

# CSR TODAY

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SCRAP TO BOOST GREEN  
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## **CSR INITIATIVE**

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## **CSR IDEA**

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# Climate crisis is no longer a future threat to wildlife – It is a corporate responsibility challenge



**Rajesh Tiwari**  
Publisher  
[rt@iccsr.org](mailto:rt@iccsr.org)

**The latest research, led by the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research (PIK) and soon to be published in Nature Ecology and Evolution, warns that more than a third of wildlife habitats on land could be exposed to multiple extreme weather events by 2085 if current emission trajectories continue.**

**T**he climate debate is often framed around carbon emissions, renewable energy transitions and net-zero targets. But a new global scientific study serves as a stark reminder that climate change is not merely an environmental issue – it is rapidly becoming a survival crisis for the planet's biodiversity. More importantly, it is emerging as a profound ethical, economic and corporate responsibility challenge.

The latest research, led by the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research (PIK) and soon to be published in *Nature Ecology and Evolution*, warns that more than a third of wildlife habitats on land could be exposed to multiple extreme weather events by 2085 if current emission trajectories continue. The findings are deeply alarming not just for conservationists, but for governments, industries and corporations increasingly positioning sustainability and ESG commitments at the centre of their public narratives.

The study paints a grim portrait of the future. Heatwaves, droughts, floods and wildfires are projected to strike ecosystems with unprecedented frequency and intensity. Wildlife species across amphibians, birds, reptiles and mammals will face cascading climatic shocks capable of triggering local extinctions and irreversible ecological damage.

What makes the report particularly significant is its emphasis on “compound extreme events” – situations where multiple climate disasters occur in close succession, amplifying destruction. The Australian “Black Summer” fires of 2019-20 are cited as an example, where drought conditions preceding the fires intensified biodiversity losses dramatically. Such events are no longer isolated anomalies; they are becoming the new climate reality.

For the corporate world, especially companies speaking the language of sustainability

and social responsibility, this study raises uncomfortable questions.

Can businesses continue treating biodiversity protection as a peripheral CSR activity while their core operations remain deeply tied to fossil fuel-intensive economic systems? Can sustainability reports celebrate token plantation drives while global ecosystems collapse under escalating climate pressures?


The gap between corporate sustainability rhetoric and ecological reality is becoming increasingly difficult to ignore.

The numbers highlighted in the study are staggering. Heatwaves alone could expose up to 93% of species' habitats by 2085 under current climate trajectories. Wildfire exposure among amphibians could rise nearly seven-fold compared to scenarios aligned with the Paris Agreement goals. Regions such as the Amazon basin, Southeast Asia and southern Africa – all critical reservoirs of global biodiversity – are expected to become major hotspots of ecological disruption.

This is not merely a wildlife issue.

Biodiversity loss directly threatens food systems, water security, agriculture, public health and economic stability. Pollinators, forests, wetlands and natural ecosystems form invisible infrastructure supporting modern economies. Their collapse carries enormous long-term risks for businesses themselves.

Yet biodiversity protection remains significantly underfunded compared to climate mitigation efforts.

Globally, corporations have become increasingly active in decarbonisation discussions, renewable energy investments and carbon accounting frameworks. However, biodiversity often occupies secondary space in ESG frameworks – treated as an extension of environmental branding rather than a central business concern. 

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# CSR NEWS



## Centre for Transforming India Wins ‘Most Impactful Rural Support for Education Initiative 2026’ at Global CSR & ESG Awards

The Centre for Transforming India (CFTI), a grassroots implementation organization focused on rural transformation, has been honored with the prestigious “Most Impactful Rural Support for Education Initiative 2026” at the Global CSR & ESG Awards 2026. The recognition acknowledges CFTI’s contribution towards strengthening rural education ecosystems, improving last-mile access to learning, and driving measurable community impact through sustainable grassroots interventions across rural, tribal, and aspirational regions in India.

Organized by Brand Honchos, the Global CSR & ESG Awards recognize organizations demonstrating



measurable impact through responsible and sustainable development initiatives aligned with CSR and ESG priorities. CFTI was recognized for its scalable grassroots implementation model and sustained efforts towards improving access to education and strengthening community infrastructure. Over the years, the organization has impacted more than 700,000 beneficiaries through initiatives focused on education, healthcare, water conservation, women empowerment, and livelihood development. Through its flagship programs My School My Pride and Pedals of Hope, CFTI has distributed over 35,000 bicycles to improve school access, transformed 144+ government schools through infrastructure and digital enablement support, and strengthened learning environments across high-need geographies.

Speaking on the recognition, Chitralkha Patil, Founder & Mentor Trustee, CFTI, said, “This recognition reflects the collective efforts of communities, volunteers, and partners who believe that meaningful transformation begins at the grassroots. At CFTI, education is not just about access to schools but about creating opportunity, dignity, and long-term empowerment for rural communities. Our vision is to build scalable, community-led development models that create sustainable impact and contribute towards a more inclusive and empowered India.”

With a growing presence across multiple states and aspirational regions, CFTI continues to strengthen its role as a credible grassroots implementation partner committed to driving sustainable and community-led rural transformation across India.

# FUJIFILM Sonosite India Strengthens Commitment to Education Through CSR Initiative in Gurugram

**R**einforcing its commitment to community development and inclusive growth, FUJIFILM Sonosite India Pvt. Ltd. successfully conducted a corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiative at Government Senior Secondary School, Kherla, Sohna, in Gurugram, Haryana.

The programme was organised in collaboration with the New Delhi-based non-profit organisation, Social Initiative for Community Development (SICD), with the aim of supporting and encouraging students from government schools.

The event commenced with a traditional welcome for the dignitaries, who were received with a ceremonial tilak at the school premises, followed by a formal felicitation with floral bouquets. The programme witnessed active participation from students, faculty members, and representatives from both organisations, creating a positive and engaging environment.

In his opening remarks, Rahul, Founder Trustee of SICD, outlined the organization's mission and the objectives underpinning the initiative. The School Principal subsequently addressed the gathering, extending sincere appreciation to the sponsors for their generous support. Thereafter, the Managing Director of FUJIFILM Sonosite India Mr. Nitin Gupta, articulated

the company's CSR philosophy and shared an inspiring message with the students, encouraging them to pursue academic excellence.

Adding a cultural dimension to the event, students from Classes IX to XII presented vibrant performances, showcasing their talent and enthusiasm. The performances were well received and reflected the confidence and creativity of the students.

The highlight of the programme was the distribution of Fujifilm Sonosite branded school bags and water bottles to 200 senior students.

The initiative aimed to provide essential support to students while motivating them to continue their educational journey with confidence.

The programme concluded with a formal Vote of Thanks delivered by the SICD team, followed by the distribution of refreshments to students and attendees. Through this initiative, FUJIFILM Sonosite India continues to reinforce its commitment to education and community development, contributing meaningfully towards empowering young minds in underserved communities.



# Vedanta's TACO signs MoU with Government of Rajasthan

The Animal Care Organization (TACO), a flagship animal welfare initiative by the Anil Agarwal Foundation, has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Government of Rajasthan to establish the Agnivesh Agarwal Nature Interpretation Centre at the Sariska Tiger Reserve.

The first-of-its-kind, technology-enabled centre aims to create immersive and interactive experiences that deepen public understanding of biodiversity, wildlife conservation, and ecological sustainability.

Designed as an educational and engagement hub, the initiative seeks to inspire greater awareness and stewardship towards India's natural ecosystems.

The collaboration was formalized in the presence of Sanjay Sharma, Minister of Forest, Environment and Climate Change, Rajasthan, along with officials from the Forest Department.

As part of the initiative, surveillance vehicles were also flagged off for Ranthambore Tiger Reserve to strengthen on-ground protection efforts and support frontline forest personnel engaged in wildlife conservation.

Speaking on the occasion, Priya Agarwal Hebbbar, Chairperson, HZL,



Non-Executive Director, Vedanta said: "Conservation is ultimately about coexistence — rooted in education, community, and shared responsibility. Through this initiative,

we hope to create experiences that inspire people to better understand and protect our ecosystems for generations to come."

Reflecting on the personal significance of the initiative, she added that the centre has been named in memory of her late brother, Agnivesh Agarwal, with whom she shared a deep connection to nature and wildlife.

The initiative reflects TACO's continued commitment towards conservation, ecological awareness, and sustainable community engagement across India.

# CSR TODAY

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# Hoops4Hope Tournament Sees Over 100 Underprivileged Children Take the Basketball Court in Mumbai

**M**ore than 100 students from government-run schools across Mumbai participated in a community basketball tournament organised under the Hoops4Hope initiative, marking the culmination of weeks of structured coaching and grassroots engagement.

Held in Matunga, the full-day tournament featured over 20 matches across Under-16 boys' and girls' categories, with Vile Parle Mumbai Public School emerging as winners in both divisions. All participants received certificates, while winners and runners-up were awarded trophies and medals.

For many of the students, this was their first experience of playing in a structured tournament, reflecting growing access to organised sport, along with visible gains in confidence, teamwork, and on-court skills. The event was attended by Maharashtra State

Basketball Association Secretary, Mr. Govind Krishnan Muthukumar, signalling wider encouragement for community-led sporting efforts.

In the lead-up to the tournament, a sports equipment donation drive was also organised, enabling participating students to access basic playing gear.

The tournament builds on the work of Hoops4Hope, a grassroots initiative led by 17-year-old student and basketball enthusiast Viraj Lohchab. Over the past few months, the programme has been conducting free weekend coaching sessions for students from five government schools in Mumbai.

What began as a small effort has gradually expanded to engage over 100 middle-school students, many of whom had limited or no exposure to structured basketball training. The sessions, conducted in collaboration with coach Prabhu Maspog of Bayciti Sports, have focused on building consistency, participation, and equal access for both girls and boys.



Viraj, who has been playing competitive basketball for several years at the inter-school level, drew on his own experience with the sport—as well as a recent internship with sports-tech platform Spolto—to initiate the programme and bring together support from coaches and partners.

As the initiative evolved, it received support from ecosystem partners including Spolto, which helped expand outreach and participation, and Nivia, which contributed

basketball equipment to improve the playing experience for students.

Together, the collaboration has enabled Hoops4Hope to move from informal coaching sessions to a more structured programme, culminating in the tournament. While still early in its journey, Hoops4Hope reflects how student-led efforts, when supported by community and ecosystem partners, can create meaningful access to sport at the grassroots level.

Viraj Lohchab said: “I’ve always enjoyed playing basketball, and

over time I realised that many children don’t get the same opportunities to access the sport. This started as a small effort on weekends, and it’s been encouraging to see more students join and stay engaged.”

A participating student added: “Before this, I had never played basketball properly. Now I look forward to every weekend. Being on the court makes me feel confident, and playing in the tournament felt really special.”

## Aman Tea Group Marks International Tea Day Across More than 50 Locations, Reinforcing Commitment to Sustainability and Tea Communities

**A**man Tea Group commemorated the International Tea Day through a large-scale initiative conducted across more than 50 locations, bringing together growers, workers, and tea communities in a collective effort to recognise the people behind the industry while reinforcing the importance of sustainability and responsible tea cultivation.

The initiative focused on honouring small growers and tea workers who play a critical role in sustaining the tea ecosystem, while also encouraging conversations around safe farming practices, quality awareness, and the long-term future of the industry.

As part of its ongoing commitment towards responsible tea cultivation, Aman Tea Group has been consistently engaging with growers and farming communities across tea producing regions, particularly in West Bengal, to create greater awareness around sustainable farming practices and the importance of safe tea production at the source.

The programmes organised on International Tea Day reflected this year’s global focus on strengthening livelihoods and advancing sustainability across the tea sector.



**Rajeev Baid, Managing Director at Aman Tea Group, highlighting the importance of sustainability, safe farming practices, and supporting tea growing communities**

Speaking on the occasion, Rajeev Baid said, “Tea has always been deeply connected to people and communities. Behind every cup are thousands of growers, workers, and families whose contribution often goes unseen. International Tea Day is an important reminder to recognise and appreciate their role in shaping the industry. At Aman Tea Group, we believe sustainability is not just a conversation for the future, but a responsibility that begins today at the ground level. Supporting safe farming practices, building awareness among growers, and strengthening the ecosystem

around tea are essential for ensuring the long-term future of the industry.”

Over the years, Aman Tea Group has continued to focus on building stronger engagement with growers and tea communities while encouraging practices that support both quality and sustainability.

The company reiterated that the future of tea will increasingly depend not only on production and market demand, but also on how responsibly the industry approaches cultivation, community development, and environmental stewardship.



