

CHAMPIONS OF SUSTAINABILITY

SPOTLIGHT



CELEBRATING INDIA'S GREEN GUARDIANS

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The 13th edition of the JSW-Tol Earth Care Awards, held recently in Mumbai, celebrated the idea of sustainability becoming a way of life, recognising institutions, companies and grassroots organisations working towards a greener future across India. The event brought together environmental leaders, policymakers, innovators and changemakers, in a hall packed with "climate warriors."

The awards highlighted climate initiatives focused on ecological restoration, water conservation and sustainable resource management. Recognitions included efforts to restore degraded forests, revive natural water sources, improve groundwater recharge and strengthen climate resilience through community participation.



Projects involving rainwater harvesting, watershed restoration and scientific conservation models demonstrated how local action can create long-term environmental impact. The 13th ECA also acknowledged initiatives supporting sustainable forest management and conservation practices while promoting livelihoods and improving access to critical natural resources.

This year's awardees reflected the full spectrum of climate action in practice. The community-led climate action category recognised organisations working at the grassroots level, drawing on local knowledge, building coalitions and demonstrating that solutions to major environmental challenges often emerge from the communities most affected by them. Another category honoured institutions that have embedded sustainability into policy and planning as a core commitment rather than an afterthought.

Introduced in 2008 as the brainchild of JSW Foundation Chairperson Sangita Jindal, the JSW-Tol Earth Care Awards serve as a platform to recognise visionaries and innovators tackling climate change through sustainable solutions and environmental leadership. The initiative aims to honour green innovations from industries, enterprises, NGOs and grassroots organisations across India.

In her keynote address, Mumbai Municipal Commissioner Ashwini Bhide described climate change as both a reality and a challenge that must be addressed collectively. "It's a challenge that needs to be dealt with as an opportunity. And that opportunity would



The climate is changing, and the evidence is impossible to ignore — in our weather patterns, our forests, our oceans, and in the difficult choices' humanity is being forced to make. Yet, amid this crisis, there is hope. Across cities, villages, campuses and communities, ordinary people are stepping forward. Young women and men are not waiting for change; they are becoming the force driving it.

SANGITA JINDAL, Chairperson, JSW Foundation

This year's awards honoured individuals, institutions and companies driving climate action and community resilience across the country

WINNERS OF COMMUNITY-LED CLIMATE ACTION

Central Himalayan Rural Action Group (CHIRAG)



CHIRAG has pioneered a science-backed, community-led spring shed management model that restores Himalayan water sources, embeds long-term water security governance within rural communities and demonstrates strong scalability potential with a replicable pathway for government adoption.

NIRMAN



NIRMAN has enabled tribal forest-dependent communities to secure legal tenure under the Forest Rights Act and govern their own forest landscapes through sustained ecological restoration and fire prevention. The communities are heavily involved in the sustainable management and regeneration of forests to protect biodiversity and catchment areas.

Himmothan Society



Himmothan Society has strengthened holistic livelihood and climate resilience in fragile Himalayan landscapes through an integrated model spanning water security, indigenous artificial glacier systems, fodder development and community-led livestock management.



Installation by Prashant Pandey

GREEN BUSINESS TITAN

The Mahindra Group



The 13th Earth Care Awards recognised the Mahindra Group as the Green Business Titan for its long-standing commitment to sustainability, climate action, and inclusive growth across its diversified businesses. Mahindra Group has committed to achieving carbon neutrality for Scope 1 and Scope 2 emissions by 2040. As of FY25, approximately 30% of the Group's electricity consumption is sourced from renewable energy, with a projection to increase to up to 60% in the coming years. The group is water positive and has planted over 25 million trees through Project Hariyali as part of its biodiversity efforts.

COMMUNICATOR FOR CLIMATE ACTION

Mongabay India



Mongabay India was felicitated under Communicators for Climate Action – Written Journalism and Storytelling for its rigorous, independent environmental journalism that brings India's conservation frontline to diverse audiences. Through open-access articles, features, podcasts, and videos, it makes environmental science accessible and amplifies the voices of communities most affected by ecological change.

WINNER OF EMERGING BUSINESS IN CLIMATE ACTION

Minimac Systems



Minimac Systems Has been recognised for developing a proprietary, multi-technology lubricant reconditioning system that addresses a high-volume industrial waste problem with a commercially scalable model and a credible pathway to full MacroCircularity.

come through the various ideas we propagate, the action we take, and the collaborations we build," she said.

A panel discussion during the event brought together jury chair Ajay Mathur, Soumya Swaminathan, former jury chair R. A. Mashelkar and Rajat Gupta to reflect on the evolution of climate action in India and the growing diversity of people driving change across the country.

They noted that the awards had evolved significantly, bringing together young people, women leaders and grassroots innovators united by a larger purpose. The discussion also focused on the scale and diversity of climate initiatives emerging from across India and stressed the need for stronger institutional and industry participation to support such efforts. Jury members further highlighted the economic opportunities emerging from sustainability, including renewable energy, biofuels and electric mobility, noting that India's sustainability transition is already reshaping industries and creating new avenues for growth.

