

CSR TODAY

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When Heat Threatens the Food Chain



Rajesh Tiwari
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Agriculture remains one of the sectors most exposed to climate change. According to recent estimates, agricultural workers accounted for nearly two-thirds of all work hours lost globally due to excessive heat in 2024.

The world is entering another period of climatic uncertainty. With a powerful El Niño expected to intensify global temperatures and 2027 projected to be among the hottest years on record, the debate on climate change can no longer be limited to melting glaciers, rising seas or extreme weather. The latest warning comes from a far more immediate concern — the food on our plates.

New research has highlighted how rising temperatures are increasingly affecting agricultural workers in some of the world's most important food-producing regions. From India's rice fields and Brazil's coffee plantations to cocoa farms in West Africa and tea estates in Kenya, heat stress is reducing the ability of millions of farmers and labourers to work safely and productively. The consequences extend far beyond the farm gate.

Agriculture remains one of the sectors most exposed to climate change. According to recent estimates, agricultural workers accounted for nearly two-thirds of all work hours lost globally due to excessive heat in 2024. In developing countries, where farming remains labour-intensive and adaptation resources are limited, the impact is even greater. Every lost working hour translates into lower productivity, reduced incomes and potentially lower food output.

For India, the warning is particularly significant. Agriculture still supports nearly half the country's workforce and remains heavily dependent on monsoon rainfall. Rising temperatures, recurring heatwaves, erratic rainfall and extreme weather events are already affecting crops ranging from rice and wheat to pulses, cotton and sugarcane. Regions such as Marathwada, Vidarbha, Bundelkhand and parts of North India have repeatedly witnessed the

devastating combination of drought, crop losses and farm distress. As climate risks intensify, safeguarding agricultural productivity will become central not only to food security but also to rural livelihoods and economic stability.

The implications extend beyond producing nations. Global food supply chains are deeply interconnected. A failed harvest in India, drought in Brazil or heatwave in Africa can quickly translate into higher food prices across the world. The inflationary pressures witnessed in recent years have demonstrated how climate shocks can disrupt markets, strain household budgets and challenge governments.

The challenge is not merely one of production but of resilience. Farmers need access to climate-resilient seeds, efficient irrigation systems, weather forecasting services and sustainable farming practices. Greater crop diversification, agroforestry and improved soil management can help reduce vulnerability to extreme weather. Equally important is ensuring that climate finance reaches small and marginal farmers who remain on the frontline of the crisis.

Governments must recognise that food security and climate policy are now inseparable. Investments in adaptation are no longer optional; they are essential. At the same time, reducing greenhouse gas emissions remains critical because adaptation alone cannot keep pace with rising temperatures.

The lesson is clear. Climate change is no longer a future threat to food security. It is already disrupting farms, livelihoods and food markets. Protecting farmers from extreme heat is not merely an agricultural priority — it is an economic, social and national security imperative for India and the world. 

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Mobavenue AI Tech Limited plants 15,000 trees to offset ~10,000 tonnes* carbon footprint, alongside supporting sustainability and healthcare initiatives

Mobavenue AI Tech Limited has undertaken sustainability initiatives integrating responsible practices across operations and community initiatives. The company is working towards sequestering ~10,000 tonnes of carbon over the next twenty years, alongside adopting more sustainable operational processes.

As a step towards embedding sustainability into its organisational culture, Mobavenue AI has aligned its efforts at an employee level through a commitment of planting 75 trees per employee, reflecting an organisation-wide approach to environmental responsibility. The initiatives brings together a set of focused green initiatives under the company's broader CSR efforts, aimed at contributing to environmental balance while staying closely connected to communities on the ground. These include a targeted reduction in paper usage by 90% within office premises, transitioning to energy-efficient LED lighting across offices, phasing out single-use plastics by FY27 and introducing indoor office plants across workspaces.

As an initial step under this framework, Mobavenue AI is undertaking an agroforestry initiative in Mirzapur and Sonbhadra districts of Uttar Pradesh, involving a plantation drive of 15,000 trees across identified locations. The plantation includes a mix of fruit-bearing and non-fruit-bearing



trees, aimed at supporting local biodiversity and creating sustainable livelihood opportunities for farmers, and is expected to engage approximately 88 farmers and community members while contributing to an estimated 10,000 tonnes of carbon offset over the next twenty years as the trees mature.

Additionally, as part of its broader CSR initiatives, Mobavenue AI continues to support community-led healthcare initiatives. Under the Cervical Cancer Mukta Bharat Abhiyan, the company has enabled awareness sessions across 2 schools, reaching 358

parents, teachers and students, along with administering 125 doses, focused on building awareness and improving access to preventive care.

The Company also continues to support healthcare initiatives in association with SJKRCC Trust, including financial support towards medical treatment for underserved patients, covering expenses such as medicines, medical equipment, consumables, nursing staff support, professional fees for medical practitioners, and other related general expenses.

Kunal Kothari, Founder, Chairman and COO of Mobavenue AI Tech Limited, said, "At Mobavenue AI, as we continue to build the business, there is a clear focus on embedding sustainability into our everyday decisions, from how we operate to how we contribute beyond it. These initiatives bring a more structured approach to these efforts, grounding them in real action. Whether it is advancing environmental initiatives or supporting access to healthcare, the intent is to contribute meaningfully through initiatives that create wider, long-term impact. This is a direction that will continue to guide how we build and grow the business."

Through these initiatives, Mobavenue AI aims to build a more structured approach to sustainability, bringing together operational practices and community-led initiatives under a unified direction.

IIFL Home Finance partners with Salaam Baalak Trust and Swayam Siddha to drive inclusion and opportunity



IIFL Home Finance, one of India's leading affordable housing finance companies, has reinforced its commitment to inclusive community development through two impactful CSR initiatives aimed at improving educational access for vulnerable children and enhancing mobility for persons with disabilities.

As part of its CSR efforts, IIFL Home Finance collaborates with Salaam Baalak Trust to strengthen its flagship School on Wheels programme in Delhi. The company formally handed over a fully equipped mobile education bus at Salaam Baalak Trust's Tis Hazari Centre. The new bus will serve children across underserved communities within East Delhi, bringing education, digital learning, and developmental opportunities directly to their doorsteps.

The AC bus features digital learning facilities, internet connectivity, creating a more conducive and engaging learning environment for

children. The initiative is expected to directly benefit more than 600 children and their families through improved educational access and community outreach.

Building on its commitment to inclusive development, IIFL Home Finance also partnered with Swayam Siddha Industrial Co-operative Society for the Handicapped Ltd. to improve mobility and accessibility for persons with disabilities in Mumbai. The company facilitated the launch of a wheelchair-accessible Tata Magic vehicle along with two EV scooters at Swayam Siddha's Rabale Centre in Navi Mumbai.

The vehicles have been provided to support beneficiaries in accessing skill development centers, employment opportunities, and essential services. The initiative forms part of a broader effort to strengthen infrastructure and create more inclusive environments for persons with disabilities.

Speaking on the initiatives, Aarti Marwaha Upadhyay, Chief Human Resource Officer, IIFL Home Finance, said, "Inclusion is not a programme for us, it is a conviction. When a child in East Delhi steps onto a mobile classroom, or a person with disability in Mumbai can independently access a skill centre or a job, something fundamental changes in their world. Our partnerships with Salaam Baalak Trust and Swayam Siddha are rooted in that belief that finance can be a force for equity, and that the communities we serve deserve more than access to housing alone."

These initiatives collectively demonstrate IIFL Home Finance's focus on empowering vulnerable sections of society through targeted interventions in education, accessibility, skill development, and community welfare. By partnering with credible grassroots organizations, the company continues to create sustainable impact and contribute towards inclusive social development.

LinkedIn India extends partnership with Mentor Together through INR 1.5 crore grant to upskill 25000 students across Karnataka

Programme will support students through mentorship-led employability initiatives focused on AI-readiness

As AI shifts traditional career paths and professionals increasingly look for guidance, mentoring is emerging as a critical lever of career growth. LinkedIn, the world's largest professional network, has extended its partnership with Mentor Together, a non-profit organisation helping young people access career guidance. Backed by a INR ~1.5 crore (\$160,000) grant from LinkedIn, the partnership will support 25,000 students across Karnataka, through structured mentoring programmes designed to enhance employability and AI-readiness.

The initiative extends the ongoing 7-year partnership between the two organisations, and their sustained collaboration with the Government of Karnataka's Department of Collegiate and Technical Education.

Over the past year, the programme reached over 23,000 students across nine districts, supported 573 students in one-on-one mentoring through the Mentor To Go app, and facilitated more than 8,000 hours of mentoring conversations. As a result, 86% of mentees completed the programme with greater confidence in their career direction.

The next phase of the partnership arrives at a pivotal moment for India's young workforce. As AI continues to reshape the nature of entry-level roles, the question at the heart of this programme is a practical one: what does preparing students for work actually mean today? The answer is a progressive, three-level journey, where AI is not a subject to master in isolation, but a tool to understand in the context of real career decision-making:

Level 1 - Career & AI Awareness: With 25,000 students across the districts of the state, normalising career conversations and introducing AI literacy through group mentoring sessions.

Level 2 - Foundational Career Mentoring: 8,000 students in short-cycle, time-bound mentoring conversations with professionals on the Mentor To Go app, covering career exploration and responsible AI use for learning and planning.

Level 3 - Placement-Focused Mentoring: 700 final-year students in high-touch mentoring combining mentor guidance, staff support, and AI-enabled job-search tools.

Together, the three levels are designed to meet students where they are, whether they are just beginning to think about careers or actively preparing to enter the workforce, and move them forward with the right combination of human guidance and AI-enabled support.

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Branch International and Samarthanam Trust Reach 220 Beneficiaries Through School and Disability Support Initiatives in Bengaluru

Branch International, a leading NBFC, in collaboration with Samarthanam Trust for the Disabled, an organization dedicated to empowering persons with disabilities and marginalized communities, has successfully implemented a series of health, hygiene, and community support initiatives benefiting 220 individuals across Bengaluru and strengthening support for underserved populations.

The initiative focused on two key areas, Menstrual Hygiene & Nutrition and Support for Persons with Disabilities, impacting school students and individuals with disabilities through targeted interventions.

Under the Menstrual Hygiene & Nutrition program, the initiative reached approximately 200 students across two government schools, promoting awareness around menstrual health and nutrition. The program included the distribution of 200 Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) kits and 200 nutrition kits, along with interactive awareness and sensitization sessions designed to reduce stigma and encourage healthy practices among young girls.

In addition, the Community Health Support initiative was aimed at enhancing independent living for persons with disabilities. The program facilitated the distribution of assistive devices such as artificial limbs, wheelchairs, digital kits, and spinal injury kits to approximately 20 beneficiaries. Each intervention included proper assessment, customization, and training support to ensure long-term usability and improved health outcomes.

These efforts are aligned with Samarthanam Trust's ongoing mission to drive inclusive development through education, healthcare, and livelihood support, particularly for persons with disabilities and other underserved sections of society.

Neeraj Gupta, MD, Branch International, said, "At Branch, we believe access changes outcomes, whether it's access to credit, a hygiene kit, or a wheelchair. Our partnership with Samarthanam Trust extends that conviction beyond financial services, and the 220 lives reached are a starting point, not the destination."

Krishna Priya, Head of People (India), Branch International

further added, "Inclusion at Branch is a hiring principle, a product principle, and now visibly, a community principle. Our partnership with Samarthanam Trust gives our team a chance to live the values we recruit for, and reminds us that the company we're building inside is only as real as the impact we have outside it."

Dr Mahantesh G Kivadasannavar, Founder Managing Trustee, Samarthanam Trust for the Disabled, said, "We believe that access to basic healthcare, hygiene, and assistive support can significantly transform lives. Our partnership with Branch International has enabled us to extend our reach and deliver targeted interventions that not only address immediate needs but also foster long-term dignity, independence, and well-being among beneficiaries."

The initiative also underscored the importance of awareness-led interventions, with on-ground sessions helping break social taboos around menstrual health while promoting informed and confident decision-making among young students.

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Cambridge Judge Business School Recognises FUEL Founder Dr. Ketan Deshpande for Outstanding Contribution and Philanthropic Impact

Friends Union for Energising Lives (FUEL), the Pune-based public charitable trust and NSE Social Stock Exchange-listed non-profit, has announced that its Founder, Chairman and Managing Trustee, Dr. Ketan Deshpande, has been formally recognised by the University of Cambridge, Judge Business School, for his outstanding contribution to the Cambridge India Business Society and for FUEL's exemplary philanthropic work.

The recognition was conveyed through a letter dated 30 May 2026, issued on the occasion of the Cambridge India Business Dialogue 2026, and jointly signed by Prof. Gishan Dissanaik, Dean of Cambridge Judge Business School, and Prof. Jaideep Prabhu, Vice Dean and Director of the Centre for India

& Global Business. The letter acknowledged Dr. Deshpande's steadfast support and mentorship of the Cambridge India Business Society over the past three years, crediting his guidance with helping shape it into one of the most active student-led communities at the School and enabling the growth of its flagship annual Dialogue. It further recognised FUEL's pioneering work in career guidance, skill development and youth empowerment, which has touched the lives of over a million young people across India and opened doors of opportunity for those who need them most.

Responding to the recognition, Dr. Ketan Deshpande said: "This honour belongs not to one person, but to a mission and a movement. For 19 years, FUEL has worked

to open doors of opportunity for first-generation and underserved youth across India. To have that journey seen and valued by an institution like Cambridge is both a privilege and a renewed responsibility. In the same spirit, we are honoured that Cambridge alumnus Dr. Yusuf Hamied has adopted the School of Science at FUEL SkillTech & Entrepreneurship University. As Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam reminded us, dreams are not what you see in sleep — they are what do not let you sleep. There is still so much to build."

The acknowledgement marks a significant milestone in FUEL's growing international engagement and reflects the organisation's deepening association with Cambridge Judge Business School and the wider Cambridge community.



India Autism Center and Special Olympics Bharat sign MoU to build an inclusive sports ecosystem for individuals with autism and intellectual disabilities

India Autism Center (IAC), a pioneering not-for-profit organisation committed to building an inclusive, world-class ecosystem for individuals on the autism spectrum and those with associated neuro-developmental conditions, and the organisation behind Samaavesh, India's largest residential care facility dedicated to autism support and care has entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Special Olympics Bharat, the National Sports Federation recognised by the Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports, Government of India. The collaboration aims to advance inclusive sports opportunities, enhance access to structured training, and strengthen support systems for athletes with intellectual and developmental disabilities, fostering greater participation, confidence, and holistic development.



The MoU, effective from 11 June 2026 for a period of three years, was signed today by Jaishankar Natarajan, Director & Chief Executive Officer, IAC Patrons Foundation, and Dr. Mallika Nadda,

President, Special Olympics Bharat and Chairperson - Special Olympics Asia Pacific Advisory Council (APAC), marking a significant step towards building a long-term partnership and an inclusive sports ecosystem

that enables individuals with special needs to participate, develop their skills, and realise their full potential.