## BC Jindal Group Strengthens Educational Equity Through Scholarship Initiative

**B**C Jindal Foundation, the CSR wing of India's leading business conglomerate, the BC Jindal Group, has announced that it has extended support directly to more than 500 children across 4 districts in 4 states by committing Rs 192 lakh. Through its foundation's initiative, the BC Jindal Scholarship, the group continues to support talented children to pursue higher education in Angul, Nashik, Ernakulam and Varanasi across the states of Odisha, Maharashtra, Kerala and Uttar Pradesh, respectively.

The BC Jindal Group, led by Shyam Sunder Jindal, Promoter, BC Jindal Group has been working toward enabling education in India's remote areas through various social initiatives of the BC Jindal Foundation. The education program has become a cornerstone of the group's commitment to social upliftment, specifically targeting children from economically disadvantaged backgrounds.

"Low family incomes and deep-rooted societal biases against girls' education often prevent talented youth from reaching their full potential. Through targeted financial aid, we are empowering academically bright, underprivileged students to access higher education and build brighter futures. We aim to create opportunities for children to pursue education beyond primary school," said a BC Jindal Group spokesperson.

In Odisha's Angul district, the foundation's BC Jindal Vidya Scholarship initiative focuses on a transparent, merit-based system across four government high schools, directly impacting 20 villages in the Kaniha block. The rural-centric scholarship model empowers financially disadvantaged yet academically meritorious girl students to excel in higher education.

In Nashik, Maharashtra, the BC Jindal Foundation-supported Udayan Shalini Fellowship (USF) initiative offers financial assistance to deserving

girl students over five years from government and government-aided schools, ensuring economic barriers do not disrupt their education. The unique academic excellence and personality development program for deserving, talented girls from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds aims to transform students into empowered and dignified women— "Shalinis." Unlike a typical scholarship, it supports higher education while providing sustained mentoring, leadership development, and a strong sense of social responsibility.

In Ernakulam, Kerala, the BC Jindal Foundation's partnership with Chinmaya Vishwa Vidyapeeth (CVV) for the 'Utthistha Bharata - Arise India Scholarships programme' stands as a distinctive initiative aimed at aiding students hailing from underprivileged and underserved communities throughout India.

Beyond traditional education, the Foundation is deeply committed to preserving India's cultural

legacy, specifically focusing on the artisanal heritage of Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh. By adopting a specialized school of design and weaving, the Group supports children of the Varanasi weaver community, helping them navigate the challenges of sustaining traditional handloom textile production. The program integrates the use of authentic silk yarn and zari (metal thread) into a modern training curriculum. This dual mission not only nurtures the

heritage of fine hand weaving but also empowers the next generation with self-sustaining livelihoods, standing as a testament to the BC Jindal Group's enduring commitment to inclusive development and social equity.

“These initiatives stand as a testament to the BC Jindal Group's enduring commitment to inclusive development, educational empowerment, and social equity, particularly in rural areas, contributing

meaningfully to building a more equitable and progressive society. It focuses on enabling children to continue their studies beyond the primary level by addressing financial and social barriers. The initiatives seek to support talented students who are often held back due to gender bias and economic constraints. Ultimately, it strives to build a more inclusive and opportunity-driven educational ecosystem,” added a BC Jindal Group spokesperson

## Prateek Group's Aakar Foundation Marks Mother's Day Celebrations With Elderly Women at SHEOWS Care Centre, Delhi

**R**einforcing its commitment towards meaningful community engagement and social responsibility, Prateek Group's Aakar Foundation organised a special Mother's Day CSR activity at SHEOWS Care Centre, Delhi.

The initiative was aimed at spending quality time with elderly women residents and celebrating the spirit of motherhood through warmth, care, and companionship.

The event began with a warm welcome for all attendees, followed by a cake-cutting ceremony to mark the occasion. Members of the foundation, along with key representatives from Prateek Group, interacted closely with the residents and caretakers, creating a cheerful and engaging atmosphere throughout the evening.

Speaking on the initiative, Prateek Tiwari, Managing Director, Prateek Group, said, “Mother's Day is a reminder of the love, strength, and selflessness that mothers bring into

our lives every single day. Through this initiative, we simply wanted to spend meaningful time with the residents, listen to their stories, and make them feel valued and remembered. Sometimes, small gestures and genuine conversations can create the biggest impact. At Prateek Group, we strongly believe that community responsibility goes beyond

infrastructure and business. It is equally about compassion, human connection, and giving back in ways that truly matter. This evening was emotional, humbling, and deeply special for all of us.”

Led by the Managing Director's wife, Remika Tiwari, the activity brought a deeply personal and emotional touch to the evening, reflecting

Prateek Group's people-first philosophy and compassionate approach towards community welfare. As part of the celebration, sarees and gowns were distributed among the women residents as thoughtful gifts. Snacks and interactive engagement activities were also organised, encouraging conversations, laughter, and shared moments of joy.

Through initiatives led by Aakar Foundation, Prateek Group continues to focus on creating a positive social impact by supporting communities through meaningful outreach, engagement, and welfare-driven activities.





## Mobavenue AI Tech Limited plants 15,000 trees to offset ~10,000 tonne carbon footprint

**M**obavenue 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 Mukht 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.

## MakeMyTrip Foundation Joins Hands with DTTDC to Support Dilli Haat - INA, Delhi's Living Showcase of Indian Craft

**M**akeMyTrip Foundation, the social impact arm of MakeMyTrip, has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Delhi Tourism and Transportation Development Corporation (DTTDC) to support the enhancement of Dilli Haat - INA, one of the capital's most loved cultural spaces and, for hundreds of artisans from across India, a vital marketplace and source of livelihood.

For over three decades, Dilli Haat-INA has been the place where artisans from every corner of India, from Kashmir to Kanyakumari, share the same open-air space with the families, students, tourists, and cultural enthusiasts who come to discover their work.

Through this partnership, MakeMyTrip Foundation will work alongside DTTDC on a set of enhancements designed to make the visitor experience as memorable as the crafts themselves. Greener, better-maintained landscaping will add to the haat's open-air character. Upgraded pathway and promenade lighting will make evenings safer and more welcoming for families

after sundown. And washroom maintenance and hygiene upgrades will further enhance the comfort of visitors who often spend hours exploring the haat.

Delhi CM Rekha Gupta said, "Dilli Haat-INA holds a special place in the cultural fabric of our city, and our government is committed to ensuring that spaces like this continue to thrive for both artisans and visitors. As we work towards positioning Delhi as a leading global destination, we are also focused on building a strong night tourism economy that allows visitors to experience the city well beyond sundown, and Dilli Haat-INA is a perfect example of an evening destination that supports this vision."

Minister of Art, Culture & Tourism Kapil Mishra said, "Dilli Haat-INA has always been a meeting point: between the artisan who brings their craft from across the country and the visitor who comes to experience the breadth of India's heritage. Our responsibility is to ensure this space serves both equally well. Collaborations like this one with MakeMyTrip Foundation help us

deliver tangible improvements on the ground, and we look forward to more such partnerships that strengthen Delhi's cultural and tourism ecosystem."

Rajesh Magow, Co-Founder & Group CEO, MakeMyTrip and Managing Trustee, MakeMyTrip Foundation, said, "At the Foundation, our vision is to support responsible tourism by protecting the environment, empowering local communities, and preserving the cultural heritage of India's most-visited destinations. Over the past decade, this has taken shape through initiatives such as afforestation across several states, mangrove plantation along the Gujarat coast, and community-based tourism in the Himalayas. Dilli Haat-INA marks our first partnership in an urban cultural setting, and it is a fitting one. Our aim here is not only to enhance the visitor experience but also to contribute to making this space more sustainable. We are grateful to the Government of Delhi and DTTDC for their trust in this partnership, and we look forward to working closely with them."



## Chishty Foundation & Saksham Sanchar Foundation Empower Ajmer's Youth with Landmark Media, Career & Startup Seminar at Ajmer Sharif

In a landmark initiative to empower the youth of 800 years old Khuddam Community of Ajmer Sharif, the Chishty Foundation, in collaboration with the Saksham Sanchar Foundation, organized a grand seminar on Media & Communication Education, Career Counselling, and Startup Dialogue at the historic Chishtiya Hall, Dargah Sharif, Ajmer.

The seminar witnessed an overwhelming turnout of young men and women, students, Anjuman members, and senior representatives of the Khuddam-e-Khawaja community, reflecting the deep aspiration for growth and learning among the youth of the region.

The event brought together a distinguished panel of nationally recognised experts in media, communication, career counseling, and entrepreneurship. Smt Archana Sharma, Director of Saksham Sanchar Foundation, shared valuable insights on media literacy and communication skills. Dr. Lalit Khatri, Senior Career Counselor at Click To College, guided the youth on career planning and professional pathways. Raunak Kumar Sinha from Chandigarh University spoke on emerging career opportunities for young professionals. Prof. (Dr) Fakira Mohan Nahak, Director of PR & Media Communication at Manipal

University Jaipur, addressed the audience on the evolving landscape of media and public relations. Neelam Singh, Editor of The Healthy Indian and Project Director of Trusted Information Alliance, highlighted the role of responsible journalism and trusted media. Yajvender Yadav, a celebrated author, spoke on the power of writing, personal branding and communication. Sandeep Dahiya, Bureau Chief of PTI, shared his extensive experience in national media and journalism.

The welcome address was delivered by Haji Syed Salman Chishty, setting a warm and motivating tone for the programme. Syed Iqbal



Chishty Advocate spoke about his long-standing experience in the Anjuman and encouraged the youth to take active roles in community development. Syed Fakre Moin delivered an impactful address on the importance of education as the foundation of progress. Rahat Hussain Motiwala served as Master of Ceremony and anchored the proceedings. The Quran recitation was led by Syed Fuzail Chishty.

In his keynote remarks, Haji Syed Salman Chishty, Gaddi Nashin of Dargah Ajmer Sharif and Chairman of the Chishty Foundation, emphasised that the empowerment of youth through education, skill-building and entrepreneurship is the need of the hour. He urged the young generation to embrace modern communication skills while staying rooted in their values, and assured continued support from the Chishty Foundation for such developmental initiatives.

In recognition of outstanding contributions to media, communication and career counselling, the Chishty Foundation presented Excellence Awards to Smt Archana Sharma, Dr. Lalit Khatri, Raunak Kumar Sinha, Prof. (Dr) Fakira Mohan Nahak, Neelam Singh, Yajvender Yadav and Sandeep Dahiya. All awards were presented by Senior members of Khuddam Community, Anjuman Members and Haji Syed Salman Chishty.

Certificates of participation were distributed to all attendees. The vote of thanks was graciously delivered by Syed Ali Zaid Chishty and Syeda Samar Chishty, who expressed gratitude to all experts, community members, and the youth for making the seminar a resounding success.

The seminar marked a significant step in bridging the gap between Ajmer's youth and national-level expertise in media, careers, and entrepreneurship and has set a new benchmark for community-driven educational initiatives.

# Fidelity International unveils a Miyawaki forest with 15,000 native trees to boost Gurugram's urban ecology

Fidelity International has created a high-density Miyawaki forest with the plantation of 15,000 indigenous saplings across 11,873 square metres at the Dhankot pond area in Gurugram.

Using 100% native species planted at a density of 2 to 4 saplings per square metre, the initiative will transform the land over the next three years into a dense, self-sustaining urban forest designed to deliver long-term climate, biodiversity and community benefits to the city.

This forest was inaugurated on 1 May by Rohit Jetly, Head of Records Keeping Platforms and India Site Head, and Stuart Warner, Head of FIL Platforms, marking a significant Earth Day commitment to urban ecological restoration.

## DESIGNED FOR MEASURABLE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

The Miyawaki method involves the high-density plantation of native tree species to accelerate forest growth and enable self-sustaining ecosystems, even in urban settings.

Developed with Creating Awareness To Change Habits (CATCH) Foundation as the implementation partner, this plantation located in Gurugram Sector 101 features over 30 native tree species and replicates natural multi-layer vegetation to accelerate growth and ecosystem revival.

Once mature, it is expected to deliver:

- 250 to 280 tonnes of Carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) absorption annually
- 2 to 3°C localized cooling
- 5 to 15% higher groundwater recharge
- Improved air quality through particulate absorption



- Enhanced biodiversity including the return of birds, bees and pollinators

During its establishment and growth phase, the forest is projected to sequester a cumulative 142 to 458 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (tCO<sub>2</sub>e) over the next ten years, with higher annual absorption expected as the forest reaches maturity.

