

CSR TODAY

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When the Himalayas cross the limits of adaptation



Rajesh Tiwari
Publisher
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CSR cannot remain confined to schools, hospitals and short-term relief after disasters. Companies, particularly those with large carbon footprints or supply chains exposed to climate risks, need to invest in resilience, disaster preparedness, water security, scientific monitoring and community-based adaptation.

Climate disasters do not stop at national borders or at the edge of a factory gate. They can disrupt transport corridors, power and water supplies, tourism, agriculture, labour availability and supply chains.

The catastrophic collapse in Nepal's Himalayas is a stark reminder that climate change is no longer a distant environmental concern.

It is reshaping the physical landscape, altering the stability of mountains and turning familiar natural hazards into more complex and potentially devastating disasters.

The tragedy, in which more than 1,300 people were killed and thousands remain missing, was not caused by a single extreme weather event. Scientists describe it as a compound disaster, involving glacier thinning, permafrost thaw, record temperatures, meltwater and the legacy of a major earthquake. Climate change appears to have intensified several of these risk factors.

The most disturbing finding is that adaptation has limits. Early warning systems, disaster preparedness and resilient infrastructure remain essential, but there are events whose scale can overwhelm even well-prepared communities. For vulnerable countries such as Nepal, this raises an uncomfortable question of climate justice: how should nations that have contributed least to global warming cope with risks created by decades of fossil-fuel use elsewhere?

For businesses, the lesson is equally important. Climate disasters do not stop at national borders or at the edge of a factory gate. They can disrupt transport corridors,

power and water supplies, tourism, agriculture, labour availability and supply chains. Corporate climate strategies therefore need to look beyond emissions targets to the resilience of the communities, infrastructure and ecosystems on which businesses ultimately depend.

This is where the conversation around corporate social responsibility must evolve. CSR cannot remain confined to schools, hospitals and short-term relief after disasters. Companies, particularly those with large carbon footprints or supply chains exposed to climate risks, need to invest in resilience, disaster preparedness, water security, scientific monitoring and community-based adaptation.

There is also a larger responsibility. Supporting clean technologies, reducing emissions across operations and supply chains, and directing climate finance towards vulnerable communities are no longer simply environmental choices. They are investments in economic and social stability.

The Nepal disaster should therefore not be seen only as a Himalayan tragedy. It is a warning from a fragile ecosystem whose risks are increasingly connected to the rest of the world. The message is clear: adaptation can protect lives, but only rapid emissions reduction can prevent tomorrow's risks from becoming today's catastrophes. 

Ganesh Chaturthi

By **Jawhar Sircar**

On Ganesh Chaturthi the first name that comes to our mind is Bal Gangadhar Tilak. It is he who brought Ganesh Puja that into a major public event, that involved millions into our national movement. Prior to this, his worship was primarily a family worship and then a deity patronised by Shivaji and the Maratha empire from the 17th century.

The Marathas spread it all over the Deccan by and is still quite popular in Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka and Goa. But its democratisation and popularisation were largely thanks to Tilak — who used it to spread the message of nationalism via its popular appeal. And, the Bombay film industry played a big role to make it universal.

In fact, Tilak's community Ganesh celebrations inspired Bengali nationalists to start community or sarbojanin Durga Pujas in Bengal from 1910, Ganesh is celebrated in Tamil Nadu as Pillayar and in Kerala as Lambodhara Piranal.

Ganesha is primarily a 'non-Aryan' god and was slowly adopted by all others — as India moved towards a composite culture. He is one more of the non-Sanskritic deities to join the Indian pantheon like Kubera, the wealthy yaksha or Hanuman.

The basic point is that the elephant, which is the most dominant of all animals in India was worshipped by indigenous Indians long before he was converted to Ganesh. As civilisation spread in India and human settlements or Kshetras kept replacing Vana-anchal, the forested regions, the elephant was the only major link between the two. They were prized in the pristine jungle as well as in the newer urban or village habitats where their utility was even more — in both war and peace.

The elephant emerged as a symbol of royalty and divinity. We see it as Airavat,



Jawhar Sircar,
IAS (Retd), Ex-MP, Rajya Sabha,
Ex-CEO, Prasar Bharati

the carrier of Lord Indra. Buddhism gives a prominent role to it in Maya's dream where a celestial elephant appears and causes Buddha's Divine Conception.

This half-elephant god is mentioned in the Shiva Puran and in the Shanti Parva of Mahabharata, almost two thousand years ago. There are a lot of tales about how Parvati's new son lost his own head in battle against Shiva and how an elephant's head had to be fitted in.

If we move straight to the 19th century, we find John Murdoch observing that Ganesh is worshipped in every Hindu home. H.H. Wilson also noted that "Hindus believe that when their efforts fail it is due to demoniacal obstruction, the aid of Ganesa, as lord of demons, is sought". Wilson, however, misunderstood the Ganas as demons.

During Ganesh Chaturthi in Maharashtra, Ganapati comes in a staggering

variety of styles, postures and poses. The Mumbai film industry has certainly played a very colourful role in further popularising "Ganapati Bapa Moriyaa".

He is worshipped in many countries influenced by Hindu or Buddhist culture. In Thailand he is revered as Phra Phikhanet or Phra Phikkanesuan, derived from Vara Vighnesha and Vara Vighneshvara. In Myanmar, he is known as Maha Peinne, which is from Pali Maha Winayaka.

Sri Lankan Buddhists call him Gana Deviyo, while the Hindus there call him Aiyanayaka Devioy. In Japan he is popularly known as Kamgiten and the oldest continuity Ganesha temple in the world is the Matsuchiyama Shoten in Tokyo. Ganesha has been worshipped for more than a thousand years.

Many recall the story of how when Ganesh was asked to go around the world, he simply went in circles round his parents because he felt that they were all who mattered in the universe. This child-like behaviour of Ganesh is very popular and he is loved as a roly poly baby.

There was intense rivalry between the Shaiva and Vaishnava cults in the past. Thus when Krishna's Balagopal version became an instant hit because of vatsalya or love for the child, the Shaivas filled this gap with Ganesha who was fat and and more endearing.

People in the East are not so figure conscious and have not shied away from displaying their large bellies, as it represented wealth and prosperity. Like the 'Laughing Buddha' in China and Japan.

There is no doubt that Ganesh Chaturthi is spreading to other parts of India, possibly on the wings of Bollywood, and that it has gained considerable popularity in Bengal as well. 🇮🇳

Source: *Vision Times*

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CSR NEWS



Pidilite-trained candidates Prakash Suthar (Left) and Pankaj Jangra (Middle) set to represent India at WorldSkills Shanghai

Pidilite-trained candidates set to represent India at WorldSkills Shanghai 2026

Pidilite Industries Limited, India's leading manufacturer of adhesives, sealants, and construction chemicals, is proud to support two candidates, Prakash Suthar and Pankaj Jangra, at the WorldSkills International Competition 2026 in Shanghai. Trained at the Pidilite Woodworking and Plumbing Centre for Advanced Skills (PWP), both candidates are preparing to represent India at WorldSkills Shanghai 2026 following their outstanding performances at the IndiaSkills 2026 National Competition.

Commenting on the achievement, Sudhanshu Vats, Managing Director, Pidilite Industries Limited, said, "India's Viksit Bharat vision requires not only scale and infrastructure but also a skilled workforce equipped to meet the demands of a rapidly

evolving economy. At Pidilite, we believe industry has an important role to play in strengthening the skills ecosystem and creating pathways for talent to excel. The achievements of our PWP-trained candidates at IndiaSkills 2026 and their progression to the global stage at WorldSkills Shanghai 2026 reflect the potential of focused, industry-aligned training. We are proud to support these young professionals as they showcase India's skilled craftsmanship to the world."

The candidates will now take their skills to WorldSkills Shanghai 2026, the 48th WorldSkills Competition, which will be held from 22 to 27 September 2026 in Shanghai, China. The event is expected to bring together more than 1,400 young skilled professionals from over 70 countries and regions,

competing across 64 skill categories. The Pidilite Woodworking and Plumbing Centre for Advanced Skills (PWP), established in partnership with Kaushalya - The Skill University, Ahmedabad, focuses on bridging the gap between traditional craftsmanship and evolving industry requirements through advanced, hands-on training in woodworking and plumbing.

Pidilite's continued investment in skill development reflects its long-term commitment to building a future-ready, industry-aligned workforce. Through initiatives such as PWP, the company seeks to strengthen capabilities across the woodworking and plumbing ecosystems, support professional excellence, and create greater opportunities for skilled talent to participate on national and international platforms.

Eye Donation Fortnight: Experts call for greater awareness as shortage of donor corneas leaves thousands waiting for sight

India is home to approximately 1.1 million people living with corneal blindness, while only around 25,000-30,000 corneal transplants are performed annually, according to recent data highlighted by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare during the 41st National Eye Donation Fortnight in August 2026.

As India observes National Eye Donation Fortnight, the gap between the need for donor corneas and their availability remains significant. While India has made progress in strengthening its eye-banking network, with 396 functional eye banks and cornea collections rising 12 per cent from 62,370 in 2022-23 to 69,848 in 2024-25 as per National Programme for Control of Blindness & Visual Impairment (NPCBVI) reports. However, experts say collections still need to increase substantially to meet the burden of corneal blindness.

Dr. Sushmitha Sriganesh, Executive Director, Shraddha Eye Bank, and Chief Medical Officer, Shraddha Eye Care Trust, said the shortage is not only a question of infrastructure, but also of awareness and public understanding of eye donation.

“India continues to face a significant burden of corneal blindness, with donor cornea availability falling well short of the need. While the eye-banking ecosystem has strengthened, greater public awareness and informed family conversations are critical to closing this gap,” Dr. Sushmitha said.

One of the barriers, Dr. Sushmitha noted, is the misconceptions surrounding eye donation. “Many people still fear that eye donation

will disfigure the face, believe that only younger people can donate, or assume that conditions such as diabetes, hypertension or previous cataract surgery make donation impossible. These are misconceptions. The eye bank carefully assesses the suitability of donated tissue, and eye donation is a dignified and respectful process”

Beyond dispelling these myths, experts emphasise the importance of discussing one’s wishes with family members, as the family or next of kin plays a critical role in facilitating donation after death.

“Pledging your eyes is only the beginning. It is extremely important to tell your family about your decision so they can honour that wish when

the time comes. A formal pledge is not the only route to donation; even if someone has not formally pledged, their family can still come forward and give consent if they know their loved one wished to donate, subject to the applicable process and medical assessment,” said Dr. Supriya Sriganesh, Consultant – Cataract and Refractive Surgeon, and Executive Director, Nethradhama Superspecialty Eye Hospital.

Once the family is aware of the decision, the actual donation process is simpler than many assume. “There is no cost involved for the donor family, and the retrieval process generally takes only 15-20 minutes, without significantly delaying funeral arrangements. Families should contact the nearest eye bank as soon as possible after death, ideally within six to eight hours, to enable timely assessment and retrieval. Ultimately, eye donation is a gift that you can continue to give even after death. All it takes is a decision to donate, a conversation with your family and a timely call to the eye bank can give someone else the possibility of seeing again,” Dr. Supriya added.

As National Eye Donation Fortnight brings the issue into focus, experts emphasise that closing India’s corneal donation gap will require awareness to move beyond one-time pledges and become part of everyday conversations. When families understand the process, know their loved one’s wishes and are prepared to act in time, a decision made in one family can become the gift of sight for another, turning a moment of loss into a lasting gift of sight and a legacy that lives on through another life.

Despite a steady rise in cornea collections, experts say myths, lack of awareness and limited family conversations continue to keep potential donations from reaching those who need them.

Bisleri International Partners with Dr. M.G.R. Fisheries College and Research Institute to Promote Plastic Recycling & Circular Economy

Bisleri International, India's leading packaged drinking water company has signed a Letter of Association with Dr. M.G.R. Fisheries College & Research Institute, Ponneri, Tamil Nadu. The partnership, under Bisleri's flagship sustainability initiative Bottles for Change, will engage students and equip them to promote responsible waste management and plastic recycling.

As part of the collaboration, National Service Scheme (NSS) students from the colleges will work closely with Bisleri's "Bottles of Change" team to conduct awareness programmes, plastic waste collection, and recycling initiatives, and activities aimed at encouraging responsible waste management.

Highlighting the role of the youth in creating lasting change, K. Ganesh, Head of Corporate Affairs & Sustainability, Bisleri International, said, "Young Champions can play an important role in driving lasting behavioural change around plastic waste management. Through Bottles for Change, we aim to equip students with the awareness and opportunities to participate in responsible plastic collection and recycling. Our collaboration with Dr M.G.R. Fisheries College and Research Institute will help extend these efforts beyond the campus and encourage more sustainable practices within the wider community."

Speaking about the collaboration, Dr S. Balasundari, Dean, Dr. M.G.R. Fisheries College and Research Institute, said, "Through the collaboration with Bisleri, we aim to



Bisleri International and Dr. M.G.R. Fisheries College partner to promote plastic recycling and circular economy



Bisleri International and Dr. M.G.R. Fisheries College sign a Letter of Association on plastic recycling and environmental awareness

strengthen awareness around plastic recycling, responsible waste management and environmental conservation among our students, staff and the wider community. The active involvement of our NSS students is a

great opportunity to translate environmental awareness into meaningful action and contribute to more sustainable practices."

The partnership seeks to engage students as active participants in

environmental conservation while also building greater awareness within surrounding communities about the importance of segregating, collecting and responsibly recycling used plastic.

An integral part of Bisleri's Greener Promise vision for a more sustainable future, Bottles

for Change focuses on promoting responsible plastic management through awareness, collection and recycling. The initiative works with educational institutions, communities and other stakeholders to encourage behavioural change and strengthen systems that help channel used plastic towards recycling.

The collaboration with Dr. M.G.R. Fisheries College and Research Institute extends this effort by engaging students in hands-on sustainability initiatives and enabling them to promote responsible waste management practices within the campus and surrounding communities.

Mumbai surgeon to become Rotary International chief

Eminent Mumbai-based surgeon Dr Bharat Pandya, member of the Rotary Club of Borivali in Mumbai, has been confirmed as president-nominee of Rotary International—the association of the membership service organization's 45,000 clubs worldwide.

Dr Pandya's one-year term on July 1, 2028.

Dr. Pandya follows Indian Rotary leaders who have served as Rotary International president, Nitish C. Laharry (1962-63), Rajendra K. Saboo (1991-92), Kalyan Banerjee (2011-12), and Shekhar Mehta (2021-22).

"Being a surgeon has profoundly influenced the way I lead," Dr. Pandya said.

"In surgery, decisions are based on analysis, knowledge, evidence, boldness and integrity. I have carried this forward to Rotary. I often talk about three phases in life: learn, earn and return. Rotary gave me the chance to return, even while I was still earning. I've gotten far more from this organization than I could ever give back — and now I intend to keep giving," he said.

"To me, the essence of Rotary can be captured in two words: hope and opportunity. Hope that a newborn child will be protected from polio



Dr. Bharat Pandya, President (2028-29), Rotary International

through Rotary's polio eradication efforts, hope that our communities can be made better — and the opportunity we have as Rotarians to fulfill that hope," he added.