The collaboration brings together IACs expertise in therapy, education, rehabilitation, and inclusive development with Special Olympics Bharats extensive experience in conducting sports and development programmes for individuals with intellectual disabilities across India. As part of the partnership, IAC Sports Center will serve as a dedicated venue partner for Special Olympics Bharat, offering infrastructure and facilities to support sports training, practice sessions, competitions, tournaments, and inclusive recreational activities for special athletes in Kolkata. IAC will also extend support towards organising training camps, workshops, assessments, and regional sporting initiatives, while ensuring accessibility, safety, and seamless coordination for all participants.

Special Olympics Bharat will formally acknowledge IAC Sports Center as a venue partner across its

official digital platforms, including its website, application, and social media channels, further amplifying awareness around inclusive sports and highlighting the importance of creating equal opportunities for athletes with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Speaking on the occasion, Natarajan said, At IAC, we believe that every individual deserves opportunities to discover their abilities, build confidence, and participate meaningfully in society. This partnership with Special Olympics Bharat is an important milestone in our journey towards creating inclusive platforms where individuals with autism and developmental disabilities can experience the transformative power of sports. Through structured training, accessible infrastructure, and community participation, we aim to empower athletes to build independence, confidence, and a strong sense of achievement.

Dr Nadda said, "Sports have the unique ability to bring people

together, build confidence, and create pathways for inclusion. Our collaboration with IAC will help expand opportunities for athletes with intellectual disabilities by providing them with accessible training spaces and a supportive environment. We look forward to working together to strengthen grassroots participation and enable athletes to progress towards higher levels of sporting excellence."

The partnership will also explore collaborative research initiatives in adaptive sports, autism, inclusion, and community participation, along with opportunities for joint publications, knowledge development, and outcome-based frameworks. Through this collaboration, both organisations aim to enhance sports participation, strengthen athlete development, build capacity among coaches and volunteers, and create sustainable pathways for athletes to progress from grassroots training to national and international platforms.

Jaquar Foundation and PHD Family Welfare Foundation Recognised for Community Healthcare Excellence

Jaquar Foundation, along with its implementing CSR partner PHD Family Welfare Foundation (PHDFWF), is conferred with the 'CSR Excellence in Community Healthcare' Award at Sustainability Carnival 2026 held at India Habitat Centre (IHC), New Delhi, for its impactful Mobile Medical Van (MMV) initiative focused on delivering accessible healthcare services to underserved and vulnerable communities. The recognition highlights the Foundation's sustained commitment towards strengthening grassroots healthcare outreach through doorstep medical assistance across remote, rural, peri-urban, and underserved regions.

The event brought together eminent personalities from government, industry, CSR, healthcare and the development sector to discuss sustainability, social impact and inclusive growth and community development with multiple panel discussions and interactive sessions. The award was received by Shamsher Kanwar, Head CSR, Jacquar

Foundation along with Sangita Dutta Das, Chief Executive, PHDFWF on behalf of the entire PHDFWF team from the jury members including Asim Khan- CSR Professional, Nikhil Pant in presence of other jury.

Implemented across Haryana, Rajasthan, Delhi NCR, and Gujarat, Mobile Medical Van (MMV) initiative currently operates through 8 Mobile Medical Vans that provide free primary healthcare consultations, diagnostic support, eye and dental care services, medicine distribution, and preventive healthcare awareness directly within communities lacking regular medical access.

Over the last eight years, the initiative has conducted more than 11,200 healthcare camps and impacted over 5.63 lakh beneficiaries across multiple regions. The programme has consistently expanded its reach through specialised healthcare interventions including eye and dental mobile units, child healthcare outreach, and dedicated rural healthcare support in industrial and remote geographies.

Coforge Opens Its Fourth Public Library in India at Vasant Kunj, New Delhi

Coforge, an AI-native engineering services leader, inaugurated The Coforge Public Library at Vasant Square Mall, Vasant Kunj, New Delhi, on 5 June 2026. This is the company's fourth public library in India and its third in the Delhi-NCR region. The Coforge Public Library is the company's flagship Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiative.

The library was inaugurated by the Chief Minister of Delhi, Rekha Gupta, along with Sudhir Singh, CEO and Executive Director, Coforge, in the presence of members of the local community, educationists, senior citizens, youth, and children.

The Coforge Public Library at Vasant Kunj offers a 10,000 sq. ft. reading space and a curated collection of more than 15,000 titles across popular genres, including fiction, non-fiction, children's literature, self-help, business, spirituality, art, technology, photography, and poetry in both English and Hindi. The collection features books from leading international publishers such as Penguin Random House, HarperCollins, Pan Macmillan, and Simon & Schuster, as well as Indian publishers including Karadi Tales, Amar Chitra Katha, Eklavya, Ektara, and Adidev. The library also includes a dedicated children's zone where young readers can enjoy read-aloud sessions and discover the joy of books. Visitors can locate titles through digital terminals or seek assistance from the library staff. Entry and reading are completely free, and visitors may also borrow books to read at home by paying a fully refundable fee.

Access to well-equipped reading spaces and quality learning resources remains limited in many parts of India. The Coforge Public Library initiative seeks to bridge this



gap by creating a free, inclusive, and welcoming environment for readers from all walks of life, regardless of age, background, or economic status. The initiative supports India's broader goals of literacy, lifelong learning, and community development.

Located on the first floor of Vasant Square Mall, Vasant Kunj, New Delhi, the library has a seating capacity of 170 people and is open from 9:00 AM to 8:00 PM, 365 days a year. It is strategically positioned to serve the densely populated

neighbourhoods of Vasant Kunj and surrounding areas, including Masoodpur, Mahipalpur, Rangpuri, Kishangarh, and Chattarpur.

The first Coforge Public Library was inaugurated in Noida in February 2024, followed by the second in Gurugram in June 2025 and the third in Hyderabad in October 2025. Coforge plans to continue expanding this network of free public libraries across India, with an immediate focus on Delhi-NCR and Hyderabad.

Carrier India Expands Centres of Excellence, Launches Skill Development Program at ITI Kubernagar, Ahmedabad

Carrier India has launched its new Centre of Excellence for Professional Skill Development at Industrial Training Institute (ITI) Kubernagar, Ahmedabad. Implemented by United Way of Delhi, this initiative reinforces Carrier's commitment to equipping India's workforce with industry-relevant skills and advancing innovation HVAC sector. Carrier India is a part of Carrier Global Corporation (NYSE: CARR), global leader in intelligent climate and energy solutions.

Launched under Carrier India's CSR initiative, the program is designed to bridge the skill gap by providing students with hands-on training in refrigeration and air conditioning systems. The specialized curriculum combines technical expertise with practical exposure, preparing students for real-world careers in the evolving HVAC industry.

"Expanding our Centres of Excellence to ITI Kubernagar is more than skilling- it's about unlocking economic opportunity. By connecting students to industry-led HVAC training and real career pathways, we're building a workforce that drives employment, fuels sectoral growth, and strengthens the broader economy from the ground up," said Sundaresan



Narayanan, Managing Director, Climate Solutions India at Carrier Airconditioning & Refrigeration, Carrier India.

The inauguration was presided over by Kunvarjibhai Bavaliya, Minister for Labour, Skill Development, Employment and Rural Development, Government of Gujarat along with N. V. Desai, Principal, ITI Kubernagar, underscoring the program's strong alignment with India's national skill development priorities.

As the implementing partner, Dr. Sujeet Ranjan, CEO, United Way Delhi, states "The launch of

the Centre of Excellence at ITI Kubernagar, Ahmedabad marks a significant step in empowering youth through industry-aligned skilling. In partnership with Carrier India, UWD is helping equip young people with practical HVAC skills, industry exposure, and pathways to meaningful employment, while expanding access to quality training across the country."

NV Desai, Principal, ITI Kubernagar shares, "This collaboration reinforces our commitment to delivering industry-aligned training that connects education with skills. Recognizing the growing importance of the HVAC sector, we are focused on developing well-rounded professionals - equipped with capabilities required for long-term career success"

This program marks a continued milestone in Carrier India's efforts to support India's national skill development mission and promote sustainable, energy-efficient solutions.

Launched under Carrier India's CSR initiative, the program is designed to bridge the skill gap by providing students with hands-on training in refrigeration and air conditioning systems



Cosmo Foundation Strengthens Its Environmental Commitment Through Employee Led Community Initiatives

As part of World Environment Day 2026, Cosmo Foundation, the community outreach arm of Cosmo First Ltd., celebrated the day with a series of employee engagement initiatives in Delhi, Gujarat and Maharashtra. The activities were aimed at raising people's awareness of environmental issues and of engaging individuals in conservation efforts.

The employees gathered at Karjan, Gujarat to take an oath for sustainable environmental practices and participate in a plantation drive. As a part of organised activities, Cosmo Foundation in association with Prayas Youth Foundation hosted a Seed Ball Making Workshop in Delhi, and a plantation drive at the army cantonment biodiversity hub in Chhatrapati Sambhajanagar,

Maharashtra, where employees planted 100 saplings and contributed to long-term greening efforts. These activities were part of the World Environment Day celebrations and are in addition to the large-scale plantation programmes of the Cosmo Foundation.

Speaking on the occasion, Yamini Kumar Jaipuria, Managing Trustee, Cosmo Foundation and Whole-time Director (Corporate Strategy, ESG and CSR), Cosmo First, said, "Environmental sustainability requires consistent action, community participation, and long-term commitment. At Cosmo Foundation, our efforts have grown into a movement that has impacted multiple lives, through tree plantations, water conservation, renewable energy adoption, and environmental awareness

across communities. The progress we have achieved is the result of strong partnerships with institutions, local communities, volunteers, and organisations such as the BSF, Indian Army, and Prayas Youth Foundation, who share our vision for a greener future. As we mark World Environment Day, we remain committed to creating lasting environmental impact by encouraging collective action and nurturing a sense of responsibility towards the planet for generations to come."

Over the years, Cosmo Foundation has endeavoured to create a meaningful impact in the communities it operates in. It has impacted the lives of more than 7.78 lakh through its 3E approach various interventions spanning education, environment and

community empowerment. Within its environmental focus area, the foundation has been instrumental in planting more than 1.61 lakh trees in Maharashtra, Delhi, Gujarat and Haryana in collaboration with Border Security Force, Indian Army, Prayas Youth Foundation etc. These efforts have resulted in over 179 acres of land being rehabilitated with a mix of plantation approaches including Miyawaki forests, agro-forestry, high density plantations and fruit bearing trees which have created a richer biodiversity with over 80 tree species being planted. The Foundation has further promoted conservation of rainwater of more than 2.06 crore litres, through school-based rainwater harvesting systems, facilitated access to clean energy through solar installations across community institutions and fostered responsible waste management practices through the distribution of waste bins in schools and local communities.

In FY 2025-26 alone, the Foundation has planted 50,000 trees at BSF Chhawla, Delhi and in Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar, on a land area of nearly 10 acres of land. It also installed 17.98 kW of solar power systems in four rural schools in Karjan, supported over 220 families including beneficiaries of agroforestry interventions and individuals engaged at tree plantation sites and helped recycle 383.8 kilograms of electronic waste responsibly. More than 13,200 students and community members participated in drives for cleanliness, plastic collection, plantation, workshops and awareness sessions. Further, Swachhata Committees continued to function in 52 schools, involving over 10,000 students every year. At the same time, public green spaces such as Jasola Kos Minar Park in Delhi and Karjan Public Park in Gujarat continued to be maintained as part of the Foundation's environmental programmes.

DS Group Inaugurates Retrofitted Electric Boat on World Environment Day in Varanasi

The Dharampal Satyapal Group (DS Group), a leading FMCG conglomerate and multi business corporation, in partnership with IX Energy, has successfully piloted the conversion of a 25-seater diesel boat into an electric boat and will inaugurate the vessel on World Environment Day in Varanasi. The initiative aims to facilitate collaboration with government departments and other stakeholders to promote the large-scale conversion of diesel boats to electric boats in the city.

The initiative has been conceptualized with the objective of aiding collaboration among government authorities, industry stakeholders, and the local boat operator community to accelerate the large-scale adoption of electric boats in Varanasi. By replacing diesel-powered boats with electric alternatives, the project seeks to reduce air, water and noise pollution, improve the experience of pilgrims and tourists, and contribute towards a cleaner and more sustainable riverfront ecosystem.

Commenting on the initiative, Prabhakant Jain, General Manager, Sustainability & CSR, DS Group, said, "At DS Group, sustainability drives our commitment to community development and environmental stewardship. Through this pilot initiative, we have demonstrated that clean and efficient river transport can be both environmentally responsible and economically viable for the local boat operator community. The successful conversion of a diesel-powered boat into an electric boat marks an important step towards reducing air, water and noise pollution along the Ganga riverfront. We hope this initiative will encourage wider collaboration amongst all relevant stakeholders to accelerate the transition towards sustainable mobility solutions in Varanasi, creating long-term benefits for the environment, pilgrims, tourists and the Mallah community."

The electric boat is equipped with a 35 kWh battery, electric motor, gearbox and associated systems. On a full charge, it can travel approximately 80–85 kilometres, including operations against river currents, or complete 3–4 rounds between Assi Ghat and Namoo Ghat.

Beyond environmental benefits, the initiative also offers significant economic advantages for the Mallah community by reducing fuel expenses and operating costs. To support adoption, charging-related concerns have been addressed through the installation of charging points at key ghats and the provision of long charging cables for convenient battery charging.

The initiative builds on DS Group's longstanding commitment to preserving the cultural and environmental heritage of Varanasi. Through the Dharampal Satyapal Foundation, the Group maintains six ghats in the city—Chait Singh Ghat, Shivala Ghat, Mahanirvani Ghat, Guleria Ghat, Niranjani Ghat and Dandi Ghat. In these ghats it undertakes regular cleaning and maintenance activities, ProSupport inking water facilities, and supports various cultural and community initiatives.

HUL, BMC and partners open 25th Suvidha Centre in Mumbai

A decade after launching its community hygiene initiative in Mumbai's informal settlements, Hindustan Unilever Limited (HUL) on Sunday opened the 25th Suvidha Centre in the city, marking the expansion of a public-private sanitation model that has evolved from a basic toilet facility into an integrated community utility hub.

The new centre at Borivali has been developed in partnership with the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC), HSBC India and JSW Foundation. Union Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal inaugurated the facility.

Launched in 2016, the Suvidha initiative was conceived to address sanitation and hygiene challenges faced by residents of densely populated urban settlements. Over the years, the model has expanded to provide a range of services including clean toilets, bathing facilities, purified drinking water and laundry services under one roof.

According to HUL, the 25 centres collectively serve more than six lakh people annually and have recorded over 10 crore service uses since inception. The programme is implemented with support from Pratha Samajik Sanstha and United Way Mumbai, while EY serves as the governance partner.

What distinguishes the Suvidha model is its attempt to combine public health objectives with financial sustainability. The centres are designed to recover operating costs through user fees, with revenues reinvested into maintenance and hygiene standards. Independent assessments cited by the company indicate that households using the facilities save time and reduce healthcare expenses, while reporting improvements in



sanitation-related health outcomes. The initiative also reflects a growing emphasis on climate-resilient urban infrastructure. Each centre is equipped with solar power systems and water recycling facilities. HUL said the network has helped conserve more than 30 crore litres of water since its inception.

The project is now being positioned as a template for urban sanitation across the country through collaboration with the Ministry of

Housing and Urban Affairs under the Centre for Hygiene and Sanitation Excellence (CHASE). HUL and its partners have also developed a Suvidha Toolkit aimed at helping governments and civic bodies replicate the model in other cities.