Commenting on the initiative, Ameet Nayak, Head of India Legal & APAC Company Secretary, and India CSR Head, Fidelity International said, “This Miyawaki forest reflects our belief that meaningful environmental action must be rooted in local communities and designed to deliver lasting value. By restoring green cover and strengthening ecosystems, the forest will enhance environmental resilience while improving wellbeing and quality of life. At Fidelity International, our CSR approach is centred on purposeful action and strong partnerships that translate intent into tangible, on-ground impact. Through close collaboration with civic authorities, ecological partners, and our employees, we are helping build healthier ecosystems, stronger communities, and sustainable outcomes

for the years ahead. The early return of birds, bees, and butterflies at the Dhankot pond underscores the powerful impact of thoughtfully designed ecological interventions, demonstrating how native ecosystems can thrive when supported by scientific methods and sustained care.”

Bharat Sisodia, Founder-Chairperson, CATCH Foundation added, “Creating self-sustainable forests in close alignment with the 2070 Net Zero Carbon goal, which in turn become natural habitats for biodiversity to thrive in abundance, is the objective of CATCH Foundation. Urban spaces have become concrete jungles, and we have witnessed these vital green lungs being quietly wiped out of existence. Projects like the Dhankot Pond Area Forest Plantation represent a powerful restoration of such ecosystems, addressing some of the most pressing national challenges, including air pollution—especially in the NCR—biodiversity loss, and the broader climate crisis. Our collaboration with Fidelity International reflects a shared commitment to creating resilient urban spaces that we can responsibly pass on to future generations.”

# realme signs MoU with IIIT- Delhi to build a more cyber-resilient India under realme DigiShield India Program

*Initiative to benefit over 10,000 citizens and 1,000 police personnel across Gujarat and Uttar Pradesh through cyber safety awareness and skilling*

realme, the most popular smartphone brand among youth, announced the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Indraprastha Institute of Information Technology Delhi (IIIT) to launch the realme DigiShield India Program. Jointly implemented by realme India and IIIT-Delhi, the program is designed to address the growing challenges of cybercrime in the country through large-scale citizen awareness, structured skilling programs, and targeted capacity building for law enforcement agencies.

The realme DigiShield India Program is built on a multi-layered approach that includes large-scale awareness and sensitization sessions for citizens, specialized workshops and technical training modules for police personnel, and a structured DigiShield Certification Program to equip participants with practical digital safety knowledge. The initiative also includes a strong digital campaign component to drive mass awareness across platforms, along with a Cyber Safety Ambassador Program aimed at identifying and training local champions who can further amplify digital safety practices within their communities. Speaking on the collaboration,

Francis Wong, CMO, realme India, said, “India’s digital growth story is one of the most powerful in the world, but it is also accompanied by a sharp rise in cyber risks that cannot be overlooked. At realme, we believe that safety must evolve in parallel with access as digital adoption deepens across the country. Through the DigiShield India Program, in collaboration with Indraprastha Institute of Information Technology Delhi, we are working to bridge this gap by empowering citizens with critical awareness and skills.”



Dr. Arani Bhattacharya, Assistant Professor and Dean of Communication & Alumni Affairs said, “Cybercrime is evolving faster and in newer ways than awareness. The realme DigiShield India Program represents a critical step towards building digital resilience across India by bridging this critical gap by creating a sustainable ecosystem of sensitized citizens and empowered law enforcement. Through this partnership with Realme, IIIT-Delhi plans to empower around 10,000 citizens of different age groups and 1,000 law enforcement

officers across Gujarat and Uttar Pradesh with digital safety awareness and knowledge. This initiative exemplifies how academia, industry, and government can collaborate to address pressing cyber safety challenges facing Indian citizens.”

Through this initiative, realme and IIIT-Delhi aim to reach up to 10,000 citizens across Gujarat and Uttar Pradesh with digital safety training and certification, while also equipping up to 1,000 police personnel with critical knowledge on cybercrime prevention and response.

In addition, the program will extend its impact to the wider public through sustained digital campaigns and outreach efforts.

India’s rapid digital transformation, driven by smartphones, UPI payments,

digital wallets, and app-based services, has significantly enhanced accessibility and participation in the digital economy. However, it has also led to a rise in cyber threats such as fraudulent loan and gambling applications, malware and fake app installations, UPI and OTP frauds, SIM swap scams, identity theft, and account takeovers. The DigiShield India Program is designed to address these challenges by building awareness, strengthening institutional capacity, and empowering citizens with the knowledge needed to stay safe in an increasingly digital world.



## Casio India Strengthens Commitment to Music Education - Extends CSR Support to India's First Mobile Music Classroom & Recording Studio - The Musical Bus

Casio India Co. Pvt. Ltd., a subsidiary of Casio Computer Co., Japan, has announced a new milestone under its ongoing Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) partnership with Manzil Mystics through its support towards overhauling the Musical Bus—India's first mobile music classroom and recording studio. The initiative was unveiled recently at Gandhi Smriti, New Delhi, marking a significant step towards making structured music education more accessible and inclusive.

Following the successful pilot of the Learning Through Music project

in Patna, this next phase under the Delhi Project strengthens Casio India's role in expanding access to music education. The Musical Bus is a pioneering, on-the-move platform that connects children and young musicians with opportunities to learn, create, and perform, regardless of geographical or socio-economic barriers.

As an all-in-one mobile solution, the Musical Bus is equipped with a professional-level music classroom, a fully functional recording studio, and a performance setup on wheels. The initiative is designed to foster creativity, build confidence,

and provide hands-on exposure to the fundamentals of music production and performance. This bus aims to cover various schools, colleges and other community spaces, thereby bringing the musical experience and access to learning closer to the ground.

Through this association, Casio India and Manzil Mystics aim to empower underserved communities by enabling access to structured music education. The program builds a natural synergy by amalgamating Casio electronic keyboards into curriculum-based instrumental learning modules to facilitate

practical skill development, while also creating pathways for livelihood opportunities in the music and creative industries. Currently, the Delhi Project is supporting 50 young musicians through structured upskilling, with plans to expand its reach in the near future.

Under this collaboration, the program will focus on providing structured musical training both vocal and instrumental including Casio electronic keyboards, alongside curriculum-based modules designed to develop practical skills that can translate into future music education. The initiative will particularly target underprivileged students studying in government

schools and young musicians from low-income backgrounds, enabling them to access high-quality music education and professional development opportunities.

Commenting on the initiative, Akira Watanabe, Director, Casio India, “At Casio, we have always believed in the transformative power of music as a universal language that inspires creativity and builds confidence. By supporting the Musical Bus, we are reaffirming our commitment to making music education accessible to all. This initiative allows us to nurture talent and enable young musicians to explore sustainable opportunities in the creative ecosystem.”

The launch event at Gandhi Smriti brought together representatives from Casio India and Manzil Mystics, along with young musicians and community members. The event showcased the potential of the Musical Bus as a dynamic learning and performance space, reinforcing the role of music as a powerful medium for education, expression, and social change. Through its continued partnership with Manzil Mystics, Casio India remains committed to building an inclusive ecosystem that promotes music education, supports aspiring artists, and enables individuals from underserved communities to pursue creative and sustainable career pathways.

## The Art of Living and HDFC ERGO Build Job-Ready Graduates: A Practical Skills Initiative

**M**any graduates step out of university unprepared for the realities of the workplace. In early 2026, an initiative across Tamil Nadu and Bengaluru set out to change that - not through lengthy courses, but through a practical, hands-on approach to job readiness. Through a CSR partnership with HDFC ERGO, The Art of Living Social Projects launched the Employability & Workplace Readiness Program under its Vidya project. Designed as a 20-hour intervention with real impact, the programme equipped young graduates with the skills they actually need at work.

### THE GAP WE ALL ACKNOWLEDGE, BUT RARELY ADDRESS WELL

India produces millions of graduates each year. Yet employers keep pointing to the same issue: A degree doesn't necessarily translate into workplace readiness.

#### Students often struggle with:

- Communication
- Financial awareness
- Workplace expectations
- Work stress and pressure

This programme didn't sidestep the problem - it went straight at it.

### NOT JUST TRAINING. PREPARATION FOR REAL LIFE.

What set the programme apart was its emphasis on application over theory. It did not treat employability as a checklist; it approached it as a mindset, preparing students not just to secure jobs, but to handle them effectively.

Less lecturing. More doing - role plays, discussions, real-world scenarios.

#### Students engaged in:

- Stress management through breathing, meditation, and mindfulness
- Professional communication and interpersonal skills
- Workplace discipline and productivity
- Basics of banking, insurance, and financial planning
- Sales, negotiation, and relationship management

### SMALL PROGRAMME. REAL REACH.

The target was 400 students. The outcome: 370 trained in Tamil Nadu, and 31 in Karnataka. One striking detail: 67% of participants were women, reflecting strong female participation in skill-building initiatives.

Students came from diverse academic backgrounds - BBA, B.Com, BA, and BSc - but shared a common need: clarity and confidence about stepping into the workforce.

# CSR INDIA UNITED

## The Coca-Cola India Foundation and Healing Himalayas operationalize a Material Recovery Facility in Kedarnath



**A**nandana - The Coca-Cola India Foundation, in collaboration with Healing Himalayas and with support from the District Administration of Rudraprayag and the Urban Development Department of Uttarakhand, has operationalized a Material Recovery Facility (MRF) in Kedarnath, bringing structured waste management to one of India's

most ecologically sensitive high-footfall destinations.

Established under the Himalayan Harmony Project, the facility marks a milestone as one of the few MRFs constructed at such a high altitude, offering a scalable model for waste management across tourism-driven and environmentally fragile regions.

Kedarnath has long faced challenges of waste accumulation,

limited segregation, and logistical constraints due to its terrain. Addressing this required not just infrastructure, but a systems-led approach. The project was built through extensive stakeholder consultations, baseline assessments, and digital mapping of over 400 waste collection sources across the region, laying the foundation for a more organised and efficient waste management ecosystem.

Spread across 3,000 square feet, the MRF has a processing capacity of three tonnes per day and a storage capacity of up to 50 tonnes. It serves as a central hub for waste collection, segregation, and processing.

Beyond infrastructure, the initiative drives behaviour change and community participation through door-to-door awareness, engagement with local businesses, and training of waste workers to strengthen source segregation practices and improve operational efficiency.

Speaking about the initiative, a representative from the District Administration, Rudraprayag, said, "The operationalization of this MRF marks a turning point in how we manage waste in the upper Himalayan belt. It brings structure, dignity, and opportunity to a space that has long depended on manual efforts. Beyond improving waste systems, this project creates livelihood opportunities for local waste workers and transporters, offering training in waste handling, logistics, and digital monitoring."

Vinod Goswami, Director - Urban Development Department, Uttarakhand, said, "Kedarnath's MRF is a model for structured waste management. It demonstrates how technology and public-private collaboration can converge to protect fragile ecosystems. By reducing open dumping, the MRF redefines what responsible tourism can look like in Uttarakhand. We see strong potential for replicating this model across other high-footfall tourist destinations."



Devyani Rajya Laxmi Rana, Vice President, Public Affairs, Communications and Sustainability, Coca-Cola India and Southwest Asia, said, “Kedarnath’s MRF reflects how infrastructure, partnerships, and community participation can come together to address environmental challenges in fragile ecosystems. By enabling responsible collection, segregation, and processing of plastic waste through our recycling partners, the initiative aims to create a cleaner and more resilient ecosystem for local communities and

visitors alike. More importantly, it is a collective step towards bringing ‘Mera Kedar, Swachh Kedar’ to life, in line with the Prime Minister’s Swachh Bharat mission.”

For Pradeep Sangwan, Founder of Healing Himalayas Foundation, this collaboration represents the culmination of years of effort to bring structured waste management to the mountains. “To address the growing waste challenge in fragile mountain ecosystems, we began working towards establishing MRF centres in high-altitude regions with the

support of local communities and administrations. Setting up a facility at this elevation came with its own set of logistical and climatic challenges, but with the support of Anandana, The Coca-Cola India Foundation, we have been able to turn the vision of ‘Mera Kedar, Swachh Kedar’ into reality. The Kedarnath MRF stands as proof that such infrastructure can thrive even in the toughest terrains when purpose and partnership come together.”

The facility is equipped with on-site staff accommodation, utilities, and essential machinery including a hydraulic baling unit and weighing equipment. By enabling the compression of dry waste, the MRF significantly improves reverse logistics efficiency, allowing larger volumes of waste to be transported from the high-altitude region to the foothills, addressing one of the most critical challenges in mountain waste management. A digital dashboard further enables real-time tracking of waste movement, ensuring transparency and data-driven operations.

As the Char Dham Yatra gains momentum, the Kedarnath MRF stands as a timely and scalable intervention, demonstrating how infrastructure and community participation can intersect to protect India’s most sacred and fragile geographies.

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

**B**ranch 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.

This collaboration reflects Branch International’s continued commitment to community development, health equity, and inclusion, while reinforcing the role of strategic partnerships in driving sustainable social impact.