The second edition of the Young Climate Champions (YCC) Programme was also announced at the awards in collaboration with Earth Day Network India. The initiative that aims to engage young minds through specially designed workshops across colleges in India saw a participation by over 25,000 students through

MUMBAI'S CLIMATE CHALLENGE: TURNING CRISIS INTO OPPORTUNITY



Climate change is a reality that must be tackled through ideas, action and collaboration. Even Mumbai, due to its unique vulnerabilities as a dense coastal megacity faces rising sea levels, extreme rainfall, flooding and heat stress. Through the Mumbai Climate Action Plan, BMC is investing in climate-resilient infrastructure, sewage treatment, flood mitigation, green public transport, air-quality monitoring and renewable energy. But building a climate-resilient Mumbai requires collective responsibility from the government, institutions, businesses and citizens alike.

ASHWINI BHIDE
Municipal Commissioner, BMC

Climate action must move from choice to collective priority. Whether for individuals or businesses, sustainability is often pursued because people choose to do so — not because it is deeply embedded as a national or institutional priority

AJAY MATHUR
Professor of Practice, School of Public Policy, IIT-Delhi

Seeing so many individuals and groups across India dedicating themselves to climate action, biodiversity conservation, protection of nature, and the livelihoods of rural communities is commendable. Their work is innovative, meaningful, and deeply inspiring.

SOUMYA SWAMINATHAN
Chairperson, M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation, and Fellow of the Royal Society

The climate sector today is not facing a shortage of funding, but a challenge of awareness, coordination, and scale. However, the real need is to channel funding effectively — ensuring the right resources reach the right initiatives at the right time to create meaningful, scalable impact.

SHLOKA NATH
CEO, India Climate Collaborative

I have experienced firsthand the depth of innovation and ingenuity coming out of India. It reflects a distinct dynamism, grounded in scalability and real-world application. Initiatives like this are key to amplifying the bold ideas and leaders driving real impact.

JENS NIELSEN
Founder & CEO, World Climate Foundation

workshops, webinars, presentations, and institutional engagements.

Rinku Pal of ABM College, Jamshedpur; Jhansi Bhupendra Pulla of Pillai College, Mumbai; Arnab Garg of IIT Delhi; Haridra Bora of Miranda House, Delhi; Arpit Kumar of Manipal Academy of Higher Education, Udupi; T. K. Devanarayanan of NIT Calicut; and Rajalakshmi Institute of Technology, Chennai were felicitated for outstanding contributions across Air Quality, biodiversity, Clean and Renewable Energy, Environmental Education, water stewardship, waste management, and climate-resilient campus initiatives were the winners of YCC, respectively.

A compelling display of works by sculptor Prashant Pandey was also exhibited at the venue. Made with marble blast stone, cigarette butts, blood slides, industrial scrap, and organic residue, the artworks displayed exquisite craftsmanship with layered cultural and political meaning.

The awards were supported by knowledge partner Think Through Consulting and outreach partners, India Climate Collaborative, Council on Energy, Environment and Water, Earth Day Network, and Sustainability Mafia.

Earth Care Awards inspire us to think that while climate change is a global threat, solutions begin with individual courage and collective action. Every young climate champion matters. Because when creativity meets commitment, even the biggest global crises can yield to human ingenuity.

R.A. MASHELKAR
former Jury Chair and former Director General of CSIR

It's a myth that climate action will slow economic growth. On the contrary, emerging evidence shows that a green economy could unlock nearly \$4 trillion in investment opportunities for India by 2047, contribute over \$1 trillion to the nation's GDP, and generate 48 million new jobs.

ARUNABHA GHOSH
Founder & CEO, Council on Energy, Environment and Water

India's green economy is no longer the future; it's a profitable reality. The renewable energy sector alone has attracted annual investments of \$20–25 billion. Emerging sectors such as battery storage and ethanol blending to electric mobility are demonstrating strong commercial viability.

RAJAT GUPTA
Senior Partner, Sustainability Practice, McKinsey & Company

WINNERS OF INSTITUTIONAL LEADERSHIP IN CLIMATE ACTION

Gram Panchayat Nanasa



Gram Panchayat Nanasa has initiated a village water security model that combined groundwater recharge with a cultural behavioural innovation to achieve sustained community ownership. The initiatives succeeded due to active public participation and localised water management strategies spearheaded by Sarpanch Rohit Tiwari.

The Office of the Collector, Rajnandgaon, Chhattisgarh



The Office of the Collector, Rajnandgaon, Chhattisgarh received a commendation for district leadership in restoring groundwater through GIS-based hydrological planning, convergence financing and a sustained structural shift toward diversified, climate-resilient agriculture.

WINNER OF WOMAN LEADER IN CLIMATE ACTION

Meera Chandran, Forest First Samithi



Meera Chandran has embodied deeply rooted environmental stewardship in women leadership through a science-backed, community-led restoration model in the Western Ghats that has earned judicial recognition and empowered tribal communities as primary agents of forest recovery.