Speaking at the inauguration, Goyal said the centres have evolved into comprehensive community facilities that address multiple everyday needs of urban families beyond sanitation alone.

HUL Chief Executive Officer and Managing Director Priya Nair said the initiative demonstrates how public-private partnerships can create scalable and sustainable solutions to urban challenges, while

HSBC India CEO Hitendra Dave and JSW Foundation Chairperson Sangita Jindal highlighted the role of long-term partnerships in improving sanitation access and community well-being. As Mumbai continues to

grapple with rapid urbanisation, the expansion of the Suvidha network highlights the increasing focus on integrated, climate-resilient sanitation infrastructure as a critical component of urban development.

CBRE's Ek Pehal Blood Donation Camp in Pune Facilitates 80+ Units of Blood Collection Ahead of World Blood Donor Day

CBRE South Asia Pvt. Ltd, India's leading real estate and infrastructure consulting firm, under its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programme Ek Pehal, successfully organized the CBRE Ek Pehal - Blood Donation Camp 2026 in Pune today. Conducted in partnership with BloodConnect Foundation, India's largest youth-led organization working towards ensuring blood sufficiency, the camp reaffirmed CBRE's commitment to community health and inclusive social impact.

The camp was held at Sadhu Vaswani Mission, Pune, with blood collection and processing support from Inlaks & Budhrani Hospital. The initiative brought together 150+ donors, reflecting strong community participation.

Through the drive, which was voluntary, non-remunerated, and conducted under approved medical and safety protocols, CBRE facilitated the collection of more than 80 units of blood. On the medically accepted premise that a single unit of blood can save up to three lives, the camp has the potential to benefit over 240+ patients in critical need a contribution that carries particular significance ahead of World Blood Donor Day on June 14, a global observance that calls attention to

▶ **Conducted in partnership with BloodConnect Foundation**

▶ **Facilitated the collection of 80+ units of blood**

▶ **CBRE Ek Pehal has supported over 80 blood donation camps across India**

India's persistent voluntary blood donation gap.

"At CBRE, we believe that creating sustainable communities goes beyond the built environment. Blood donation is a simple act with the power to save lives, and this initiative reflects our commitment to supporting critical healthcare needs while encouraging greater community participation in social causes," said Anshuman Magazine, Chairman & CEO, India, Southeast Asia, Middle East & Africa, CBRE.

"The Pune camp is part of our broader vision to create long-term

social impact through collaborative partnerships and employee-led volunteering. We are grateful to our partners and donors who made this drive a success and helped make a tangible difference in people's lives," he added.

While this marked the first blood donation camp at CBRE's Pune office, CBRE Ek Pehal has supported over 80 blood donation camps across India in partnership with BloodConnect Foundation, building a sustained and scalable model for voluntary blood donation across major cities. Under the initiative, CBRE Ek Pehal, the company has collected ~6,000 units of blood and impacted ~18,000 lives till date.

Building on this momentum, CBRE aims to expand similar drives across its offices and project sites nationwide.

'CBRE Ek Pehal' is targeted to support migrant workers and their families across multiple identified areas, including education, healthcare, and community infrastructure development across major cities in India. All CSR initiatives under the programme are tailored to meet the specific needs of communities, ensuring outcomes that are both relevant and effective. Since its inception in 2019, CBRE Ek Pehal has positively impacted more than 5,50,000 lives across India.

CSR INDIA UNITED

Cohesion Foundation Trust Celebrates 25 Years with New Vision to Transform 1 Million Lives by 2030

Launched Outcome Report highlighting impact across 50,000+ households, 15,000+ women farmers, 67,000+ children, and 43,000+ individuals linked to welfare schemes

Cohesion Foundation Trust, a development organisation with nearly 30 years of work in India's most underserved communities, today released its Outcome Report 2020–25:

5 Years of Impact at a national event titled 'Roots and Horizons: 25 Years of Development Through Her', held at Juniper Hall, India Habitat Centre, New Delhi. The report documents 5 years of measured outcomes across Gujarat, Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, and Uttar Pradesh, it further outlines the future plans for the next 5 years as it works toward its stated goal of transforming 1 million lives by 2030.

Distinguished voices contributing to the day's discussions included Dr. Rajesh Tandon (PRIA), who spoke on the state of government-civil society collaboration; Prof. Bina Agarwal (University of Manchester), on women's land rights as the foundation for economic agency and intergenerational change; Mr. Gagan Sethi, on the lessons of 25 years of community-centred practice and what the next chapter demands; Mr. Sudarshan Suchi (Reliance Foundation), on how philanthropic capital can be aligned with public systems to reach the last mile; Ms. Saranya Pradhan (McCain Foods India), on how private sector engagement with women and youth in agriculture builds both livelihoods and supply chain resilience; Mr. Biraj Patnaik (National Foundation for India), on resourcing the civil society ecosystem and sustaining organisations that hold the long view; and Mr. Sivakumar Surampudi (ITC Limited), on market-linked models that connect rural women and youth to economic opportunity.

The Outcome Report 2020–25 captures a period of significant growth and impact for the organisation. Over the last 5 years, Cohesion supported more than 15,000 women farmers, reached 67,409 children through education and early childhood development programmes, linked over 43,000 individuals to government welfare schemes, strengthened more than 150 community-based organisations, and enabled community-led water management initiatives that created 259,188 kilolitres of additional water storage across 78 villages.

Speaking at the event, Rajesh Kapoor, Chief Executive Officer, Cohesion Foundation Trust, said, "25 years ago, we began with a belief that communities themselves hold the knowledge, resilience and leadership needed to drive lasting change. Our journey has reinforced



(L-R) Sudarshan Suchi, Reliance Foundation; Poonam Muttreja, PFI; Rajesh Tandon, PRIA; Subodh Mishra, Cohesion Foundation Trust; Sivakumar Surampudi, ITC

that belief time and again. Whether it is women farmers strengthening livelihoods, families accessing essential entitlements, or communities managing natural resources, meaningful development happens when people are empowered to lead it. As we look ahead, our

ambition is to help transform a million lives by 2030 through community-owned development.”

The Outcome Report also sets out Cohesion's strategy for the next 5 years, the organisation's stated goal is to transform 1 million lives by 2030 through community-owned

development. Building on its 'Model, Replicate and Scale' approach, the strategy will focus on climate-resilient livelihoods, women's leadership, youth empowerment, stronger community institutions and evidence-driven engagement with public systems and development partners.

Maruti Suzuki hosts friendly matches with visually impaired cricketers as part of its employee volunteering CSR program

Maruti Suzuki India Limited, under its Employee Volunteering CSR Program – 'eParivartan', hosted a special cricket match with players with visual impairment from the Cricket Association for the Blind, Delhi (CABD), an affiliate of the Cricket Association for the Blind in India (CABI).

The unique initiative aims to enable social inclusion and cultivate empathy, respect, and teamwork. The match was held at the SportsCube Center for Excellence in Sector 70, Gurgaon, a venue specifically chosen for its fully accessible infrastructure for cricketers with visual impairment. As part of this event, a team of Maruti Suzuki employees played two 10-over matches with players from CABD. Both matches were won by the team from CABD. The matches were played as per official blind cricket guidelines, including audible balls and adjusted rules for batting, bowling, and fielding.

Discussing this initiative, Rahul Bharti, Senior Executive Officer, Corporate Affairs, Maruti Suzuki India Limited, said, "We thank the Cricket Association for the Blind, Delhi, for giving us this chance to bring both the teams together.



Playing alongside these remarkable cricketers reminded our team of their incredible talent, determination, and spirit. There are vital lessons here to be learnt for all of us about the true spirit of sportsmanship and what it means to collaborate closely with diverse groups and persons with disabilities. Such interactions help us nurture empathy, embrace the spirit of equality, and inspire us to grow as more holistic human beings.”

Maruti Suzuki also presented cricket kits to the Cricket Association for the Blind – Delhi.

In FY 2025-26 alone, Maruti Suzuki employees volunteered over 2,600 hours under the Company's employee volunteering CSR program, 'eParivartan,' positively impacting the lives of more than 8,700 individuals. Over 1,100 company employees volunteered time and skills across 30+ community activities, ranging from health and community care to education and youth engagement. Employees who participated in employee volunteering programmes reported feeling positive, calm, and content after this wonderful engagement.

Cargill Strengthens Maharashtra's Dairy Ecosystem with Two Year Integrated Livestock Development Initiative, Supports Government's Focus on Livestock Modernization

Initiative aims to benefit over 8,000 smallholder dairy farmers across 140+ villages in Ahilyanagar through last-mile mobile veterinary services, AI-powered Advisory App FarmerChat, capability building trainings

Building on its work with dairy farmers and partners to strengthen India's rural economy and livestock ecosystem, Cargill today announced the launch of an Integrated Dairy Development Initiative in Maharashtra's Ahilyanagar district in partnership with Syngenta Foundation India and Digital Green India.

The program was inaugurated in Mumbai by Pankaja Munde, Minister of Animal Husbandry, Environment & Climate Change, Government of Maharashtra, N. Ramaswamy, Secretary, Department of Animal Husbandry, Dairy Development, and Fisheries, Government of Maharashtra along with partners and farmers joining on ground in Ahilyanagar.

With an investment of over INR 2.3 crores over the next two years as part of Cargill's corporate social responsibility and sustainability efforts, the initiative will first be rolled out across Ahilyanagar district (before expanding to other districts) and aims to improve



Pashu Arogya Mitra (Mobile Veterinary Van) as part of the Cargill's Integrated Dairy Development Initiative

livestock health, dairy productivity, and farmer resilience for more than 3,000 farmers through Pashu Arogya Mitra (Mobile Veterinary Van) in 26 villages of Rahuri, Rahata and Shrirampur districts of Ahilyanagar. Additionally, initiative will also

provide AI-powered digital advisory services, and farmer capability building for 5,000 farmers directly across 120 villages.

The initiative comes at a time when India is increasingly focused on strengthening livestock productivity, expanding veterinary access, accelerating digital agriculture adoption, and improving income resilience for dairy-dependent rural households. Animal husbandry continues to be one of the largest contributors to agricultural GDP and a critical source of supplementary income for millions of farmers across the country.

Munde said strengthening the rural economy and increasing farmers' income is a key priority of the state government. Animal husbandry and dairying are important pillars of rural development and need to be better

Cargill partners with Syngenta Foundation India and Digital Green India to strengthen Maharashtra's dairy ecosystem

Program aligned with India's priorities around livestock modernization, digital agriculture, rural income enhancement, and enhancing dairy productivity

facilitated by effective use of technology, artificial intelligence-based guidance and accessible veterinary services. "This joint initiative of Cargill, Syngenta Foundation India and Digital Green India will contribute to the modernization of the livestock sector, women empowerment and sustainable rural livelihoods. I am confident that this initiative will benefit thousands of dairy farmers across Maharashtra and will accelerate our goals of 'Developed Maharashtra and Developed India,'" she said.

STRENGTHENING LAST-MILE VETERINARY ACCESS THROUGH TECHNOLOGY AND PARTNERSHIPS

At the center of the initiative are two Mobile Veterinary Vans deployed in partnership with Syngenta Foundation India, towards critical last-mile veterinary healthcare requirements in this region. Equipped with diagnostic tools, medicines, and vaccine cold-chain facilities, the vans will provide preventive care, reproductive services, vaccination, and routine animal health check-ups directly at farmers' doorstep, to reduce possible treatment delays, improve preventive coverage and lower livestock mortality.

Complementing the veterinary intervention, Digital Green will conduct Livestock and Farm Management Training program to help build capacity of Dairy farmers, by training Pashu Sakhis and Para-vets as Master Trainers to deliver village-level training on animal nutrition, calf care, housing, hygiene, preventive healthcare, breeding, and dairy management. Digital Green will also introduce FarmerChat, an AI-powered, voice-enabled advisory platform that provides real-time guidance in local languages. Accessible through voice, text, and image-based queries, the platform will also help farmers navigate government livestock schemes, animal health services, input providers, and generic market options,



Pankaja Munde, Minister of Animal Husbandry, Environment & Climate Change, Government of Maharashtra, inaugurated the Cargill's Integrated Dairy Development Initiative at Mumbai



Interaction with Pashu Sakhis to understand livestock-related challenges and support needs at the village level

helping reduce information gaps, enabling more timely and informed decision-making. To strengthen grassroots adoption and long-term ecosystem capacity, the program will train Master Trainers who will subsequently conduct village-level sessions for farmers.

Ravinder Balain, President, Cargill India & Senior Managing Director Cargill Animal Nutrition & Health, India, highlighted that, "India's dairy sector plays a critical role in strengthening rural livelihoods, food

security, and agricultural growth, particularly in Maharashtra where animal husbandry remains deeply connected to the rural economy. For Cargill, the state is a strategic market, and we have been working closely with dairy farmers here for several years through nutrition, animal healthcare, farmer education, and veterinary outreach programs. I am confident that this initiative will greatly benefit Dairy farmers in the state, leading to a stronger dairy ecosystem for India."

Narayan Seva Sansthan Unites 21 Differently-Abled Couples at 46th Mass Wedding Ceremony in Delhi

In a powerful celebration of dignity, inclusion, and new beginnings, Narayan Seva Sansthan, one of India's leading organizations dedicated to disability rehabilitation, healthcare, and social empowerment, successfully organized its 46th Mass Wedding Ceremony for 21 differently-abled and underprivileged couples in New Delhi.

The ceremony brought together couples from various states, including Rajasthan, Jharkhand, Bihar, Gujarat, and Uttar Pradesh, who solemnized their marriages through traditional Vedic rituals, taking the sacred seven pheras and beginning their lifelong journey as life partners.

The two-day event was marked by deep emotion, cultural vibrancy, and a strong sense of community. It began with auspicious rituals, including Ganpati Sthapana, followed by traditional Haldi and Mehendi ceremonies, where families, guests, and volunteers blessed the couples with happiness and prosperity. The celebrations were further enlivened by women performing traditional songs, Ghoomar, and folk dances, creating an atmosphere filled with warmth, joy, and cultural pride.

During the ceremony, hundreds of guests and dedicated donors were honoured by President, Prashant Agarwal, Director Vandana Agarwal, and Trustee Devendra Choubisa with traditional turbans, stoles, and mementos in recognition of their support. The event also featured a large-scale gift drive, where Narayan Seva Sansthan offered beds, almirahs, gas stoves, fans, mixers, and more than 100 kinds of household utensils. Also, Delhi donors gave different kinds of gifts to the newlyweds.



Speaking on the occasion, President, Prashant Agarwal, Narayan Seva Sansthan said, "All 21 couples have now taken their sacred vows around the holy fire as per Vedic traditions. Each newlywed couple has been provided with essential household items to help them

begin their new life with dignity and self-reliance.

He further emphasized that mass weddings are not merely a union of two individuals, but a powerful platform to promote social harmony, equality, and humanity. This initiative serves as a ray of hope for



Durga and Mukesh

differently-abled and economically weaker families who often face challenges in conducting such an important life ceremony,” he added.