## India launches one of the World's largest 'AI Literacy for Teachers' Program

The initiative by Bodhan AI, a CoE in AI for Education incubated at IIT Madras, to train 1 Million Teachers is designed to reimagine how teaching is delivered in classrooms, positioning AI not as an add-on tool, but as a core teacher assistant

In a landmark step toward transforming school education in India, Bodhan AI announced the launch of its AI Literacy for Teachers, a national-scale program aimed at training over 1 million teachers in Artificial Intelligence for everyday teaching by 2027.

The announcement was made by Dharmendra Pradhan, Minister of

Education, Government of India, at the IIT Madras Technology Summit hosted at Bharat Mandapam on 5th May 2026. Bodhan AI is a Centre of Excellence in AI for Education incubated at IIT Madras.

The initiative is designed to reimagine how teaching is delivered in classrooms, positioning AI not as an add-on tool, but as a core teacher

assistant embedded across lesson planning, content creation, assessments, and student feedback systems.

### 'FUTURE-READY INDIA'

Pradhan said, "As we move from vision to execution, initiatives like the AI Literacy Program for Teachers are pivotal to shaping India's unique pathway in artificial intelligence: one that is inclusive in access, interoperable in design, and sovereign in capability. By integrating AI into everyday classrooms, we are not merely introducing technology; we are empowering our teachers to become architects of a future-ready India. Training one million teachers is more than a milestone of scale: it is the foundation of a responsible,

ethical, and India-centric AI ecosystem in education, firmly aligned with Honourable PM Shri Narendra Modi's vision of Viksit Bharat."

Prof. V. Kamakoti, Director, IIT Madras, added, "India's strength lies in its scale and diversity, and technology must rise to meet that complexity. As AI begins to reshape education, building AI literacy among teachers becomes foundational to ensuring meaningful adoption. This initiative demonstrates how AI can be integrated into everyday teaching practices enabling teachers to enhance pedagogy, improve efficiency, and deliver better learning outcomes at scale. We are proud to be a part of this great initiative."

### SYSTEMIC SHIFT IN TEACHING

Further, Dr. Mitesh Khapra, Principal Investigator, Bodhan AI, said, "Our goal is simple but ambitious to make AI a trusted co-pilot for every teacher in India. This

program moves beyond awareness to real, daily usage helping teachers save time, improve instructional quality, and focus more on what truly matters: student engagement and learning."

The program addresses one of the most pressing challenges in education today: teacher workload and classroom diversity. By enabling teachers to use AI for routine and high-effort tasks such as lesson planning, worksheet generation, multilingual content delivery, and evaluation, the initiative is expected to:

- Reduce teacher workload
- Improve consistency and quality of teaching materials
- Enable more personalized and data-driven learning experiences

Rather than fragmented tool usage, the program introduces a structured AI-integrated teaching workflow, ensuring scalable adoption across central, state, and government-supported schools.

### BUILT FOR SCALE

Following this announcement, the initiative will be rolled out in phases, undertaking pre-pilots and pilots through the coming months, leading to the launch of the first public cohort on Teachers' Day (September 5), and scaling to 1 million teachers by 2027. This is not incremental improvement, it is a national transformation in foundational and AI-enabled learning, built on evidence and designed for hockey stick growth. Aligned with the broader Bharat EduAI stack vision of Bodhan AI, the program focuses on capabilities such as:

- AI-driven lesson planning and content generation
- Automated assessment (including handwritten evaluation)
- Multilingual translation and communication tools
- AI-assisted administrative workflows
- Student-facing AI tutors for guided learning

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**INDIA NEEDS MORE  
SCRAP TO BOOST GREEN  
STEELMAKING.**

# CAN IT FIND IT?

If the world's second largest steel producer is to cut emissions in the sector, the country must navigate a complex scrap metal landscape.

An analysis by Patrick Moore

India's push to expand scrap-based steelmaking faces growing pressure – as tight domestic supply and rising global export restrictions threaten its decarbonisation ambitions.

*Image: Zoshua Colah, CC BY-SA 3.0, via Unsplash.*



Steel scrap has become an increasingly strategic resource for countries and their steelmakers as a key input for emissions reductions. India, the world's second largest steel producer, has set ambitious targets to double the share of scrap use in its total steel output in the coming decades. The question is: where is the scrap?

Scrap steel can significantly reduce emissions in steelmaking when used to feed electrified furnaces. It can also bring down emissions from traditional blast furnaces by replacing shares of iron ore used in production, which usually requires carbon-intensive processing.

The coal-powered blast furnace route accounts for nearly 60 per cent of Indian crude steel capacity – a share set to rise with planned expansions. This process drives the iron and steel sector's contribution of roughly 10 per cent to the country's total carbon emissions. The potential benefits of greater scrap usage have therefore been highlighted by top industry figures. But supply constraints represent a significant hurdle.

The Indian government aims for scrap to feed 50 per cent of its steel production by 2047, a figure that currently stands at 23 per cent. It is also seeking to more than double its crude steel output in the next decade, to reach 400 million tonnes per year.

With domestic scrap metal availability tight, and systems for its collection still developing, India is currently reliant on imports to meet

the shortfall. Roughly a quarter of its 41 million tonne ferrous scrap consumption in the 2024-25 financial year was met with imports, according to recent analysis by the consultancy EY-Parthenon, alongside the Confederation of Indian Industry and WWF-India.

But this flow of steel scrap is being squeezed by rising global barriers: as of March 2025, 48 countries had imposed some form of restrictions on scrap exports. By 2030, the global scrap trade is expected to shrink by 15 per cent, EY-Parthenon notes. India's key suppliers, the US and the European Union, are expected to see a drop in exports of 39 per cent and 23 per cent, respectively.

"Supply constraint of scrap is a big challenge – not just for India, for the world over," Sanjay Mehta, president of the Material Recycling Association of India (MRAI), told Dialogue Earth. "Countries don't want any kind of metal scrap to go out because they have realised in the last seven, eight years that it's an essential commodity for reducing carbon emissions."

Amid these global dynamics, analysts and industry figures told Dia-

logue Earth of the need to focus on developing domestic scrap recovery. Here, they assess recent progress towards this and, with a new steel scrap recycling policy on the horizon in India, share their outlook on the way ahead.

### DEVELOPING DOMESTIC SYSTEMS

The authors of EY-Parthenon's analysis are clear on the chances of India hitting its 2047 scrap production goal.

"In short, India will find more scrap, but not enough to fully meet both its steel growth targets and the decarbonisation needs," Swapnil Kaushik, an EY-Parthenon senior consultant who co-authored the report, told Dialogue Earth. The country is expected to face a scrap supply deficit of 40-50 million tonnes by 2050 "even under optimistic scenarios", the report notes.

Nonetheless, domestic scrap stock is anticipated to grow by 6-8 per cent a year through to 2050. Analysts are therefore emphasising the need to focus on improving scrap recovery and processing to reduce import dependence. As Kaushik said, "the

long-term answer must be domestic ecosystem building”.

Sakshi Balani, director of Indian steel decarbonisation at the non-profit Climate Catalyst, explained that these supply constraints simply reflect “where India is in its development trajectory”.

“Much of the steel consumed during India’s rapid growth in recent decades is still locked up in infrastructure, buildings and vehicles that are in active use,” she told Dialogue Earth. “The large end-of-life scrap volumes that advanced economies now enjoy reflect steel installed generations ago.”

Establishing the systems to capture increasing volumes of domestic scrap has been a policy focus since 2019, when the national steel scrap recycling policy was launched. Alongside a 2021 vehicle scrapping policy and a 2019 ship recycling act, this created “a more coherent regulatory environment for scrap than existed before”, said Balani.

These policies have sought to coordinate a fragmented system largely dominated by the informal sector, which Mehta of the MRAI characterised as the key challenge.

In an interview with Dialogue Earth, Mehta, joined by the MRAI’s secretary general Amar Singh, said that progress has been made in setting these scrap policies. But they also pointed out that measures such as goods and service tax (GST) and collection procedures have made formal recyclers more expensive.

The informal sector avoids this tax, allowing it to undercut formal recyclers while disincentivising formal participation. This is holding back scrap from moving up supply chains to the steelmakers. Singh said the MRAI is therefore asking the government to cut GST on scrap from 18 per cent to 5 per cent.

Other challenges mentioned by the MRAI include a lack of uniform

**The companies building integrated domestic scrap supply chains now will be in a stronger position than those that remain dependent on imports as global availability tightens.**

**SAKSHI BALANI**  
**Director of Indian Steel Decarbonisation,**  
**Climate Catalyst**

national quality standards, with a need to strengthen systems for scrap grading and certification, as well as a lack of traceability systems linking scrap origin to end use.

India’s Ministry of Steel is currently finalising a new policy that will replace the 2019 scrap steel recycling guidelines, alongside a proposed national steel policy. Many of the experts Dialogue Earth spoke to have been actively involved in consulting with the relevant officials on these.

Mehta said he feels positive about the government’s awareness of and engagement with these challenges, and “optimistic” for the recycling sector’s development. However, he was cautious on the potential for swift change: “Policy is one part. Implementation is another. We can’t force each and everyone to implement overnight.”

### **VEHICLE SCHEME HIGHLIGHTS CHALLENGE**

India’s vast fleet of vehicles has been seen as a promising domestic source of scrap steel. There has been a vehicle scrapping policy in place since 2021, but progress toward its goals has been slow. Balani said this is the “most visible example” of the gap between policy and implementation.

This policy established a system for registered vehicle scrapping facilities (RVSFs), which were tasked with processing a total of 500,000 vehicles annually by 2026. However, between August 2022 and July 2025, only around 350,000 vehicles were scrapped of an estimated eligible pool of 12 million, EY-Parthenon notes. “The constraint is not the policy architecture but the physical infrastructure required to deliver it,” Balani added.

She pointed to a lack of testing stations, regional dismantling centres and processing facilities.

Amar Singh highlighted the lack of incentives, and mandates, for drivers to take vehicles to these registered facilities: “If I sell it to a RVSF, they will pay me 30,000 rupees. But if I sell my car to any informal guy, he will pay me 60,000 rupees.”

Until RVSF scrapping is mandated, Singh does not expect the policy to work. But “once the material starts flowing to registered vehicle facilities, there will be a huge turnaround in this sector”, he said. EY-Parthenon’s analysis projects that vehicle recycling could grow by around 13 per cent by 2030, supported by such policies.

### **FINDING NEW SOURCES**

Other sectors highlighted by analysts as potential sources of scrap steel for India include its growing manufacturing sector, alongside construction, infrastructure and shipbreaking.

Singh said the construction and demolition sector is at a “very nascent stage” as a scrap source. EY-Parthenon analysts told Dialogue Earth that, due to these projects’ long lifecycles, this source will only deliver significant scrap steel volumes in the medium to long-term.

Scrap from shipbreaking, meanwhile, has received some policy

and research attention. India scraps roughly a third of the world's end-of-life vessels, mostly in its western state of Gujarat. A 2024 study co-authored by Balani found that scrap steel from shipbreaking accounted for as little as 0.5 per cent of India's steel production.

It projected the sector to expand in the coming decade, as a vast swathe of the global fleet is due to reach retirement. But this, too, is bound up in international scrap dynamics: notably, some European organisations have called for the restriction of end-of-life vessel exports, in favour of retaining the material internally.

New scrap-based production is also coming online in India, signalling growing efforts towards scrap use among key steelmakers. In March, Tata Steel inaugurated an electric arc furnace in Ludhiana, in the northern state of Punjab,

carbon footprint of less than 0.3 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> per tonne of steel. This compares to approximately 2.2 tonnes for Tata's typical Indian operations.

Beyond policy, experts highlighted that steelmakers could collect, aggregate, dismantle and process scrap themselves – what EY-Parthenon's analysis terms “backwards integration”. Doing so could not only secure supplies but also capture margins of up to 16 per cent – which, the report notes, currently go to intermediaries.

“The companies building integrated domestic scrap supply chains now will be in a stronger position than those that remain dependent on imports as global availability tightens,” said Balani.

### LOOKING AHEAD

With new policies being finalised, experts highlighted several ways for

most consequential step” for the scrap sector's development.

Bansal also suggested stronger regulations that extend the responsibilities of producers could be useful – for example, mandatory recycling for steel end-user industries.

Balani concluded that policy must move from guidance to enforceable standards, incentivise investment in scrap collection and infrastructure, and bring informal collectors into regulated supply chains. “Until that happens”, she said, “the gap between India's scrap ambitions and its scrap reality will persist. But with the policy revision on the horizon and growing industry momentum, there is a real opportunity to close it”.

With a scrap supply deficit set to persist, Kaushik underlined the wider implications for India's attempts to turn its steel sector green: “Scrap should be looked to as a short-term

**New scrap-based production is also coming online in India, signalling growing efforts towards scrap use among key steelmakers. In March, Tata Steel inaugurated an electric arc furnace in Ludhiana, in the northern state of Punjab, with plans to only use scrap steel as the feedstock.**


with plans to only use scrap steel as the feedstock.

