

MULTIPOLARITY IN CLIMATE COOPERATION

NAVIGATING A FRACTURED WORLD



FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK



Dr. Arvind Kumar
President
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Dear Readers,

September 2025 finds us at a moment of profound recalibration in global governance. The triple planetary crisis climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution demands unprecedented levels of cooperation. Yet, instead of solidarity, we are witnessing the rise of trade protectionism that threatens to derail clean energy transitions and fragment international diplomacy.

The recent imposition of tariffs ranging from 25% to 145% on renewable energy technologies by the Trump administration exemplifies this paradox. What should be a moment of scaling up ambition to meet the urgent goal of cutting global emissions by 42% by 2030 is instead being undermined by short-term protectionist measures. These tariffs have already stalled over 10 GW of solar installations in the U.S., raised EV costs by 20–30%, and rippled through supply chains from India to Southeast Asia. Protectionism has, in effect, become an assault on planetary preservation.

But fragmentation is also catalyzing innovation in diplomacy. The 25th SCO Summit in Tianjin unveiled an alternative vision: a new SCO Development Bank, local currency settlement systems, and dedicated financing for renewable corridors. Similarly, India's deepened partnership with Japan under the Joint Crediting Mechanism marks a breakthrough in bilateral climate cooperation—linking advanced technology transfer with carbon markets and long-term green investment. These developments highlight a new era of climate multi-polarity, where environmental cooperation is both a tool and a stage for geopolitical realignment.

In this shifting order, India stands at the intersection of competing blocs—nurturing SCO frameworks with China and Russia, while advancing technological and financial partnerships with Japan, and engaging the United States on climate leadership despite tensions. This balancing act reflects both opportunity and responsibility: to ensure that the Global South has resilient, sanction-proof pathways to sustainability while keeping climate ambition alive amid fractured multilateralism.

This month's newsletter reflects these global undercurrents while anchoring them in India Water Foundation's mission. We feature the Revitalizing the Wetlands of India – Progress Report 2025, which underscores wetlands as socio-economic lifelines and ecological safeguards. We bring insights from the Water Sustainability Summit 2025 and the UNESCAP South and South-West Asia Forum, where IWF reiterated that circular water practices and integrated governance are no longer options but imperatives.

You will also find announcements of our upcoming High-Level Policy Dialogue on North East India's Development Pathways at the UNHRC, updates on the 2nd Water Transversality Global Awards & Conclave 2026, and new knowledge products including the SDG Report 2025 and the Global Wetland Outlook 2025. From Mizoram's sustainable pig farming to debates on biofuels, wetlands, and climate finance, our Success Stories and Friday Blogs showcase how local resilience and global advocacy converge.

As always, our Global Spotlight celebrates IWF's recognition in the World Water Council and ICID newsletters, affirming that water-centered sustainability remains our most powerful diplomatic currency.

In this fractured yet fertile moment for new alignments, let us remember: climate action is not just an environmental necessity but the organizing principle for a just and sustainable international order. India Water Foundation will continue to bridge divides, foster innovation, and amplify voices of the Global South in this evolving landscape.

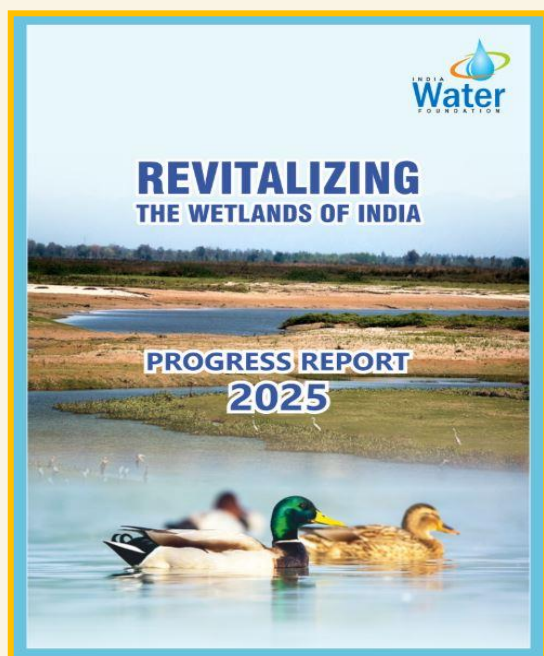
Let us stay committed, collaborative, and courageous in shaping this future together.



