs of the society."

The 'Vistara Wellness Initiative' as part of One Tata response was first rolled out in April 2020, in collaboration with Indian Hotels Company



Limited (IHCL), under which over 50,000 long shelf-life nutritious food items were distributed to frontline health workers. It was followed by the National Nutrition Month observed by the airline throughout the month of September 2020, with extensive support by its employees to provide over 1000 wellness kits

to local communities affected by the pandemic. Under this flagship program, the airline has now further ramped up its efforts to reach out to more families across the country. The various initiatives demonstrated their values of collaboration and partnerships to protect and empower the affected communities.

# CSR INDIA UNITED

## Honeywell to set up 10 oxygen generation plants to support Government's fight against COVID-19; commits 4 in Maharashtra



**H**oneywell Hometown Solutions India Foundation (HHSIF), the philanthropic arm of Honeywell, a Fortune 100 company, today announced it is setting up 10 oxygen generation plants of 600 liters per minute (LPM) capacity in government hospitals across India. In Maharashtra, these plants are being set up in Pune, Ratnagiri and Solapur districts to support healthcare infrastructure in preparation for an anticipated third wave of the COVID-19 pandemic. The first such plant was inaugurated today at Late Droupadabai

Murlidhar Khedekar Hospital, Bopodi, Pune. "Honeywell is pleased to partner with the government to strengthen healthcare infrastructure in the collective efforts to manage patient care during the pandemic," said Ashish Gaikwad, President, Honeywell India. "Timely and adequate oxygen supply can help save lives and is an essential medical aid for COVID-19 patients. We are pleased to announce the setting up of 10 oxygen generation plants of 600 liters per minute (LPM) each in remote districts of Maharashtra, Karnataka, Haryana

and Uttarakhand to enable inclusive healthcare for all." This initiative is a part of HHSIF's commitment to set up 10 oxygen generation plants under the supervision of Americares, across Maharashtra, Karnataka, Haryana and Uttarakhand.

"Honeywell's support has been focused and timely. These oxygen generation plants will help save lives during COVID-19 crisis and will serve to improve the quality of critical care at the government health facilities for years to come," said Shripad Desai, MD and Country Director, Americares.

Each plant has a capacity to generate 600 LPM, enough to cater to the needs of a hospital with more than 150 intensive care units (ICU) beds. The oxygen generated onsite will be directly supplied to hospital beds, including those in ICUs. Honeywell is also funding the annual maintenance contracts of these plants for two years to ensure they function smoothly after the one-year warranty period has lapsed.

The oxygen generation plant in Pune was inaugurated in the presence of several government officials including Murlidhar Mohol, Mayor, Pune; Sunita Wadekar, Deputy Mayor, Pune; Vikram Kumar, Commissioner, Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC); and Hemant Rasne, Standing Committee Chairman, PMC.

"The Pune Municipal Corporation has been actively working on a contingency plan for a possible third wave. In the last few months, we have received great support from Honeywell in helping our efforts to contain the pandemic and enhance the healthcare infrastructure through multiple actions like setting up COVID Care Centers, oxygen concentrators and medical supplies. We are pleased with the latest support of setting up an oxygen generation plant for the Pune hospital that helps with a sustainable solution for the long term," said Murlidhar Mohol,

# India-EU Economic Diplomacy in the Changing World:

# SHAPING VISION OF A 'MULTIPOLAR' ASIA

By Pooran Chandra Pandey

## Introduction

Economic diplomacy is a form of 'diplomacy' that uses the full spectrum of economic tools of a state to achieve its national interests. The scope of economic diplomacy can encompass all of the main international economic activities of a state including, but not limited to, policy decisions designed to influence exports, imports, investments, lending, aid, free trade agreements, et al.

Concept is concerned with economic policy issues, e.g., work of delegations at standard setting organizations such as World Trade Organization (WTO). Economic diplomats also monitor and report on economic policies in foreign countries and give the home government advice on how to best influence them. Economic diplomacy employs economic resources, either as rewards or sanctions, in pursuit of a particular foreign policy objective. This is sometimes also called "economic statecraft"

## Context Setting

Economic diplomacy is traditionally defined as a decision-making, policy-making process, advocating for sending state's business interests. The concept requires application of technical expertise while analyzing effects of a country's (receiving state) economic situation on its

political climate and on the sending state's economic interests. The sending state and receiving state, foreign business leaders, as well as government decision-makers, work together on some of the most cutting-edge issues in foreign policy including but not limited to technology, environment, and health, as well as in the more traditional areas of trade, commerce and finance. Versatility, flexibility, sound judgment, and strong business skills are all needed in the execution of economic diplomacy.