A Tata spokesperson told Dialogue Earth that 40 per cent of the required scrap will be sourced from the company's recycling plant in Haryana, approximately 200 km south of Ludhiana.

The remainder will be sourced from within a 300 km radius. They stated that 50 per cent of the facility's power will come from renewable sources, with an expected

the government to support domestic scrap collection and unlock supply.

As with crude oil, liquified natural gas, coal and coke, “scrap has to be looked at as a raw material at the same level of nation-building security – at a strategic level,” according to Kapil Bansal, the lead author of EY-Parthenon's recent report, and an energy transition and decarbonisation partner at the consultancy. Balani, likewise, said such a designation would be “the

lever, while the major decarbonisation routes to produce steel would be through green hydrogen-based direct reduction of iron, alongside scrap-based electric arc furnaces powered by renewables.” 

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*(Source: <https://www.eco-business.com/news/india-needs-more-scrap-to-boost-green-steelmaking-can-it-find-it/>)*



Deep-sea mining edges closer to reality without clear global oversight – with key regulatory gaps still unresolved. Image: NOAA Photo Library, CC BY-SA 3.0, via Flickr.

# DEEP-SEA MINING RULES STALL DESPITE MOUNTING URGENCY

Global efforts to regulate deep-sea mining face delays – as unresolved rules and unilateral moves heighten uncertainty over the industry’s future, writes **Elizabeth Claire Alberts**, Mongabay.com

**C**ommercial deep-sea mining hasn't yet begun, but it soon could — with the potential to reshape vast stretches of the ocean as companies move to extract minerals from the seafloor. However, this nascent industry lacks a set of international rules to govern it, and a recent meeting of the regulatory body charged with drafting one has adjourned with big gaps remaining.

Leticia Carvalho, Secretary-General of the International Seabed Authority (ISA), the UN-associated deep-sea mining regulator, has stressed the importance of completing the rules to govern seabed exploitation — known as the mining code — by the end of this year. Completing this task has become a critical test for the ISA since the , which is not a member state of the ISA, fast-tracked deep-sea mining plans with apparent disregard for international law.

Completing the mining code would ultimately make the “a less attractive option for companies” by making any moves to mine outside of ISA regulations “highly problematic,” Carvalho said at a press briefing in response to a question from Mongabay.

“I continue to be very confident and trust that this year there will be great progress ... of the mining code that will take the International

“

**This is a frontline novel industry that will be taking place far offshore and far below the surface, and is inherently destructive. So, I don't think it's unreasonable that it's taking a long time.**

— JULIAN JACKSON  
Deep-sea Mining Lead, Pew  
Charitable Trusts

Seabed Authority from the era of exploration to the era of exploitation of mineral resources in the deep sea,” Carvalho said.

However, the meeting closed on 19 March without a clear timeline for finishing the mining code.

Pradeep Singh of Lisbon-based

ocean conservation non-profit Oceano Azul, who attended the ISA meeting as an observer, told Mongabay he believes it's “highly unlikely” the code will be finished this year.

“We're making progress, but we still have a lot more that we need to complete before we can get to adoption of a robust set of regulations that truly represents the best interest of humankind,” Singh said.

Key issues that remain unresolved include setting standards and guidelines — such as environmental thresholds — clarifying how resource benefits would be shared and determining whether the regulations will apply to all forms of deep-sea mining or only to polymetallic nodule extraction.

Julian Jackson, the deep-sea mining lead at Washington DC-based Pew Charitable Trusts, told Mongabay that the code shouldn't be rushed.

“This is a frontline novel industry that will be taking place far offshore and far below the surface, and is inherently destructive. So, I don't think it's unreasonable that it's taking a long time.”

While the ISA deliberates, the is moving forward with plans to mine the deep-sea in both international and domestic waters, following an executive order from President Trump. In January, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), a agency that will oversee deep-sea mining in international waters based on domestic law, approved a rule allowing companies to apply for both exploration and exploitation licenses at the same time. The Metals Company announced it had submitted an application under this new rule. 

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

*Source: <https://www.eco-business.com/news/deep-sea-mining-rules-stall-despite-mounting-urgency/>*

**Key issues that remain unresolved include setting standards and guidelines — such as environmental thresholds — clarifying how resource benefits would be shared and determining whether the regulations will apply to all forms of deep-sea mining or only to polymetallic nodule extraction.**

# NALANDA MUSEUM UPGRADATION

REVIVING A LEGACY THROUGH TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION

International Museum Day 2026 Marks a New Era for India's Premier Archaeological Institution

**T**he Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), under the aegis of the Ministry of Culture, is set to unveil a transformative chapter in India's cultural heritage preservation on May 18, 2026

International Museum Day. The comprehensive Nalanda Museum upgradation project represents a bold reimagining of how ancient history is presented to contemporary audiences, blending traditional archaeological excellence with cutting-edge digital innovation.

## FROM PRESERVATION TO EXPERIENCE: THE VISION BEHIND THE UPGRADE

For over a century, the existing Nalanda Museum stood as a repository of artifacts, its century-old building and conventional display methods reflecting the museum practices of a bygone era. Recognizing the need for transformation, ASI initiated an ambitious project to breathe new life into this institution. The initiative addresses three critical objectives: upgrading the museum infrastructure, enhancing artifact curation, and introducing

immersive digital technology to elevate the visitor experience from passive observation to active engagement.

The project's crown jewel is an innovative Nalanda Experience Centre a dedicated immersive facility designed to transport groups of 40 to 50 visitors through the story of Nalanda University in just 10 minutes, utilizing state-of-the-art 360-degree projection technology.

## A COLLABORATIVE TRIUMPH

The successful execution of this ambitious vision required seamless coordination across multiple institutional and private sector stakeholders.

**ASI Leadership:** The project was spearheaded by ASI's Additional Director General (ADG) Shri Anand Madhukar and Dr. Vasant Swarnkar, Director of the Museum,





Main Hall



Gallery 1



Gallery 2



Gallery 3

who brought their deep expertise in archaeological management and curatorial excellence.

**Academic Partnership:** IIT Delhi's Department of Design contributed innovative design thinking through the efforts of Sabyasachi Paldas (Professor of Practice) and Aakash Johry (Assistant Professor), ensuring that functionality met aesthetic and pedagogical standards.

**Technology Implementation:** FITT (Foundation for Innovation and Technology Transfer) at IIT Delhi partnered with Vizara Technologies Pvt Ltd, an IIT Delhi-based startup specializing in immersive technology solutions. The Vizara team, led by MD Dr. Anupama Malik, CEO Anuj Kaushal, Project

Head Ankit Jangir, and Project Manager Shubhneet, executed the technological transformation with precision and innovation.

### THE MUSEUM EXPERIENCE: FIVE ZONES OF DISCOVERY

The upgraded museum has been thoughtfully designed into five distinct zones, each telling a different chapter of Nalanda's remarkable history while employing complementary display and digital technologies.

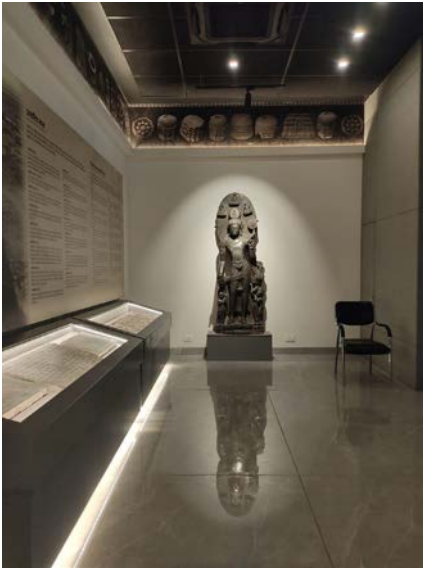
The Main Hall serves as the museum's threshold, where visitors encounter two primary artifact categories: large-scale stone sculptures and ancient seals and sealings. The centerpiece is a magnificent large-scale replica of the Seal of Nalanda,

the institution's tangible emblem and a critical artifact in establishing its historical authenticity.

The digital narrative "Tradition of Knowledge - History of Nalanda" unfolds across multiple platforms: a prominent LED wall, an LFD (Large Format Display) tower, and interactive tablets that invite researchers and curious minds to delve deeper into the university's intellectual traditions.

**Artifacts on Display:** Gallery 1 houses smaller stone artifacts, presenting them as standalone heritage objects for direct examination and observation.

**Digital Experience:** Independent from the artifact displays, the digital storyline "The University and



Gallery 4

Its Architecture” unfolds through separate technology: a touch table, television displays, and interactive tablets. Visitors can access this content to understand the spatial organization and architectural sophistication of Nalanda University on their own.

**Artifacts on Display:** This zone features iron artifacts and fragments presented for visitor inspection and study.

**Digital Experience:** Complementary but separate from the artifacts, the digital storyline “Extent of the Knowledge & the Library” is presented through an LED wall and a kinetic installation, demonstrating Nalanda’s unparalleled scholarly

resources through independent visual and interactive content.

**Artifacts on Display:** Gallery 3 showcases bronze items, copper artifacts, terracotta objects, and beads for direct observation.

**Digital Experience:** The digital storyline “Administration of the University” is presented through separate hardware - two LFD walls and interactive tablets - that explore the institutional structures, economic systems, and governance mechanisms independently from the artifact displays

**Artifacts on Display:** The final gallery features inscriptions and large-scale sculptures representing decades of ASI archaeological fieldwork.

**Digital Experience:** The digital storyline “Excavations & Archaeological Findings” is showcased through a commanding LFD wall as a standalone experience, allowing visitors to engage with the narrative of archaeological discovery independently from viewing the artifacts themselves.

### THE NALANDA EXPERIENCE CENTRE: IMMERSIVE STORYTELLING AT SCALE

Beyond the traditional galleries lies the innovative Nalanda Experience Centre, a purpose-built immersive theater unlike any other museum installation in India. Designed to





accommodate 40 to 50 visitors simultaneously, this space employs 20 strategically positioned projectors creating a seamless four-sided projection environment that envelops viewers in a multisensory narrative.

In a mere 10 minutes, audiences are transported through time - witnessing the rise of Nalanda

University, its golden age as a center of learning, its monastic life, and its enduring legacy. The

360-degree storytelling format transcends traditional documentary formats, creating an emotional and intellectual connection to history that resonates long after the experience concludes.

### **SIGNIFICANCE FOR CULTURAL HERITAGE AND TOURISM**

The Nalanda Museum upgradation represents more than a facility renovation - it signals a paradigm shift in how India's archaeological institutions engage contemporary audiences. By marrying artifact preservation with digital narrative, the project honors Nalanda's historical significance while making it accessible and compelling to visitors from diverse backgrounds.

For pilgrims, scholars, students, and international visitors, the enhanced museum now offers a more complete, engaging understanding of Nalanda University's




unparalleled contributions to Buddhist scholarship, philosophy, mathematics, and medicine. The site's designation as a UNESCO World Heritage Site gains reinforced meaning through this thoughtful curatorial and technological upgrade.

### **CONCLUSION: A MUSEUM FOR OUR TIME**

As the Nalanda Museum opens its doors on International Museum Day 2026, it stands as a testament to what is possible when archaeological science, institutional commitment, academic expertise, and technological innovation converge

toward a shared vision. The project honors the past while serving the present, ensuring that the legacy of Nalanda University - one of the world's greatest centers of learning - continues to inspire and educate generations to come.

The upgradation of Nalanda Museum is not merely a restoration of a building or reorganization of artifacts. It is a conscious choice to tell India's intellectual history in a way that captures hearts and minds, proving that heritage preservation and contemporary engagement are not mutually exclusive pursuits. 

# NAGALAND UNIVERSITY STUDY HIGHLIGHTS GIS-BASED SOLUTION TO ADDRESS SOIL EROSION IN NORTH-EAST INDIA

The researchers emphasize that such an approach not only helps control erosion but also supports long-term environmental sustainability, improves agricultural productivity, and enhances water availability

**A** study by Nagaland University has called for a scientific approach using geospatial technology to mitigate the impacts of soil erosion in the North-Eastern hilly region of India.

The researchers emphasize that such an approach not only helps control erosion but also supports long-term environmental sustainability, improves agricultural productivity, and enhances water availability.

Soil erosion is emerging as a serious environmental and ecological issue in the eastern Himalayan region, affecting agricultural productivity, water resources, and overall ecological balance. The problem is further aggravated by factors such as steep slopes, high rainfall, deforestation, unscientific land use practices, and increasing human interventions including shifting cultivation, mining and infrastructure development.