As president, Dr. Pandya will inspire Rotary's 1.2 million members across continents and cultures to deliver real, long-term solutions to the world's most persistent issues, while developing leadership through meaningful connections.

Among his priorities will be to oversee Rotary's top goal of ending polio. Alongside its Global Polio

Eradication Initiative partners, Rotary has achieved a 99.9 percent reduction in polio cases and contributed more than US\$3 billion and countless volunteer hours to protect more than 3 billion children from this paralyzing disease.

Dr. Pandya's story with Rotary began as the only doctor in his newly chartered club in 1989, when he was handed responsibility for the local pulse polio immunization drive. He set up ten immunization centres and personally went door-to-door administering the oral polio vaccine to children.

That experience became part of a longstanding commitment to polio eradication. Decades later, Pandya served on the India National PolioPlus Committee (2011-15), the committee overseeing the final push that led to India — once considered the world's hardest place to defeat the disease — being declared polio-free in 2014.

Dr. Pandya's professional career as a surgeon has shaped his approach to leadership. After earning his undergraduate and postgraduate medical degrees from Seth G. S. Medical College and King Edward Memorial Hospital in Mumbai, he has been practicing as a general and laparoscopic surgeon for 38 years.



Max Healthcare Foundation Expands Max Medical Scholarship to Fund Education of 250 Meritorious MBBS Students in its 4th Year

Max Healthcare Foundation today announced the launch of the fourth edition of its flagship Max Medical Scholarship Programme, expanding its annual intake to up to 250 new students this year, compared with 100 students in previous years. The expansion will significantly widen the programme's reach and enable more meritorious students from economically weaker sections to pursue medical education.

The scholarship will fully fund the medical education of up to 250 new students this year who have qualified for the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET examination) and secured admission to the Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery (MBBS) program in

government medical colleges across Delhi NCR, Mumbai, Nagpur, Lucknow, Mohali, Dehradun, Bathinda and Bhubaneswar for the academic year 2026-27.

In addition to creating new opportunities for fresh applicants, the Max Medical Scholarship programme will continue to fund education of students awarded in previous years, now in the second, third and fourth year of medical education, ensuring continuous support throughout their academic journey. The Max Medical Scholarship Programme is part of Max Healthcare Foundation's corporate social responsibility efforts to nurture and uplift the next generation of medical professionals.

Speaking on the announcement, Taruna Soi, Chairperson,

Max Healthcare Foundation, said "Financial constraints can often prevent bright students from economically weaker sections from pursuing their dream of becoming doctors. Over the past three years, the Max Medical Scholarship Programme has supported 245 students in pursuing their medical education. This year, we are significantly expanding the programme to support up to 250 new students, enabling many more deserving students to pursue their dream of becoming doctors without the burden of financial constraints. By supporting these future medical professionals, we are not just enabling individual aspirations, we are nurturing talent, breaking systemic barriers, and shaping a more inclusive and healthier tomorrow".

IIFCL-Supported 'Bharat Vann' Miyawaki Forest Inaugurated at Lodhi Colony Park, New Delhi

India Infrastructure Finance Company Limited (IIFCL), a Government of India enterprise under the Ministry of Finance, today inaugurated 'Bharat Vann', a Miyawaki-based urban forest at Lodhi Colony Park, New Delhi, under its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiative. The project is being implemented by Enviro Creators Foundation.

The plantation project was inaugurated by Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman, Hon'ble Union Minister of Finance and Corporate Affairs, in the presence of Rohit Rishi, Managing Director, IIFCL; Palash Srivastava, Deputy Managing Director, IIFCL; and Subodh Sharma, Chief General Manager, IIFCL, along with Manoj Kumar Dwivedi, Chairman, NDMC; Rahul Singh, Secretary, NDMC; and Kuljeet Chahal, Vice Chairman, NDMC.

Bharat Vann comprises approximately 10,000 native saplings planted over around 3,000 sq. metres using the Miyawaki methodology to create a dense, multi-layered urban forest. The initiative is aimed at enhancing urban biodiversity,



supporting ecological restoration, improving the local environment and contributing to carbon sequestration. The project also provides for 36 months of maintenance to support the healthy growth and survival of the plantation. The inauguration also featured an

interaction with students, highlighting the importance of environmental awareness and sustainable development.

Bharat Vann is part of IIFCL's continued efforts to support sustainable and environmentally focused initiatives through its CSR programme.

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RRoshani – a CSR initiative by the RR Kabel Foundation Announces Successful Completion of Road Safety Campaign in Maharashtra

Roshani – a CSR initiative by the RR Kabel Foundation, in partnership with the Elixir Foundation, is proud to announce the successful completion of the "Traffic Awareness, Management & Road Safety Campaign". The initiative, which ran from January to September, 2025, aimed to enhance road safety awareness and improve the working conditions of traffic police across the Pune and Nashik districts of Maharashtra.

Setting up police booths can make a significant difference in improving road safety and protecting lives. When placed at critical locations such as busy junctions, accident-prone areas, schools, and hospitals, these booths serve as constant reminders for drivers to follow traffic rules, thereby reducing speeding, drunk driving, and other unsafe practices. They also enable the police to respond quickly in the event of accidents or emergencies, which can help save lives. In addition, police booths provide a point

of assistance where people can seek help or guidance while traveling. By enhancing road safety, preventing accidents, and fostering a sense of security, police booths not only strengthen law enforcement but also deliver important benefits to society.

"At RR Kabel, we see road safety not just as a civic duty, but as a shared mission. Through this campaign, in collaboration with the Elixir Foundation, we were able to raise awareness, engage citizens meaningfully, and extend much-needed support to our traffic police who work tirelessly to keep our roads safe. The success of this initiative reflects our commitment to building safer, more responsible cities, and we remain steadfast in our efforts to drive positive change for the community," said Kirti Kabra, Director, RR Global. The campaign focused on a multi-pronged approach to create a safer environment for everyone on the road.

The project was concluded with a formal handover ceremony in Pune.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE CAMPAIGN:

- **Educating the Community:** The awareness campaign reached over 10,000 students and citizens, providing crucial awareness on traffic rules, pedestrian safety, and first aid practices
- **Wider Reach:** Beyond this direct outreach, the campaign's messaging was amplified through branded police booths, ensuring its impact extended to a much larger audience
- **Creativity for a Cause:** A road safety-themed painting competition witnessed the participation of 1,000 individuals, fostering community-wide awareness through a creative and engaging platform
- **Enhancing Support for Traffic Police:** Demonstrating commitment to road safety, 75 new traffic police booths were installed—55 in Pune and 20 in Nashik—significantly improving visibility, safety, and working conditions for the traffic police force

OneStage and MetLife Foundation Launch Plastic-Free Gurugram Initiative to Drive Community-Led Environmental Action

MetLife Foundation has partnered with OneStage to launch the Plastic-Free Gurugram (PFG) Initiative, a city-wide sustainability program aimed at reducing single-use plastic consumption and promoting responsible waste management practices across Gurugram. The initiative aims to reach more than 100,000 residents across Gurugram through awareness campaigns, community mobilisation efforts and waste management interventions. The initiative will engage residents, Resident Welfare Associations (RWAs), government institutions, malls and communities in need to drive long-term behaviour change and advance sustainable living practices across the city.

The initiative was unveiled during PNB MetLife's 25th anniversary celebrations by Lyndon Oliver, Regional President, MetLife Asia, Sameer Bansal- MD & CEO, PNB MetLife and Pankaj Gupta, CEO, One Stage reinforcing a shared commitment to building healthier, more sustainable communities.

A baseline survey conducted as part of the program revealed an important insight: while awareness of plastic pollution is relatively high, consistent adoption of sustainable practices remains a challenge. The survey covered 228 respondents across 27 locations, providing a foundation for designing targeted interventions.

The findings showed that 93.8% of mall visitors and 75.6% of residents are aware of issues related to single-use plastics, while 84.4% of

respondents already practice waste segregation at home, demonstrating a strong foundation for positive environmental action. However, 77.8% continue to use disposable products during social gatherings, and 66.7% cite convenience or lack of alternatives as the primary reason for using single-use plastics, highlight-

Gurugram for years to come."

Adding to this, Sameer Bansal, MD & CEO, PNB MetLife, said, "Plastic pollution is one of the most pressing urban environmental challenges of our time, and meaningful progress requires collective action from citizens, institutions, businesses, and civil society. The Plastic-Free

A baseline survey conducted as part of the program revealed an important insight: while awareness of plastic pollution is relatively high, consistent adoption of sustainable practices remains a challenge.

ing the need for behavior-change initiatives and greater access to sustainable options.

Speaking on this, Tia Hodges, President and CEO, MetLife Foundation, said, "A cleaner environment is fundamental to healthier, more resilient communities. Through Plastic-Free Gurugram, MetLife Foundation is supporting a community-led movement that brings together residents, institutions and local partners to address plastic pollution and create lasting change. Our ambition is not only to reduce plastic waste, but also to foster a culture of environmental responsibility that will benefit

Gurugram initiative is an important step towards helping residents adopt more sustainable habits while contributing to a cleaner and healthier urban environment."

Pankaj Gupta, CEO, One Stage, said, "Plastic-Free Gurugram is about turning awareness into collective action. Through this partnership with MetLife Foundation, we aim to bring residents, communities, institutions and local stakeholders together to adopt sustainable practices and create lasting behavior change. We are delighted to be part of this shared effort to make Gurugram cleaner, healthier and more sustainable for generations to come."



HCLFoundation undertakes mega coastal cleanup campaign

HCLFoundation, which drives the corporate social responsibility agenda of HCLTech in India, today announced the successful completion of cleanup campaign across 50 coastal areas across Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry, Andhra Pradesh and Odisha.

The campaign was launched on August 11 in collaboration with M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation, People's Action for Development, Development Research Communication and Services Centre, SPANDAN, ReefWatch Marine Conservation, Plan@Earth, Animal Warriors Conservation Society and Plan Foundation to mark HCL Group's 50th anniversary.

As part of the campaign, on the International Coastal Cleanup Day, HCLFoundation also organized awareness initiatives, including street plays, sand sculptures and marine debris exhibitions, bringing together employees, local communities and environmental partners in Kundapura (Karnataka), Kochi (Kerala), Ramanathapuram & Thoothukudi (Tamil Nadu), Ongole (Andhra Pradesh), South & North



24 Paraganas (West Bengal) and Puri (Odisha).

The initiative mobilized over 7,000 volunteers and community members, leading to the collection and responsible removal of more than 54,000 kg of marine debris from coastal ecosystems.



“Healthy oceans and clean coastlines are critical to ecological balance, livelihoods and community well-being. Lasting environmental change requires sustained participation from all stakeholders to help foster a culture of stewardship and responsibility towards our coastal ecosystems,” said Dr. Nidhi Pundhir, Director, HCLFoundation while participating in a beach clean-up drive in Puri, Odisha.

Under its coastal and marine conservation mission, HCLFoundation and its partners have so far removed over 829,610 kilograms of ghost nets and marine debris.

Indus Towers' CSR initiatives positively impact 33.88 million lives across India in FY26

As digital infrastructure continues to connect millions, true progress lies in creating capability equality, ensuring that every individual, irrespective of geography, gender or socio-economic background, has access to the opportunities, skills and resources needed to participate meaningfully in India's growth story. Indus Towers Limited, through its flagship CSR programmes, Saksham and Pragati, is contributing to this vision, positively impacting 33.88 million lives in FY26 and taking its cumulative reach to 90 million lives across India.

At the heart of Indus Towers' social impact approach lies a commitment to empower communities with digital skills, education, health-care access, livelihood opportunities and sustainable infrastructure. The Company's interventions are designed to support the vision of a participatory India, where

development is driven not only for communities but with communities. The aim is to work closely with local stakeholders, government institutions, implementation partners and beneficiary groups to identify needs, create solutions and build long-term community ownership.

Speaking on the Company's CSR initiatives, Prachur Sah, MD & CEO, Indus Towers Limited, said, "India's development journey will be truly transformative only when growth becomes inclusive and participatory. At Indus Towers, we believe that sustainable progress begins with capability equality, ensuring that every individual has the opportunity, resources and support needed to realise their potential. Through our CSR programmes, we are focused on empowering communities with knowledge, skills and opportunities that help them participate meaningfully in India's economic and social

progress. By working closely with communities, implementation partners and government institutions, we aim to create lasting impact that strengthens resilience, fosters inclusion and contributes to nation-building. As we look ahead, we remain committed to expanding our reach and deepening our contribution towards a more inclusive, empowered and future-ready India."

The programmes are aligned with several national development priorities and flagship government initiatives, including Digital India, Skill India Mission, Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, National Education Policy 2020, PM eVIDYA, and the Aspirational Districts Programme, while also contributing to multiple United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Through this alignment, Indus Towers helps translate national aspirations into meaningful grassroots outcomes.

Bank of India Officers' Association Mumbai-Goa Unit Distributes Essential Grocery Kits to Over 100 Facility Staff Ahead of Foundation Day

Ahead of Bank of India's 121st Foundation Day on September 7, 2026, the Bank of India Officers' Association (BOIOA), Mumbai-Goa Unit, organised a grocery distribution programme for more than 100 facility staff members working at the Bank's Head Office in Mumbai.

Organised under the leadership of BOIOA Mumbai-Goa Unit President Shri Anton Sadnaha and General Secretary Nilesh Pawar, the initiative sought to extend the spirit of the Foundation Day celebrations to members of the Bank's extended family. Essential kits comprising grocery items, cooking oil



and other daily necessities were distributed during the programme. The initiative has been undertaken annually by the BOIOA Mumbai-Goa Unit for the past five years, reflecting its continued commitment to supporting and recognising facility staff.

PepsiCo advances ESG ambitions with efforts across Water, Farming and Nutrition, contributing to resilient business growth

The India business contributes to the global sustainability goals through leadership in water stewardship, regenerative agriculture and circular packaging

PepsiCo released its 2025 ESG Performance Update, highlighting measurable progress against its PepsiCo Positive (pep+) ambition and demonstrating how sustainability is increasingly embedded in the way the company operates and grows. Globally, PepsiCo has expanded regenerative, restorative and protective farming practices to 4.7 million acres across more than 60 countries, achieved 100% water replenishment at company-owned facilities in high-water-risk areas and reduced virgin plastic use in primary packaging by 6%. In India, PepsiCo continues to make strong progress across these priorities.

"We're excited by the momentum we're building as pep+ continues to transform our business end to end," said Jim Andrew, PepsiCo Chief Sustainability Officer. "We're making significant progress- from expanding regenerative, restorative and protective practices to 4.7 million acres, reducing emissions of our operations, to evolving our product portfolio to offer more choices — and we're doing it in



ways that we believe will strengthen our business for the long term. While there's more work ahead, this progress reflects how we're continuing to take steps to embed sustainability into how we operate, innovate, and grow."

In India, these global ambitions are translating into efforts in our food value chain; from farmers and natural resources to manufacturing, packaging, logistics and consumers. Rooted in its pep+ ambition and locally in its Partnership for Progress philosophy, PepsiCo is working with farmers, communities, governments, industry partners and consumers to build a more resilient food system, recognising that the long-term health of the business is intrinsically linked to the health of the ecosystem in which it operates. PepsiCo India engages with approximately 36,000

farmers across 14 states in India and sources 100% of its chip-grade potatoes locally in the country.