REVITALIZING THE WETLANDS OF INDIA- PROGRESS REPORT 2025

Wetlands are among the most productive and valuable ecosystems on the planet, vital to biodiversity, water security, climate regulation, and the livelihoods of millions. The report **“Revitalizing the Wetlands of India- Progress report 2025”** presents a comprehensive and data-rich assessment of the current state of wetlands across India, underscoring both progress and persisting challenges. India’s wetlands ranging from high-altitude Himalayan lakes and riverine floodplains to mangroves, coastal lagoons, and man-made reservoirs cover approximately 16.89 million hectares, or 5.12% of the country’s landmass. India now boasts 91 Ramsar Sites, the largest number in Asia and third globally, reflecting its growing international leadership in wetland conservation. These ecosystems provide critical services including water purification, groundwater recharge, carbon sequestration, biodiversity conservation, disaster risk reduction, and cultural value. However, the report highlights alarming trends: nearly 40% of wetlands have been lost over the past three decades, and 50% of those remaining are ecologically degraded due to encroachment, pollution, unsustainable land use, and climate change.

Drawing upon extensive national datasets such as the Wetlands Atlas 2024, the National Wetland Inventory and Assessment (2nd Cycle), and satellite-based analyses by ISRO combined with field surveys and citizen science contributions, the report offers a granular overview of wetland distribution, typology, and condition. It identifies that man-made wetlands now constitute over 71% of India’s wetland area, a sign of shifting hydrological regimes and increasing human intervention.



Foreword

Reflecting on a decade of wetland conservation in India, I offer a critical assessment and measured hope for Guidelines for implementing Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Rules, 2017, which I had the privilege to help draft as a member (Hydrology) of MoEF&CC, GoI. When we proposed an "integrated approach" and advocated for enumerating wetlands in land records to prevent encroachment, we envisioned a transformative framework that would halt the alarming degradation of these critical ecosystems. Similarly, through my role in the Technical Advisory Committee for India's Second and Third National Communication and Biennial Update Reports to UNFCCC, we laid foundational strategies for sustainable climate adaptation and mitigation, recognizing wetlands as nature's frontline defence against climate change impacts.

The reality check presented in this comprehensive report "Status of Wetlands 2025" is both sobering and necessary. While India's designation of 91 Ramsar Sites making us Asia's leader and the world's third-largest wetland network represents commendable progress, the underlying statistics reveal a devastating truth: nearly 40% of our wetlands have vanished over three decades, with 50% of remaining wetlands showing signs of ecological degradation. The proliferation of man-made wetlands now constituting 71% of our wetland area signals not innovation but desperation, a hydrological regime fundamentally altered by human intervention. Cities like Chennai have lost 85% of their wetlands, Mumbai 71%, and Kolkata 36%, directly contributing to the climate disasters these urban centres now regularly face.

The implementation challenges we anticipated have materialized with concerning regularity. Despite clear mandates for the enumeration of wetlands in land records, encroachment continues unabated reports indicate that nearly 10% of water bodies in regions like Noida face illegal occupation, sometimes even by government agencies themselves. The decentralization approach through State Wetland Authorities, while theoretically sound, has faltered due to inadequate institutional capacity, insufficient funding, and weak enforcement mechanisms. Most critically, the exclusion of wetlands smaller than 2.25 hectares from legal protection has created gaping loopholes that developers and encroachers exploit with ease. This oversight is particularly troubling in urban contexts, where small wetlands play a vital role in regulating surface runoff and mitigating urban flooding. For instance, in Seoul, South Korea, the Cheonggyecheon Stream restoration transformed a concretized urban channel back into a functioning wetland system, significantly reducing flood risk while enhancing biodiversity and livability. Similar decentralized wetland systems across Indian cities could serve not only as ecological buffers but also as critical infrastructure for climate resilience. Ignoring the conservation of smaller wetlands, therefore, undermines both environmental security and urban sustainability.