A STORY OF HOPE AND RESILIENCE

Among the inspiring stories from the ceremony was that of Shibu Kumar and Geeta Kumari from Jharkhand, who have been together for two years. Shibu, who has deformities in both legs, and Geeta, who is differently-abled in her right leg,



Sheebu and Geeta

faced significant financial, social, and familial challenges that delayed their marriage.

Seeking support, the couple approached Narayan Seva Sansthan. The institution extended medical assistance to Geeta and provided modern calipers to Shibu, significantly improving his mobility. They were subsequently selected for the 46th Mass Wedding Ceremony organized by Narayan Seva Sansthan in Delhi.

Expressing her gratitude, Geeta said, “Narayan Seva Sansthan

understands the pain of the differently-abled. Because of them, I have found my love and the chance to build a home.”

ANOTHER INSPIRING STORY OF TRANSFORMATION

Mukesh and Durga from Banswara also overcame difficult circumstances to realize their dream of marriage. Mukesh’s father passed away, while his mother supports the family through daily wage labour. Durga, who had undergone successful leg treatment by Narayan Seva Sansthan in 2009, works as a teacher in a private school as her father is mentally unwell.

Facing financial hardship and family challenges, the couple reached out to Narayan Seva Sansthan and were selected for 46th mass wedding ceremony for differently-abled and underprivileged couples held in Delhi.

Thanking the institution, Durga said, “Narayan Seva Sansthan is like God for us. They successfully operated on my legs in 2009, and today they have fulfilled my dream of marriage as well.”

With this ceremony, Narayan Seva Sansthan has now facilitated 2,582 marriages of differently-abled and underprivileged individuals, reinforcing its long-standing commitment to compassion, empowerment, and social upliftment.

Recognised at the highest national level, NSS founder Kailash Manav Agarwal received the Padma Shri in 2008 from then President Pratibha Patil for his contributions to social service. Continuing this legacy, NSS President Prashant Agarwal was honoured with the National Award in 2023 by President Droupadi Murmu for advancing the empowerment of persons with disabilities. Over the years, the institution has provided free artificial limbs to more than 39,388 beneficiaries and free medical treatment to over 452,000 patients.



Nagaland University study highlights how indigenous knowledge sustains terrace farming among Angami Nagas

A Nagaland University study has generated new insights into how traditional knowledge continues to guide and facilitate terrace farming among the Angami Naga population. It presents significant lessons in sustainable agriculture and food security.

The findings of the study will also support national efforts towards food security and sustainable agriculture. Furthermore, the results of this study may also help to implement development policies and projects that would otherwise hinder indigenous people from using their culturally sensitive agricultural methods.

North-East India has diverse farming practices due to its varied agro-climatic zones and indigenous



(L) Dr. Srikanth Yamsani, Assistant Professor, Tribal Research Centre, Department of Sociology and (R) Research Scholar Mr. Ketekhoto



traditions that are deeply rooted in society. Though shifting agriculture is the predominant mode of farming in Nagaland owing to the undulating topography, the Angami Nagas have an ancient tradition of terrace cultivation.

Unlike previous studies, which focused on the technicalities of terrace farming, the present study goes deeper into the underlying social, cultural and ecological knowledge system that supports the practice.

The findings were published in Sage journal (<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/09763996261439768>), a Wos/Scopus indexed journal by SAGE Publishing that features research across a broad range of disciplines, including social sciences, humanities, and interdisciplinary studies. The findings are based on doctoral research work conducted by Mr. Ketekhoto Neihu under the supervision of Dr. Srikanth Yamsani, Assistant Professor at the Tribal Research Centre, Department of Sociology at Nagaland University.

Highlighting the need for researchers to study topics relevant to local communities, Prof. Jagadish Kumar Patnaik, Vice-Chancellor, Nagaland University, said, "The research highlights how traditional wisdom continues to sustain agricultural productivity, ecological balance, and community resilience in the hill landscapes of Nagaland. The findings show that the sustainability of

Angami terrace cultivation rests on the harmonious integration of ecological practices, social cooperation, and cultural traditions. At a time when the world is seeking sustainable and climate-resilient agricultural solutions, such research underscores the relevance of indigenous knowledge systems and the importance of documenting, preserving, and learning from them."



Congratulating the authors and the Tribal Research Centre for this significant scholarly contribution, he added, "The study provides valuable insights into the sophisticated methods of soil and water management developed by the Angami community over generations, the use of ecological indicators in agricultural planning, and the deep cultural values embedded within farming practices. It demonstrates that indigenous knowledge is not merely a legacy of the past but a living system that contributes significantly to sustainable development and environmental stewardship."

Most of the research focuses on traditional practices in soil conservation, water management, and organic farming. The terrace farms are built using traditional construction methods, which reduce soil erosion and enable proper utilisation of water. The continued use of organic inputs, rather than chemical inputs, reflects efforts to protect the environment and human health.

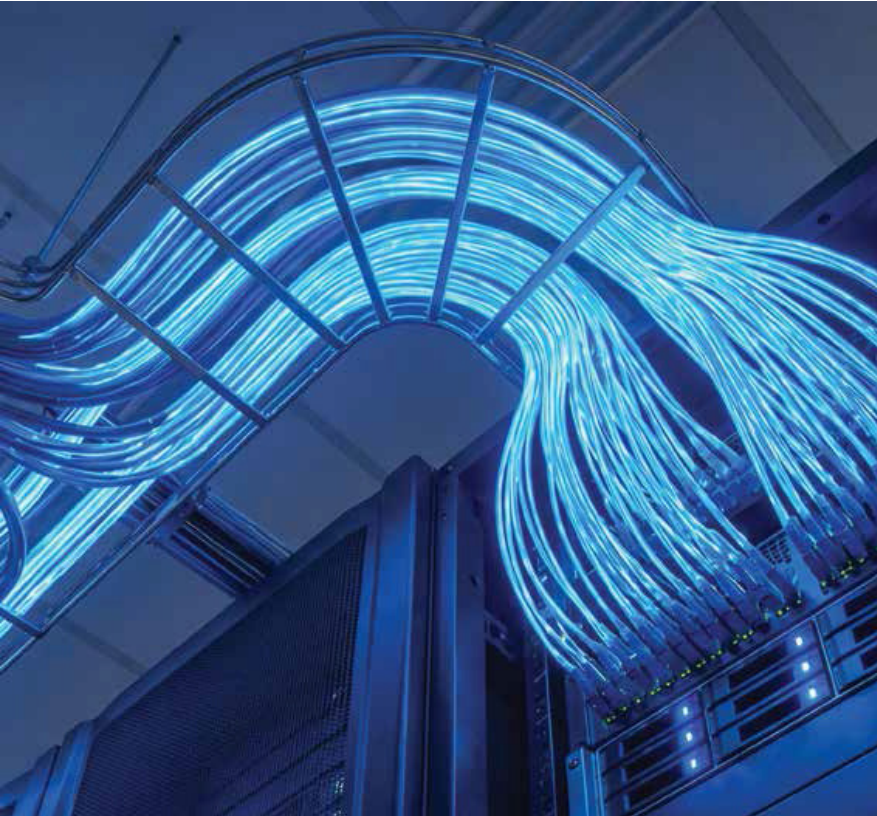
Highlighting the significance of the research, the lead researcher, Dr. Srikanth Yamsani, Tribal Research Centre, said, "Our study found that the Angami Naga population continues to practice farming in close association with cycles and signs of nature. Farmers plant, transplant, and harvest using clues like plant bloom times, bird habits, and insects."

Dr. Srikanth Yamsani added, "While these forms of agricultural practice are still strong, it is important to point out the new challenges being faced by farmers such as changing patterns of rainfall and climate variability. It is also important to note that the adaptive capacity of indigenous knowledge systems is very important."

The study can show that agriculture is not only part of the community's economic activities but is also well-rooted in their culture and society. This indicates an opportunity for sustainable agricultural development in this region and elsewhere in the world where science and traditional ways of doing things can meet. 



THE CLIMATE RISK BEHIND INDIA'S AI BOOM



CAN INDIA'S DATA CENTRES SURVIVE A HOTTER FUTURE?

India is racing to become a global digital powerhouse. From artificial intelligence and cloud computing to digital payments and data localisation, the country's economic future is increasingly tied to its ability to store, process and move vast volumes of data.

At the heart of this transformation are data centres — the sprawling, highly secure facilities that house servers powering everything from UPI transactions and online shopping to AI applications and government services. Over the past few years, India has emerged as one of the world's fastest-growing data-centre markets, attracting billions of dollars in investment from global technology firms, infrastructure funds and domestic conglomerates.

Yet as the country accelerates its digital ambitions, a new challenge is emerging — one that has received far less attention than electricity consumption or water use. Climate

change is increasingly threatening the very infrastructure that powers the digital economy.

A new global study by climate-risk consultancy XDI (Cross Dependency Initiative) has sounded a warning that some of the world's most attractive destinations for data-centre investment are also becoming climate-risk hotspots. For India, the findings raise a crucial question: Can the country build a resilient digital future in an era of rising temperatures, extreme weather and infrastructure disruptions?

THE NEW RISK NOBODY TALKED ABOUT

For years, the debate around data centres focused largely on their appetite for electricity and water. AI-driven computing has intensified these concerns, with newer facilities consuming enormous amounts of energy to run servers and cooling systems.

However, physical climate risk is now emerging as a challenge in its

own right. The XDI study analysed 2,595 planned data centres worldwide and assessed their vulnerability to direct physical damage, operational disruption from extreme heat, and indirect risks arising from failures in surrounding infrastructure such as electricity networks, transport systems, telecommunications and water supplies.

The findings suggest that climate risk is no longer a distant environmental concern. It is becoming a business continuity issue that could influence investment decisions, insurance costs, operating expenses and long-term profitability.

Globally, around six per cent of planned data centres are already classified as high-risk under current conditions. More importantly, climate-related risks are projected to rise sharply through the century under high-emissions scenarios.

The report's central message is simple: the race to build digital infrastructure can no longer be separated from climate resilience.

INDIA'S DATA-CENTRE GOLD RUSH

India's data-centre industry is experiencing unprecedented growth.

The rapid expansion of digital services, the government's Digital India programme, increasing internet penetration, growth in e-commerce, and the emergence of artificial intelligence have fuelled demand for data storage and processing capacity.

Mumbai remains India's largest data-centre hub, benefiting from submarine cable connectivity, financial-sector demand and established infrastructure. Chennai has emerged as a major gateway city due to its strategic coastal location and international cable landings. Hyderabad and Bengaluru are witnessing rapid expansion because of their thriving technology ecosystems.

Industry estimates suggest India's data-centre capacity could more than double over the next few years,

supported by investments running into tens of billions of dollars.

At the same time, the government is pushing ambitious initiatives such as the IndiaAI Mission, semiconductor manufacturing, digital public infrastructure and cloud-based governance systems. Together, these developments make data centres a strategic national asset rather than merely a real-estate investment.

But the XDI report suggests that some of India's most important digital corridors are also among the regions facing significant climate challenges.

HEAT IS BECOMING THE BIGGEST THREAT

Traditionally, flooding has been viewed as the primary environmental threat to critical infrastructure. Yet for data centres, extreme heat is increasingly emerging as an equally serious concern.

The XDI analysis places Indian states such as Tamil Nadu, Telangana and Karnataka among the world's highest-risk regions for operational disruption linked to extreme heat.

This finding carries significant implications. Unlike visible disasters such as floods or cyclones, heat-related risks can develop gradually but have equally severe consequences. Rising temperatures increase cooling requirements, raise electricity consumption and put additional stress on power grids.

Data centres operate around the clock. Even minor fluctuations in temperature can affect equipment efficiency, increase maintenance costs and, in extreme cases, trigger system failures.

As India experiences more frequent and intense heatwaves, maintaining stable operating conditions inside these facilities will become increasingly challenging.

The issue extends beyond individual buildings. Record-breaking temperatures can also affect workers, supply chains and the wider



infrastructure ecosystem that data centres depend upon.

THE HIDDEN VULNERABILITY: INFRASTRUCTURE DEPENDENCIES

One of the most important insights from the report is that climate risks extend well beyond the data centre itself. A modern data centre functions as part of a complex network involving electricity suppliers, telecom operators, water utilities, transport systems and logistics providers.

If any one of these supporting systems fails, the data centre's op-

erations can be affected. The study notes that indirect risks are often significantly underestimated. Previous assessments in Europe found that productivity losses associated with indirect climate risks could be many times higher than losses arising from direct physical damage alone. This finding has particular relevance for India.

Consider a heatwave that pushes electricity demand to record levels. Even if a data centre remains physically intact, disruptions in power supply could affect operations.

Similarly, urban flooding may not directly damage a facility but could disrupt employee access, equipment deliveries or network connectivity.

For digital infrastructure, resilience is only as strong as the weakest link in the surrounding ecosystem.

WHY MUMBAI MATTERS

Mumbai illustrates this challenge better than any other Indian city.

The country's financial capital hosts the largest concentration of data centres and serves as a gateway for international internet traffic. Yet it is also among India's most climate-vulnerable metropolitan regions.

The city faces recurring flooding during intense rainfall events, rising temperatures associated with the urban heat-island effect, sea-level rise and increasing pressure on urban infrastructure.

Recent concerns over delayed monsoons and water shortages have highlighted how climate variability can affect essential services even before extreme weather events occur.

As Mumbai seeks to strengthen its position as India's digital capital, climate resilience will increasingly become a competitive advantage.

Investors may eventually assess not only land availability and connectivity but also the city's capacity to withstand climate shocks.

THE INSURANCE CHALLENGE

Climate risk is also beginning to

reshape the economics of digital infrastructure. Insurers are paying closer attention to catastrophe exposure and operational risks associated with data centres.

As facilities become larger and more valuable, potential losses from climate-related disruptions increase correspondingly. Global insurance experts expect premiums linked to data-centre infrastructure to rise significantly over the coming decade.

For developers and investors, this means climate resilience is no longer merely an environmental responsibility. It is becoming a financial imperative. Facilities designed without adequate consideration of future climate risks may face higher insurance costs, reduced financing options and increased operational expenses.

BUILDING CLIMATE RESILIENCE INTO INDIA'S DIGITAL FUTURE

The encouraging aspect of the XDI analysis is that future risk is not predetermined.

Unlike existing infrastructure, planned data centres provide an opportunity to incorporate resilience measures from the outset.

Site selection remains the first line of defence. Avoiding highly exposed locations can significantly reduce future risks.

Engineering solutions can also play a crucial role. Advanced cooling technologies, energy-efficient designs, backup power systems, flood protection measures and water-recycling infrastructure can improve resilience.



Renewable energy integration offers another pathway. By reducing dependence on vulnerable power grids and fossil-fuel supply chains, renewable energy can enhance both sustainability and operational reliability. Artificial intelligence itself may become part of the solution, enabling predictive maintenance, real-time monitoring and climate-informed operational planning.

INDIA'S OPPORTUNITY

The challenge posed by climate risk should not be viewed as an obstacle to India's digital ambitions. Instead, it offers an opportunity to build a new generation of climate-resilient infrastructure from the ground up.

Many advanced economies are grappling with ageing infrastructure designed for a different climate era. India, by contrast, is still in the process of building much of its future digital backbone. That creates a strategic advantage.

If climate resilience becomes a core component of planning, India

could emerge not only as a major data-centre destination but also as a global model for sustainable digital infrastructure. The convergence of AI, renewable energy, resilient urban planning and climate-smart engineering could create a new template for digital growth.