State and non-state actors – all government agencies involved in international economic mandates are players in economic diplomacy (though they often do not describe them as such). Further, non-state actors such as non-government organisations (NGOs) engaged in international economic activities are also players in economic diplomacy. Businesses and investors are also actors in the processes of economic diplomacy, especially when contacts between them and governments are initiated or facilitated by diplomats. Scope of definition is especially applicable to practice of economic diplomacy as it is unfolding in emerging economies.

This new approach though involves an analysis of a nation's economy, taking into account not only its officially reported figures

but also its gray, or unreported, economic factors. A nation that wants to attract business must be proactive rather than passive seeking out opportunities and learn to bring them home. Tax and other concessions are necessary and costly, in short term; however, creative support of new business opportunities can generate major chances for success. This sort of activity is also a part of economic diplomacy.

## Current Trade Status between India and EU

India-EU relations date to the early 1960s, with India being amongst the first countries to establish diplomatic relations with the European Economic Community. A cooperation agreement signed in 1994 took the bilateral relationship beyond trade and economic cooperation. At the 5th India-EU Summit at The Hague in 2004, the relationship was upgraded to a 'Strategic Partnership'. The two sides adopted a Joint Action Plan in 2005 (which was reviewed in 2008) that provided for strengthening dialogue and consultation mechanisms in the political and economic spheres, enhancing trade and investment, and bringing peoples and cultures together.

India now is amongst the world's fastest-growing large economies and is an important player in global economic governance. It is also an

# INDIA'S PARLIAMENTARIANS MAKE A START IN UNDERSTANDING RIVERS

Many gaps remain, many discredited ideas are pushed, but a look from the river basin perspective a step forward in the latest report by the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Water Resources, writes **Omais Ahmad, The Third Pole**

**Confluence of Indus (on the left)  
and Zaskar rivers, Ladakh, India.**

*Image: Bernard Gagnon, CC BY-SA 4.0.*

The Indian Parliamentary Standing Committee report on water resources released on 3 August looks at water issues from the lens of river basins as well as international treaties. The committee focussed primarily on floods, an issue of compelling national importance highlighted by the dozens killed in the state of Kerala as floods ravaged the state in mid-October. Nevertheless, the committee took a broader perspective — looking at two river basins beyond political borders. This is a first. The report provides a rare insight into issues uppermost in the minds of Members of Parliament from the Lower House (Lok Sabha) and Upper House (Rajya Sabha) across party lines, as well as the glaring omission of many issues.

### THE RIVER BASINS THAT ARE INCLUDED, AND THOSE EXCLUDED

This particular standing committee on water resources focussing on floods was set up in 2019-20 but could not deliver its report in the stipulated period. When the committee reconvened for 2020-21 it added “International Water Treaties in the field of Water Resource Management with particular reference to Treaty/Agreement entered into with China, Pakistan and Bhutan” to its scope. The addition goes unexplained but the approach of the report is wide-angle, and looks at flooding not just as a local issue, but one impacted by changes across river basins. This is a positive sign; it indicates a broaden-

ing of approach from the local problem of floods to a wider perspective on the issues involved in dealing with rivers, including transboundary issues.

Nonetheless it is important to note how narrow this opening is. The country that India shares the most rivers with — Bangladesh — is not even mentioned. India shares 57 rivers with its downstream neighbour, and the most important river management treaty — after the Indus Waters Treaty (1960) with Pakistan — is the Ganga River Treaty (1996). While the former is discussed at length, including that it has no obvious exit clause, the latter finds no mention though it is due to expire in 2026. Of the 57 rivers, 54 flow

from India to Bangladesh, possibly explaining the omission. Floods in a downstream country do not directly impact Indian voters.

More striking is the exclusion of Nepal. This is truly odd because it is discussed in the minutes of the meetings from the Parliamentary Standing Committee. The meeting on 17 November 2020 is specifically on the subject “Flood Management in the Country including international water treaties in the field of water resource management/flood control with particular reference to treaty/agreement entered into with Nepal, China, Pakistan and Bhutan”. Given that flooding in Bihar is an annual saga, with huge loss of life and property, and it is downstream of Nepal



# Godrej & Boyce and WWF India, aims to empower over 100 mangrove ambassadors in nine coastal states of India

Close to 10,000 citizens have been sensitized about the importance of mangrove conservation in building climate resilience

In a bid to protect the most vulnerable communities and biodiversity from the impact of climate change, Godrej & Boyce, the flagship company of the Godrej Group, in collaboration with WWF India (World Wide Fund for Nature-India) continues the journey to protect mangroves and sensitize citizens about mangrove conservation. After the successful launch of the Magical Mangroves campaign in 2020, Godrej & Boyce and WWF

India will rejuvenate the ongoing citizen movement in nine Indian states, which include Maharashtra, Goa, Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Odisha, West Bengal and Karnataka.