Yet, this report also illuminates pathways forward that align with our original integrated vision. The emergence of community-based conservation initiatives, technological

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While inland wetlands dominate the landscape, coastal wetlands remain under significant threat despite their critical role in climate adaptation. The Indo-Gangetic Plains, North-East, and deltaic regions are home to the highest concentrations of wetlands, but even Ramsar Sites such as Kolleru Lake and Deepor Beel show signs of rapid decline due to poor management, nutrient loading, and encroachments.

The report outlines the major drivers of wetland loss, categorizing them into four primary forces: land-use change through urbanization and agriculture; hydrological modifications and pollution from sewage and industrial effluents; climate change impacts such as erratic rainfall and rising sea levels; and biological threats including invasive species and resource over-extraction. The combined effects of these pressures have reduced wetland health, impacted aquatic biodiversity, and diminished their ability to buffer against natural disasters. Wetland health cards assessed under the Wetlands Rejuvenation Programme show only 19% of wetlands rated as “Very High” in ecological integrity, while a majority fall in moderate or poor categories, particularly in urban and industrial corridors.

Despite the challenges, the report also celebrates milestones achieved under flagship national initiatives. The National Plan for Conservation of Aquatic Eco-systems (NPCA), Mission Sahbhagita, the Save Wetlands Campaign, and the Amrit Dharohar initiative have collectively led to improved wetland mapping, community engagement, integrated management planning, and mainstreaming of wetland values into developmental agendas. Over two million citizens have participated in wetland conservation efforts, and over 680 wetlands now have health cards uploaded, reflecting a growing culture of citizen science and environmental stewardship. Additionally, innovative approaches like Payments for Ecosystem Services, green bonds, and wetland carbon assessments are gaining traction as India explores new financing models for ecosystem restoration.

Importantly, the report frames wetlands as not merely environmental assets but as socio-economic lifelines especially for Indigenous and rural communities. Wetlands support traditional fisheries, floodplain agriculture, pastoralism, and cultural practices, sustaining over 90 million people. Case studies from Loktak, Chilika, Kuttanad, and Sambhar Lake illustrate how traditional ecological knowledge and community-based governance can enhance wetland resilience. The economic valuation of wetlands reveals that inland and coastal wetlands contribute ecosystem services worth tens of billions of dollars annually. This underscores the urgent need to incorporate wetlands into national accounts and decision-making frameworks.

Looking forward, the report calls for a paradigm shift in wetland management towards basin-scale planning, cross-sectoral integration, legal enforcement, and inclusive governance. It recommends accelerating national inventories, protecting small and seasonal wetlands, leveraging space-based monitoring technologies, and adopting adaptive management approaches. The WISER 2025 framework Wetland Inventory, Science, Economics, Restoration provides a roadmap that links data, policy, and practice. India’s wetland future depends on timely and transformative action: reclaiming wetlands is no longer a conservation choice but an ecological necessity to build a water-secure, climate-resilient, and inclusive future.

WATER SUSTAINABILITY SUMMIT 2025



The Water Sustainability Summit 2025, organized by the PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PHDCCI) in association with Water Today, convened in New Delhi on August 21, bringing together leaders from government, industry, academia, and civil society to deliberate on India's pressing water challenges. With changing rainfall patterns, recurring floods, shrinking rivers, and fast-depleting groundwater, the summit highlighted the urgent need for collective action and long-term strategies for water security.