BEYOND THE AI RACE

The global race to build artificial intelligence infrastructure is accelerating rapidly. But the next phase of competition will not be determined solely by computing power, semiconductor capacity or investment flows.

Increasingly, success will depend on whether digital infrastructure can remain operational during heatwaves, floods, storms and other climate-related disruptions.

For India, the stakes are especially high. The country's digital economy is expected to become one of the world's largest. Data centres will form the foundation of that transformation. The question is no longer where these facilities will be built.

The more important question is whether they will be built for the climate realities of the future.

In the age of artificial intelligence, resilience may become just as valuable as processing power. The countries that recognise this early are likely to hold a decisive advantage in the digital economy of the twenty-first century. 





UNESCO NAMES 12 NEW GLOBAL GEOPARKS

The 12 newly designated geoparks are located in China, France, Greece, Ireland, Japan, Malaysia, Portugal, the Russian Federation, Tunisia – marking its first geopark – and Uruguay.

“Every rock formation, every canyon and every fossil tells a story that belongs to all humanity. In just ten years, UNESCO Global Geoparks have shown that protecting geological heritage also means advancing science, strengthening education

and building local resilience. What unites its 241 sites across 51 countries is not just geological significance, but a shared commitment to pass on knowledge, with local communities at the centre,” said Khaled El-Enany, UNESCO Director-General.

The UNESCO Global Geoparks designation, created in 2015, brings together territories recognised for their rich geological heritage. These rock formations, mountain or volcanic ranges, caves, canyons, fossil sites or ancient desert landscapes

each bear witness to our planet’s history, evolution and climate. The sites combine conservation, environmental education and a sustainable approach to development, while also supporting Indigenous Peoples and local communities in promoting their culture and know-how.

Each year, new sites are added to the network by decision of UNESCO’s Executive Board, after an evaluation of the applications by the Global Geoparks Council made up of international experts.

UNESCO continues to promote the programme in areas where geoparks are less common, notably in Africa, the Arab States and Small Island Developing States. UNESCO does this by facilitating expert missions, tailored training sessions and individual consultations on both a national and local scale, to guide the preparation of applications for UNESCO Global Geopark status.

The new UNESCO Global Geoparks are:

CHINA

Changshan UNESCO Global Geopark

Changshan UNESCO Global Geopark, located at the junction of the Yangtze and Cathaysia massifs along the Jiangshan-Shaoxing tectonic belt, stands out as an exceptional natural geological museum and laboratory for paleontological studies.

Showcasing over a billion years of geological history, the mountainous landscape has a subtropical monsoon climate and is rich in biodiversity, featuring evergreen broad-leaved forests and a complex terrain sloping from the north and south towards the centre. The geopark preserves well-developed stratigraphic sequences and abundant, diverse fossils, which support global biostratigraphic studies, providing key insights into early life evolution and long-term tectonic processes.

Changshan boasts a history of over 1,800 years, and today around 300,000 people from nine ethnic groups live in the area, contributing to the stewardship of the region's cultural and natural heritage. Cultural heritage is closely intertwined with the region's landscape, as Changshan was an important link in the Maritime Silk Road, and during the Song Dynasty it was an important traffic artery which became renowned for its flourishing literary scene.

The continuous study of Song poetry with over 4,000 recorded

poems reflects the people's deep connection to the land. The land continues to support local livelihoods, with the strata of the geopark meaning the soil contains a high content of nutrient elements beneficial for agriculture. Changshan is known in China as the hometown of citrus changshan-hayou and tea-oil camellia, and the geopark actively encourages the development of this characteristic agriculture, playing on its local advantages and bringing shared prosperity to the local community.

Mt. Siguniang UNESCO Global Geopark

Mt. Siguniang UNESCO Global Geopark is situated on the eastern edge of the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, featuring an alpine terrain with distinct vertical climate zones. The geopark is known for its complex tectonics, including folds, flysch deposits, and towering granite peaks. Significant geological formations such as the "Xikang-type" folds, "Xikang Group" flysch, offer key insights into continental collision.

Traversed primarily by the Fubian, Wori and Xiaojinchuan Rivers, the region exhibits a dendritic drainage pattern in the upper Yangtze basin. These landforms record the uplift processes of the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, with dramatic alpine landscapes and numerous peaks towering over 5,000 metres.

Today, approximately 33,000 people inhabit the Mt. Siguniang UNESCO Global Geopark, with the region being a key settlement for Jiarong Tibetan communities. The Tibetan language and associated cultural practices continue to be central to community identity and intergenerational knowledge transmission, and every year the Mt. Siguniang Pilgrimage Festival is held, paying homage to the legend that four girls transformed into mountain peaks.

The region's distinctive folding structures and tectonic context are

of global scientific significance, while the region's pastoralism, architecture, and cultural practices reflect long-standing relationships with and adaptation to high-altitude environments.

Environmentally friendly tourism connects outsiders with the spectacular scenery in a way that supports sustainable local development and gives visitors a chance to experience traditional Tibetan dance, cuisine, and art, reflecting the practical knowledge and practices of the people developed over generations in the region

FRANCE

Terres d'Hérault UNESCO Global Geopark

The Terres d'Hérault UNESCO Global Geopark is a name composed of two words. "Terres," which makes the link to the soil and geology of the region, and "Hérault" corresponds to the main river that crosses the department in the Occitanie region of Southern France, which has the same name.

The territory distinguished by dramatic landforms and deep canyons showcases over 540 million years of geological history. Its rock formations record key Earth processes including sedimentation, tectonics, volcanism, metamorphism, and erosion, making the area a natural open-air laboratory. Remarkable geological sites include the Coumiac marble quarry, the Navacelles cirque, and Salagou Lake, one of Europe's largest exposures of red rock formations formed over 250 million years ago, along with volcanic features.

This geopark reveals Earth's dynamic history, climatic shifts, and ancient life. Spanning 112 municipalities, over 100,000 people live in the Terres d'Hérault region, and its exceptional geological features and cultural diversity offer outstanding opportunities to support tourism and agriculture, with the region home to livestock and vineyards.

Here, geological features have shaped settlement patterns, agricultural practices, architecture, and local traditions for centuries. Occitan culture is deeply rooted within the region and continues to flourish. The local population continues to speak the Occitan language and partake in Occitan traditions, with visitors offered a unique chance to discover outstanding geosites and experience a place where geology directly connects to daily life.

GREECE

Nisyros UNESCO Global Geopark

Nisyros UNESCO Global Geopark, located in the southeastern Aegean Sea at the heart of the Dodecanese island group, encompasses the volcanic island of Nisyros and its surrounding islets. This compact geopark is remarkably diverse, shaped by one of the youngest and most active volcanic systems in Greece, and features one of the best-preserved calderas in the Aegean.

The geopark presents a natural open-air geological museum, including the Stefanos hydrothermal crater, one of Europe's largest and most accessible, alongside a series of hydrothermal craters, fields, lava domes, volcanic cones, and submarine volcanic centres. These features make Nisyros a natural laboratory for studying active volcanism, geothermal systems, and the evolution of young volcanic islands within the Hellenic Volcanic Arc.

Ecologically, the geopark hosts a diversity of habitats, with its volcanic soil supporting endemic and rare plant species, while terraced landscapes, dry-stone walls, and small-scale agriculture reflect long coexistence between people and nature. Villages such as Nikia and Mandraki preserve volcanic-stone architecture, and monasteries like Panagia Spiliani highlight spiritual heritage.

In Nisyros, geology and human history are inseparable, and the geopark has encouraged the community to

participate in heritage preservation through collaborations with local schools and research institutions, encouraging the next generation of environmental stewardship. Visitors are drawn to Nisyros for its cultural authenticity, with vibrant traditions of festivals, music and gastronomy very much still alive.

IRELAND

Joyce Country and Western Lakes Global Geopark

The rocks and landscapes of Joyce Country and Western Lakes UNESCO Global Geopark tell a story that spans 700 million years, linked to the mountain-building event of the Grampian-Taconic Orogeny (a major period of mountain formation over 450 million years ago).

This has created great geodiversity in the park, displaying a wide range of igneous, sedimentary and metamorphic rocks, and a rich fossil record. It is also home to Ireland's only fjord at Killary Harbour. Limestone terrains in the east have developed extensive karst and epikarst systems, including the Cong isthmus, where you can find one of the world's fastest flowing spring complex and multiple cave systems.

Around 60% of the geopark lies in a Gaeltacht area where Irish is a living language for home, education, business, and social life, making Joyce Country and Western Lakes the first UNESCO Global Geopark on the island of Ireland to include a Gaeltacht area. Irish is deeply embedded in local culture and has influenced the language of science itself, with terms such as "drumlin" derived from the Irish "droimainn", now used internationally in glaciology.

Communities across the region continue to participate in music, storytelling, crafts and cuisine, helping to keep the Irish language and associated cultural practices alive, such as Gaelic football, handball and traditional basket making using locally grown willows, with the geopark pro-

moting sustainable development by supporting local businesses to keep the area's intangible heritage alive.

JAPAN

Miné-Akiyoshidai Karst Plateau UNESCO Global Geopark

Miné-Akiyoshidai Karst Plateau UNESCO Global Geopark features a diverse landscape of mountains, valley plains, and the Akiyoshidai karst plateau, known for its dolines and extensive limestone caves. The plateau's grasslands, shaped by centuries of traditional burning, support unique limestone-adapted flora and fauna. The Akiyoshidai Karst Plateau, a key feature of the Miné-Akiyoshidai Geopark, is formed from the Akiyoshi Limestone, offering an 80-million-year record of marine ecosystems.

This limestone, along with the fossil-rich Mine Group, preserves evidence of terrestrial life on land after the Permian extinction around 250 million years ago, including recently discovered plant and insect species. Nationally significant geological heritage includes skarn copper deposits formed by magma interacting with limestone around 100 million years ago, with this copper historically used in the Great Buddha of Nara, which is part of the UNESCO "Historic Monuments of Ancient Nara" World Heritage Site.

The geopark lies within a "satochi satoyama" zone, a transition area between wilderness and urban spaces, rich in biodiversity and agricultural heritage. Historically, the economy centred on agriculture, forestry, and mining. While coal mining declined about 50 years ago, limestone mining continues, alongside a copper mining festival.

Today, modern manufacturing and tourism is supported by the region's unique natural and cultural landscape. In this way, the geopark links Earth science with local culture, with sustainable tourism initiatives leading to economic development in the area, the geopark running

educational programmes, and local universities conducting scientific research on the land.

MALAYSIA

Lenggong UNESCO Global Geopark

Lenggong UNESCO Global Geopark, located in Perak, Malaysia, is nestled between the Titiwangsa and Bintang mountain ranges. Its diverse landscapes include river terraces, limestone hills, and granite peaks. The region's tropical climate fosters dense rainforests rich in biodiversity, including endangered and endemic species like the Malayan tiger and Lenggong rock gecko, while limestone forests host rare plant species.

The Lenggong Geopark also highlights outstanding geological heritage, including the Lawin Tuff, evidence of ancient volcanic activity linked to the supercontinent Gondwana, and granitic magmatism tied to major global tectonic collision. The region hosts rare granites, major faults such as Bok Bak, and suevite formed by a meteorite impact around 1.8 million years ago, as well as the thickest Toba super-eruption ash deposit outside Sumatra, left by one of Earth's most powerful volcanic eruptions about 74,000 years ago.

The population of about 61,000 is ethnically diverse, including Orang Asli Indigenous Peoples. Agriculture, aquaculture, and tourism are key economic drivers, with the region known for freshwater fish, cultural heritage, and preserved forest ecosystems supporting unique wildlife and traditional livelihoods.

The geopark includes the Lenggong Valley, a UNESCO World Heritage Site with one of the world's longest archaeological sequences, where stone tools, burial sites, and ancient settlements reveal a deep history of human adaptation to changing environments. Community-led initiatives and partnerships with researchers and educational institutions promote geotourism, heritage conservation, and traditional knowl-

edge, ensuring that local people benefit from increased visitation while safeguarding both archaeological and natural sites.

MALAYSIA

Sarawak Delta UNESCO Global Geopark

Located in western Sarawak, Malaysia, the Sarawak Delta UNESCO Global Geopark sits at a major geological boundary where two ancient landmasses came together more than 200 million years ago, during the breakup of the supercontinent Gondwana.

This collision shaped the foundations of Borneo and has led to the Kuching Zone suture, which is a key piece of evidence for how Southeast Asia's landmasses have shifted over time. Today, the geopark is defined by a warm tropical climate and exceptional biodiversity, supported by an extensive river delta system and a landscape that transitions from low-lying plains to higher ground inland. The area preserves a long record of Earth's history, spanning over 250 million years, during which shifting plates and tectonic forces gradually reshaped Borneo.

Home to over 600,000 people, this geopark includes Kuching – the UNESCO City of Gastronomy, where traditional street food and kopitiam culture blend with fine dining and festivals. Kuching and neighbouring towns showcase the region's ethnic diversity and harmony, and locals partake in cultural dances, such as the Eagle dance of the Bidayuh Indigenous Peoples.

Traditional agricultural, aquaculture and craft-making practices, along with more modern ecotourism practices, are supported by the region's strong transport network which links the region nationally and internationally, meaning visitors can experience the Sarawak Delta's rich geological history and sustainable land usage, showcasing the dynamic environment and traditions of the delta.

PORTUGAL

Algarvensis UNESCO Global Geopark

The Algarvensis UNESCO Global Geopark is located in southern Portugal's Algarve region and presents a diverse geological history spanning 330 million years. The highly geodiverse territory is marked by a wide variety of rock types and landforms that record major tectonic, volcanic, and sedimentary processes shaping the region.

Two extremely unique geological features are the tsunami deposits at Lagoa dos Salgados formed during the 1755 Lisbon Earthquake and the Loulé Salt Mine, which is the deepest point in Portugal open to the public, and has served as a cornerstone of Portuguese industry for centuries. Located both at land and sea, the geopark preserves evidence of volcanic activity and limestone formation as well as extensive coastal marine environments, making it a key site for understanding the Earth's processes.

The Algarvensis hosts well-preserved Mediterranean ecosystems and a rich marine environment, and this biodiversity coexists with a strong cultural legacy, visible in megalithic monuments, ancient writing systems, Roman and Islamic heritage, traditional villages, craftsmanship and a gastronomy rooted in the Mediterranean Diet.

As a hub for tourism coastal population densities triple in the summer months, with the region's economy relying heavily on the tertiary sector, while many inland areas face economic and population decline. The geopark tries to rebalance this pattern while uplifting the local communities, encouraging visitors to explore inland villages to experience local handicrafts and gastronomy. By connecting geology with local tourism, Algarvensis promotes a model of sustainable development, while also providing educational programmes to help steward the

next generation of awareness to protect the environment.

RUSSIAN FEDERATION

Toratau UNESCO Global Geopark

Toratau UNESCO Global Geopark is located at the junction of the southern part of the Ural Mountains and the eastern outskirts of the East European Platform, within the Republic of Bashkortostan. The territory is rich in unique geological sites of scientific, historical, and natural value, with rocks ranging from 1 billion to 250 million years old. Its main geological highlights are the three Shikhany mountains of Toratau, Yuraktau, and Kushtau, which are remnants of a massive barrier reef that formed approximately 280–300 million years ago.