"In India, our growth is deeply connected to the strength and resilience of the ecosystem around us. From the farmers who grow our ingredients and the communities around our operations, to the natural resources we depend on and the consumers we serve, every part of our value chain is interconnected," said Yashika Singh, Chief Corporate Affairs Officer and Sustainability Head, PepsiCo India & South Asia.

She added, "PepsiCo Positive and our Partnership for Progress philosophy is about turning this interdependence into shared growth. When we strive to help farmers become more resilient, we strengthen our supply chain; when we improve water and resource efficiency, we build operational resilience; when

we advance circularity, we help strengthen the systems we rely on; and when we evolve our portfolio, we respond to changing consumer preferences. This is how we see sustainable growth; not as a separate agenda, but as an integral part of building a stronger business and contributing to progress for communities, consumers and the planet.”

Over the years, the company has partnered with start-ups to accelerate the adoption of digital technologies across its farmer network. Through initiatives such as Mitti Didi, which provides thousands of farmers with soil-health diagnostics and real-time farming insights, and Lay's Smart Farms, developed with Cropin, PepsiCo is using technology to improve farm productivity and resource efficiency. The Smart Farms programme spans more than 18,000 mapped acres and provides insights to over 7,000 farmers, while micro-irrigation has reached 100% adoption across potato farms in key sourcing regions, including more than 2,300 acres in Uttar Pradesh.

This focus on resilience through innovation extends to water, a critical shared resource for both communities and business. PepsiCo's Sustainable Water Resource Development and Management replenishes more than 100% of the water utilized in high water-risk manufacturing facilities back into the local watershed. The Pune manufacturing facility is a strong example of our water conservation efforts with water utilisation being reduced by more than 90%. Globally, PepsiCo has replenished 23 billion litres of water to local ecosystems since 2010 and reached approximately 97 million people with safe water access.

PepsiCo is also advancing the transition towards a more circular and resource-efficient value chain in India. The company is compliant with local Extended Producer

Responsibility requirements for both its foods and beverage business. It is redesigning packaging to reduce material use and improve recyclability, including through the adoption of mono-material and polyolefin-based structures for its foods packaging and the transition to 100% rPET bottles for select products in its beverage packaging. Alongside this, biomass accounts for 97% of PepsiCo India's fuel mix, supporting the company's transition towards lower-carbon operations.

PepsiCo India is also advancing cleaner transportation through the Kosi-Pataudi EV Green Corridor,



developed in partnership with Kalyani Powertrain Limited and Vayudoot Road Carriers. The corridor currently operates with thirteen 32-foot electric container trucks, enabling approximately 6 lakh electric kilometres annually. PepsiCo India has already retrofitted more than 800 vehicles, including distributor-linked vehicles for last mile delivery, across the country, accelerating the transition towards more sustainable mobility across its distribution network.

The company is also evolving its portfolio to meet changing consumer preferences. More than 50% of PepsiCo's beverage portfolio by volume in India is now low- or zero-sugar. Across convenient foods, PepsiCo continues to expand positive choice offerings, including Red Rock Deli baked variants with 40% less fat and Kurkure Jowar Puffs, a millet-based innovation that celebrates India's agricultural heritage. These innovations are part of PepsiCo's broader effort to provide consumers with more choices that align with diverse tastes, preferences and lifestyles.

Together, these efforts reflect PepsiCo's approach to sustainable business transformation in India, where progress across one part of the value chain can strengthen another. By investing in farmers, communities, resources, operations and consumer choices, PepsiCo aims to create a virtuous cycle in which a more resilient ecosystem supports a more resilient business, delivering long-term value for the business, communities, consumers and the planet.

TP in India celebrates 25 Years with 13th Great Place to Work® certification, Scales workforce to 90,000+

TP targets double-digit growth as it scales existing operations in India, to reaffirm India as a centre of excellence for AI-powered CX and transformation solutions for the Group

TP (formerly known as Teleperformance), a global leader in digital business services, is marking 25 years of operations in India, proudly earning its certification as a Great Place to Work for the 13th time this year.

The defining double milestone highlights TP's enduring commitment to building a high-trust, people-first workplace while scaling its workforce to more than 90,000 employees across 44 delivery centres in India and strengthening its role as a strategic hub for AI-powered customer experience (CX) and digital business transformation.

Since establishing operations in India in 2001, TP has evolved from a traditional CX management and business process outsourcing services provider into a technology and transformation-led organisation supporting more than 200 global clients across 22+ languages from India. The company is now strengthening double-digit year-on-year growth in India, building on the country's deep talent base and growing role in delivering AI-powered digital business solutions to leading global brands across industries including travel and hospitality, healthcare, retail and ecommerce, banking and



finance, technology, telecom, utilities and other industries.

TP in India, the largest multicultural team within the TP Group, serves clients from across the globe combining human empathy with AI and advanced technology to deliver scalable, cost-effective and value driven digital CX, back-office and transformation solutions. TP's growth in India is also reflected in its expanding footprint. In 2025, the company opened new delivery centres in Mumbai, Chennai and Indore, adding to its established network across the country. In 2026, TP is focused on scaling existing sites while expanding into additional metro and non-metro locations, including Gurgaon, Noida, Jaipur, Mohali, Mumbai and Hyderabad.

Commenting on the milestone, Maneesh Daga, Country Head, TP in India, stated: "Maneesh Daga, Country Head, TP in India, commented on the milestone: "A quarter of a century ago, TP began operations in India. This milestone is more than a number, it is a testament to the resilience of our teams, the trust

of our clients, and the evolution of an industry. What began as a scale and efficiency play has become one of India's defining service sector success stories. Today, we deliver outcome-based, AI-powered customer experience for global brands, and we are equally proud of building one of the country's great places to work. The next 25 years will be defined by what our people and our technology achieve together."

TP's evolution reflects the broader transformation of India's services industry, which is moving from operations-led delivery towards AI-enabled, hyper-personalised and outcome-based models. TP is advancing this shift through its suite of AI solutions, combining human expertise with latest technology to support CX and digital business transformation at scale. As TP marks completion of 25 years in India, the company is focused on expanding its geographic footprint, strengthening its technology and AI capabilities, and building the future workforce required to support the evolving needs of global enterprises.



State Bank of India partners with Bisleri International Pvt Ltd to drive responsible plastic waste management

State Bank of India (SBI) signed a Letter of Association with Bisleri International Pvt. Ltd. to drive responsible plastic waste management across branches/offices of SBI. As part of the collaboration, Bisleri will carry out training and awareness sessions for SBI employees and housekeeping staff on responsible plastic waste management, collection of used plastic waste from SBI offices and sending for recycling.

“Bottles for Change” is an initiative from Bisleri – India’s leading packaged water brand, through which the company engages institutions, housing societies, corporates, and communities to create awareness on responsible plastic waste management. This partnership between SBI and Bisleri is also aimed to support India’s transition towards a circular economy by fostering sustainable change through responsible plastic waste management and achieve its goal of net zero emissions by 2070.

Speaking on the partnership, Ravi Ranjan, Managing Director (Risk, Compliance & SARG), State Bank of India, said, “Our collaboration with Bisleri under the “Bottles

for Change” initiative is a step towards embedding sustainable practices into our everyday workplace culture. We believe that when employees are empowered to make responsible choices, that awareness extends well beyond our offices and



into the communities that we serve and are a part of. Sustainable development and climate-conscious initiatives are important pillars in India’s journey towards Viksit Bharat 2047, and partnerships such as this can help translate that larger vision into meaningful action on the ground”

Commenting on the collaboration, Dr. Angelo George, CEO, Bisleri International Pvt. Ltd., said, “Responsible plastic waste

management begins with awareness and collective action. Our partnership with State Bank of India brings together the reach of one of India’s largest institutions and Bisleri’s experience through Bottles for Change to encourage responsible segregation, collection and recycling of used plastic. By engaging employees across SBI offices, we aim to build responsible practices at the workplace that can extend into homes and communities. We believe this collaboration can become a scalable model for corporate participation in advancing a circular economy for plastics.”

The partnership reinforces SBI’s commitment to responsible growth and environmental stewardship, while promoting sustainable practices across its operations and achieve its goal of Net Zero (Scope 1,2 &3) by 2055 - its Centenary Year. By encouraging responsible plastic waste management and recycling, SBI and Bisleri aim to foster greater awareness and contribute to a more resource-efficient and sustainable future for India.

RiverSoft's Society Activation Programme reaches 50000 household across Bengaluru, Hyderabad and Noida

For millions of urban households, hard water is a daily reality. Even then, awareness of its long-term effects and solutions to tackle it remains surprisingly low. RiverSoft, a trusted hard water solutions brand, is bridging this gap between hard water problems and their impact on overall lifestyle with a vision of making soft water accessible to every household. In line with this, the brand has introduced the RiverSoft Society Activation Programme – a grassroots-level initiative to raise awareness about hard-water and solutions directly amongst residential communities and neighbourhood retail stores.

The programme is built around three simple pillars: consumer education, hands-on product demonstrations, and genuine on-ground conversations. Every weekend, RiverSoft teams set up activations in societies, helping residents understand their unique water-quality challenges and explore solutions best suited to their needs. These interactions give RiverSoft a direct line to consumer sentiment, bring up real concerns, purchase barriers, and evolving expectations around hard-water solutions that shape the brand's future innovation.

Through this awareness campaign, RiverSoft has reached 100+ societies in Bengaluru and 30+ societies in Noida and Hyderabad, translating into 50,000 households.

Speaking on the initiative, Ashutosh Kedawat, Founder & CEO, RiverSoft, said, "Our Society Activation Programme grew out of a simple belief: meaningful change starts with having real



conversations, not just marketing messages. We wanted to help people connect the dots between the hard water flowing into their homes and the problems they'd long assumed were just part of life - such as hair fall, skin issues or appliance damage. By meeting consumers where they live, we're not only creating awareness of these everyday struggles but also listening and learning from them directly. Crossing 50,000 households is a proud milestone, but

this is just the beginning of a much larger movement to make water care a mainstream, everyday priority for urban India."

Looking ahead, building on this momentum, RiverSoft plans to deepen its presence in existing markets while expanding the Society Activation Programme into new cities, reinforcing its commitment to making water quality an accessible, everyday conversation for consumers across India.

94% of business leaders report climate-related financial losses, yet 79% lack the data to inform business strategy

As many as 94% of senior business leaders say climate-related disruption has caused financial losses for their company over the past two years, with 30% reporting setbacks of over \$1 million. However, more than three quarters (79%) say their sustainability data is insufficient to accurately inform wider business strategy as it hasn't yet been properly integrated across the organisation. At the same time, AI is emerging as a powerful enabler, helping companies make sustainability data more reliable, actionable, and strategically valuable.

That's according to Sustainability in Action 2026, a new report by Sweep and Capgemini, which polled 1,000 senior business leaders across the United States, the United Kingdom, France, the DACH region and the Nordics. It follows the firms' 2024 research which assessed business confidence in sustainability data, with the newest findings revealing a significant decline over the past two years.

The 2026 report shows that climate disruption is already having a direct commercial impact on most companies, while the data required to understand and address issues head-on remains siloed in business systems, left incomplete or lacking standardisation. With only one in five reporting minimal financial impact below \$100,000, it's clear how much businesses are battling against the ramifications of climate change, exacerbated by a challenging geopolitical environment.

"Sustainability has not fallen off the business agenda, in fact the opposite is true," said Rachel Delacour, co-founder and CEO of Sweep. "There

is a growing risk to companies as climate disruption and geopolitical tensions continue to impact supply chains, costs and investment decisions faster than the data systems built to help manage them."

Despite these challenges, companies remain convinced that sustainability is commercially important. 85% of respondents say their business must transform for the low-carbon economy, and 86% view that transition as a growth opportunity rather than an inhibitor.

(79%) respondents say AI adoption has increased investment in sustainability, with benefits including greater access to investment, improved data accuracy and audit-readiness, and reduced time spent on data collection and processing.

"Resilience is no longer just about managing risk," said Cyril Garcia, Global Head of Sustainability Services, Corporate Responsibility and member of the Group Executive Board at Capgemini. "It is about anticipating disruption and acting

Ongoing geopolitical and climate disruption has highlighted a critical need for integrated sustainability data, research from Sweep and Capgemini has found

However, the quality of the sustainability data underpinning those decisions is degrading. In 2024, over half (53%) of respondents claimed their data lacked the reliability needed to inform business strategy, compared to 79% this year.

The report findings come at a time when companies are increasingly using sustainability data to make decisions on cost, risk mitigation, supply chains, procurement and investment strategy.

AI has rapidly emerged as a way to support these decisions effectively, making data more reliable, actionable and relevant. Eight in ten

with confidence. Trusted, connected data across the value chain is the foundation that enables AI to improve supply chain performance, advance sustainability outcomes, and create sustained competitive advantage for organisations."

"Business leaders are under pressure to respond to the huge financial losses fueled by geopolitical changes, extreme weather events and uncertain economic conditions," adds Delacour. "Sustainability data is an answer to all of that, as it provides insights on where these risks are hitting the business, what it is costing them, and where to act first."

IIT Madras, UNESCO MGIEP to develop AI-powered immersive learning technologies for global education

Partnership will create AI tools that convert existing curricula into immersive learning experiences integrating Social & Emotional Learning, gamification, enabling more engaging, inclusive & effective education

Indian Institute of Technology Madras (IIT Madras) is partnering with UNESCO Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace and Sustainable Development (UNESCO MGIEP) to develop next-generation Artificial Intelligence and immersive learning technologies aimed at transforming education globally.

The collaboration will combine UNESCO MGIEP's global leadership in Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) with IIT Madras' expertise in AI, Extended Reality (XR), game design and immersive technologies to create digital learning solutions that make education more engaging, interactive and learner-centric.

The cooperation agreement was signed recently in the presence of Prof. Obijiofor Aginam, Director, UNESCO MGIEP, Prof. Manu Santhanam, Dean (Industrial Consultancy and Sponsored Research), IIT Madras and Prof. M. Manivannan, Head, Experiential Technology Innovation Centre (XTIC), IIT Madras.

Speaking about this initiative, Prof. Obijiofor Aginam, Director of UNESCO MGIEP, said, "UNESCO MGIEP will provide expertise on Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) and alignment with UNESCO's recommendations on AI ethics and learner-centred education. The resulting open-source AI is expected to

accelerate at scale the integration of SEL from policy aspiration to everyday classroom practice."

Prof. Obijiofor Aginam added, "This tool is also expected to reduce teacher burden by providing a scaffold that helps teachers practically embed SEL into lesson plans, teaching activities, and assessments. The teachers can further adapt it, to make it more context relevant. Such Open AI models are also expected to be low-cost and efficient in low-bandwidth scenarios, thereby helping bridge the digital divide instead of exacerbating it through the need for continuous internet connectivity."

The partnership is also expected to generate scalable digital learning technologies that can be adapted across diverse educational systems worldwide, supporting the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4.7, which promotes education for peaceful, inclusive and sustainable societies.