Speaking at the summit, Dr. Arvind Kumar, President of the India Water Foundation, underscored that circularity in water management is no longer an option but a survival imperative. He cautioned that while policies increasingly mention recycling, reuse, and Zero Liquid Discharge (ZLD), actual implementation remains fragmented and compliance-driven. Citing India's water stress—18% of the global population but only 4% of freshwater resources, and a demand-supply gap expected to cross 70% this year—he emphasized that linear industrial models of “take-use-dispose” are unsustainable in the face of climate change, droughts, and glacial retreat.

Drawing from his national and international engagements, Dr. Kumar pointed to three urgent gaps: policy incoherence, where governance is fragmented and lacks a uniform framework; economic misalignment, where wastewater reuse and ZLD are seen as costs rather than opportunities; and weak ESG accountability, where superficial disclosures allow greenwashing to persist. He urged that India must begin treating circular water practices as strategies for resilience, not just compliance. Without systemic reform, he warned, India risks undermining progress on SDGs 6, 12, and 13, putting both economic growth and national stability at stake.

9th South and South-West Asia Sub-regional Forum for Sustainable Development: Advancing SDG 6



The 9th South and South-West Asia Sub-regional Forum for Sustainable Development, convened by UNESCAP on 25th August 2025, opened with the first Sub-regional Consultation on Advancing SDG 6 – Clean Water and Sanitation. Serving as a preparatory meeting for the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD) and the global High-Level Political Forum (HLPF), the consultation brought together government representatives, experts, and think tanks from across South and South-West Asia, including India, Pakistan, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Maldives, and Nepal.

Dr. Arvind Kumar, President of the India Water Foundation, presented the region's progress and challenges, cautioning that none of the SDG 6 targets are currently on track for 2030. He stressed that water must be recognized not just as a resource but as a policy priority, a community concern, and a catalyst for resilience—central to both climate action and the wider 2030 Agenda.

Discussions showcased national progress: India's integrated programmes such as Jal Jeevan Mission, Swachh Bharat Mission, AMRUT, and river rejuvenation efforts; Pakistan's National Water Policy and Flood Protection Plan; Nepal's remarkable 95% population coverage with safe drinking water; Bhutan's community-driven water management; and Bangladesh's focus on climate-resilient planning and Integrated Water Resource Management. At the regional level, BIMSTEC cooperation on technology transfer and capacity building was highlighted as a model of collaboration.

At the same time, participants acknowledged persisting challenges—climate-induced disasters, financing gaps, service delivery inequities, governance fragmentation, and the need for stronger accountability. Calls were made for multidimensional reforms, innovative financing tools, last-mile inclusion, and integrated river basin management supported by science and technology.

The forum reaffirmed ESCAP's pivotal role as a connector, mobilizer, and enabler in scaling up best practices and strengthening regional cooperation. It was widely agreed that progress on SDG 6 requires breaking sectoral silos, reinforcing water-climate-energy-health linkages, and advancing public-private-community partnerships.

ANNOUNCEMENT

HIGH-LEVEL POLICY DIALOGUE: FROM PERIPHERY TO MAINSTREAM – NORTH EAST INDIA'S DEVELOPMENT PATHWAYS



The India Water Foundation (IWF) is pleased to announce a High-Level Policy Dialogue on “From Periphery to Mainstream: North East India’s Development Pathways”, during the **60th Session of the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC)** to be held on 12th September 2025, 12:00–13:00 hrs (Geneva Time) in hybrid mode.

The North East region of India; home to eight states rich in cultural and ecological diversity—has long faced challenges of geographical isolation, fragile ecosystems, limited livelihoods, and climate vulnerabilities. Yet, in recent years, transformative development models from states like Meghalaya and Sikkim have showcased how inclusive, ecosystem-based approaches rooted in community participation and traditional knowledge can foster resilience, improve livelihoods, and strengthen state economies.

Through this dialogue, IWF will highlight how water, human health, and human development are inseparably linked, and how people-centric policies across agriculture, education, nutrition, skill development, and natural resource management are driving the region’s transition from periphery to mainstream in India’s development narrative.