The study focuses on the Siji watershed, a part of the Gai River Basin in Assam, which represents one of the most erosion-prone regions in the Northeast. Using the Revised

Universal Soil Loss Equation (RUSLE) integrated with GIS-based modelling, the research assesses soil erosion and sediment transport by analysing key factors such as rainfall intensity, soil

characteristics, slope, land use patterns, and conservation practices.

The findings were published in *Discover Geoscience* (<https://doi.org/10.1007/s44288-026-00472-y>), a peer-reviewed journal that publishes research on monitoring, assessment, and management of environmental quality, brought out by the prestigious Springer Nature.

The Research Paper was co-authored by Prof. M. S. Rawat, Department of Geography, School of Sciences, Nagaland University along with his Research Scholar Ms. Tulumoni Gogoi and Dr. Pradeep Kumar Rawat, Consultant Professor, Asian International University, Manipur.

Speaking on the significance of the study, Prof. Jagadish K. Patnaik, Vice-Chancellor, Nagaland University, said, “The recent study on GIS-based solutions for soil erosion marks a significant step towards addressing one of the most pressing environmental challenges in North-East India. Integrating geospatial technology can effectively guide conservation efforts, ensuring reduced soil degradation while promoting sustainable land use practices. Such research contributes to long-term environmental sustainability, strengthens agricultural productivity, and improves water resource management in the region.”

The findings show that areas with dense forest cover and gentle slopes experience minimal erosion, while regions with steep slopes, croplands, barren land, and human disturbances such as road construction and mining are at significantly higher risk. In some cases, erosion rates were found to be extremely high, indicating serious threats to land stability and local ecosystems.

Elaborating on how this study proposes addressing these challenges, Prof Rawat said, “We recommend an Integrated Watershed Management (IWM) approach. This includes developing sustainable land use plans and implementing



mechanical and biological measures such as contouring, terracing, and vegetation cover to reduce soil loss and improve water management.”

The watershed-based modelling approach allows for a more detailed and location-specific understanding of how different natural and human factors interact within a defined drainage area. By integrating spatial data layers, the model identifies erosion hotspots and quantifies soil loss across micro-level units within the watershed. This makes it possible to prioritise high-risk zones and design targeted interventions rather than applying uniform solutions across the region.

The researchers emphasize that such an approach not only helps control erosion but also supports long-term environmental sustain-

ability, improves agricultural productivity, and enhances water availability. The model can also guide policymakers and planners in making informed decisions about land use and conservation.

Importantly, the study suggests that the proposed framework can be adapted for other regions with similar geographical and environmental conditions, both within India and globally.

The research also highlights the need for future work, including the development of flood prediction models and better monitoring systems in the region. Given the increasing impact of human activities and climate-related factors, timely intervention is crucial to prevent further environmental degradation. 📍



Researchers found that about 84 per cent of animals for sale on Facebook are banned from commercial cross-border trade under an international treaty. More than half of them were endangered or critically endangered species. *Image: Smithsonian's National Zoo, CC BY-SA 3.0, via Flickr.*

# ILLEGAL WILDLIFE TRADE THRIVES ON FACEBOOK, REPORT SAYS

Online sales of wildlife products from protected species are booming on Facebook. The platform hosted more than three-fourths of the 22,000 wild animals and their parts known to be sold online between April 2024 and March 2026, valued at US\$65 million, according to a recent report, reports **Spoorthy Raman**

**W**ith just the click of a button or a swipe on a phone, it's possible to buy almost anything online, including rare or endangered animals. From quirky shark trophies to exotic live birds, contraband rhino horns or ivory, buyers can flock to e-commerce platforms and find them all. Traffickers hide behind their screens while profiting from online sales of protected species as these animals dwindle in the wild.

"It's the largest wildlife market," said wildlife trade researcher Chris Shepherd from the Center for Biological Diversity. "It's easy, it's convenient; you can operate anonymously from the comfort of your home. You don't have the expenses of setting up a shop."

Online commerce in illicit wildlife products continues to grow, involving more species and wider geographies. It's an illicit industry run by kingpins with well-connected networks, and it's hard to prosecute. Catching online criminals is extremely challenging.

"Wildlife markets have moved from physical locations into online locations, and that's mirroring broader trends in the global economy," said Simone Haysom, director of environmental crime programs at the Swiss-based organisation Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime.

In a recent report, Haysom and her colleague Russell Grey analysed online wildlife trade data from April 2024 to March 2026. They focused on 10 countries across three continents, places where environmental crime and internet use are high, making them fertile grounds for online wildlife trafficking. They found some 266,535 wildlife products posted on 61 online marketplaces, worth about US\$66 million.

About 75 per cent of the nearly 22,000 ads they saw were on Face-

“

**Meta needs to ask itself what role it wants to play in that process. Does it want to be the central platform where that trade is concentrated and scaled, or does it want to set a model for how to deal with the complex online trade?**

—SIMONE HAYSOM

Director of Environmental Crime Programs, Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime.

book, a platform that's been notorious in selling live wildlife, as a recent Mongabay investigation revealed.

The large majority of the species offered online — about 84 per cent — are banned from any kind of international commercial trade under CITES (the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora), a global wildlife trade treaty. More than half of all Facebook ads offered endangered or critically endangered animals including pangolins, gibbons, hornbills, sea turtles, cobras and clouded leopards.

"There's just anything and everything on Facebook," said Gray, citing examples of pangolin boots, chimpanzee leather and ivory trinkets carved from walrus tusks. "The world is really significantly under-prepared for cyber trade in wildlife."

Though Facebook, Etsy, Amazon and eBay have policies prohibiting

the sale of live animals and their products, online sales are rampant — and buyers are mopping them up.

"It's great to see another report come out that keeps the online trade, and especially the issues regarding Facebook, in the spotlight," said Shepherd, who has worked with platforms such as Etsy and eBay to stop the trade of painted woolly bats. This report, he said, shows that Facebook is "a massive trade hub" for imperiled species. Shepherd was not involved in the publication of this report.

### FACEBOOK IS AN IDEAL PLATFORM FOR TRAFFICKERS

Facebook's design makes selling wildlife easy, the authors say. Anyone can create an account or a private, members-only group — without physical verification or vetting, often using fake names or posting anonymously. Users can also communicate privately, using its encrypted messaging service.

But Facebook groups, which bring together people with shared hobbies or interests (in this case, wildlife trade), are a hub where buyers and sellers can negotiate via private messaging, making it difficult for investigators to track.

Meanwhile, Facebook's algorithms track users' activity and interests, and suggest similar pages, new contacts, groups and content rife with wildlife trade. The platform also lets users monetise their content: They can earn money by creating content for their paying subscribers.

Before Facebook groups, Haysom said most online wildlife trade was limited to random enthusiast platforms or websites that she likened to "small versions of Reddit" that focused on specific species or animal groups. But now, those have disappeared, she said. "Facebook groups really replaced a lot of different types of sites on the Internet by providing this free infrastructure

that was very good at marketing,” Haysom said.

Facebook prohibits the sale of “any product or part” from endangered and threatened animals, such as bone, teeth, horn, ivory, carcasses or live animals. In 2019, it also introduced pop-up alerts warning that trading endangered animals is illegal. But as the new report shows, ads offering these products are plentiful. The authors say that’s because Facebook does a poor job of moderating content.

While only 12 per cent of the posts were in English, most of the moderation was in English. “It’s a global platform, but [Facebook] isn’t moderating like a global platform,” Haysom said.

Other e-commerce platforms “seem to be more willing” to moderate what users post and take down content that violates their policies, Gray said. “Facebook doesn’t really have that [moderation].” In his experience, he said, “If you report something that is clearly illegal and goes against their community standards, they just send an automated mes-

sage back to you saying it doesn’t go against the community standards, and they don’t take it down.”

sage back to you saying it doesn’t go against the community standards, and they don’t take it down.”

Since 2018, Facebook’s parent company, Meta, has been a part of the Coalition to End Wildlife Traf-

ficking Online, a group of corporations formed to crack down on illegal online commerce. In its latest report, the coalition said that between 2018 and 2025 it took down 63.3 million prohibited wildlife listings and blocked the sellers. But it didn’t detail where those listings were posted.

“You don’t know what’s been removed by who,” Haysom said. “We’re relying on Facebook to tell us what it’s done. There is no independent oversight.”

New pages and groups for animal sales keep appearing, the report says, with more than half of them created after Facebook joined the coalition, so constant surveillance is needed. When Facebook blocks users or closes a group, traffickers are quick to create another account or group, Shepherd said. “I can’t imagine anyone stopping selling illegal wildlife because their post has been taken down.”

Since the Cambridge Analytica scandal went public in 2018, exposing 87 million users’ personal data to third parties for political

third party,” Gray said. Since then, the platform has allowed users to post anonymously, which has helped illegal trade flourish, he said. “It’s like the dark web, really. There’s no real difference.”

Meta did not respond to Mongabay’s questions regarding the report’s findings — or steps it’s taking to combat wildlife trafficking on its platforms.

## BUYERS AND SELLERS ON FACEBOOK

The report didn’t delve into the profiles of buyers or sellers. But their analysis shows, Gray said, that people selling animals on Facebook are often poachers who opportunistically hunt something exotic and want to sell it. It’s how they make initial contacts with wildlife traffickers and buyers.

“If they catch a pangolin, what do they do with it? The local community either won’t buy it because they know it’s illegal, or they just can’t afford it. So, the first thing that they’ll do is go to a group called ‘pangolins for sale’ on Facebook,” Gray

**Since the Cambridge Analytica scandal went public in 2018, exposing 87 million users’ personal data to third parties for political advertising, Facebook has tightened access to its data for everyone, including civil society organisations that monitor wildlife trade. “So, there’s no way to automate searches and moderate the platform as a third party**

sage back to you saying it doesn’t go against the community standards, and they don’t take it down.”

Since 2018, Facebook’s parent company, Meta, has been a part of the Coalition to End Wildlife Traf-

advertising, Facebook has tightened access to its data for everyone, including civil society organisations that monitor wildlife trade. “So, there’s no way to automate searches and moderate the platform as a

said. “Then somebody will offer to buy it. And from that point on, they have contact with a greater network of wildlife traffickers.”

But these groups aren’t just buyers and sellers: Courier companies and

escrow financial companies advertise their services to traffickers and middlemen who aggregate wildlife before exporting on a larger scale. Once someone finds a group, the algorithm does the job of showing them several more to boost their visibility, helping them build connections.

“We’re not just looking at markets, we’re also looking at the formation of networks ... poachers being connected to middlemen,” Haysom said. “You actually only need a few people to compose a transnational wildlife trafficking train — and to do quite a lot of damage.”

Some poachers are double-dipping, making money through Facebook’s monetisation for content creators while selling rare, protected animals. “They’re hunting endangered wildlife, and they’re posting their activity on Facebook and also conducting their sales through those accounts,” Gray said. “This is either an established trend or it’s becoming a trend.”

## NEED FOR TIGHTER REGULATIONS

The report calls for regulations that prevent platforms’ algorithms from amplifying content related to illegal wildlife trade. It also demands better surveillance of posts, especially those not in English. It’s also critical, authors say, for Facebook to open its moderation to independent oversight and to coordinate with law enforcement to nab traffickers.

“We need regulation with teeth,” Haysom said. “Self-regulation has not worked ... and is unlikely to be fully successful.” She cited the EU’s Digital Services Act as an example. This 2022 law mandates online platforms to verify sellers and take down illegal content. “I don’t think it’s rocket science.”

Facebook and Instagram are currently under investigation in the EU for algorithms that encourage addictive behaviours in children and for their noncompliance with the act.

Meta was recently found guilty by the European Commission for failing to prevent under-13 children from accessing its platforms.

Despite a multitude of reports and studies exposing unrelenting illegal wildlife trade on Facebook, Meta hasn’t been held accountable in the US, where it’s headquartered, because of protection under Section 230 of the US Communications Decency Act. The 1996 law prevents

able for other damaging activities. “As physical [wildlife] trade moves to digital trade, it’s going to be challenging in the future to regulate.”

Shepherd said platforms need to move beyond just removing posts. “That’s really just scratching the surface. What really needs to be done is the follow-up: Where are these people? Where are these animals that are being sold?” he said. “Enforcement action should be taken.”

**Facebook and Instagram are currently under investigation in the EU for algorithms that encourage addictive behaviours in children and for their noncompliance with the act.**

U.S. internet service companies from liability for content posted by users — unless it violates federal criminal law and the government can show the company intentionally did so.


That’s often tricky to establish. “The government would need evidence that Meta was doing more than just hosting the post,” Gray said. “That is why, in practice, the question is not, ‘Was illegal wildlife sold on Facebook?’ It is, ‘Did Facebook itself knowingly participate in the crime?’”