The geopark also includes important geological sections at Usolka and Dalny Tulkas, along with caves, waterfalls, gorges, mountain rivers, and rugged rock outcrops that reveal the long and complex history of the Southern Urals.

Natural and cultural heritage are closely intertwined in Toratau, as the geopark preserves ruins of ancient settlements and fortresses that allow visitors to immerse themselves in the region's past and learn about the culture and life of the peoples who have historically inhabited this area.

Today the geopark supports locals by showcasing their cultural heritage, cuisine and craft, and has led to the creation of jobs inside the park. Geoguides and researchers of the geopark have also developed educational programmes to help local communities help understand, preserve and develop the region.

TUNISIA

Dahar UNESCO Global Geopark

Dahar UNESCO Global Geopark in Southern Tunisia becomes the third in Africa, and offers a remarkable geological record spanning the last 250 million years, highlighting the earth's evolution. Situated on the

northeastern edge of the Saharan Platform, Dahar features well-preserved, flat rock layers from the Mesozoic Era (about 250–66 million years ago) and diverse petrographic, mineralogical, and morphological features shaped by erosion and alteration, and marks the site where the Great Rift opened around 200 million years ago, initiating the formation of the Tethys Ocean and the breakup of the supercontinent Pangaea into Gondwana and Laurasia. A key highlight is Jebel Tebaga, which hosts Africa's only known marine Upper Permian outcrop, featuring marine fossils formed over 250 million years ago.

Around 330,000 people live in the geopark area, where agriculture and livestock shaped by arid environmental conditions form the main economic activities.

Human adaptation to this challenging environment is evident in traditional water systems, oil mills, ksour (fortified granaries), and troglodytic dwellings, which link geology closely with cultural heritage and ingenious responses to scarce water and extreme temperatures. As tourism grows, supported by an improving road network and proximity to an international airport, the geopark works to provide visitors an authentic experience, exposing them to traditional crafts, food and practices.

Around 330,000 people live in the geopark area, where agriculture and livestock shaped by arid environmental conditions form the main economic activities.

URUGUAY

Manantiales Serranos UNESCO Global Geopark

The Manantiales Serranos UNESCO Global Geopark is located in south-east Uruguay, in the Department of Lavalleja. The region presents a rich geological history, with more than 80% of the territory composed of metamorphic and igneous rocks that record significant tectonic activity.

Over 28 distinct lithologies and valuable mineral deposits testify to the formation and breakup of ancient supercontinents such as Rodinia and Gondwana. Geological records document the opening of the Atlantic Ocean during the Mesozoic, which led to the separation of South America and Africa, followed by tectonic processes of uplift, erosion, non-deposition, and sedimentation accompanied by climate change.

Community is at the heart of the aptly-named 'Manantiales Serranos' ('Mountain Springs' in English), which was even named through a community-driven process to reflect the area's hilly landscape and abundant water sources. The region is home to the headwaters of the Santa Lucía River, Uruguay's third-largest basin, which supplies drinking water to 60% of the population and supports much of the country's industry.

Its main urban centers include Minas, Solís de Mataojo, and the tourist village of Villa Serrana, which swells from 300 residents to 10,000 during peak seasons. Surrounding rural communities often bear names linked to local geological features. The region's economy is based on agriculture, livestock, mining, water use, and tourism, fostering a culture strongly connected to natural resources and committed to environmental conservation. 🌱

(Source: <https://www.eco-business.com/press-releases/unesco-names-12-new-global-geoparks/>)



André Hoffmann warns that rising conflict, short-term politics and weakening multilateralism are undermining efforts to build a more sustainable and resilient global economy. Image: ILO Asia-Pacific, CC BY-SA 3.0, via Flickr.

WE ARE SPENDING MORE THAN THE PLANET CAN GIVE US

Davos trustee André Hoffmann on how short-term politics and fossil-fuel dependence are pulling the world away from climate action. Excerpts of the interview

by **Dipankar Ghose & Patrick Moore**

André Hoffmann has spent years arguing that business must move beyond its focus on short-term profit and

help to build “sustainable prosperity” as the vice-chairman of Swiss pharmaceutical giant Roche and co-chair of the World Economic Forum’s board of trustees.

It’s a cause he has backed beyond the world of business, too, across decades of philanthropy and leadership in environmental and conservation nonprofits, including a ten-year

stint as vice-president of the World Wide Fund for Nature.

In his 2024 book, *The New Nature of Business*, co-authored with journalist Peter Vanham, Hoffmann made the case for companies to account for their effects on nature and society – to put the cost to the planet on the balance sheet, as he likes to say. But much has changed since. Speaking to Dialogue Earth, Hoffmann says the world has become “even more short term”, with war, deglobalisation, and authoritarian politics pulling against collective action.

In a wide-ranging interview, he warns that climate resilience must shape long-term planning, describes calls to burn more fossil fuels from within the US administration as “pretty terrifying stuff”, and warns that a big financial crisis in the next few years is “not impossible at all.”

The interview has been lightly edited for brevity and clarity.

Dialogue Earth: Since you published your book, in late 2024, we've seen conflict, increased trade tensions, political swings and a corporate retreat from environmental, social and governance (ESG) commitments. Has this had an impact on your vision for a “new nature” of business?

André Hoffmann: That's an interesting way to open this conversation. Certain things come out reinforced by the current situation, others a little bit less emphasised. The world has become even more short-term. Most of the businesses described in the book as working for sustainable prosperity have changed or adapted their strategies, and are navigating the current seas in a slightly different way.

The short term is winning again. But the thing I would change in the book's vision, if I were to take into account the last couple of years, is to put much more emphasis onto social capital: how can we move away

from “me, me, me” to the “we”, to the “us”?

Countries can see a crisis like the blocking of the Strait of Hormuz as evidence for the case for renewables. Or they can turn to short-termism on energy, however dirty. How to convince governments that renewables are the way to go, even if there is short-term cost?

I think the answer is one word – resilience. The idea that we are dependent on imported gas either from Russia, or now the US, for producing simple goods we need in our daily life is something that should spur memories of what happened during Covid: we were all suddenly incredibly dependent on a couple of economic actors in a way which did not allow us to think long term. In corporate thinking, to put some resilience in is key to what is going to happen now.

Many global ESG efforts were made through the 2010s, in particular in Europe and the US. There has been progress in China, too, in building regulations around this. But in a world that is, perhaps, “deglobelising”, connections across nations are fraying. Do you think the principles of your “new nature of business” can endure, and also translate to countries of the Global South?

I think the rebuilding of national boundaries is very much intended to split the problem in several places. But what we try to talk about is to do it together. The splitting up of big blocs into small constituent parties, of course, is in the interests of autocrats.

A couple of weeks ago I was in Washington DC, and the people I talked to in government were telling us very openly, “I'm sorry, we don't want the European project to succeed, so we're going to make sure we can do everything we can to break up the European Union because it will be too strong a bloc.” The new nature of business is about purposeful

industry which helps us to create prosperity in a sustainable way. It's not going to happen if we just pitch each other against each other.

Around us, there is constant conflict – Sudan, Gaza, Iran. War has no ESG strategy, and it is successfully balkanising interests. What is the environmental case to stop conflict?

There's a school of thought, which I really don't like, that says it must get worse before it gets better. I would prefer us to be more proactive than this. The risk that comes with international relationships, is how are we ever going to stop war if we cannot define it?

War is no longer pitching two armies together. It is something that happens constantly. Russian robots trying to do something; disruptions in payment systems between Singapore and China. These things are happening all the time. We see in Europe the extent to which two economies are focused on this – I mean, 40 per cent of Russia's GDP is on armament; Ukraine, probably more. If we were to think in ESG criteria, if you talk about social capital, we are going to need different incentives, because the incentive now is just destroying the neighbour, and that cannot be the right way to look forward.

But I cannot at the moment see an international code that would settle the impact that war has on countries. The big wars of the moment have been done against every legal consideration. So this is not looking good.

You now lead Davos. There are COPs for climate, biodiversity and more – collections of stakeholders trying to come together to think of solutions. But what do agreements mean when multilateralism is weakening? When Donald Trump can, one fine day, say we are pulling out of the Paris agreement?

Our theme this year at Davos was “the spirit of dialogue.” We want to

talk about growth because of the debt issue. We want to talk about livelihoods and the world of work. We want to talk about innovation, and we have to talk about geopolitics. We're trying to put all this into the context of planetary boundaries.

Right now, we are spending more than the planet can give us, and that is a road to nowhere. The idea of having that dialogue on the table in Davos becomes even more important. How do you lead Davos? Clearly, the agenda we've discussed since the beginning – this idea of saying we need to act collectively – is in danger. How can you trust the government who bombs the people they're negotiating peace with? How can you trust a government which does this with every international treaty? How can you trust a world order where might is right?

Since your book was released, there has been a lot of scrutiny on artificial intelligence and its potential environmental and social impacts. Many have fears about its impact on employment and work too. Do you see AI as an industry that can still fit within your vision of a new nature of business?

First, we need to measure the impact that AI can have on the system. The US stock exchange is at a historical high on the back of six or seven AI-adjacent companies. Half the countries on the planet are in some sort of conflict, and the US stock exchange is at a historical high. There is a disconnect there which we are going to have to deal with. I mean, the likelihood of a big financial crisis in the next three to six years strikes me as not impossible at all.

The idea of using AI to make more sense of the flood of data we are generating every day could be fantastically useful. But at the same time, there are consequences of its systemic use. It could be very dangerous for jobs, but for all sorts of other things. Education – what's

the point of going to school if you have everything at your fingertips anyway? How do you create an education system which allows people to use information in the right way rather than just acquiring it?

The new nature of business means doing something for sustainable prosperity, and if we want to do that in a way that really benefits the system, we should not refrain from using any tools. AI seems to be a tool just as good as another. We should not throw it away, but it has to be controlled and regulated.

There is a lot of concern about environmental impacts. Do you think that is central enough in discussions that you see at Davos and other multilateral forums?

"Well, the last one I attended, we had a senior member of the US administration addressing us and saying we need to provide more, and we need to burn more, fossil fuels. This is pretty terrifying stuff. You can see the pressure under which he probably is. But that's no excuse. It's the example of the bathtub [for fossil fuel use]. You go into a bathroom and the tub is overflowing. What do you do? Do you turn off the tap or mop up the floor? What they are telling us in the US now is that you turn the tap on a bit more, because then you'll be much better at mopping up the floor."

You talk in the book of your family's pharmaceutical company, Roche, having a purpose to "do now what the patient needs next". If we take nature, climate and the environment as our patient, what is the most vital action to take now?

We are not talking about the environment and nature because we love it, or because it's beautiful. What should drive us here is humanity. The best way to do that is to include the cost of nature in the balance sheet. If we realise that nature is not limitless and that it has

a price, I think we are going to get on in a better way. If you look at a tree and put value on it, a tree is worth its weight in wood.

But it's so much more than that because it's alive. It's connected to the rest of the forest. It's part of an ecosystem. At the moment, all our economy is purely extractive. But if nature could stand its ground and be recognised as of value, we would be in a very different place.

This is all taking place in an information battle over environment and climate. How do you win this? How do you convince people that environmental change is around them now, particularly when fossil fuel lobbies are pouring money into disinformation?

We need to find something that is understood by all. The idea of going deeper and deeper into the science has not helped us. We need to make it more accessible. Maybe there is something we can learn from the populist movement – this notion of "what's in it for me?" How can I translate the environmental crisis to my own person? That might be a way of getting there.

If I talk about nature in a boardroom, people say "oh, he just likes birds or trees". That is not what we are talking about. We are talking about sustainable prosperity, which means a circular economy, which means reuse, which means sufficiency. The communication battle will be won if you can convince your reader – our readers, collectively – that it is not something that concerns somebody else, but it is our concern, and we can do something at an individual level as well. 

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(SOURCE: <https://www.eco-business.com/news/qa-we-are-spending-more-than-the-planet-can-give-us-that-is-a-road-to-nowhere/>)



WEAVING STRONGER CITIES IN THE PACIFIC TOGETHER

Urbanisation across Pacific small island developing States (SIDS) is accelerating, though unevenly, with around 45 per cent of the population living in urban areas in 2020, a figure projected to rise to nearly 60 per cent by 2050. While levels of urbanisation vary widely between countries, cities and towns across the Pacific are growing faster than planning systems, infrastructure and governance arrangements can keep pace. Climate change, environmental

degradation and rapid urbanisation aren't separate challenges here; they collide. Cities face cyclones, floods and earthquakes alongside slow, grinding stresses like sea-level rise, saltwater intrusion, land subsidence and environmental decline. These risks cascade across urban systems: housing failures trigger health crises; infrastructure breakdowns disrupt livelihoods; informal growth deepens vulnerability.

That's why building urban resilience in Pacific SIDS isn't optional — it's existential.

At its core, urban resilience is about the capacity of cities and communities to survive, adapt and thrive no matter what shocks or stresses they face. It's not about a single project or sector. It's about how land, housing, infrastructure, governance, culture and finance work together, before disasters or shocks strike, not just after.

SO HOW DO WE ACTUALLY GET THERE?

If there's one thing Pacific cities do not need more of, it's another glossy

plan that never leaves the shelf. Urban resilience in the Pacific is a systems and governance challenge, not merely a technical or environmental one.

That truth landed sharply at the 7th Pacific Urban Forum (PUF7) in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea. But what transformed it from a familiar diagnosis into something more hopeful was the human layer, a shared recognition that resilience isn't built by frameworks and data alone, but through relationships, trust and the ability to work across boundaries.

Technically, we know what needs fixing. The problem isn't a lack of awareness or evidence. It's a failure to translate knowledge into coordinated, sustained action. Urban growth in Pacific SIDS is often informal and geographically constrained, pushing settlements into floodplains, steep slopes and vulnerable coastlines. Governance structures remain fragmented, with weak alignment between national and local mandates. Data exists, but it's often locked in institutional silos. Slow-onset risks are rarely reflected in zoning codes, infrastructure investment, or budget decisions.

BUT KNOWING THIS ISN'T THE SAME AS CHANGING IT.

The message from PUF7 was clear: governance, not hazards, is the real bottleneck. Institutional silos, short political cycles and top-down policy design repeatedly undermine resilience efforts. Plans are written, consultations are held, but implementation falters. The result is a familiar loop: plan, delay, react; then repeat. Too often, resilience is framed as "either/or": government or community; policy or customary law; development or heritage. Pacific realities demand "both/and".

SO WHY IS BREAKING THAT LOOP SO HARD?

For Millicent Barty, a Solomon Islands youth leader and founder

of Kastom Keepers, an NGO dedicated to raising resilience rooted in kastom*, the answer lies in weaving. Integrating kastom and traditional knowledge into urban planning, not as a cultural add-on, but as something foundational, isn't just about cultural recognition. It's a resilience strategy. Urban systems that ignore customary land, social networks and stewardship aren't just culturally blind; they're structurally weak.

That idea resonates strongly across the Pacific. Solomon Islands leaders spoke about the need for place-based, community-led planning in Honiara, grounded in customary land tenure and lived realities. Fiji highlighted whole-of-government coordination to align housing, land, climate and social protection, backed by real budgets and institutional reform. Kiribati emphasised the need to strengthen local councils so that national climate priorities translate into action on the ground. Vanuatu underscored how post-disaster rebuilding created momentum to hard-wire resilience into housing policy and building codes.