The discussion will not only spotlight India’s efforts in integrating constitutional safeguards, SDG localization, and infrastructure investments, but will also draw lessons for the Global South on building resilient communities through sustainable and inclusive pathways.

A digital booklet on “Periphery to Mainstream: North East India’s Development Pathways” will also be launched during the event. For your digital copy scan QR below.



KNOWLEDGE HUB



The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2025

The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2025 presents a sobering midpoint review: while progress since 2015 has improved lives, advancing education, health, energy access, and disease prevention the pace remains too slow to meet all 2030 targets. Deep inequalities, climate crises, and rising debts persist. Yet success stories, such as universal electricity in 45 countries and disease elimination in 54, show progress is possible. The report urges urgent action across six areas—food, energy, digital access, education, jobs, and climate and calls for stronger global cooperation and investment.

[CLICK HERE](#)



Sustainable Development Report 2025

The Sustainable Development Report (SDR) reviews progress made each year on the Sustainable Development Goals since their adoption by the 193 UN Member States in 2015. Ahead of the 4th International Conference on Financing for Development (Ff4D) in Seville, Spain, the 10th edition of the SDR outlines urgent reforms to the Global Financial Architecture (GFA). This edition also includes for the first time an assessment of which countries have most progressed on the SDGs using a headline SDG Index (SDGi).

[CLICK HERE](#)



Global Wetland Outlook 2025

The Global Wetland Outlook 2025 offers the most current global evaluation of the condition, trends, value and policy responses concerning wetlands. Produced by the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) of the Convention on Wetlands, it synthesises recent scientific and economic evidence to examine the extent of wetland loss and degradation, the ecosystem services that wetlands provide, and the actions required to achieve international restoration and conservation targets.

[CLICK HERE](#)

EVENT ALERT!



Join us for the **2nd Water Transversality Global Awards & Conclave 2026**, a two-day conference on “*ESG Transversality for Sustainable Water, Energy, Health and Environment Nexus*.” This landmark event will explore ESG integration, the Water-Energy-Health & Environment Nexus, global collaboration, and innovations driving carbon neutrality. Don’t miss this convergence of policy, industry, and sustainability leadership.

[Please click here for more information.](#)

SUCCESS STORIES



Transforming Livelihoods through Sustainable Pig Farming in Mizoram

In Mizoram's Dampa-Thorangtlang landscape, pig farming is central to culture, food, and livelihoods. However, challenges like limited piglet availability, restricted farming options near protected areas, and frequent African Swine Fever (ASF) outbreaks have strained this vital practice.

[Read more](#)



Farmer Earns 5 Times More With Hydroponics & Saves 80% on Electricity Bills; Helps Others Switch

“The culture of mono-cropping is prevalent in Punjab and Haryana, where most families grow paddy and wheat throughout both Kharif and Rabi seasons. Sticking to specific crops year after year eventually leads to an increase in soil-borne diseases and substantially decreases the fertility of soil,

[Read more](#)

FRIDAY BLOGS



Reimagining Water for Climate Action?



Reweighting Climate Finance: Equity or Illusion?



Reimagining Climate Emergency due to Deluge and Despair



Is biofuel the Green Alchemy?



**From St.
Victoria to
Abu Dhabi: A
Clarion Call
for
Wetlands?**

INVITATION TO JOIN MEMBERSHIP

At the India Water Foundation (IWF), we're more than just a network—we're a movement. By becoming a member, you join hands with individuals, organizations, and institutions passionate about sustainability, environmental conservation, and driving meaningful change.

Why Join Us?

We're committed to creating opportunities for every member to make a real impact. Here's what we offer:

- **Shape Policies with Us:** Be part of advocacy efforts that influence sustainable development strategies.
- **Learn and Grow Together:** Attend our exclusive workshops and training programs, designed to keep you at the forefront of innovation.
- **Connect with Change-makers:** Collaborate with a global network of experts, innovators, and leaders.
- **Make a Grassroots Impact:** Help us drive community-led projects that promote resource efficiency and environmental resilience.
- **Be Recognized for Your Efforts:** Let us celebrate your contributions through awards, features, and event opportunities.