Elaborating on the outcomes from this project, Prof. M. Manivannan, also a faculty in the Department of Applied Mechanics and Biomedical Engineering, IIT Madras, said, "A major outcome of the partnership will be the development of AI-powered tools capable of transforming conventional curricula by integrating Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) concepts and embedding gamified,

immersive learning experiences". Prof. M. Manivannan added, "The technology is designed to integrate SEL seamlessly into existing academic content rather than introducing it as a separate subject, making learning more enjoyable for students, easier for teachers to deliver and simpler for institutions to implement."

The envisioned AI tool will analyse existing curricula and generate personalised, gamified learning pathways enriched with SEL components. The immersive technologies will shift classrooms from passive instruction to experiential learning, encouraging greater student participation while providing real-time emotional feedback and fostering critical life skills such as self-awareness, self-management, responsible decision-making, relationship building and social awareness.

The collaboration seeks to address one of the major challenges in education—the practical integration of Social and Emotional Learning into mainstream curricula. By embedding these concepts into everyday classroom experiences through AI and immersive technologies, the partners aim to make SEL an integral and enjoyable part of education rather than an additional academic requirement.

Beyond technology development, the collaboration will undertake joint research in educational technology, pedagogy, AI and learning sciences. It will also facilitate faculty and researcher exchanges, organise workshops, conferences and seminars, and promote interdisciplinary research at the intersection of immersive technologies, pedagogy and learning science.

IPE Hyderabad Announces Scholarships of up to Rs 2 Lakh for High Performing CAT Aspirants

Students preparing for the Common Admission Test (CAT) now have an additional reason to aim high. The Institute of Public Enterprise (IPE), Hyderabad, one of India's well-established management institutions, has announced merit-based scholarships for eligible candidates seeking admission to its two-year full-time PGDM programmes for the 2027–29 batch.

Under its scholarship and financial-aid scheme, eligible students with strong CAT performance can receive scholarships of up to Rs 2 lakh, helping deserving candidates reduce the financial burden of pursuing a quality management education. The initiative reflects IPE's commitment to recognizing academic merit and ensuring that talented students have greater access to professional management education.

For students in the General category, CAT scores of 80 percentile and above can qualify for a scholarship of Rs 2 lakh. Additional scholarships are available for candidates across other CAT percentile ranges and categories, subject to the Institute's eligibility criteria and applicable terms. Special scholarship provisions are available for eligible candidates from OBC, SC/ST/Minority categories and designated regions like Northeastern States, Jammu Kashmir and Ladakh. There is no limit on number of students who get scholarships. IPE offers more than Rs. 2 Crores of Scholarships each academic year. More information is available on IPE official website.

The CAT is among India's most recognized management entrance examinations and is widely accepted by leading business schools like

IIMs and IPE. Beyond serving as an entry route to management education, CAT tests a student's aptitude in areas such as quantitative ability, verbal ability, logical reasoning and data interpretation. The preparation process itself helps students develop analytical thinking, problem-solving ability, decision-making skills and time management -competencies that are increasingly important in today's competitive business environment.

Prof. S. Sreenivasa Murthy, Director, Institute of Public Enterprise, said that students should

should not prevent talented students from pursuing their management aspirations. "Through our scholarship initiative, we seek to encourage meritorious students to pursue quality management education. We invite CAT aspirants to explore the opportunities available at IPE and to consider how their academic performance can translate into both financial support and a strong foundation for their professional careers."

Prof. Murthy suggested that, "With the CAT 2026 application window closing on September 15,

2026, students aspiring to pursue management education are encouraged to apply for CAT 2026 and take the examination scheduled for November 29, 2026. A strong CAT score can not only expand their choice of manage-



ment institutions but can also help eligible candidates access merit-based scholarships at IPE".

view their CAT performance not merely as an examination result but as an opportunity to make informed choices about their future. "A good CAT score reflects a student's aptitude, discipline and commitment. The next important step is to choose an institution that can transform this potential into managerial competence, professional confidence and leadership capability. At IPE, we focus on providing a rigorous and industry-relevant management education supported by our institutional legacy, experienced faculty and strong engagement with industry and the public sector." He added that financial constraints

Established in 1964, IPE has built a strong legacy in management education, research, consultancy and executive development. The Institute offers Six AICTE approved, NBA & SAQS Accredited full-time PGDM (General / Core), PGDM (Marketing Management), PGDM (Banking & Financial Services), PGDM (International Business), PGDM (HRM) and PGDM (Business Analytics). IPE PGDM programs are recognized as equivalent to MBA by Association of Indian Universities (AIU), Government of India.

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Bombay Shaving Company launches The Anandi Fellowship to identify and back India's next generation of entrepreneurs

The Bombay Shaving Company has launched The Anandi Fellowship, a new initiative designed to identify and nurture entrepreneurial talent among young Indians at an early stage.

Open to students currently in Class 11, Class 12 or the first year of undergraduate study, the fellowship aims to give aspiring entrepreneurs access to the kind of exposure, mentorship and opportunities that are typically available much later in a career.

The fellowship will begin with the Anandi-NEAT 2026 (Nationwide Entrepreneurship Acumen Test), a two-hour, pen-and-paper assessment scheduled to take place in the first week of December 2026. The test is designed to assess entrepreneurial acumen rather than prior startup experience, and does not require coaching or specialised preparation.

Students who qualify will be invited to a three-day Grit Bootcamp in Gurgaon in May 2027, with all expenses covered. The bootcamp will bring together founders and CEOs from a range of startups and businesses, who will participate in the selection process and provide participants with direct exposure to entrepreneurship and company-building.

Selected Anandi Fellows will have access to four key opportunities:

- Entrepreneur-in-Residence opportunity at Bombay Shaving Company: A pre-placement offer (PPO) with a compensation of ₹25 lakh per annum.
- Paid summer internships: Opportunities to work with leading founders, startups, venture capital firms and companies



across sectors, with a stipend of ₹1 lakh per month.

- Education scholarship: A ₹1 lakh annual scholarship through college.
- Future founder funding: Up to ₹1 crore in seed funding when

a fellow decides to pursue their own startup full-time.

The internship network associated with the programme includes organisations such as Bombay Shaving Company, Urban Company, Elevation Partners, Country Delight, Mosaic Wellness, Z47 Partners, Atomberg, The Whole Truth, Sixth Sense, Allen, Qualia, Agilitas, GoKwik, Rebel Foods, Leap Scholar, Giga Capital and Treebo Hotels, among others.

The programme is deliberately designed to remain independent of a student's academic background or college. Fellows can pursue the course and institution of their choice, while the fellowship focuses on identifying entrepreneurial potential at an early stage.

Shantanu Deshpande, Founder & CEO, Bombay Shaving Company, said: "Entrepreneurship is usually discovered much later than it needs to be. By then, access, networks and financial circumstances have already shaped who gets the opportunity to build. The Anandi Fellowship is our attempt to change that equation, to find young people with the curiosity, grit and acumen to build, and give them real exposure, mentorship and eventually capital. We are not looking for students who have already built a company. We are looking for the potential to build one."

Registrations for the Anandi Fellowship are now open here: www.theanandifellowship.com

Students in Classes 11 and 12 and first-year undergraduate programmes who are interested in entrepreneurship can register for the Anandi-NEAT 2026, scheduled for the first week of December.

Programme will give students in Classes 11, 12 and first-year undergraduate studies access to internships, scholarships, founder mentorship and up to ₹1 crore in seed funding

CSR INDIA UNITED

From a Remote Village in Gadchiroli to Curtin University in Australia & Back Home

For Ignasiyus Prakash Bada, studying abroad was once a distant possibility. Growing up in Bande, a remote village near the Surjagarh Iron Ore Mine in Gadchiroli, in a family of seven, higher education abroad was a distant dream. His mother Sarita is an Anganwadi helper, while his father Prakash is a farmer.

Today, Ignasiyus has completed his Master's in Innovation and Entrepreneurship from Curtin University in Perth, Australia, and has returned to Gadchiroli to begin

his professional journey with Lloyds Metals and Energy Limited (LMEL) as a Management Trainee. He is the first student from the inaugural batch of the Lloyds Infinite Foundation's Curtin University Sponsorship Programme to complete his studies.

The opportunity came through a scholarship programme initiated by Lloyds Infinite Foundation, the CSR arm of Lloyds Metals and Energy Limited, to support promising students from the region to pursue higher education and gain international exposure.

The programme covered Ignasiyus's tuition fees, accommodation, travel and living expenses.

Reflecting on his journey, Ignasiyus said, "This is a dream come true. Coming from Bande, the opportunity to study in Australia and experience a completely different educational and cultural environment has changed my perspective, confidence and aspirations. I am grateful to Mr. B. Prabhakaran for the support and trust that made this possible and for giving students like me an opportunity to pursue

aspirations we may never have thought of. Returning home and beginning my career here is a meaningful part of this journey for me."

The milestone also reflects a commitment made by B Prabhakaran, Managing Director, Lloyds Metals and Energy Limited, in 2023 to create opportunities for local youth to access higher education and encourage them to contribute to the development of their home region.

Commenting on the milestone, Prabhakaran said, "This is a proud moment for all of us. When we started this programme, we made a promise to create global opportunities for our local youth and encourage them



to return and contribute to the development of Gadchiroli. Ignasiyus has shown that this promise can become a reality. His journey from Bande to Curtin and back to Lloyds will inspire many youngsters from the region. This is just the beginning."

Ignasiyus's story from a farming and Anganwadi family in a remote village, to a university in Australia, and now back home as a young professional mark the first journey completed under the sponsorship programme and sets an example for other students from the region.





Noida International Airport and Bird Academy Create hospitality employment pathways for local youth in Jewar

Bird Academy, in collaboration with Noida International Airport, Brisk Olive Trust, and Roseate Hotels & Resorts, the hospitality brand of Bird Group, has successfully completed a hospitality skill development programme for local youth in Jewar.

The programme was designed to support employment-oriented skill development for young people from communities around Noida International Airport and help them access opportunities linked to the region's growing aviation, hospitality and services ecosystem.

Conducted at ITI College, Jewar, the programme trained 33 students from different backgrounds who had completed schooling up to Class 12. It covered key areas of hospitality operations, including Front Office and Food & Beverage, along with soft skills, industry interactions and site visits to hospitality facilities.

The training focused on practical capabilities, workplace readiness and confidence-building among the students. Following the completion of the programme, candidates have moved into employment opportunities across the region, including at Noida International Airport, Roseate Hotels & Resorts, and outlets along the Yamuna Expressway.

The hospitality programme builds on an earlier collaboration between Bird Academy and Brisk Olive Trust, the CSR partner for Noida International Airport. Last year an aviation skill development programme was conducted at ITI College, Jewar, for 28 students from underprivileged backgrounds. The programme focused on aviation ground operations, including ramp operations and passenger handling, along with soft skills, airport exposure visits and interactions with industry professionals. Candidates

who completed the programme have since secured employment opportunities at Noida International Airport.

The Aviation Skill Development Centre at ITI College, Jewar, was inaugurated last year by the Hon'ble Member of Legislative Assembly of Jewar - Shri Dharendra Singh, with support from Noida International Airport. The centre is intended to equip local communities with skills aligned to employment opportunities emerging from the region's aviation and logistics ecosystem.

Christoph Schnellmann, Vice Chairman, Noida International Airport, said: "Noida International Airport's development is closely linked with the communities around it. Supporting local youth with relevant skills and access to employment opportunities is an important part of our commitment to the region. We are encouraged to see participants from these programmes move into

employment, and we will continue to work with partners on initiatives that strengthen employability and support inclusive regional growth.”

Radha Bhatia, Chairperson, Bird Group & Bird Education Society for Travel & Tourism (BESTT), added: “The belief that skill is the most powerful enabler of opportunity has driven everything Bird Academy has stood for since 1998. In a world where graduation and post-graduation alone no longer guarantee a rewarding career, focused skilling is what bridges education and employment. Empowering women has always been central to our mission, because when you empower a woman, you empower an entire family, and in turn, a community. We believe in gender parity, and that every young woman deserves equal access to skill and opportunity.

Seeing them step into meaningful careers alongside their peers, is the very purpose. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Mr. Christoph Schnellmann and the Noida International Airport team,

and communities come together with shared intent. Aviation and hospitality are among the fastest growing pillars of India's economy, and demand a skilled, world-ready workforce capable of delivering

In a world where graduation and post-graduation alone no longer guarantee a rewarding career, focused skilling is what bridges education and employment.

and to the leadership of Brisk Olive Trust, for giving Bird Academy the opportunity to positively impact 61 lives. This is just a curtain raiser, one that showed us what is possible when institutions, industry,

world-class experiences. We look forward to sustained and strategic public-private partnerships that place our youth, our communities, and our nation firmly at the centre of this growth story.”

Aequs Foundation's 'One Precious Notebook' Campaign Transforms Education for Underserved Students in North Karnataka

A simple gesture it may be, but employees of the Aequs Group of companies have opened a space to learn, imagine and dream for thousands of underserved school children by gifting nearly 1.3 lakh notebooks this year.

The annual 'One Precious Notebook' campaign by Aequs Foundation, the CSR arm of the Aequs Group, elicited a widespread response from Aequs employees and school administrations alike, reinforcing the impact of this initiative aimed at enhancing opportunities for needy children.

This year, the campaign reached out to 114 schools so far impacting the lives of over 19,000 students. A record 876 volunteers actively

participated in the campaign this year, contributing their time and effort - personally distributing the notebooks to students.

Akkamahadevi Melligeri, Chairperson, Aequs Foundation said “The 'One Precious Notebook' campaign is a testament to the Foundation's unwavering commitment to education and community development. By alleviating financial burdens on families, the initiative fosters a culture of learning and sheds light on the challenges faced by underserved students. Through this powerful effort Aequs Foundation continues to instil hope and ambition for a future where education is the cornerstone of a fair and just society.”

The One Precious Notebook campaign holds a special place for Aequs employees who add an individualized touch with a message for recipient on the last page of the notebook. Each notebook thus represents not just pages, but a promise of hope and opportunity for the students who come in touch with.

Another endearing element this year was the notebook cover designs derived from drawings by children of Aequs employees who participated in a competition to lend a creative touch to the campaign. Each notebook not only carried knowledge but also reflected the spirit of togetherness and creativity from the Aequs family.

M3M Foundation Supports Kamya Bhardwaj Through 'Samudra Se Shikhar Tak' to Take on the Oceans Seven

Haryana's First Female Channel Swimmer on a Historic Quest to Become India's First Woman to Complete the Oceans Seven

M3M Foundation has come forward to support young open-water swimmer Kamya Bhardwaj in her quest to conquer the Oceans Seven, launching 'Samudra Se Shikhar Tak' under its Lakshya programme as a dedicated initiative for her historic journey.

Beginning with the iconic English Channel, Kamya will take on seven of the world's most challenging open-water crossings in her pursuit of becoming the first Indian woman to complete the Oceans Seven. M3M Foundation will support her throughout this journey and is also launching a donation and partnership campaign, inviting individuals, institutions and organisations to become part of this landmark endeavour.

The Oceans Seven is considered one of the ultimate challenges in open-water swimming, demanding exceptional physical endurance, mental resilience, technical preparation and the ability to navigate unpredictable currents, temperatures, tides and weather conditions. Kamya enters this challenge with a strong record of endurance,

including her world record-setting double crossing of the Palk Strait, swimming from India to Sri Lanka and back non-stop in 18 hours and 15 minutes.