But recent court rulings in California and New Mexico have held Meta liable for its content, specifically for harm to children’s mental health. The jury in New Mexico went as far as to say that Meta concealed what it knew about child sexual exploitation on the platform, thereby knowingly perpetuating the harm.

Gray said he hopes US policy-makers see the need for regulations that hold online platforms account-

He said online platforms must work with law enforcement agencies to catch traffickers and bring them to court. “They need to go beyond inconveniencing these trade groups and focus on prosecuting these people, arresting these people and putting them out of business.”

Time is running out for actions. The massive trade is contributing to what is being called the Sixth Mass Extinction, and many species are in serious trouble, teetering on the brink.

“Meta needs to ask itself what role it wants to play in that process. Does it want to be the central platform where that trade is concentrated and scaled, or does it want to set a model for how to deal with the complex online trade?” Haysom asked. 

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

*(Source: <https://www.eco-business.com/news/illegal-wildlife-trade-thrives-on-facebook-report-says/>)*



Rising urban heat in India is intensifying health risks and exposing planning gaps – with experts warning that cities must prioritise vulnerable communities and long-term adaptation.  
 Image: Olga Andreyanova, CC BY-SA 3.0, via Unsplash.

# AS INDIAN CITIES STRUGGLE TO PLAN FOR HEAT, THE MOST VULNERABLE SUFFER

Experts say more help for the marginalised is needed to stop urban development making things worse, writes **Shalinee Kumari**, Dialogue Earth

**S**ummer arrived early in India this year, and with it the dread of heatwaves. Temperatures in Delhi exceeded 35°C in the first week of March, the earliest they had done so since 2011. In parts of the Mumbai metropolitan region, heat

warnings were issued as temperatures reached 40°C.

Often known as an invisible disaster, heat is increasingly and evidently affecting the lives of those who live in India's urban areas.

During a recent Dialogue Earth panel at Mumbai Climate Week,

heat specialists warned that not only is the death toll rising now, but India's rapidly growing cities are not being built to deal with the heat that's coming. They said the most vulnerable people in these cities desperately need more attention and help.

## ISLANDS OF HEAT

These high temperatures are fuelled by the urban heat island effect that keeps city temperatures higher than the surrounding countryside.

Things are likely to get worse in the future, according to recent research on several Indian cities. Mean urban land temperatures are projected to rise by an additional 45 per cent compared to surrounding rural areas.

The health risks of this heat are alarming. The India Meteorological Department recorded 10,545 heat-related deaths between 2000 and 2020. In the same period, the National Disaster Management Authority recorded 17,767, and the National Crime Records Bureau 20,615.

But experts say the true toll of heat is likely far higher. These numbers do not include deaths from other conditions exacerbated by heat – such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes, mental illness and asthma – or which have these as a contributing factor.

“Government data restricts itself to diagnosed heat-related illnesses such as heat stroke or heat exhaustion, recorded by a physician at a health facility,” notes Bhargav Krishna, coordinator of environmental governance and policy at the Sustainable Futures Collaborative, a climate change research organisation.

## LIVING IN A HEAT TRAP

Over the last 50 to 60 years, the frequency, length and intensity of heatwaves in India have increased, while urban migration has accelerated.

According to the latest available census data, the number of migrants shifting from rural to urban areas increased from 51.6 million in 2001 to 78.2 million in 2011. The slum population in the cities also increased, from 52.4 million to 65.5 million.

About 57 per cent of Indian districts, home to over three-quarters of the population, are now classi-



**Heat is felt very personally on our bodies, but we have to connect that experience to the broader condition of our cities. Heat collectivises us, but we must also recognise that in the 21st century, there are no natural disasters, only man-made ones.**

– BHARGAV KRISHNA

Coordinator of Environmental Governance and Policy, Sustainable Futures Collaborative

fied as being at high to very high risk from extreme heat, according to a 2025 report by the Council on Energy, Environment and Water, a think-tank headquartered in Delhi. Risk was defined as “a combination of hazard, exposure, and vulnerability”. Krishna notes that increasing heatwaves, coupled with intense urban migration and the growth of unplanned settlements due to poor urban planning, are creating “heat traps”.

The materials a home is built with determines a resident’s ability to cope with heat, Krishna adds. “You might work in a covered space, but if it’s poorly insulated, and you return to a house made of heat-trapping materials with no ventilation, you don’t recover at night.”

Extreme heat hits poorer neighbourhoods hardest, notes Rashee Mehra, an urban geographer and consultant at the Indian Institute for Human Settlements, a Bengaluru-based organisation focused on sustainable urbanisation.

The population facing such heat is also undercounted, says Mehra: “Government data says about 11-15 per cent of Delhi’s population lives in *bastis* [informal settlements]. The real number is closer to 30 per cent.”

These residents are crammed into a tiny sliver of Delhi’s land: *bastis* make up only 0.6 per cent of the city, she says, whereas 2 per cent is car parking. Because such settlements are informal, they are mostly missing from official data used for planning. This means when new city master plans are drawn up, people in the *bastis* are evicted.

“Informality refers to what falls outside the purview of planning and government data collection, which is actually the majority of our city,” says Mehra, referring not just to *bastis* but also unauthorised colonies, resettlements areas and other informal housing and workspaces. “When we talk about heat, the numbers often don’t exist for the most vulnerable.” But she adds: “There is no real invisibility, only people we choose not to see.”

## HEAT ACTION PLANS

Until recently, heat was not a notified disaster, Krishna says, referring to the designation making victims and affected areas eligible for government compensation.

There was no dedicated funding, a limited political push, and no clear institutional responsibility. “In many cases, health departments led the response simply because they bore the brunt of the impacts,” says Krishna. Though heatwaves are still not classified as disasters at a national level, progress is being made. Within the last two years, Tamil Nadu, Madhya Pradesh and

Telangana have designated them as disasters for which compensation will be given to victims' families.

Over the last decade, the primary policy response to extreme heat has been heat action plans (HAPs). These plans lay out the responses a city should take when a heatwave is declared. Measures range from providing water and oral rehydration salts to putting out advertisements on heat stress prevention, and organising preventive heat training for health workers, schoolchildren and the local community.

For red-alert-level heat, the plans call for the identification of vulnerable populations and high-risk areas, and the deployment of additional medical vans and health teams at public places such as major bus terminals. Ahmedabad introduced the

In that year, the National Disaster Management Authority advisory explicitly urged better recognition of informal workers. Some cities have complied. For instance, Delhi's 2025 HAP requires authorities to ensure uninterrupted water supply and access to shaded areas and cooling shelters in informal settlements.

## REIMAGINING CITY PLANNING

Adaptation to heat from climate change, which drives temperatures higher, requires rethinking how cities are planned and developed, say experts in India and worldwide.

But one of the challenges is that cities tend to think about heat only when it is already hot, says Patricia Fabian, an expert on urban heat at Boston University in the US.

roofs that reflect sunlight instead of absorbing it. More focus is needed on such measures, Fabian notes.


But district cooling or large-scale systemic solutions seem distant when there remain struggles with basic urban coordination, notes Krishna. "Many cities lack green space, planning, zoning clarity and basic services," he adds.

The most vulnerable populations – such as outdoor labourers and those living in *bastis* – also need to be more visible to planners via better data, and integrated into plans. "They don't just need a place in the conversation; they need to be at the centre of it," says Mehra.

Discussions of these vulnerabilities will mean dealing with sensitive sociocultural issues. "We know from research that caste and religious minorities are concentrated in particular areas. In India, caste is a critical vulnerability," says Mehra. "We cannot choose not to see caste, religion, or race in planning."

Expanding social protection for those least able to cope with the impacts of heat is essential, say Mehra and Krishna.

"Heat is felt very personally on our bodies, but we have to connect that experience to the broader condition of our cities," says Krishna. "Heat collectivises us, but we must also recognise that in the 21st century, there are no natural disasters, only man-made ones."

This is a CATCH story. This story is part of Dialogue Earth's work on the Community Adaptations to City Heat (CATCH) project, in partnership with Boston University. The project is funded by Wellcome. All Dialogue Earth content is editorially independent. Read more stories from CATCH. 

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*(Source: <https://www.eco-business.com/news/as-indian-cities-struggle-to-plan-for-heat-the-most-vulnerable-suffer/>)*

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first such plan in India after the 2010 heatwave, which caused over 1,300 excess deaths, and several other cities have followed.

Earlier HAPs were often highly technical and included early warnings, emergency response protocols and public advisories. While they did identify vulnerable groups, they did not have tailored measures for street vendors, construction workers, waste pickers and other informal workers who face daily heat exposure, say experts.

Krishna says that the new generation of heat action plans, emerging in 2025, is more grounded in community needs, incorporating inputs from these heat-exposed groups.

"In extreme conditions, they shift into emergency mode – trying to prevent deaths, reduce hospitalisations, check on neighbours. In that moment, it is difficult to think long term," she says.

But long-term resilience means people can stay cool at home, at work and at school, so cities won't have to rely so heavily on emergency response, she adds.

This means better planning for residents, and of basic services, as well as for features that cool urban areas, such as green spaces. Planting trees and installing cooler pavements could help, as could improving dwellings through better insulation, cooling equipment and white

# CITIES CAN UNLOCK MORE PRIVATE INVESTMENTS FOR URBAN CLIMATE ACTION: REPORT

The nonprofit network C40 Cities have outlined recommendations for city planners in building a financial case for urban adaptation, writes **Nadilla Sakinah**

**C**ity planners and urban project developers can raise more money for climate adaptation by better aligning climate planning and finance functions, among other recommendations in new report by C40 Cities.

“Adaption finance can be unlocked when cities approach projects with financial risk-return clarity, and when financiers engage as long term partners in structuring solutions,” said C40, a global network of mayors from the world’s leading cities.

The organisation’s new report found that current adaptation finance flows fall far short of what cities need to become more climate resilient.

“Cities are the front lines of the climate crisis, yet the lack of accessible finance remains the single greatest barrier to action,” said Andrea Fernández, managing director of climate finance at C40 Cities.

The report includes several recommendations, which include developing clear adaptations strategies and investment pipelines to create strong demand signals. Urban planners and policymakers should also engage with private investors early in project design to ensure scale and bankability.

Another recommendation is for government stakeholders to build partnerships with the private sector to align on risks, returns and shared benefits. Policymakers can also look into developing viable monetisation pathways including tariffs, land value capture and blended finance structure.

The C40 report also recommended investing in project preparation capacity and strengthen transpar-



**Nhieu Loc-Thi Nghe canal in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam**

ency and reporting frameworks to bring projects to market and maintain investor confidence.


Adaptation finance investment is urgently needed as climate risks affect a country’s mortality rate. By 2035, developing countries will need US\$310–400 billion annually for climate adaptation. In Asia, 95 out of 300 cities in the region will experience an increase in temperature-related mortality. People living in

heavily populated areas will be the most vulnerable.

According to C40 Cities, city policymakers can encourage businesses to assess climate-related risks and invest in adaptation so that companies to discover their own investment opportunities for adaptation.

Examples of successful local climate initiatives highlighted in C40 Cities’ report includes the SMART Tunnel in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia,

which demonstrates how large-scale flood infrastructure can be delivered with private sector financing and expertise. The dual purpose tunnel provides stormwater diversion during extreme rainfall and acts as a tolled motorway during normal conditions, generating user-fee revenues.

Another example is the Nhieu Loc-Thi Nghe canal restoration in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, which catalysed private real estate investment to reduce flood risk while improving drainage and sanitation. The canal rehabilitation was initiated by local government and supported by the World Bank, offering a model of indirect private sector involvement. 

(Source: <https://www.eco-business.com/news/cities-can-unlock-more-private-investments-for-urban-climate-action-report/>)

# IIT GANDHINAGAR STUDY FINDS URBAN GREENING MUST BE TAILORED TO CLIMATE AND CITY DESIGN

The study, published in the prestigious Nature Communications journal, analysed 138 Indian cities & found that trees alone are not enough & cities need smarter and more climate-responsive planning to ensure that tree cover delivers maximum cooling benefits

**A** new study by Indian Institute of Technology Gandhinagar (IITGN) researchers found that while urban greening remains essential to reduce heat stress, cities need smarter and more climate-responsive planning to ensure that tree cover delivers maximum cooling benefits.

The study analysed 138 Indian cities between 2003 and 2020 across tropical savanna, semi-arid steppe and humid subtropical climates. The researchers found that the cooling benefits of vegetation can vary significantly depending on humidity, canopy density, urban compactness and airflow conditions.