As a part of this program, WWF India will identify over 100 volunteers, who will commit their time towards being educated on mangrove conservation and inspire more community members to do the same. The volunteers, referred

to as mangrove ambassadors, will be mentored by Godrej & Boyce to spread awareness about the significance of preserving these vital coastal ecosystems in their respective states and will be equipped with a curated toolkit of presentations, videos, story books, mangroves app and more.

So far, the Magical Mangroves campaign has sensitized close to 10,000 citizens in India's coastal states. With over 140 seminars, it has helped teachers seamlessly integrate environment education in schools and students have benefitted from the practical knowledge of the subject. Citizens have been introduced to the Mangrove biodiversity



# INDIA'S RENEWABLE ENERGY PLANTS 'NOT BIRD- FRIENDLY'



Vegetation in Dweep, Neil Island, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, India. Image: Vyacheslav Argenberg, CC BY-NC-ND 4.0

# Will India's oil palm drive raise fears of deforestation?

As India imports US\$10 billion worth of palm oil annually, a new policy aims to massively increase plantations that will focus on the north-east region and Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

India's newly announced plan to move from being the world's biggest importer of palm oil to that of major producer of the crop may be at the cost of large-scale deforestation of ecologically sensitive areas.

An official note posted recently said the union cabinet headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi had approved the launch of a "National Mission on Palm Oil" that would have a "special focus on the north-

east region and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands".

"Due to the heavy dependence on imports for edible oils, it is important to make efforts for increasing the domestic production of edible oils in which increasing area and productivity of oil palm plays an important part," the note said.

According to the Solvent Extractors Association of India, the country spends an average of US\$10 billion on importing palm oil — the

# Sustainability-linked bonds, the next frontier in galvanising green finance

Speaking at the inaugural Singapore Sustainable Investing & Financing Conference, IFC's Alfonso Garcia Mora said SLBs create "the right incentives" for both issuers and investors to comply with sustainable performance indicators.



L-R: Eric Francia, president & CEO, AC Energy attending virtually, Eugene Cheng, group financial officer, Sembcorp Industries, Alfonso Garcia Mora, regional vice president, Asia and Pacific, IFC. Jennifer Tay, partner and infrastructure leader, PwC Singapore moderated the panel at Ecosperity Week 2021. Credit: Temasek

**T**he International Finance Corporation (IFC), the World Bank Group's private-sector investment arm, and energy and urban development company, Sembcorp Industries, announced that the conglomerate had successfully launched a S\$675 million (US\$497 million) sustainability-linked bond (SLB) recently.

Sembcorp's SLB is the first issuance by an energy company in Southeast Asia and the region's largest such issuance to date. The bond was anchored by an investment of S\$150 million from the IFC,

the first investment of this kind from the corporation.

"These are the type of instruments that can really resonate well," said Alfonso Garcia Mora, IFC's regional vice president for Asia and Pacific, during a panel discussion at the Singapore Sustainable Investing & Financing Conference (SSIFC), an event co-organised by asset manager Blackrock, IFC and state investment firm Temasek as part of Ecosperity Week 2021, hosted by Temasek.

"They [SLBs] create the right incentives on the issuer's side to do things that they have committed to with specific key performance

indicators that are sustainable and incentives on the investor side, to make sure that they are not putting their money in something that will not comply," Garcia Mora told the panel on Thursday.

Garcia Mora also said that the success of the bond issuance showed that investors have been clear about their position on the climate crisis and are continuing to shift capital to align their portfolios with net-zero targets. Unlike traditional green bonds, SLBs involve issuers pledging to improve their performance against tailor-made environmental, social and governance



Floating market in  
Bangkok, Thailand.  
Image: Mandala Travel, CC  
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# WILL THE UN FOOD SYSTEMS SUMMIT BRING CHANGE?

Tensions need resolving if the summit process is to achieve its ambition of transforming how the world does food, writes **Mike Shanahan**, China Dialogue

**T**he global food system is a mess. The way we produce, transport, consume and waste food is destroying nature, degrading soil, and polluting air and water. It powers climate change, accounting for around one-third of humanity's greenhouse gas emissions.

Social inequality and violations of human rights are widespread. Malnutrition and obesity are both major killers. And while we pro-

duce more food than ever, the UN reported in July 2021 that 811 million people still go hungry each day. That's more than one in every ten people. Perversely, most are farmers and their children.

So, on the face of it, it is good news that the UN will host a Food Systems Summit on 23 September. It aims to accelerate the transformation of these systems so they provide nutritious food for all, are good for people and nature, help fight climate change and boost resilience