However, 'Samudra Se Shikhar Tak' is envisioned as a journey with a purpose far beyond a sporting achievement. Through Kamya's endeavour, the initiative aims to encourage more girls and women to pursue sport and challenge conventional boundaries; inspire young people to embrace resilience, courage and perseverance; raise

for the requirements of Kamya's campaign, including training, sports science, medical assessments, nutrition, recovery, technical preparation, safety, logistics and international travel.

Commenting on the initiative, Dr. Payal Kanodia, Chairperson & Trustee, M3M Foundation, said, "Having been a sportsperson myself, I understand the discipline, challenges and support required to pursue excellence in sport. Women, in particular, need stronger platforms and encouragement to pursue ambitious sporting dreams.

Kamya's Oceans Seven journey is a remarkable example of courage and perseverance, and through 'Samudra Se Shikhar Tak', under our Lakshya programme, we are proud to stand behind her and inspire many more young women to believe that no sporting dream is beyond their reach."

As part of the initiative, M3M Foundation is opening 'Samudra Se

Shikhar Tak' to public participation through a donation and partnership campaign. Supporters can join the journey as a Journey Partner, supporting the wider campaign; an Ocean Partner, supporting a specific crossing; or a Kilometre Partner, sponsoring one or more kilometres of the campaign. Reinforcing its own commitment to the mission, M3M Foundation will support every fifth kilometre Kamya swims,

Standing alongside her as she takes on each stage of this



awareness about the importance of clean and healthy water bodies; and encourage the next generation of swimmers to dream bigger and pursue excellence.

The initiative is a reflection of M3M Foundation's commitment to nurturing exceptional young talent through its Lakshya programme and creating the support systems needed to help ambitious individuals realise their potential. Through 'Samudra Se Shikhar Tak', the Foundation will provide comprehensive support

extraordinary challenge. Through this collective effort, the initiative seeks to bring people together behind a journey that embodies sporting excellence, women's empowerment, environmental responsibility and the aspirations of India's

future swimmers. With the English Channel marking the beginning of her Oceans Seven campaign, Kamya is preparing to take on a challenge that could create a defining moment for Indian open-water swimming. 'Samudra Se Shikhar Tak' is not just

about reaching the other shore. It is about showing how far courage can take you, and how one extraordinary journey can inspire many more to begin their own.

One swimmer. Seven crossings. A journey to make history.

From Scholarship to Service: GSK Scholars Programme Has Supported 564 MBBS Students from Low-Income Households Across 23 States

Impact assessment finds 85 per cent of scholars completed their MBBS without an education loan, and 94 per cent intend to serve in public or rural healthcare. Nine former scholars are now practising doctors. The GSK Scholars Programme, a CSR initiative of GSK implemented under GSK Cares in partnership with Buddy4Study and the Foundation for Excellence, has supported 564 meritorious students from economically disadvantaged households through their MBBS education across 23 states. Nine former scholars have now completed their training and are practising as doctors across India, several of them offering free consultations in the communities they came from.

For many students in India, clearing NEET and securing a government medical seat is only the first hurdle. Tuition, hostel fees, textbooks, laboratory materials, instruments, examination fees and travel accumulate steadily across the four and a half years of the course. In households where a single earner supports the family, families borrow, students take on education loans, and some quietly cut back on food or study materials to keep going. The risk of dropping out at this stage is rarely academic. It is financial.

The GSK Scholars Programme was designed to close this gap. Rather than funding entry alone, it supports scholars through the full duration of their MBBS, combining multi-year financial assistance with structured engagement and mentorship. In FY 2025-26 alone, the programme supported 152 scholars.

WHO THE SCHOLARS ARE

An impact assessment of the programme found that 58 per cent of scholars came from a rural schooling background, and 65 per cent were the first in their families to attend university. These are students with the ability to become doctors, for whom the cost of staying in college, rather than the difficulty of the course, was the real barrier.

WHERE THE SUPPORT GOES

The scholarship goes almost entirely towards the expenses that keep a medical student in college: tuition fees for 94 per cent of scholars, textbooks and study materials for 92 per cent, and hostel fees for 90 per cent. Ninety-eight per cent of scholars said the support helped them avoid additional borrowing, and 85 per cent completed their MBBS without an education loan. For a first-generation graduate from a household with

no financial cushion, graduating debt-free shapes every career decision that follows.

WHERE THEY INTEND TO GO

The assessment also points to where these doctors are likely to serve. Eighty-four per cent of scholars expect to work in government service, 94 per cent intend to serve in public or rural health systems, and all scholars surveyed intend to pursue postgraduate specialisation. The programme is estimated to generate a social return of Rs 4.66 for every Re 1 invested.

FROM SCHOLARSHIP TO SERVICE

The nine former scholars now practising across India are the clearest evidence of what the model delivers. Working in hospitals, clinics and healthcare institutions, they represent a pipeline that begins with a student at risk of leaving medical college and ends with a doctor serving a community that needs one.

As India continues to expand its medical education capacity, the GSK Scholars Programme addresses a quieter but equally important question: whether the students already sitting in those classrooms are able to finish.



EXTREME HEAT IS WORSENING OTHER CLIMATE IMPACTS ON HEALTH

As heat overlaps with other intensifying climate events, scientists are uncovering how they compound each other – and how cities can adapt, writes **Joe Coroneo-Seaman**, Dialogue Earth

Extreme heat can amplify the health impacts of wildfires, cyclones and air pollution, creating compound risks that are becoming more common as the climate warms. Image: Hong Kong Free Press, CC BY-SA 3.0, via Wikimedia Commons.



Europe's recent record-breaking heatwaves are a prescient reminder of how dangerous heat can be. During one seven-day stretch in late June, more than 10,000 excess deaths were recorded in the region by the European Mortality Monitoring Network. This is a spike that scientists have so far only been able to attribute to higher temperatures. But the health problems during these events are increasingly not due to heat alone.

In recent years, scientists have started to build a clearer picture of how extreme heat combines with other environmental hazards, such as cyclones, wildfires and ozone pollution. Their work suggests these compound events are becoming more common due to climate change and, in turn, carry greater health risks than each event would on its own.

Damage to infrastructure and disruption to everyday life from a hurricane undermines people's ability to cope with heat, which itself can then hamper disaster recovery efforts. Wildfires destroy landscapes while the smoke they generate adds to the adverse health impacts of heat, across many kilometres.

"Heat is insidious," says Kurt Shickman, senior fellow at the World Resources Institute's Ross Center for Sustainable Cities.

"It reduces people's ability to weather other disasters."

HURRICANES AND HEAT: RESILIENCE AS A SOLUTION

In August 2021, Hurricane Ida made landfall in the United States. The cat-

egory four tropical cyclone brought fast winds, intense rain and storm surges to the states of Louisiana and Mississippi, as well as painful memories of the devastation wrought by Hurricane Katrina 16 years before.

Six people died as a direct result of the Ida's winds and floodwaters. But the cyclone caused more deaths – via an indirect, compound route.

Hurricane Ida produced the most extensive power outage in Louisiana's history. The utilities company Entergy, which supplies electricity to the southern US states of Arkansas, Mississippi, Texas and Louisiana, reported that around 30,000 utility poles were downed. Such impacts left at least 1.2 million households across eight US states without electricity for hours, if not days. For some people in Louisiana, days stretched into weeks.

In those weeks a blistering heatwave arrived. Heat index temperatures, which combine air temperature and relative humidity to give a "feels like" value, surpassed 37.8°C. With millions of homes lacking electricity and unable to run air conditioning, the heat proved more deadly

than the initial cyclone. According to the official tally, 13 people died from "post-Ida heat exhaustion".

Ida is one in a string of recent tropical hurricanes – Irma in 2017, Laura in 2020 and Beryl in 2024 – that have made landfall on the US gulf coast before causing heat-related deaths during the massive power outages that followed.

As well as taking down infrastructure directly, heat piles the pressure on city power grids: electricity demand for air conditioning shoots up, while cables overheat and carry less power. One analysis of the impact of compound weather events and heatwaves on power outages across the US observed that the combined stress often led to "cascading failures and prolonged recovery times".

These problems are compounded by defoliation, caused by hurricane winds blowing leaves off trees or bringing them down entirely.

The resulting loss of shade and evapotranspiration, by which trees naturally cool the surrounding air, has been shown to leave neighbourhoods with higher exposure to dangerous heat. A 2023 study esti-

mated that after hurricane Laura, residents of Cameron, Louisiana experienced heat index temperatures above 30°C for 24 additional hours compared to a simulated “normal foliage” scenario. This effect was found to be particularly strong at night.

Disaster relief workers are especially vulnerable to the cyclone-heatwave cocktail: hours of physical work outside in restrictive protective gear, with little rest or shade. Conditions for rescue workers after hurricane Beryl were found to have frequently exceeded workplace heat safety thresholds.

Patricia Fabian, a heat expert at Boston University in the US, says post-cyclone power cuts put people at risk of more than just heat stress.

Food and water supplies become erratic; medication that needs to stay refrigerated soon becomes unusable; during days of stifling heat, people are more likely to go swimming to cool down in lakes and rivers, which are more likely to be contaminated with sewage because heavy rain has overwhelmed the stormwater drains. “That results in spikes in gastrointestinal disease,” she explains.

Combined cyclone-heatwaves have been relatively rare in the past, but they are expected to occur more as the climate warms. In 2019, a study published by Nature Climate Change observed that the arrival of a major tropical cyclone, followed within 30 days by a heat index temperature above 40°C, has historically happened three times every 30 years.

If global heatwaves become more frequent and intense in line with projections, this could rise to seven times every 30 years at 1.5°C of average global warming. That grows to 11 times at 2°C. If global warming reaches an average of 4°C, the study says such events “could occur at

There's a hidden cascade that happens when heat hits a city. It's the grinding intensity of the heat, day and night, that causes knock-on effects that aren't always attributed to heat but are really related to heat.

KURT SHICKMAN
Senior Fellow, Ross Center for Sustainable Cities

least annually”. Keeping the power on could be vital for saving lives when this happens.

“Better maintenance” of electrical infrastructure can make cities less vulnerable to outages during hurricanes, explains Ning Lin, a civil and environmental engineering expert at Princeton University in the US. Trees and branches falling onto power lines cause the most problems.

Therefore, city governments and grid operators can lower this risk by burying cables underground, regularly checking for old or damaged poles and trimming trees, she says.

Some city residents are already bringing in their own heat solutions. The city of New Orleans in Louisiana was hit hard by both Katrina and Ida. So, as part of the Community Lighthouse Project, local community buildings are being equipped with solar panels and batteries to enable them to assist local people if power networks go down.

For Shickman, the high chance of power cuts during a compound heat event makes the case for rolling out passive cooling measures (creating shade, planting street trees, using heat-reflective materials for buildings) even stronger. He wants passive cooling features to become

a key part of what makes a building safe legally, via health and safety codes. This would place them on a par with fire extinguishers and smoke alarms.

“It’s critically important that it’s the focus – it works regardless of whether there are electrical inputs,” Shickman points out.

“We need to keep our communities and our buildings as cool and as safe as possible. [Even with passive cooling] they’re not going to be cool, but they are going to be safer than a building that has been absorbing heat the whole time.”

HEAT AND WILDFIRES: WARNING SIGNALS

Extreme heat and wildfires are another dangerous pairing. When combined with unusually long periods of low rainfall or drought, hot weather has contributed significantly to increased fire activity in recent years.

On their own, wildfires can be deadly. In 2025, a series of catastrophic blazes across the US, Europe and South Korea resulted in over 300,000 evacuations and over 90 deaths. But there is also evidence of “synergistic” negative effects on health from heat and smoke.

Breathing in fine particulate matter (that with a diameter of less than 2.5 micrometres), is a major secondary cause of wildfire-linked health impacts. Both heat and smoke inhalation contribute to cardiovascular and respiratory problems. Experiencing both at once raises the chance of complications, and wildfire smoke plumes can choke cities hundreds of miles away.

In 2024, researchers in the US published an analysis of satellite, environmental and public health data collected in California between 2006 and 2019.

They found that in areas exposed to extreme heat (when the heat index was higher than 85 per cent of historical summer days) and dangerous levels of wildfire smoke on the same day, hospitalisations for cardiorespiratory disease were higher than would be expected from the sum of the risk of both hazards separately.

The effect was more pronounced in certain neighbourhoods, says study author Miriam Marlier, who works on the overlap of environmental change and public health at UCLA Fielding School of Public Health in the US.

The at-risk neighbourhoods had factors that are all too familiar to those who study urban heat:

possible to protect your health. What are you supposed to do when it's hot and smoky?"

Marlier and her colleagues propose issuing joint alerts for when both heat and wildfire smoke are forecast, with a lower threshold to compensate for the greater risk to people's health.

Shickman agrees: "Access to early warning systems is absolutely critical."

These warnings should focus not on the physical attributes of the weather, he argues, but on potential health outcomes: "The way we assess the danger of a hurricane has nothing to do with what it means for humans. We don't talk about storm surge of hurricanes, we talk about

with using an AI agent to give personalised heat warnings. "Rachel" contacted 17,000 customers living in high-heat-risk neighbourhoods by text chat or phone call to offer heat safety advice, such as asking if they had access to air conditioning and cool water. The company reported 47 per cent fewer in-patient admissions compared to a control group.

HIDDEN CASCADES

As Europe is learning, extreme events linked to climate change are making overlapping risks more common. But Shickman warns there is more insidious compounding going on that must not be overlooked: persistent, chronic heat.

"There's a hidden cascade that happens when heat hits a city. It's the grinding intensity of the heat, day and night, that causes knock-on effects that aren't always attributed to heat but are really related to heat."

"If someone is having their educational potential stunted because of heat, that compounds over their whole life. Is it a big splashy heat-wave along with a hurricane? No. But it's a disaster nonetheless."

As the world continues to over-heat, more people will feel negative health effects of compound disasters. This points to the growing need for city governments and companies to recognise heat as a serious health threat worth dedicating resources to.

While low-tech measures to adapt cities to extreme heat are readily available, says Shickman, the real challenge is getting investment. "It's the guys in the bank and the boardroom. That's where the innovation and mindset change needs to happen." ■

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(Source: <https://www.eco-business.com/news/extreme-heat-is-worsening-other-climate-impacts-on-health/>)

There's a hidden cascade that happens when heat hits a city. It's the grinding intensity of the heat, day and night, that causes knock-on effects that aren't always attributed to heat but are really related to heat.

"[Lower levels of] local tree canopy coverage, local income and health insurance coverage were related to higher synergistic effects," she says.

Upgrading buildings to better resist heat can help here, but key to saving lives is warning people about incoming risks.

In the US, two separate government agencies are responsible for sending out warnings on heatwaves and air pollution. Marlier observes that public alerts issued ahead of heatwaves and air pollution from wildfire smoke are often "at odds with each other".

She explains: "If it's hot, you're told to open your windows to be outside to try and cool down. What are you told when it's smoky? You're told to close everything up, stay inside, try to keep inside as clean as

wind speed [although the former does more damage]. It's even worse with heat. It's just temperature, but that's not really an indication of what the danger is for people."