Who Can Join?

We welcome everyone who shares our vision, including: Companies, institutions, and organizations of all sizes, NGOs, government bodies, and Intergovernmental organizations
Individuals—from young professionals to retirees, who want to create positive change

Our Special JalMitra Social Outreach Membership

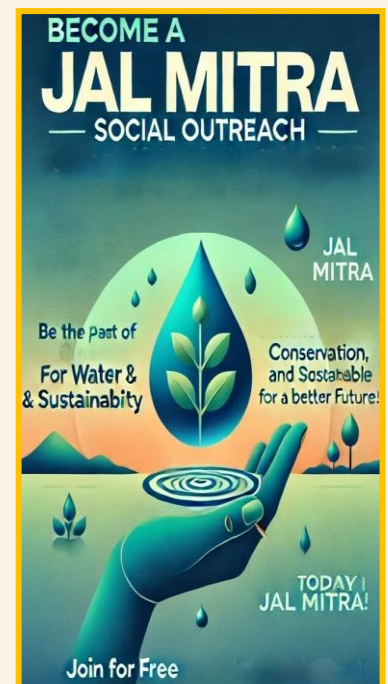
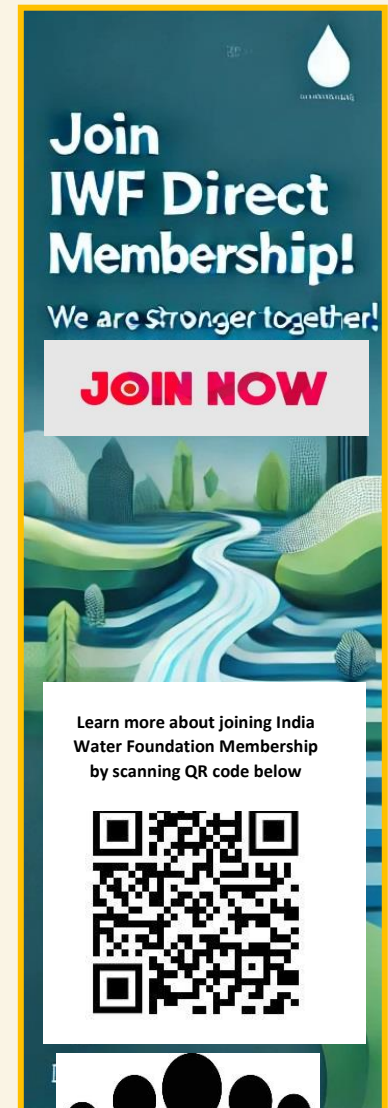
The JalMitra outreach program and encourages sustainable living practices by promoting sustainable conservation and restoration projects. The campaign fosters awareness and behavioural change at the grassroots level, enabling communities to adopt environmentally responsible lifestyles that reduce ecological footprints and contribute to national and global sustainability goals.

Anyone can join this collective effort and become a Jal Mitra free of cost.

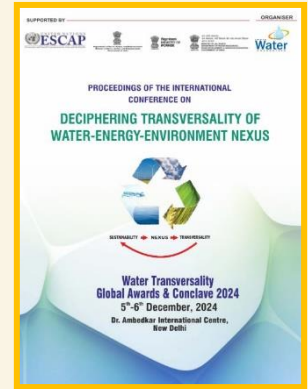
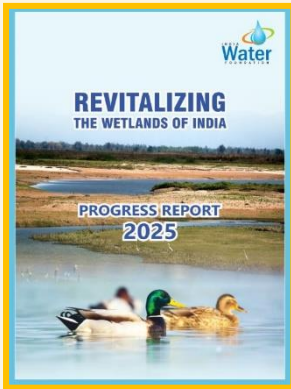
How to Join?

Take the first step today! Visit [Become an IWF Member](https://indiawaterfoundation.org/jal-mitra/) to apply and join this transformative movement. Together, let's shape a sustainable future!