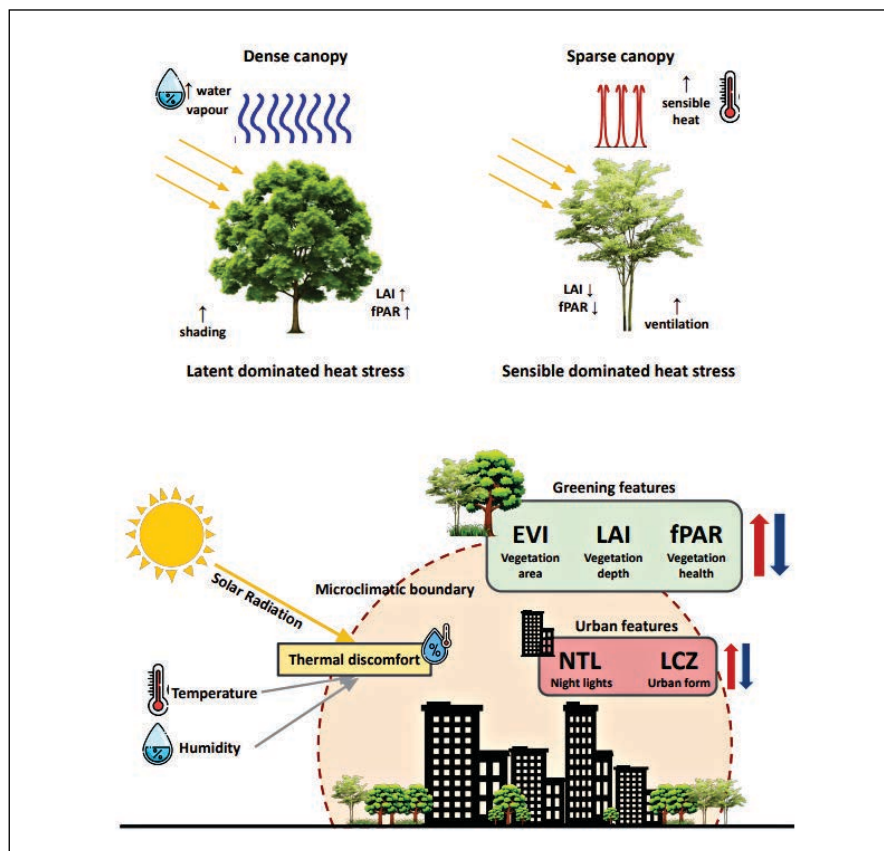
The findings also carry strong equity implications. Researchers noted that the communities most exposed to dangerous heat often live or work in dense and poorly ventilated neighbourhoods with limited access to cooling infrastructure. Better-designed urban greening



could help reduce long-term heat vulnerability for these populations.

The findings were published in Nature Communications (<https://doi.org/10.1038/s41467-026-72636-w>), a peer-reviewed, open-access journal from Nature Portfolio that pub-

lishes high-quality research across the natural sciences, engineering, and related fields. The paper was authored by Angana Borah, Adrija Datta, Ashish S. Kumar, Raviraj Dave and Udit Bhatia from IIT Gandhinagar. Highlighting the key findings,



Dr Bhatia, Corresponding Author of the study and Associate Professor, Department of Civil Engineering, IIT Gandhinagar, said, “Greening is essential for climate adaptation and shade gives people immediate relief. Our results show that one-size-fits-all plantation targets miss part of the problem. Cities need greening strategies that are designed for shade, moisture and ventilation together.”

Dr Borah, Research Graduate, IIT Gandhinagar, added, “The question is not whether cities should be green. They should be. The question is what kind of green, where and how much. In dry cities, vegetation can provide strong cooling benefits. In humid and compact neighbourhoods, planners also need to think about airflow and moisture build-up.”

The study highlights that Indian cities need integrated urban cooling strategies where shade trees, parks, roadside plantations, open spaces and ventilation corridors are planned together. In humid and dense neigh-

bourhoods, factors such as species selection, canopy spacing, pruning, irrigation and street geometry could all influence how effectively greenery reduces heat stress.

### HEAT INDEX

The research team reconstructed ‘Heat Index’, a measure that combines temperature and humidity and better reflects how heat is experienced by the human body, instead of relying only on land surface temperature. Using advanced extreme-aware downscaling techniques, the team generated high-resolution one-kilometre Heat Index maps to better identify dangerous urban heat conditions.


The study combined multiple satellite and urban datasets, including vegetation indices, canopy density measures, night-time light data and Local Climate Zone mapping. The researchers then applied explainable artificial intelligence methods to identify which urban features

increased or reduced heat stress and where critical thresholds emerged.

By making model outputs interpretable, explainable AI tools like those used in this study are making complex climate-urban interactions easier for planners and policymakers to understand and act on. The approach echoes India’s commitments at the recently concluded India AI Impact Summit 2026 to deploy AI for the Welfare for All, including AI for Social Good.

One of the study’s key findings is that urban greenery does not behave as a single uniform factor. While vegetation cover and canopy structure were linked to lower Heat Index levels once greenness crossed certain thresholds, very high canopy activity in humid and densely built neighbourhoods was sometimes associated with increased Heat Index levels.

The researchers explained that trees cool cities through both shade and evapotranspiration. In dry climates, evapotranspiration can significantly reduce heat because the surrounding air can absorb additional moisture. However, in humid and compact urban areas, excess moisture can remain trapped near the ground, increasing humid heat stress even though shade continues to offer local comfort. The authors cautioned that the study operates at a city-scale resolution and does not yet provide species-specific or street-level prescriptions. Future research will aim to connect these large-scale urban patterns with finer street-level and plant-level observations to support more precise urban planning decisions.

The study’s central message is that trees remain indispensable for climate adaptation, but future-ready urban greening must go beyond increasing green-cover targets alone. Under hotter and more humid climate conditions, cities will need greening strategies that simultaneously provide shade, manage moisture and preserve airflow. 



Fragmented incentives and project-by-project financing are holding back development, even as trillions sit idle.  
*Image: Ngân Nguyễn Văn on Unsplash*

# FROM BANKABLE PROJECTS TO BANKABLE SYSTEMS

Investors and governments are not short of money – they are trapped in a system that rewards transactions over transformation, says **Marcos Athias Neto**

Investors often cite the same constraint when asked why more capital does not flow to developing economies: too few bankable projects, too much risk. Governments see the problem differently. Capital is available, they argue, but structured around isolated transactions rather than the reforms that would make markets investable.

Both are describing the same failure from different ends.

Developing countries face a US\$4.3 trillion annual financing shortfall. In 2024, official development assistance fell by 7.1 per cent and humanitarian aid dropped by 43 per cent, even as debt burdens and climate pressures intensified. Global wealth exceeds US\$600 trillion. The constraint is not liquidity. It is how financing systems are organized, and how incentives within them consistently direct capital away from where it is most needed.

Development finance remains structured transaction by transaction. Investors assess risk deal by deal. Donors report by project cycle. Development banks organize around individual facilities. Governments allocate budgets ministry by ministry. Each institution is rational on its own terms. The collective result is fragmentation.

The pattern is consistent: capital treats symptoms rather than the systems that produce them.

This is most visible in fragile and crisis-affected settings, where by 2030 three quarters of people living in extreme poverty are projected to reside. Yet between 2019 and 2023, only 54 of 620 blended finance transactions globally were implemented in such contexts. The system directs capital toward what is easiest to finance, not what is most urgent to transform. The problem is not a shortage of instruments. It is misaligned incentives.

Consider what a single investment genuinely depends on. A renewable

energy project requires functioning tax policy, land governance, grid regulation, credit markets and access to insurance. If those systems are weak, risk premiums rise and capital withdraws. A well-structured deal cannot compensate for structural uncertainty. Markets price systems, not projects.

The absence of bankable projects, in other words, reflects underinvestment in bankable systems.

This recognition is driving a practical shift. Eighty-six governments are now implementing Integrated National Financing Frameworks, nationally led strategies that connect public finance, private investment and development cooperation so that fiscal policy, debt management, climate commitments and market

These figures matter less for their scale than for what they represent: a different model of development finance in which public investment creates the conditions for private capital, rather than substituting for it. Between 2022 and 2024, every dollar of support received by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) corresponded to nearly US\$60 in aligned investment. That leverage comes not from funding projects but from strengthening the fiscal frameworks, budget credibility and institutional incentives that shape how capital flows.

What is emerging from this work is a distinct practice, which might be called systems finance, in which the unit of investment shifts

**Developing countries face a US\$4.3 trillion annual financing shortfall. In 2024, official development assistance fell by 7.1 per cent and humanitarian aid dropped by 43 per cent, even as debt burdens and climate pressures intensified.**

regulation reinforce one another rather than operating in parallel.

These frameworks serve a dual purpose: they introduce macro-economic and policy stability that reduces risk for investors, while connecting interventions across sectors and supply chains in ways that reduce delivery risk. Countries applying them have mobilized US\$16 billion in new financing and aligned a further US\$32 billion with national development priorities. Since 2022, nationally led reforms supported through these frameworks have aligned more than US\$900 billion in public and private finance toward sustainable development.

from the individual transaction to the institutional architecture that determines whether transformation succeeds or fails. The evaluative question changes accordingly. Systems finance does not ask whether a single investment performs well within a diversified portfolio. It asks whether a portfolio of connected interventions, sequenced across sectors and capital types, can shift how an entire system works.

Systems finance does not replace project finance or blended finance. It addresses what sits underneath them: the fiscal credibility, regulatory predictability and cross-sector coordination that connects indi-

vidual instruments toward coherence and transformation.

The difference becomes concrete at country level.

For example, in Zambia, a grant that builds the business capabilities of smallholder farmers reduces the risk of lending to a company that bundles solar panels with refrigeration, providing reliable energy and cutting post-harvest losses. That investment enables cold storage and logistics infrastructure, which allows an aggregator to collect higher volumes with less spoilage. More reliable supply allows food processing firms to sign long-term offtake agreements financed through debt.

Each intervention de-risks the next. The result is a cluster of investments with smoother

A new International Organization for Standardization (ISO) management system standard (ISO 53001), developed with UNDP and built from field experiments across countries, will allow investors and regulators to verify whether an organization's decisions are genuinely aligned with sustainability objectives, not simply whether its reporting is. As practice evolves, so will the standards. When enterprises and investors operate under compatible, auditable frameworks, their activities become comparable and can be aggregated into portfolios linked to national reform priorities. That is what moves coordination from aspiration to infrastructure.

The deeper constraint, however, is institutional. Development banks

becomes a genuine competitive advantage for development institutions willing to invest in it.

Changing this requires strengthening the foundation that all other instruments depend on: domestic public finance. Credible tax systems, transparent budgeting and prudent debt management reduce investment uncertainty at its source. When fiscal systems are credible, risk-sharing and blended finance amplify investment rather than substituting for it. Public capital becomes catalytic because it lowers systemic risk, not because it absorbs losses one transaction at a time.

If national financing frameworks become genuine investment infrastructure, connecting fiscal reform, market regulation and private capital behind nationally defined priorities, money reaches the places the current system has neglected. That includes fragile contexts where economic stability depends on exactly the kind of coordinated investment that project-by-project finance cannot deliver.

The question is not whether capital exists. It is whether governments and development institutions will invest in the systems that make capital useful, or keep funding projects, one at a time, inside an architecture that has already failed. □

**Integrated development has been discussed for decades, often producing strategies without implementation power. One distinguishing feature is the effort to embed coordination in enforceable standards rather than leave it to goodwill.**

cash flows, lower default risk and higher incomes, collectively less risky than three isolated deals with unconnected enterprises. This is what systems finance looks like in practice: not a single transaction, but a sequence of coordinated investments where the interactions between them generate value that none could produce alone.

Skepticism is fair. Integrated development has been discussed for decades, often producing strategies without implementation power. One distinguishing feature is the effort to embed coordination in enforceable standards rather than leave it to goodwill.

earn fees on individual transactions. Fund managers are assessed on quarterly returns. Donor systems remain project-based. Public institutions are measured by disbursement rates rather than coherence.

These incentives reward activity over alignment, speed over system building. Managing interconnected portfolios rather than isolated projects demands a different kind of intelligence, the ability to track how interventions interact across sectors in real time and adjust course as conditions change. As access to data becomes cheaper, the value of reliable, decision-ready insight into what is working on the ground

*The United Nations Secretary-General announced the appointment of Marcos Athias Neto of Brazil as UN Assistant Secretary-General, UNDP Assistant Administrator and Director of the Bureau for Policy and Programme Support (BPPS) on 30 October 2023. He assumed his responsibilities in BPPS from 1 November 2023. Mr. Neto has previously served as the Director of UNDP's Sustainable Finance Hub, leading UNDP's work on sustainable finance in more than 40 countries in collaboration with other UN agencies and partners.*

*(Source: <https://www.eco-business.com/opinion/from-bankable-projects-to-bankable-systems/>)*

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