He points to the city of Seville in Spain, which has piloted a new approach to heatwave warnings along these lines. In 2022, the city council worked with researchers to examine decades of local weather data to identify which conditions – rather than simply which temperatures – were linked with the most heat deaths. This was used to recalibrate the public alert system, which by the end of summer had identified two potentially dangerous heatwaves that were not flagged by Spain's weather agency AEMET.

Last year, a non-profit healthcare provider in New York experimented



1,000 NEW BEGINNINGS:

DKMS AND SANKALP CELEBRATE MILESTONE FOR CHILDREN WITH THALASSEMIA IN INDIA

One thousand children, one thousand families and one thousand new beginnings: Sankalp India Foundation has reached the milestone of 1,000 paediatric stem cell transplantations, giving children with

severe inherited blood disorders such as thalassemia the prospect of a healthy life beyond regular blood transfusions and lifelong treatment. The milestone will be celebrated in Bengaluru on 5 September under the theme "1,000 Beginnings". It also

marks an important achievement in the more than ten-year partnership between Sankalp India Foundation and the international nonprofit organisation DKMS, together with medical and knowledge partner Cure2Children Foundation.



Of the 1,000 transplants carried out through Sankalp, DKMS has contributed to the transplantation costs of more than 820 children. Over the years, the collaboration has grown far beyond financial support for individual transplantations. Today, it spans thalassemia care, transplantation infrastructure and diagnostics, specialist training and clinical research.

“One thousand transplants show what long-term partnerships can achieve. Sankalp brings extraordinary local expertise and commitment, Cure2Children contributes vital medical knowledge, and together we can help turn access to cure into a reality for more children. This is exactly the kind of sustainable collaboration we want to build: in the country, for the country,” says Dr. Elke Neujahr, Global CEO of DKMS.

MORE THAN TEN YEARS OF GROWING IMPACT

Sankalp began its first paediatric bone marrow transplantation programme in Bengaluru in 2015 in partnership with Cure2Children. In the same year, the collaboration with DKMS started with free HLA typing and has since developed across the treatment pathway.

DKMS supports HLA typing for patients and their families, thalassemia management and transplantation costs, and has invested in specialised paediatric BMT capacity and molecular diagnostics in Bengaluru and Ahmedabad. The partners also collaborate on specialist training for nurses and, since 2025, on clinical research.

“For us, these 1,000 transplants are 1,000 beginnings and proof that cure can be made accessible when organisations combine their strengths with a shared purpose,” says Rajat Kumar Agarwal, President of Sankalp India Foundation. “Far more than numbers, this milestone validates our approach, showing that centres in resource-constrained settings can achieve world-class outcomes and internationally recognised quality while keeping transplantation affordable and accessible. Partnerships such as those with DKMS and Cure2Children are essential to this joint effort.”

Today, Sankalp cares for more than 3,000 children through 30 comprehensive thalassemia day-care centres and operates two paediatric BMT centres in Bengaluru and Ahmedabad. Its prevention network comprises 87 centres across

81 districts, and more than 220,000 couples have been screened.

INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION FOR QUALITY OF CARE

Another important milestone demonstrates how the partnership has evolved from expanding access to systematically strengthening quality: the BMJH-Sankalp Centre for Pediatric Hematology Oncology and BMT in Bengaluru is the first programme in India to have achieved JACIE accreditation.

JACIE accreditation is internationally recognised in hematopoietic stem cell transplantation and cellular therapy and demonstrates compliance with rigorous standards across clinical care, stem cell collection and processing, quality management and patient safety. The accreditation underlines that internationally benchmarked transplantation quality can be delivered sustainably in India and that excellent outcomes do not always require increasingly expensive or complex models of care.

ONE OF 1,000 BEGINNINGS: SHAHEEM'S STORY

Behind every transplantation is a child and a family. Muhammad

Shaheem, from Karnataka, was diagnosed with severe thalassemia at just five months old. Years of regular transfusions eventually led to severe iron overload affecting his heart and liver, making transplantation particularly high risk. His younger sister Zara was identified as a full HLA-matched donor, and after intensive preparation and counselling at the Sankalp-BMJH Centre in Bengaluru, his family decided to proceed with the transplantation.

Shaheem's mother, Zareena, knows the burden of the disease herself as she lives with thalassemia major and continues to require

DKMS said that "Behind 1,000 transplants are 1,000 children and families whose lives have been changed. What makes this milestone particularly meaningful is how our partnership has grown over eight years. Sankalp brings outstanding local expertise and commitment, Cure2Children vital medical knowledge, and DKMS contributes its experience in HLA typing, transplantation, patient support and capacity building. Together, we are addressing different barriers along the patient journey and building structures that last. This is what partnership means to us: working

structure and diagnostics, and invest in quality and expertise. Reaching 1,000 transplants and achieving JACIE accreditation are important steps towards our vision of a thalassemia- and hemoglobinopathies-free India by 2047."

DR. LAWRENCE FAULKNER, FOUNDER AND MEDICAL DIRECTOR, CURE2CHILDREN

"Bone marrow transplantation for children with severe thalassemia requires much more than medical technology. It requires highly trained teams, robust quality systems and the ability to deliver complex treatment reliably and sustainably. Our collaboration with Sankalp has always focused on developing local expertise and making high-quality transplantation accessible in a resource-conscious way. Together with the long-term support of DKMS, this programme has continued to grow in scale and quality. One thousand paediatric transplants are an impressive achievement, while JACIE accreditation demonstrates the maturity and quality the programme has reached."



regular treatment and blood transfusions. "As a mother, I wanted my son to have the chance of a life that is not determined by thalassemia. We were afraid, but the team gave us the confidence to move forward. Seeing Shaheem today makes that decision worth everything."

The 1,000-transplant milestone represents both what the partnership has already achieved and its ambition for the future: enabling more children to reach curative treatment while strengthening the structures needed to provide high-quality care sustainably. For Sankalp, it is another major step towards its vision of a thalassemia- and hemoglobinopathies-free India by 2047. Dr. Elke Neujahr, Global CEO of

with strong local partners to create sustainable solutions in the country, for the country."

RAJAT KUMAR AGARWAL, PRESIDENT, SANKALP INDIA FOUNDATION

"We call this milestone '1,000 New Beginnings' because for every child and family, transplantation can be the beginning of an entirely different future. Our ambition has always gone beyond individual transplants. We want to connect prevention, comprehensive thalassemia care, donor identification and high-quality curative treatment. Our partnership with DKMS and Cure2Children has helped us expand access, strengthen infra-

PATRICK PAUL, EXECUTIVE CHAIRMAN, DKMS FOUNDATION INDIA

"For a child with thalassemia, finding a matching donor is a crucial step toward cure, but it is not enough. Families also need a clear path to transplantation and support to overcome the financial and practical barriers along the way. Through our Thalassemia Program, we provide free HLA typing and donor searches, while our Patient Funding Program helps eligible families with transplant and post-transplant costs. Working with partners such as Sankalp allows us to connect these different forms of support and help more children move from living with thalassemia towards the possibility of a cure." 🌱

African governments should embed biodiversity protection, Indigenous rights and collective data sovereignty into AI governance as the technology expands across the continent. Image: UNclimatechange, CC BY-SA 3.0, via Flickr.



AI GOVERNANCE MUST RESPECT INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

Chadian environmental activist Hindou **Oumarou Ibrahim** talks about Indigenous perspectives on AI. Excerpts of the interview by **Brian Obara**, Dialogue Earth

As African governments develop national artificial intelligence strategies, questions of

safety, economic competition and employment have dominated the policy debate.

Less attention has been paid to how AI expansion may affect envi-

ronments, water and biodiversity, or the rights of communities whose territories and knowledge are being encroached upon. These concerns arise at several points in the AI value

chain. The associated data centres require energy, water and land, while their hardware depends on mineral supply chains.

AI systems may collect and reproduce cultural, linguistic and environmental knowledge without recognising that such information is often held collectively by a community, rather than by an individual. This is important because conventional data protection frameworks tend to focus on individual data privacy and ownership, making them poorly equipped to protect collectively held information.

In July, the UN held its first-ever Global Dialogue on AI Governance, in Geneva, Switzerland. Among those in attendance was Hindou Oumarou Ibrahim. She is president of the Association for Indigenous Women and Peoples of Chad, and a former chair of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. While there, she took part in discussions on advancing environmentally sustainable AI governance that also respects the rights of Indigenous peoples.

Here, Ibrahim tells Dialogue Earth about the importance of bringing Indigenous perspectives to Africa's AI governance debate. She explains why African governments should incorporate biodiversity, land rights and collectively owned data considerations into their AI policies. She says Indigenous peoples must be recognised as rights holders and decision-makers – especially when newfangled technology has implications for their lands or intellectual heritage.

The interview has been edited for length and clarity.

Q Dialogue Earth: As African countries develop national AI strategies, what opportunities do governments have to reflect the continent's environmental realities and cultural diversity?

A Hindou Oumarou Ibrahim:

Africa is home to extraordinary biological and cultural diversity, but it



Leaders must ensure that no AI system, policy or infrastructure project affecting Indigenous peoples, their data or their territories proceeds without their free, prior and informed consent.

**– HINDOU OUMAROU
IBRAHIM**

President, Association for Indigenous Women and Peoples of Chad

also faces significant pressures from climate change, mineral extraction, land degradation and infrastructure expansion. National AI strategies should therefore connect technological development with biodiversity protection, climate resilience, land rights and the responsible management of natural resources.

African governments can lead by requiring environmental and social impact assessments for AI infrastructure. This would help protect water and land from unsustainable data centre development, and ensure that mineral demand does not drive ecosystem destruction or dispossession.

They can also make Indigenous peoples formal participants in AI governance and protect collective rights over our rich and diverse cultural, linguistic and environmental data.

There is also an opportunity to invest in African and community-controlled AI capacity: local research institutions, Indigenous peoples' innovation centres, African language and culture models, and technologies designed for African

and community needs, rather than external markets.

Q What are current AI governance debates missing by leaving biodiversity and Indigenous rights at the margins?

A AI governance has largely been built around a western, human-centred understanding of risk. Policymakers are rightly concerned about issues such as misinformation, employment, discrimination and security. But they have paid far less attention to the natural systems that make economies and societies possible. As a result, biodiversity loss, ecosystem damage and Indigenous peoples' rights are rarely treated as core AI governance issues.

There is also a wider risk. Without ecological guardrails, AI could accelerate extraction, consumption and infrastructure development in ways that place even greater pressure on ecosystems and Indigenous peoples. Many of the lands under pressure from the mineral, energy and infrastructure sectors are Indigenous peoples' territories and biodiversity-rich areas.

AI governance cannot be described as responsible if it does not protect the ecosystems and cultures on which communities depend.

Q What should meaningful Indigenous participation in AI governance involve?

A Indigenous peoples should help shape the safeguards that protect their rights, knowledge and territories. They should participate in decisions about how systems affecting them are deployed. This must be done with respect for free, prior and informed consent.

Participation is not only about consultation. Indigenous peoples must be recognised as decision-makers and rights holders, particularly when AI policies, infrastructure projects or data practices affect their land, knowledge or cultural heritage.

Q How are existing data protection systems failing to protect knowledge and data held collectively by communities, rather than individuals?

A Conventional data protection systems tend to focus on individual privacy. They do not adequately protect a community's collective rights over its language, cultural heritage, traditional knowledge or territorial information.

Indigenous peoples must retain control over whether and how their knowledge and data are used. Governments and companies should recognise that Indigenous peoples' data is often collective and develop consultation frameworks that reflect this.

AI companies should also audit their models for linguistic and cultural bias, include Indigenous leaders and experts throughout the process, and create mechanisms that allow communities to challenge or remove inaccurate or harmful representations.

Q Can AI support Indigenous knowledge and conservation without replacing community expertise?

A There are encouraging examples in which AI is supporting, rather than replacing, Indigenous peoples' knowledge. Some examples are outlined in a recent report to the UN Economic and Social Council on Indigenous peoples and AI.

In the Amazon, Indigenous communities have worked with NGOs and researchers to use AI-supported satellite monitoring to detect illegal deforestation and mining. In Chad, participatory mapping and predictive analysis have been combined with pastoral knowledge to anticipate drought and protect herder's migration routes. In the Arctic, Sámi and Inuit communities have integrated traditional knowledge with predictive models to monitor changes in

sea ice, wildlife movements and the impacts of extractive industries.

The important point is that the technology should strengthen existing knowledge rather than replace it. Indigenous peoples bring detailed, place-based understanding accumulated over generations. AI can help analyse information and identify patterns, but it cannot substitute for the cultural context, relationships and judgement that make that knowledge meaningful.

AI can also help communities and conservation organisations process large volumes of information more quickly. It can support the detection

growth model that drives greater energy use, mineral extraction, water consumption or habitat destruction.

Q What is one AI governance recommendation you would make to world leaders?

A Leaders must ensure that no AI system, policy or infrastructure project affecting Indigenous peoples, their data or their territories proceeds without their free, prior and informed consent. That principle should apply across the entire AI value chain: from the extraction of minerals and construction

The important point is that the technology should strengthen existing knowledge rather than replace it.

of deforestation and illegal extraction, identify changes in ecosystems, analyse satellite or acoustic data, predict environmental threats and improve monitoring in places that have historically lacked resources.

The strongest opportunities are those in which AI supports priorities defined by communities themselves and strengthens the capacity of people already protecting nature.

But these benefits are not automatic. Technology can reinforce inequality when tools are designed without community participation, when data is extracted without consent, or when communities lack the infrastructure and funding needed to use the systems themselves.

Using AI to monitor forest loss does not compensate for an AI

of data centres to the collection of Indigenous peoples' knowledge, and the deployment of AI tools in communities.

This is not only about preventing harm. It is about recognising Indigenous peoples as decision-makers and rights holders. World leaders should embed Indigenous peoples' participation and data sovereignty directly into national and international AI governance frameworks, rather than treating them as optional social safeguards. 

This article was originally published on Dialogue Earth under a Creative Commons licence.

(Source: <https://www.eco-business.com/news/qa-ai-governance-must-respect-indigenous-peoples/>)

UN: EVERY US\$1 INVESTED IN CLIMATE AND CLEAN AIR ACTION CAN RETURN US\$15

Every US\$1 invested in tackling climate change and air pollution together can generate around US\$15 in economic benefits, according to a report published today by the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) and the Climate and Clean Air Coalition (CCAC). This is higher than tackling climate and clean air separately, and it includes both market and non-market economic gains.

Released on the International Day of Clean Air for blue skies, Hidden assets: The economic and health case for climate and clean air action is the first comprehensive global economic assessment of integrated climate and clean-air action.

“For too long, we have treated climate action as a cost to be managed and air pollution as the unfortunate outcome of development. This report shows the opposite: clean air is a key driver of development, health, food and energy security, and climate stability – an asset we must invest in,” said Inger Andersen, Executive Director of UNEP. “Proven solutions already exist. What we lack is the decisive leadership from governments, financial institutions, and businesses to deliver them with the speed and coordination this crisis demands.”

THE ECONOMIC VALUE OF ACTION

The annual economic benefits of implementing 25 measures that this report identified would be equivalent to:

- 2.8 per cent of global GDP in 2035
- 4.5 per cent of global GDP in 2050
- 11.4 per cent of global GDP in 2100

In comparison, 2.18 per cent of global GDP was spent on explicit fossil fuel subsidies in 2022 and 9.3 per cent of global GDP was spent on healthcare in 2023.