What these experiences show is that urban resilience in the Pacific isn't just about what we build, it's

about how we govern, decide, and work together. From a systems perspective, resilience can't be delivered sector by sector. Housing, water, transport, land, health, climate adaptation and disaster risk reduction are tightly interwoven. Decentralised infrastructure, for example, isn't only a technical fix; it depends on local capacity, trust and governance arrangements that allow communities and councils to manage systems when shocks hit.

This is why collaborative initiatives such as the Pacific Urban Partnership and regional platforms like PUF7 matter, not as event showcases, but as relational infrastructure. They create space for countries to compare experiences, learn from one another and realise they're wrestling with the same constraints.

Urban resilience in Pacific SIDS won't be achieved without strengthening the connective tissue: between lines of government; between sectors; between data and decision-making; between traditional knowledge and formal policy; and between people who share the same cities but rarely the same room.

But if resilience is about withstanding compounding risks, then the greatest asset may be the willingness to listen to each other, to share stories, to weave perspectives together, and to govern from a place of shared good rather than division.

In the end, resilience is all about learning how to weave stronger cities together. 🌱

**Kastom—a pidgin adaptation of the word "custom"—is used throughout Melanesia to refer to traditional ways of life, encompassing indigenous religion, economic practices, art, spirituality, and social norms. It provides a core sense of identity and functions as a guiding framework for social relations (such as the wantok system), land tenure, and environmental stewardship.*

(SOURCE: <https://www.eco-business.com/press-releases/weaving-stronger-cities-in-the-pacific-together/>)

From a systems perspective, resilience can't be delivered sector by sector. Housing, water, transport, land, health, climate adaptation and disaster risk reduction are tightly interwoven.

'FOR US\$100 MILLION A YEAR, WE CAN GET CLEAN OCEANS': THE OCEAN CLEANUP FOUNDER BOYAN SLAT

The 31-year-old engineer responds to criticism that his non-profit focuses downstream of the bigger problem with a “quick fix” solution, and claims he can clean the ocean in a decade by intercepting river trash.

Read an analysis by **Robin Hicks**

When Boyan Slat observed more plastic bags than fish while diving in Greece as a teenager, it triggered a mission that would swell into one of the world's most visible environmental cleanup campaigns.

The 31-year-old's organisation, The Ocean Cleanup, has removed more than 50,000 tonnes of plastic from rivers and waterways since it evolved from the Ted Talk that went viral in 2012, and is now scaling up a plan that Slat claims could clean the ocean within a decade.

But as the group expands its river cleanup operation, questions remain over whether its approach targets the right part of a complex crisis.

Slat's strategy rests on a simple premise: stop plastic before it reaches the ocean. Using artificial intelligence-powered cameras mounted on bridges, The Ocean Cleanup has mapped waste flows across hundreds of rivers, concluding that just 1 per cent of the world's rivers account for roughly 80 per cent of ocean plastic pollution. That insight has driven its deployment of solar-powered “inter-



An interceptor deployed on a river in Guatemala. Image: The Ocean Cleanup

ceptors”, systems designed to capture waste in rivers before it spews into the sea. The organisation is now active in more than 20 rivers across 10 countries and aims to expand to 30 cities by 2030 – through its flagship 30 Cities programme – backed in part by US\$121 million from The Audacious Project, a funding initiative backed by TED Talks. Slat argues that rivers offer the fastest and cheapest intervention point.

“If you work on rivers, you know that every piece of plastic that we take out would've gone into the ocean,” he told Eco-Business in an interview after an event hosted by consultancy The Matcha Initiative at the Singapore Sustainability Academy in April. “That's the highest leverage.”

By contrast, upstream solutions are far more resource-intensive and slow-moving, he argued.

“Waste collection already costs about half a trillion dollars a year globally. That has to triple or quadruple,” Slat said. “What we’re doing is a rounding error compared to that.”

For about US\$100 million a year, including the build-out costs of the river interceptors, systems and infrastructure, “we can get clean oceans,” said Slat, arguing that cleaning the oceans costs orders of magnitude less than the damage being caused by aquatic trash.

Crucially, the interceptor model now works, having been trialed many times across many different rivers. Early attempts to cleanup the Great Pacific Garbage patch, the largest accumulation of plastic in the open ocean, proved technically almost impossible – and drew derision from sceptics.

Slat recalls a news headline in the Washington Post from 2019 that read: ‘Experts warned this floating garbage collector wouldn’t work – the ocean proved them right’ after his trash collection device in the Pacific broke into two.

“For eight years we didn’t collect any plastic. The early years were about understanding the problem, doing the research, and going through failures,” Slat said.

A “QUICK FIX” – OR A DISTRACTION?

The aerospace engineering graduate is clear about how he sees The Ocean Cleanup’s role: not as a replacement for systemic reform, but as a stopgap.

“I wish our interceptors would not be necessary,” he said. “But fixing upstream systems will take decades.”

In the meantime, river interception offers what he calls a “quick fix”, one that could cut ocean plastic in years rather than decades.

The organisation estimates that deploying systems across the most polluting rivers could reduce global plastic flows by up to a third by 2030. But critics argue that this framing

“

**We’re now
cleaning an area of
ocean the size of a
football field every
five seconds.**

– BOYAN SLAT

Founder, The Ocean Cleanup

risks oversimplifying a complex problem, and diverting attention from the root causes of plastic pollution, including rising production driven by the petrochemical industry.

According to a report by Pew Charitable Trust, plastic production is projected to double by 2040, from 2020 levels.

“I don’t see any other way in which we could have a material impact on the inflow in a matter of years,” he said. “If anyone has a better solution, I’d love to hear it.” He frames the debate as a choice between idealism and pragmatism. “There’s the root-cause philosophy –

which is usually the most sustainable option long term – and then there’s the question of where you can have the biggest impact, fastest,” he said.

But global plastic production now exceeds 460 million tonnes annually, and is projected to grow. This raises questions about whether downstream interventions can keep pace with the damage being done by plastic pollution.

A SMALLER PROBLEM?

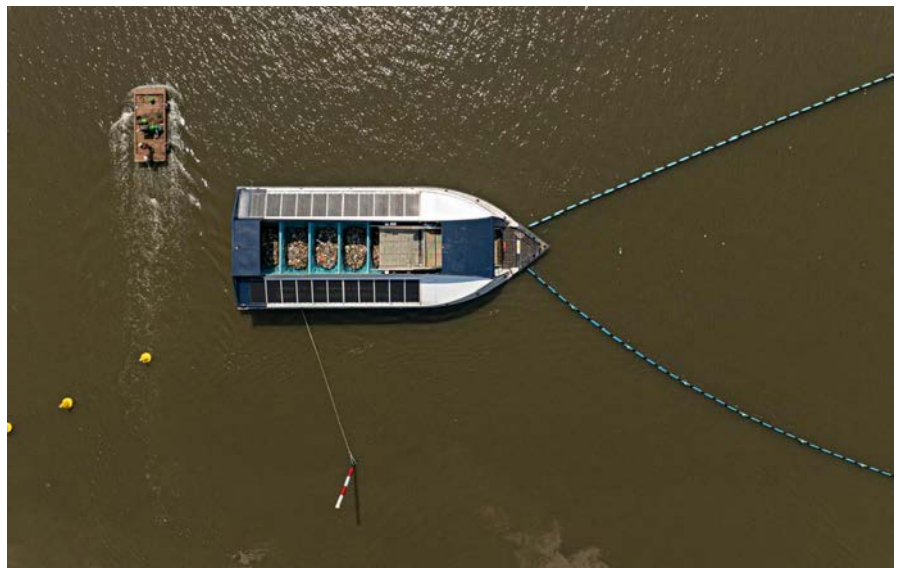
Another point of contention is the scale of the problem.

While widely cited estimates have suggested that up to 8 million tonnes of plastic enter the ocean each year, Slat argues that newer data – including The Ocean Cleanup’s own research – points to significantly lower figures.

“Our latest estimates are in the order of hundreds of thousands of tonnes, up to maybe one and a half million,” he said.

That revision reflects improved measurement of river flows, he added, after years of relying on broad modelling assumptions such as those in the landmark 2015 study led by Dr Jenna Jambeck, an American environmental engineer.

But lower estimates do not mean a smaller problem, Slat said.



An Interceptor deployed on a river in Bangkok. Image: The Ocean Cleanup

“One tonne of plastic can cause tens of thousands of dollars in damage per year,” he said. “The impact is still enormous.”

Research published in *The Lancet* last year estimated that plastics are costing US\$1.5 trillion in health-related costs annually worldwide, with those costs projected to increase by 75 per cent by 2040. Slat argues that overstating the scale of pollution can backfire, making the progress being made to tackle the problem seem insignificant.

FUNDING, PARTNERSHIPS – AND ACCUSATIONS OF GREENWASHING

As The Ocean Cleanup scales up, it must navigate a funding landscape compromised by geopolitical turmoil and climate policy reversals.

Slat acknowledged that corporate sustainability commitments have become more sensitive to political headwinds. But he said demand remains strong, provided that projects are framed as investments rather than charity.

“If you pitch it as a CSR [corporate social responsibility] check-the-box, it’s difficult,” he said. “But if you show real return on investment, it becomes a different conversation.”

That includes partnerships with companies linked to plastic production. Slat takes a pragmatic view. “If anyone should be involved, it’s precisely those companies,” he said. “It’s more fair if the polluter pays.”

The key, he added, is scale – companies investing small amounts risk tarnishing their credibility. “If it’s just token money, it doesn’t help anything,” he said.

CAN THE OCEANS REALLY BE CLEANED?

Much of The Ocean Cleanup’s work takes place in middle-income countries where rapid consumption growth has outpaced waste management systems. Slat says river trash interception is not just an



Boyan Slat speaking at the Singapore Sustainability Academy in April 2026. The Ocean Cleanup is aiming its expand operations to 30 cities by 2030, backed by US\$121 million from The Audacious Project. The organisation says that 1 per cent of the world's rivers carry 80 per cent of plastic pollution. Image: Robin Hicks / Eco-Business

environmental intervention but a social one – operations create jobs in waste collection, sorting, and system maintenance.

“There are hundreds of people whose livelihoods depend on this work,” Slat said, pushing back against critics who say his work should focus further upstream.

But once collected, the waste is difficult to manage – often contaminated and therefore hard to recycle. So much of it is landfilled, incinerated or used as fuel.

“Our ethos is to always do the best possible thing with the waste – recycling what we can, recovering value where possible, and ensuring that whatever we collect never leaks back into the environment,” he said.

But perhaps The Ocean Cleanup’s boldest ambition is how quickly it says it can have impact.

Slat suggests that “clean oceans” could be within reach in about a decade.

By his own estimates, The Ocean Cleanup is currently intercepting just 2 to 5 per cent of global plastic pollution flows. Scaling that up will require rapid expansion, sustained funding, and cooperation across

dozens of cities and governments. Slat acknowledges that the goal is ambitious, but insists it is grounded in reality. “We’ve already done up to 5 per cent,” he said. “Who else has done that?”

The Ocean Cleanup’s approach reflects a broader debate about whether to prioritise immediate, high-impact interventions or more systemic change.

Slat insists that the two are not mutually exclusive.

“We’re not against upstream solutions,” he said. “But we focus on where we can have the highest leverage.”

For now, the focus is on rivers – and the belief that stopping plastic at key choke points can buy time for more profound change.

Slat insists that for communities seeing cleaner waterways and recovering ecosystems, the impact is already tangible – and that is reason enough to keep the funding flowing towards his mission. 🌱

(SOURCE: <https://www.eco-business.com/videos/for-us100-million-a-year-we-can-get-clean-oceans-the-ocean-cleanup-founder-boyan-slat/>)

MIDDLE EAST MILITARY ESCALATION COULD COST ASIA-PACIFIC UP TO US\$299 BILLION: UNDP

Years of human development gains across Asia and the Pacific are under pressure as the impacts of the recent military escalation in the Middle East ripple through economies and households, despite a temporary ceasefire.

As the situation remains fluid, a current preliminary analysis by UNDP examines how heightened volatility, transmitted through energy, trade, and labour markets, is straining incomes, consumption, jobs and social protection across the region. Low-income households, informal workers, migrants, and small enterprises are among the most at risk. Women are the most vulnerable across these categories.

The report synthesises impact and needs assessments covering 36 countries, complemented by macro-economic simulations, and provides a regionwide outlook as well as how different countries are currently responding to these pressures.

Rising fuel and freight costs are the most immediate pressure point. With over 80 per cent of crude and LNG transiting the Strait of Hormuz destined for Asian markets, the region is experiencing rapid pass through of higher pricing on transport, electricity, food and fertiliser.

The report estimates that 8.8 million people are at risk of falling into poverty. Output losses could range from US\$97 billion to US\$299 billion, equivalent to between 0.3 and 0.8 per cent of regional GDP.

In Iran, the estimated decline in the Human Development Index is equivalent to one to one and a

half years of progress lost. In other countries, human development losses under a short-duration scenario range from weeks to months of foregone development progress, but could escalate significantly if disruptions persist, particularly in economies reliant on remittances, imported energy and food. Losses are most pronounced in South Asia, reflecting higher exposure to income



and price shocks and more limited policy buffers, while East and South-east Asia experience comparatively smaller setbacks.

Governments across the region have responded rapidly to cushion the domestic shocks through fuel price stabilisation, targeted subsidies, limits on transport, and early adaptive measures such as diversifying energy supply and improving energy efficiency. In some countries, responses have included nationwide energy saving campaigns and temporary changes to public-sector work arrangements to ease pressure on fuel consumption and public budgets.

"The strain this war is placing across Asia-Pacific is already vis-

ible. It is reaching households faster than policy can adjust. Despite the recent ceasefire, the resulting prolonged volatility in global markets is imposing increasingly difficult trade-offs between stabilising prices, supporting vulnerable households, and maintaining essential public services and market investments. At the same time, we see important opportunities for countries to accelerate long-term

resilience through adaptive social protection, stronger local and regional value chains, and diversified energy and food systems," said Kanni Wignaraja, UN Assistant Secretary-General and UNDP Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific.

The report is part of a series of socio-economic analyses produced by UNDP to support policymakers unpack the human development consequences of the current conflict, and identify options for a development response as a first line of defence.

"This is not about regular economic management measures, but a broader test of whether countries can look ahead and adapt fast to protect human development and human security gains in a far more volatile and insecure world," Wignaraja said. 

(Source: <https://www.eco-business.com/press-releases/middle-east-military-escalation-could-cost-asia-pacific-up-to-us299-billion-undp/>)



Tun Mustapha Marine ParkDrilling for oil and gas in the Tun Mustapha Marine Park could put 45,000 hectares of coral reefs, 17,000 ha of mangroves, and over 180 vulnerable and endangered species at risk. Image: Silkula Magupin/WWF-Malaysia

MAJORITY OF MALAYSIA'S MARINE PROTECTED AREAS AT RISK FROM OIL AND GAS EXPANSION, WARNS THINK TANK

An estimated 97 per cent of the country's biodiverse Marine Protected Areas are at risk of extinction from existing and planned oil and gas projects, according to new analysis by Rimbawatch. **Nadilla Sakinah** reports

Home to some of the world's most biodiverse marine ecosystems, Malaysia's marine habitats are threatened by ongoing and planned offshore oil and gas expansion projects, according to a first-of-its-kind report by environmental think-tank group Rimbawatch.