<https://indiawaterfoundation.org/jal-mitra/>



KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTS



GLOBAL SPOTLIGHT

We are proud to share a moment of collective achievement — India Water Foundation (IWF) has recently been featured in two globally respected newsletters, recognizing our pivotal role in championing sustainable development through water-centric dialogues and action.

World Water Council's Newsletter

The World Water Council spotlighted IWF for its leadership in global sustainability conversations throughout June 2025. From co-hosting the World Environment Day dialogue on “End Plastic Pollution and Deliver Actions for Harmony with Nature” with the Ministry of Jal Shakti, Government of India, to leading a high-level session on marine and coastal ecosystem conservation at the UN Ocean Conference in Nice, France, and pushing the agenda for mainstreaming water into NDCs and NAPs at the Bonn Climate Change Conference — IWF continues to serve as a catalyst for advancing water-related global action.

ICID's Newsletter

The International Commission on Irrigation and Drainage featured IWF's work in an insightful article titled “When Climate Reality Demands a New Narrative” by our Chief Functionary, Ms. Shweta Tyagi. The article outlines IWF's strategic efforts to combat climate change and plastic pollution through high-level dialogues, cross-sectoral collaboration, and impactful contributions to international policy discussions on water and biodiversity.



UPCOMING EVENTS

- **01 Sep: Capacity Building Workshop for Small Island Developing States: Leveraging Big Earth Data to Evaluate the SDGs Progress.** To strengthen SIDS' capacities in science-based, data-driven decision-making for the SDGs, including through geospatial technologies.
<https://sdgs.un.org/events/capacity-building-workshop-small-island-developing-states-leveraging-big-earth-data-evaluate>
- **02–03 Sep: 20th Global Sustainability Summit.** To bring together industry leaders, policymakers, sustainability experts, civil society, and innovators to chart a forward-looking roadmap that positions Indian industry as a global leader in responsible, regenerative, and resilient growth.
<https://sustainabledevelopment.in/brands/20th-sustainability-summit/>
- **06 Sep: International Conference on Geological and Environmental Sustainability (ICGES-25).** In Bangalore, India. A global platform for researchers, policymakers, and industry experts to share insights and research on geological and environmental sustainability.
<https://www.sfe.net.in/conf/index.php?id=3343807>
- **10-11 Sep: CARE – The Climate Action Renewable Energy (CARE) Expo, New Delhi.** International and national stakeholders showcase innovations in smart mobility, energy transition, sustainability, Eco-mobility, de-carbonization, and green finance, supporting India's renewable energy mission.
<https://icareforsustainability.com/india/>
- **10-12 Sep: India Bio Energy & Tech Expo 2025, New Delhi.** A major international exhibition on bioenergy that supports India's net zero goals, featuring advancements in bioenergy and sustainable tech.
<https://www.tradeindia.com/tradeshows/organizer-31852274/indian-federation-of-green-energy.html>
- **16-17 Sep: Energy Transition Summit India 2025, New Delhi.** Brings together policymakers, investors, and energy leaders to mobilize action on India's energy transition and de-carbonization.
<https://energytransitionindia.live.ft.com/home>
- **25-26 Sep: FICCI Bharat R&D Summit 2025.** A two-day conference with a sustainability and green innovation focus for research and industry collaboration.
https://www.ficci.in/event_details/28032507259162

IWF e- newsletter is a monthly compilation of news items on IWF-related issues in the domain of Water, Agriculture, Climate Change, SDGs, inclusive development and Water Resources Management that might be of interest to the IWF fraternity. The information contained in the NEWSLETTER does not purport to be exhaustive and is taken "as it is" from external sources and is freely available on the internet. No evaluation on the part of the IWF Office is being made in terms of the authenticity of the information that it may contain. IWF Office makes no guarantee, either express or implied, as to the accuracy of the information published. Your valuable feedback on the usefulness of the bulletin is solicited at contact@indiawaterfoundation.org.

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