Every year of delayed action would forgo more than US\$1.5 trillion annually - 0.5 per cent of GDP - in combined market and non-market benefits.

Even excluding non-market welfare benefits, the measures return around US\$4 for every US\$1 invested.

“A benefit-cost ratio of 15 to 1 would attract capital instantly in almost any other sector. The only reason it hasn’t on integrated climate and clean air action yet is that the returns are split across health systems, productivity and avoided climate damage rather than landing on a single balance sheet. Every year of delay costs the world more than USD1.5 trillion in benefits we will not get back. Finance ministries and investors who keep climate and air quality in separate budget lines are

leaving trillions on the table,” said Elliott Harris, independent, co-chair of the Assessment.

THE HUMAN COST OF AIR POLLUTION

The US\$15 return includes measurable market benefits – such as lower healthcare expenditure, greater labour productivity, and avoided physical damage – and the monetary value of fewer premature deaths and healthier lives.

In 2025, exposure to human-caused outdoor air pollution (PM2.5 and ozone) was linked to an estimated 6.4 million premature deaths worldwide. Household air pollution was linked to a further 2 million premature deaths, including around 300,000 children.

Unlike previous assessments, the report factors in the economic effects of air pollution-related illness, including pressure on health services, losses to productivity and well-being. In 2025, outdoor air pollution contributed to 5.5 million new cases of childhood asthma, 2 million new cases of dementia and millions of cases of heart attack, pulmonary disease, diabetes, stroke and lung cancer.

A PACKAGE OF 25 PROVEN MEASURES

The package of measures exam-

ined in the report spans six sectors - energy and fossil fuel systems, industry, transport, agriculture and food systems, residential cooking and heating, and waste management – and combines both long-term decarbonisation measures and measures that target super pollutants such as methane, black carbon, and hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs).

Measures include renewable power and energy efficiency, increasing clean cooking and heating solutions, tighter vehicle emission and efficiency standards, inspection and maintenance, electric vehicles and low-sulfur shipping fuels, recovery of associated gas to end routine venting and flaring and reduce oil and gas leaks, livestock and manure management, more efficient fertilizer use, improved rice cultivation and alternatives to crop residue burning, better solid waste and wastewater management, and phasing down HFCs.

By 2050, full implementation of the 25 measures could cumulatively prevent 144 million air pollution related premature deaths, including 96 million from ambient air pollution alone, and hundreds of millions of cases of chronic disease.

Many deliver domestic health and economic benefits within a single term of government.

AIR QUALITY AND CLIMATE GAINS

Compared with the report's baseline scenario, immediate implementation of the measures would halve global carbon dioxide emissions by 2050, reduce methane emissions by 60 per cent and cut major air pollutants – including black carbon, sulphur dioxide, and nitrogen oxides — by around 70 per cent.

The measures would avoid approximately 0.34°C of global warming by 2050 and 1.4°C by 2100. Because land temperature rises faster than the global average, avoided warming in most regions

"This report shows that the economic benefits of action are much greater than the costs even in the near term. Instead of asking whether we can afford to tackle climate change and air quality given so many other pressing concerns, policymakers everywhere should be asking themselves a bigger question: how can we afford not to?"

DR. DREW SHINDELL

Nicholas Professor of Earth Science at Duke University, Assessment Co-Chair

"Clean air is one of the smartest investments a society can make, protecting lungs, saving lives and strengthening economies. It's not a choice between health, climate and development: action on air pollution delivers all three."

DR. MARIA NEIRA

Former Director of the Department of Environment, Climate Change and Health, WHO, Senior Fellow, Clean Air Fund

"This report provides the most rigorous evidence yet that treating climate change and air pollution as separate problems causes us to underestimate the benefits of tackling either. When we modelled them together, the returns were larger than each could show alone, because the same sources, sectors and policies so often drive both."

SIMON DIETZ

Professor of Environmental Policy, London School of Economics and Political Science, Assessment Co-Chair

would be greater, reaching an estimated 1.5–2°C by 2100. By the end of the century, carbon dioxide emissions under the scenario would be net negative, while major air pollutants would fall by up to 85 per cent.

"This report provides the most rigorous evidence yet that treating climate change and air pollution as separate problems causes us to underestimate the benefits of tackling either. When we modelled them together, the returns were larger than each could show alone, because the same sources, sectors and policies so often drive both," said Simon Dietz, Co-Chair of the Assessment and Professor of Environmental Policy, London School of Economics.

The economic value of cleaner air materializes quickly enough to outweigh the implementation cost within a decade and continues to make up almost half of the total economic benefits in 2100, as detailed in the report.

CLOSING THE IMPLEMENTATION GAP

Institutional barriers – including fragmented decision-making, limited enforcement capacity, and weak government coordination – are the most significant of the implementation barriers identified.

Cumulatively, these barriers risk delaying full implementation by almost eight years globally. Addressing them, including through fiscal policy incentives and regulation that enable the private sector to roll out technologies that are both profitable and reduce emissions, could accelerate deployment and unlock up to US\$10 trillion in additional health benefits by 2040.

This report calls for integrated climate, air-quality, health and economic planning, stronger institutions and enforcement, and better alignment of public and private finance. 

For further information, contact, Vincent Hughes, vincent.hughes@un.org.



BENEATH WARMING SEAS, COMMUNITIES ARE HELPING REEFS RECOVER

These restoration efforts matter because coral reefs are much more than underwater landscapes.

Every day, Ikraam Ali dives underneath the waters of Dharavandhoo in Maldives to tend to young corals growing in one of the many underwater nurseries of Muraka Farm. There are no crowds watching him, and there is no dramatic rescue mission unfolding. Just rows of small corals fixed carefully in place and the steady work of helping reefs recover, one coral at a time.

For Ikraam, the co-founder of NGO Muraka Farm, this work has become part of his daily life. It is also great evidence to the world that while coral reefs across Asia and the Pacific are facing increasing pressure from rising ocean temperatures, communities across the region are not standing still.

Ikraam has witnessed the impact firsthand. “Over the past decade, we’ve seen noticeable changes. Some areas that were once full of healthy coral have been affected by warming seas and bleaching events,” he says. “Many corals lost their colour, and some didn’t survive. It was difficult to witness, but it strengthened our commitment to helping them recover.”

These restoration efforts matter because coral reefs are much more than underwater landscapes. Although coral reefs occupy less than 0.1 per cent of the ocean floor, they support more than 25 per cent of marine life. For millions of people living along coastlines in Asia and the Pacific, reefs are directly linked to their daily life. Healthy reefs help support fisheries, protect coastlines from waves and storms, and contribute to local economies that largely depend on marine ecosystems.

In Fiji, Vanuatu and the Solomon Islands, communities are doing everything they can by combining their traditional knowledge with science to protect reef areas and trying to help them have enough space to heal. Across the region, six

governments are already working together through the Coral Triangle Initiative to protect reefs, manage fisheries and keep food on the table for coastal communities.

To support countries with better preparations, ESCAP is tracking reef heat stress through different sources such as NOAA Coral Reef Watch data for seasonal impact-based forecasting and long-term projections to understand what the future could look like. This data helps identify the areas most at risk and supports more targeted action. This helps governments and communities act early, before things get out of hand.

Despite the efforts, these ecosystems continue to face growing pressure. As El Niño, a weather

existing restoration programs is becoming increasingly important right now.

However, for people like Ikraam, work usually comes back to something much simpler. It is about the belief that reefs can recover when given time and care. It is about patience and consistency. That means returning to the water day after day, checking young corals, protecting fragile sites and trusting that these efforts can help give reefs a better chance of survival.

“Through years of protection and restoration, we’ve stepped back and watched nature beautifully heal itself,” he says.

Coral reefs in Asia and the Pacific are often in the news because of

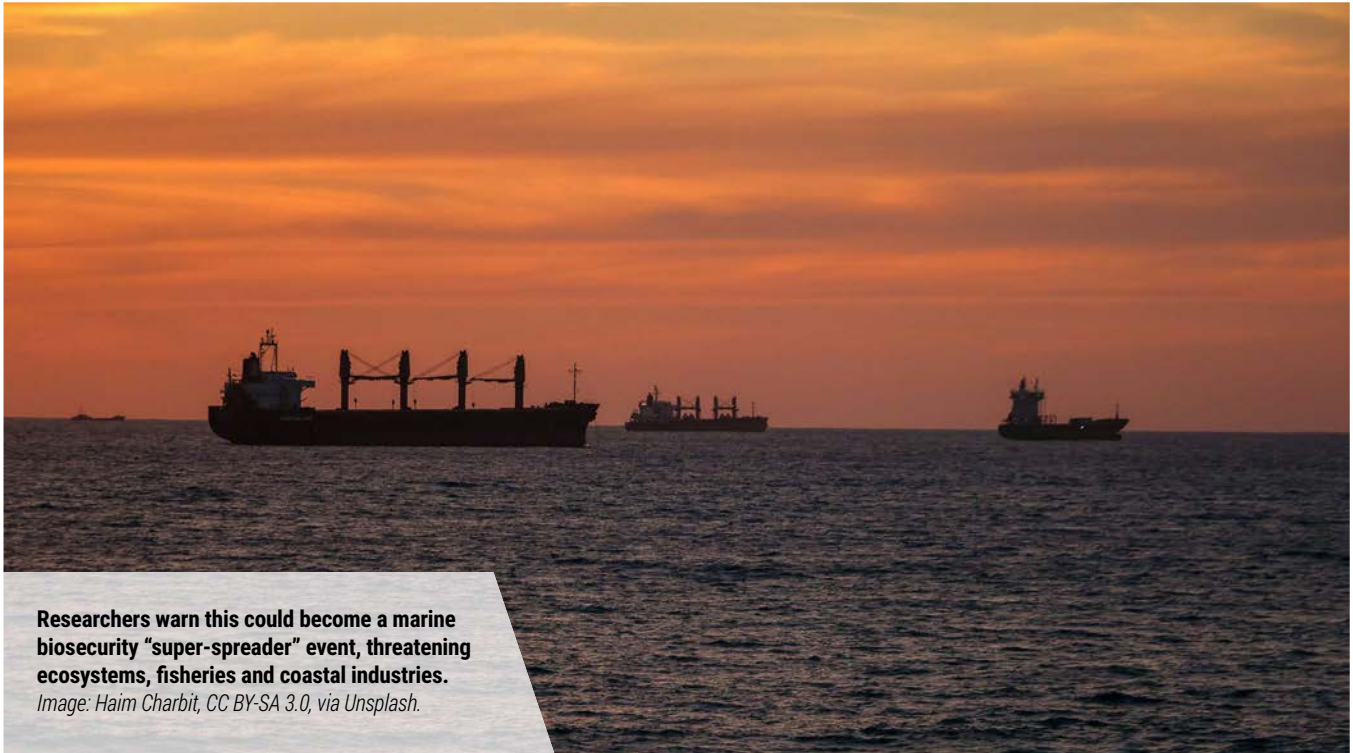
To support countries with better preparations, ESCAP is tracking reef heat stress through different sources such as NOAA Coral Reef Watch data for seasonal impact-based forecasting and long-term projections to understand what the future could look like.

pattern that warms the ocean, grows stronger in 2026, the worst heat is moving across the Pacific. When the water temperature rises, even by a degree or two, corals push out the tiny algae living inside them. These algae give corals their food and colour. Without them, the coral starts to starve and turns white. If the water temperature drops in time, recovery is possible.

The fourth global coral bleaching event, which began in 2023 and likely ended in 2025, affected reefs across 83 countries and territories. This is why the work happening underwater and keeping track of

bleaching and loss. But beneath the surface, another story is unfolding. It is the story of people like Ikraam and communities across the region who continue to restore and protect the reefs they depend on. These efforts cannot undo everything that has already been lost, but they show that recovery is possible. One coral at a time, one dive at a time, and one community at a time, people across Asia and the Pacific are giving coral reefs a better chance for the future. 🌱

(Source: <https://www.eco-business.com/press-releases/beneath-warming-seas-communities-are-helping-reefs-recover/>)



SHIPS STUCK IN THE STRAIT OF HORMUZ REGION MAY BE BIOSECURITY RISKS

More than 1,500 vessels stranded by the Strait of Hormuz blockade risk spreading invasive marine species when they resume voyages, posing a wider biosecurity threat, says an analysis by Chad Hewitt, Mario Tamburri, Ian Davidson and Gregory Ruiz

The economic ramifications of the closure of the Strait of Hormuz are widely discussed. But so far, the risk of ecological damage following a long blockade of ships has been overlooked.

Our recent research shows that more than 1,500 commercial ves-

sels that have been laid up in the Persian/Arabian Gulf since February pose a significant environmental threat because they have been accumulating marine biofouling species on their hulls.

As the strait reopens, these ships may spread these organisms to ports they visit, potentially causing an

international biosecurity “super-spreader” event.

Such incursions of alien marine plants, animals, parasites and diseases affect native ecosystems and wild fisheries as well as aquaculture stocks and coastal industries. They can lead to significant environmental damage and economic losses.

But the closure of the Strait of Hormuz is not the first time shipping disruptions have resulted in significant biofouling on idle vessels.

SHIPPING DISRUPTIONS

Global merchant vessel traffic is the main mode of transport for commodities, and researchers have identified 24 choke points in maritime trade.

But 20 of these have alternative routes, meaning shipping can be managed by re-routing vessels. This can take longer and cost more but avoids mass layoffs.

Only four choke points have no alternative routes, including the Strait of Hormuz, the Oresund Strait in the Baltic Sea, the Bosphorus and Dardanelles straits out of the Black Sea, and the Bohai Strait in the Bohai Sea.

Disruptions at choke points can be caused by conflicts and wars (Strait of Hormuz, Suez Canal), terrorism and piracy (Bab el-Mandeb Strait in the Red Sea, Malacca Strait between Malaysia and Indonesia), maritime accidents (Suez Canal, 2021) and environmental impacts such as drought (Panama Canal in 2019 and 2023).

But disruptions can also be intentional. At any time, around 1 per cent of the global commercial fleet is deliberately laid up because ships are taken out of service due to economic oversupply, seasonal market dynamics or the need for maintenance and upgrades.

Economic downturns such as the global financial crisis in 2008 have led to mass vessel layoffs following a sharp decline in global imports and exports. Thousands of vessels – about 10 per cent of global container vessels and 25 per cent of refrigerated vessels – were lying idle at anchor or pulled out of service.

The oil crisis during the 1970s laid up 466 tankers globally.

Large fishing fleets undergo seasonal layoffs associated with

regulatory closures and weather-related limitations. For example, the conservation-related fishing closure in the South China Sea between May and August results in thousands of vessels laid up each year.

Similarly, fishing fleets in the North Pacific and Bering Sea operate within restricted seasonal windows and spend the off-season in a few high-density ports.

THREATS TO NEW ZEALAND AND AUSTRALIA

Stationary vessels can accumulate large amounts of biofouling in a short time, especially in tropical waters. When vessels subsequently leave locations, they take those species to new regions, potentially delivering the next alien animal or plant pest, parasite or disease.

The Persian/Arabian Gulf is home to more than 50 marine non-native species, and many species native to the region have already been introduced across the globe.