Data findings from satellite imagery and geospatial analysis provided by conservation non-profit SkyTruth show for the first time the full extent of the overlap between offshore oil and gas blocks and sensitive marine environments, which are areas identified as critical for biodiversity protection conservation.

This includes Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), Important Marine and Coastal Areas (IMCAs), Important Marine Mammal Areas (IMMAs), Important Shark and Ray Areas (ISRAs) and coral reefs. Malaysia's waters form part of the Coral Triangle and Sulu-Sulawesi Marine Ecoregion, which supports many threatened or endangered marine species while also supporting local livelihoods, tourism and food security.

The report finds that active or proposed oil and gas blocks overlap with 97 per cent of existing MPAs in Malaysia, which are governed by strict conservation rules limiting human activity.

"For example, the Luconia Shoals National Park in Sarawak, which is a Totally Protected Area, has been encroached on by at least 31 wells, five pipelines and seven platforms commercialising at least eight known fields holding 14.3 trillion cubic feet of environmentally harmful gas reserves," said Rimbawatch director Adam Farhan in a statement on Monday.

Rimbawatch had previously raised concerns over oil and gas prospecting in the Tun Mustapha Marine Park in Sabah, the country's largest marine park covering some

900,000 hectares of which drilling would put half of that area at risk.

The think tank's latest report also estimated that oil and gas blocks overlap with 40 per cent of the country's mapped shallow coral reefs. Risks to the ecosystem include seismic blasting, drilling operations, oil spills, heavy vessel traffic and offshore infrastructure.

Satellite monitoring data from SkyTruth also estimates that 161 oil slick incidents have occurred in Malaysia's sensitive marine environments between January 2023 and December 2025, Rimbawatch said.

The report further estimates that only 5.3 per cent of Malaysia's waters are currently protected, even though 38.5 per cent fall within sensitive marine environments. It concludes that current marine governance and environmental regulatory systems in Malaysia are insufficient.

Rimbawatch said that the absence of explicit barriers against oil and gas expansion in sensitive marine environments is the key gap in the Malaysia's legal framework.

For example, domestic legal frameworks such as the National Parks Act 1980 do not recognise the risks of oil and gas to marine biodiversity, or require exclusion zones for these activities. Another example is the Tun Mustapha Park Zoning Plan, which establishes exclusion zones for extractivism for small, specific areas of the park but do not specifically exclude oil and gas in the commercial fishing zone, where extraction is planned.

Only a few voluntary corporate commitments have been made by national oil and gas firm Petronas. Rimbawatch noted that Petronas has widely advertised their contributions to marine biodiversity protection under various corporate social responsibility (CSR) programmes and has aimed to develop a Biodiversity Action Plan since 2024, but does not have suggestions for exclusion zones. Petroleum Sarawak Berhad (Petros), the state's oil company has similarly mentioned CSR efforts but do not currently have a biodiversity policy or one which establishes marine exclusion zones for ecosystem protection, the report added.

"It is deeply concerning that Malaysia's existing marine park governance practices and environmental laws do not bar or discourage oil and gas production from taking place," said Adam.

Rimbawatch urged the Malaysian government and regulators to take immediate action, giving suggestions such as creating a policy to establish exclusion zones for oil and gas activities and adequate buffer zones around MPAs.

The think tank also recommended that financial regulators enforce binding exclusions on insurance and investment for fossil fuel projects in protected areas. 

(Source: <https://www.eco-business.com/news/majority-of-malaysias-marine-protected-areas-at-risk-from-oil-and-gas-expansion-warns-think-tank/>)

Satellite monitoring data from SkyTruth also estimates that 161 oil slick incidents have occurred in Malaysia's sensitive marine environments between January 2023 and December 2025



HOW SOUTHEAST ASIA'S POWER GRIDS ARE WIRED COULD HINDER ITS CLEAN ENERGY SHIFT: STUDY

Despite Southeast Asia being a major driver of global power demand, its biggest utilities are not neutral grid operators. They also buy and sell electricity, favouring new infrastructure and their own supply over small players like rooftop solar, according to an analysis by **Agora Energiewende**.

The way Southeast Asia's power grids are structured could hold back its clean energy transition, even as the region stands among the world's fastest-growing electricity markets, a new study has found.

Despite Southeast Asia being one of the emerging economies accounting for nearly 80 per cent of additional electricity consumption in the coming decade, its biggest utilities are not neutral grid operators.

Instead, they are integrated companies whose business models could make them less inclined to tap small players like rooftop solar and other distributed energy resources, according to a new analysis by Germany-based think-tank Agora Energiewende.

The study examined how in the European Union, a stand-alone distribution system operator (DSO), is responsible solely for planning, financing, building and operating these local networks. In contrast, distribution networks in Southeast Asian are run by utilities that also sell and buy power, creating built-in incentives to favour new infrastructure and their own supply over rooftop solar, flexibility and efficiency, researchers suggested.

For instance, the report noted how state-owned power company PLN in Indonesia is a vertically integrated monopoly that generates or procures electricity, manages transmission and distribution, and sells power to consumers. In Thailand, regional distributors such as the

Metropolitan Electricity Authority (MEA) and Provincial Electricity Authority (PEA) interface with a single national buyer, while in the Philippines, private concessionaire Meralco runs both the local grid and procures or generates the electricity it retails.

When the same entity runs both the grid and earns money from other activities — like building infrastructure, buying power under long-term contracts or selling electricity to customers — conflicts of interest are hard to avoid, the report warned.

of the grid business are clearly separated from the company's other activities, as well as setting performance-based incentives, and enforcing non-discriminatory access rules.

But it argued that policymakers in emerging regions like Southeast Asia need to be acutely aware of these structural biases as they rethink the role of distribution grids in an era of rapid demand growth and rising shares of variable renewables.

"Where demand growth and distributed energy resource deploy-

Despite Southeast Asia being one of the emerging economies accounting for nearly 80 per cent of additional electricity consumption in the coming decade, its biggest utilities are not neutral grid operators.

"An entity that combines distribution functions with retail sales may not provide fully non-discriminatory grid access for distributed generation, such as rooftop solar PV. An entity that procures power may also be less inclined to facilitate distributed generation that competes with its existing supply arrangements," said the research.

The Agora report noted that independent regulation can reduce these tensions such as ring-fencing accounts, whereby the finances

ment are outpacing grid infrastructure and governance upgrades, societies are already paying the price... Delayed connections undermine the financial viability of clean energy and electrification projects and can raise costs for consumers and businesses. They also slow progress on decarbonisation," it said.

(Source: <https://www.eco-business.com/news/how-southeast-asias-power-grids-are-wired-could-hinder-its-clean-energy-shift-study/>)

FROM LAB TO KITCHEN

THE STORY BEHIND INDIA'S HEART-HEALTHY GROUNDNUT OIL

How science, farmers, and industry came together to create affordable, healthier cooking oil alternatives in India

Cooking oil in India is far more than a kitchen essential; it reflects culture, tradition, and everyday life. From ghee-rich festive sweets to deep-fried street food, oil is deeply woven into Indian food habits. In recent years, cooking oil has also become central to a growing debate around health and affordability.

Healthier oils such as olive oil often cost between INR 800–1200 (USD 10–15), making them inaccessible to many middle-income households. At the same time, India faces a rising burden of cardiovascular diseases (CVDs), increasing the need for healthier edible oils.

This creates a paradox: healthier oils remain expensive, while affordable oils are often linked to poorer health outcomes.

To address this challenge, scientists from ICRISAT and ICAR developed India's first high oleic acid groundnut varieties — ICGV 15083 (Girnar 4) and ICGV 15090 (Girnar 5).



Released in 2020, these varieties contain higher levels of oleic acid, offering improved heart health benefits and better shelf life.

Reflecting on the innovation, Dr. Janila Pasupuleti, Groundnut Breeding Lead at ICRISAT, high-

lighted the unique consumer-driven approach. “Unlike the usual top-down approach, high oleic groundnut breeding was driven by consumer needs.

“The science behind heart-healthy oil is to increase oleic acid, a heart-



Dr. Janila Pasupuleti, Groundnut Breeding Lead at ICRISAT

friendly monounsaturated fat, while reducing less healthy fatty acids linked to low-density lipoprotein (LDL), or bad cholesterol.

“This has led to the release of High Oleic Acid Groundnut varieties, Girnar 4 and Girnar 5 in India,” said Dr. Pasupuleti.

Globally, demand for high oleic oils continues to rise, and research efforts to enhance oleic acid content in major oilseed crops such as sunflower, mustard, and safflower are gaining momentum, with several high oleic variants now commercially available.

Dr Pasupuleti said the success of the initiative was driven by advances in genomics, collaboration among research partners and rigorous field testing across diverse environments.

BUILDING THE HIGH OLEIC ECOSYSTEM

While scientific advances made high-oleic groundnut varieties such as Girnar 4 and Girnar 5 possible, translating these innovations from research labs to consumers’ kitchens required strong market integration.

This is where AgroCrops, a global leader in the peanut industry, leveraged its five decades of expertise to build an ecosystem around high-oleic peanuts through its HOPE

(High Oleic Peanuts) Initiative. As part of this effort, AgroCrops promoted the cultivation of high-oleic groundnut in India and other producing countries.

Through partnering with Farmer-Producer Organizations (FPOs), the company enabled farmers to adopt these improved varieties while creating stronger market linkages.

AgroCrops CEO Mr. Saravanan Lokasundaram said their strategy has always been about integration.

“The idea was to connect peanut farmers to processing and end-use requirements while creating differentiated value across stakeholders.

“For us, high oleic groundnut represents more than a conventional crop improvement.

“It is part of a much larger transformation in global food systems

and in fact, it is trailblazing; we are observing first-hand the market response to a health-linked agricultural product,” said Mr. Lokasundaram.

Following the release of Girnar 4 and Girnar 5 in 2020 for kharif (monsoon-season) cultivation in Rajasthan, Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu, AgroCrops helped build farmer confidence by offering reliable market access and premium prices, reducing uncertainty during the early stages of adoption.

GUJARAT FARMERS CHAMPION HIGH OLEIC GROUNDNUT SEED MULTIPLICATION

Farmers in Gujarat have also played an important role in expanding the cultivation of high oleic groundnut varieties across the state.

Working closely with Khedut Feeds and Foods Pvt. Ltd., a Gujarat-based agro-processing company, farmers participated in large-scale multiplication of Girnar 4 and Girnar 5 seeds during 2021 and 2022, thereby strengthening the availability of high-oleic planting material for wider adoption.

Through the company’s Saurashtra Peanut Project, farmers were also introduced to improved agronomic practices, including seed treatment, organic fertilizer application, and awareness sessions on high oleic groundnut cultivation.



Khedut Feeds and Foods Driving Farmer Adoption of Improved Groundnut Cultivation in Gujarat

“High Oleic peanuts are also known as ‘long-life peanuts’ because the natural substitution of oleic acid for linoleic acid significantly extends shelf life while preserving quality,” shared Mr Tushar Tumar of Khedut.

“This is a unique opportunity for farmers to benefit from a fair share of growing market demand.

“It creates advantages across the value chain — snack food manufacturers can reduce packaging costs, confectioners can lower pre-coating requirements, peanut butter manufacturers can minimize stabilizer use, and overall product wastage declines due to improved shelf-life stability.

“High oleic peanuts also open valuable export opportunities for farmers,” noted Mr Tumar

FROM GROUNDNUT FIELDS TO THE KITCHEN SHELF

Beyond its industrial applications, high oleic groundnut is now creating value directly for consumers. A recent example is Navirah, a premium high oleic peanut oil brand derived from the Girnar varieties, which has made its way onto supermarket shelves in Rajkot and Ahmedabad, Gujarat. The brand exemplifies how agricultural innovation can be translated into healthier food choices and new market opportunities.

While the industrial applicability of high oleic groundnut is an added advantage, one of the more recent developments is the emergence of ‘Navirah’, a brand of high oleic peanut oil from these Girnar varieties, has now reach supermarket shelves in Rajkot and Ahmedabad, Gujarat, India.

Navirah, a Gujarat-based processing enterprise, is helping connect the last mile from farmers’ fields to consumers.

Produced in an FSSAI-licensed cold-pressing facility in Gujarat, the extra virgin high oleic groundnut oil is gradually gaining traction among

quality-conscious consumers seeking healthier edible oil alternatives.

The journey from scientific innovation to consumer adoption also required building trust at the household level.

“When high oleic groundnut varieties were first introduced in India in 2020, consumer awareness around ‘high oleic’ oils were still limited, and dedicated supply chains for such products were largely absent.

“We worked closely with farmers and processors to establish consi-

General Dr Himanshu Pathak said the story of high oleic groundnut oil demonstrates how science, policy, and industry can converge to transform everyday food systems.

“The success of high oleic groundnut shows what is possible when scientific innovation is aligned with consumer needs and market demand.

“It has created a win-win outcome, providing healthier options for consumers while generating greater value for farmers.



ICRISAT scientists advance groundnut breeding research to deliver healthier food choices and greater opportunities for farmers.

tent sourcing systems while refining cold-pressed production methods suited to the Indian market,” shared Rahul Patel of Navirah.

Positioned between low-cost refined oils and expensive imported oils, Navirah Oil is carving out a distinct category that combines familiarity, affordability, and improved nutritional value.

Reflecting on this transition, Rahul Patel noted, “Seeing Navirah reach actual kitchens has been the most satisfying part of the journey.”

PARTNERSHIPS DRIVING IMPACT

Describing the innovation as a powerful example of science delivering real-world impact, ICRISAT Director

“This success reinforces ICRISAT’s commitment to scaling innovations that improve lives and strengthen agri-food systems through the power of partnerships,” said Dr Pathak.

The development of high oleic groundnut was supported by the National Mission on Oilseeds and Oil Palm (NMOOP), Government of India, and strengthened through collaboration with ICAR–Indian Institute of Groundnut Research (IIGR) and State Agricultural Universities (SAUs), helping bring the innovation from research plots to large-scale cultivation. 🌱

(Source: <https://pressroom.icrisat.org/from-lab-to-kitchen-the-story-behind-indias-heart-healthy-groundnut-oil>)

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SAVE LIVES GIVE SMILES

Every Year, **35,000+** children are born with cleft lip and palate in India. Untreated clefts lead to difficulties in eating, breathing, hearing and speaking. The children often face social stigma and drop out of school.

Cleft treatment can change this. Forever.

OUR LEGACY & REACH:



640,000+
cleft surgeries
since 2000



150+
partner
hospitals



30+
states
and UTs



300+
cleft medical
professionals

Smile Train empowers local medical professionals with training, funding, and resources to provide free cleft surgery and comprehensive cleft care to children across the country. We advance a sustainable and scalable global health model for cleft treatment, drastically improving children's lives, creating both an immediate and long-term impact.



Let your CSR Program transform lives and create lasting impact.

Join us to change India, one smile at a time.

Contact us:

Email ID: csrindia@smiletrain.org

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