While New Zealand and Australia are not likely to receive a large number of vessels trapped in and near the Strait of Hormuz in the first month after reopening, research suggests numerous ships carrying potentially invasive species will be arriving within a year.

Both New Zealand and Australia have well-developed biosecurity rules and strong regulatory frameworks in place. This includes early detection and rapid response capabilities if ships with biofouling risk factors are identified.

For example, Biosecurity New Zealand was able to screen and take action when cruise ships were laid up during the Covid pandemic. Affected ships had to leave New Zealand waters or conduct maintenance to ensure their hulls and niche areas (propellers and rudders) were at an acceptable biosecurity standard of cleanliness.

However, management of biofouling on commercial vessels

arriving for a short time remains challenging. We recommend the following actions to manage the biofouling risk for vessels arriving from the Strait of Hormuz region.

- Inspection to estimate the level of biofouling prior to departure. Several services exist in the region to assist in this task. Use of environmental DNA sampling near vessels could assist in identifying the level of biosecurity threat.
- When possible, in-water cleaning prior to departure from the Persian/Arabian Gulf region. However, this should capture ship biofouling and coating debris rather than further expose the environment to new introductions and contaminants. Safe and effective cleaning at the earliest opportunity will decrease bioinvasion threats.
- Forecasting of vessel routes, specifically identifying the first port after departing the gulf, and communicating with port and national authorities to assess biosecurity risks.
- National authorities and ports that receive vessels should implement early detection and rapid response using environmental DNA or low-cost, rapid assessments to identify new invasion events sufficiently early to respond.
- Authorities should establish rapid alerts and dissemination networks to share biosecurity events.

The opportunity to mitigate the impacts of this potential super-spreader event, and other similar events, requires global cooperation and action to protect our environments, economies and social values from marine biological invasions and their effects. 

This article was originally published on The Conversation.

(Source: <https://www.eco-business.com/opinion/ships-stuck-in-the-strait-of-hormuz-region-may-be-biosecurity-risks/>)



Jeepneys and vehicles navigate flooded streets in Malabon, Metro Manila, Philippines.

Image: Tear Cordez/Pexels

RETHINKING FLOOD PROTECTION THROUGH A 'NO-REGRET' LENS

Governments in our region and beyond must plan today for tomorrow's floods, in a warming world. Regret can be minimised, if not eliminated, writes **Bao Tan-Hoang Nguyen**

Flooding has become a global development challenge, accounting for approximately 35 to 40 per cent of recorded weather-related disasters. Asia, particularly South-east Asia, is home to many of the world's major flood-risk hotspots. The Philippines ranks first in the 2025 WorldRiskIndex, while a separate assessment ranks Vietnam third and Myanmar fifth globally. The economic consequences are substantial: Vietnam experiences average annual losses from climate-related disasters of around US\$2.4 billion (approximately 0.8 per cent of GDP), while the Philippines faces expected

annual flood damage of approximately US\$625 million.

Despite governments' funding constraints across much of Southeast Asia, major flood-protection investments continue where resources allow. Indonesia, for example, is implementing its US\$400 million National Urban Flood Resilience Project. Yet where flooding persists or projects face delays, questions can arise about how such investments perform and how their value should be judged.

Governments and policymakers often assess flood-protection investments using economic appraisal methods, like those applied to other

major infrastructure projects. Unlike roads and bridges, however, flood protection creates value differently. A floodwall does not generate direct revenue, nor a drainage system profits. Instead, much of its value comes from avoided losses: homes that remain dry, businesses that continue operating and disruption that does not occur. Insurance data and catastrophe-risk modelling can help quantify some of these, but the value can extend to broader social benefits. Flood protection's primary purpose is not to create new wealth, but to protect existing wealth and reduce future losses.

This creates a "mindset of regret": when flooding exceeds a system's design capacity, the investment may be questioned; when the system performs successfully, the avoided disaster remains largely invisible. The dilemma is particularly relevant in Southeast Asia, where governments face competing demands for limited public resources while confronting rising flood risk. Large flood-protection investments compete with other development priorities. Successful flood protection often lies in damage and disruption that do not occur.

This invisibility has financial consequences. Across Southeast Asia, governments may find it hard to prioritise preventative flood investment. More broadly, public expenditure continues to favour post-disaster recovery over pre-disaster mitigation and prevention, while conventional cost-benefit assessment can struggle to capture avoided losses, adaptive flexibility and long-term resilience. Without dedicated revenue streams or public guarantees, flood-protection projects may be less attractive to commercial lenders.

These constraints do not excuse poor performance. Flood defences must meet rigorous engineering and operational standards, but governments must communicate

what these systems are designed to achieve and what they cannot. Flood protection should not be judged by whether flooding disappears entirely, but by how much risk and loss it reduces.

The challenge is not simply to build better flood defences but to judge them differently, which becomes more difficult as climate change makes future flood conditions harder to predict. Governments must make long-lived decisions before knowing precisely how rainfall, sea levels, urban development or exposure will change. Waiting for certainty may itself become a risk.

Climate-adaptation research offers a different perspective through the concept of “no-regret” decision-making. The “no-regret” concept is well established in the literature, while its application to flood-defence planning is more recent. Broadly, a no-regret investment delivers benefits under current conditions while remaining valuable across future scenarios. That is, an investment should still provide value even if the more severe climate impacts anticipated today do not materialise. For flood protection, that value might come from reducing existing flood risk, improving drainage and infrastructure reliability, or providing co-benefits like public space, ecological improvement or other community uses.

This changes how uncertainty is treated. Instead of waiting for precise forecasts, governments can ask whether an investment provides value today while remaining robust and adaptable across multiple plausible futures. This matters because flood-defence effectiveness depends on more than engineering. Rapid urbanisation, land-use change and inadequate maintenance can increase flood risk even when protective infrastructure performs as intended. Flood-defence planning intersects with housing, transport,

environmental management and economic policy. Political and budget cycles are short, whereas flood defences may protect communities for half a century or longer. No-regret thinking shifts attention from short-term visibility towards whether investments reduce vulnerability, remain adaptable and continue delivering benefits under different futures.

Examples elsewhere show what this can look like in practice. The Netherlands’ Room for the River programme combines flood-risk reduction with improvements to spatial and environmental quality. This does not provide a blueprint that Southeast Asian countries can simply replicate, particularly given major differences in land availability, governance and financing, but illustrates how flood investment can be designed in a “no-regret” manner.

The issue is intergenerational. Delaying investment may reduce expenditure today but increase future adaptation costs and transfer greater risks to future generations. Flood protection should be treated not as a one-off expense, but as a continuing public commitment to resilience.

Climate-adaptation research offers a different perspective through the concept of “no-regret” decision-making. The “no-regret” concept is well established in the literature, while its application to flood-defence planning is more recent.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Putting this mindset into practice requires changes in how flood protections are planned, valued and governed. First, flood defences should be maintained and upgraded with long-term societal resilience as an objective, requiring institutional continuity, sustained maintenance and flexibility as risks evolve. Second, conventional economic appraisal should inform decisions, but not determine them. No-regret planning should consider outcomes that are difficult to monetise, including community safety, continuity of essential services, preparedness for future climate extremes and confidence that protective systems can adapt as risks change. Where flood defences provide social, environmental or recreational benefits, these can strengthen the case for investment. Finally, flood defences must be coordinated with land-use planning, urban development, drainage and broader climate adaptation. Higher floodwalls cannot reduce risk if the surrounding development increases exposure.

These principles extend beyond Southeast Asia. Governments everywhere must make infrastructure decisions today for climates that cannot be predicted with certainty. A no-regret approach’s broader purpose is to ask whether those decisions will strengthen societal resilience, preserve options and leave communities better prepared across different possible futures. 

Bao Tan-Hoang Nguyen is a doctoral researcher in Construction Management at RMIT University, Australia. His research focuses on flood risk management and climate-resilient flood infrastructure.

This article was first published in Fulcrum, ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute’s blogsite.

(Source: <https://www.eco-business.com/opinion/rethinking-flood-protection-through-a-no-regret-lens/>)



The world is witnessing the rise of controlled critical mineral supply chains, strategic alliances, industrial policy, and economic nationalism, marking the new age of critical mineral mercantilism.

Image: Team Kiesel, CC BY-SA 3.0, via Unsplash.

INDIA'S CRITICAL MINERAL CHALLENGE IN A NEW GLOBAL RESOURCE ORDER

Mineral security is not just about access to resources but about control over value chains. India's response must be strategic, not reactive, says **Animesh Ghosh** and **Soumit Pandey**

Coal fuelled the first Industrial Revolution, and oil defined the industrial and geopolitical order of the twentieth century. Wars were fought over it, alliances were built around it, and economies rose and fell with its price. Critical minerals are now rewriting that playbook, owing to two major forces.

First, climate change has made the continued dependence on fossil fuels untenable. Second, geopolitics has exposed oil itself as a strategic vulnerability, weaponised in conflicts, disrupted by wars, and concentrated in unstable regions. Together, these forces are accelerating a historic shift from hydrocarbons to critical minerals.

Critical minerals are set to underpin the next phase of technological and energy transformation. Yet, instead of open and competitive markets, the world is witnessing the rise of controlled supply chains, strategic alliances, industrial policy, and economic nationalism. This is the new age of critical mineral mercantilism.

FROM ENERGY SECURITY TO MINERAL SECURITY

Unlike oil, critical minerals such as copper, graphite, lithium, cobalt, nickel, and rare earth elements are not just fuels.

They are inputs embedded across technologies such as solar panels, wind turbines, batteries, electrolyzers, electric vehicles, semiconductors, and advanced defence systems, emphasising their unique strategic value. As a result, countries are not just competing for access to energy, but for control over entire supply chains, from mining and processing to manufacturing.

The urgency is immediate, but the supply response is slow. Developing upstream and midstream capacity can take over 15 years, while building a circular economy

can be achieved in a comparatively shorter timeframe.

Demand, however, is accelerating rapidly in the present decade, driven by the global transition to clean energy technologies, decarbonisation commitments, climate mitigation imperatives, and international pledges made across forums such as the G20 and COP.

This mismatch is forcing countries, especially large economies like India, into a difficult position: deep import dependence in an increasingly unstable geopolitical environment.

A FRAGMENTED SUPPLY CHAIN REALITY

A recent study by the authors on Optimizing India's Critical Mineral Import Portfolio highlights how complex this dependency really is. It examined how India can optimise its economy-wide import portfolio

the centre, alongside Japan and South Korea. Meanwhile, scrap and recycled materials follow entirely different trade networks, dominated by China, Russia, and regional trade hubs.

This segmentation reveals a crucial truth: that mineral security is not just about access to resources. It is about control over value chains.

CHINA AND THE NEW MERCANTILISM

China, more than any other country, has systematically positioned itself at the centre of global critical mineral value chains and transformed them into instruments of industrial and geopolitical power.

Over the past two decades, China has systematically secured overseas mining assets while simultaneously building dominant processing and refining capacity. Today, it controls roughly 90 per cent of rare earth

India must make the difficult but necessary choice of prioritisation. Attempting to simultaneously meet the demands of both defence and energy transition risks diluting strategic focus and intensifying pressure on critical mineral supply chains.

for critical minerals using a model-based assessment approach of potential sourcing partners.

The findings indicate that India's future import portfolio for critical minerals is not uniform but sharply divided across three segments. Ores and concentrates are tied to geography, dominated by resource-rich countries such as Australia, Chile, Canada, and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Intermediate and finished products, utilised across economy-wide sectors, are controlled by industrial and processing hubs, with China at

processing, along with significant shares in lithium, cobalt, and graphite value chains.

This is strategic. China has effectively operationalised a modern form of mercantilism by securing upstream resources globally, building domestic industrial capacity, using scale to undercut global competition, and controlling technology and exports when needed.

The result is a structural dependency that even advanced economies have struggled to reduce, despite subsidies, trade agreements, and strategic alliances such as the

Minerals Security Partnership (MSP) and the Quad. The recently launched Forum on Resource Geostrategic Engagement (FORGE), however, signals a more coordinated attempt to diversify supply chains, strengthen allied cooperation, and reduce excessive dependence on concentrated mineral processing hubs.

INDIA'S STRATEGIC DILEMMA

For India, the challenge is not just dependence, but the temporal structure.

Domestic mining and processing ecosystems will take years to mature. Circular economy adoption in India, while promising, is still nascent. Yet, the demand for critical minerals across clean energy and defence is accelerating rapidly. This leaves imports as the immediate solution, but also the biggest vulnerability.

Analysis from the authors' study suggests that while strategic imports of raw materials will remain necessary, excessive dependence on imported processed products amid rising geopolitical fragmentation and supply-chain vulnerabilities is increasingly unsustainable. At the same time, complete import independence is neither feasible nor economically efficient. This is where India risks being locked into the lowest-value segment of the supply chain.

WHAT INDIA CAN DO

India's response must be strategic, not reactive. The National Critical Mineral Mission (NCMM), launched in 2025 in recognition of the urgency, has the potential to execute its ambitions. First, it must build allied supply chains by leveraging trade agreements and partnerships with countries outside China's dominant network across Latin America, Southeast Asia, and Central Asia.

Second, India must invest across the entire value chain, from upstream mining to midstream refining to downstream manufac-

turing. Competing with China will require long-term capital commitment, not short-term return expectations. Hence, multilateral investment opportunities and co-operation with allies would be strategically well-placed.

At the same time, India must confront the structural constraint of being a highly price-sensitive market. This means that any domestic value chain must be designed to remain cost-competitive despite higher initial investments.

To manage this, India can pursue co-investment models, technology partnerships, and demand aggregation with allied countries such as Australia, Japan, and Russia to achieve economies of scale and reduce input costs, rather than relying solely on protectionist measures like price flooring, which could raise prices domestically.

Third, India has a unique opportunity to lead in circular economy systems. India already has a vast informal recycling sector. Formalising and scaling this could provide a

strategic edge in secondary material supply. Doing this would entail improving policies towards collection, extraction, and recovery, financial implications such as reverse charge mechanisms in GST, constant technology upgradation, skilling and re-skilling the labour force, and a strong, adaptive research and development segment.

Finally, India must make the difficult but necessary choice of prioritisation. Attempting to simultaneously meet the demands of both defence and energy transition risks diluting strategic focus and intensifying pressure on critical mineral supply chains.

Strategic sequencing rather than parallel expansion will, therefore, be key, alongside maintaining a diversified energy mix that reduces excessive dependence on critical minerals concentrated within specific clean energy technologies and supply chains, ensuring long-term energy security and sustainability.

A NEW RESOURCE ORDER

The world is not moving away from resource competition; it is redefining it.

For India, the question is not whether to participate but how. It can remain a price-sensitive importer at the mercy of global shocks, or it can become a strategic actor shaping resilient, diversified, and future-ready supply chains.

The window to choose is narrow. And in this new resource order, delay is the costliest dependency of all. 

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(Source: <https://www.eco-business.com/opinion/indias-critical-mineral-challenge-in-a-new-global-resource-order/>)

Domestic mining and processing ecosystems will take years to mature. Circular economy adoption in India, while promising, is still nascent. Yet, the demand for critical minerals across clean energy and defence is accelerating rapidly.

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