



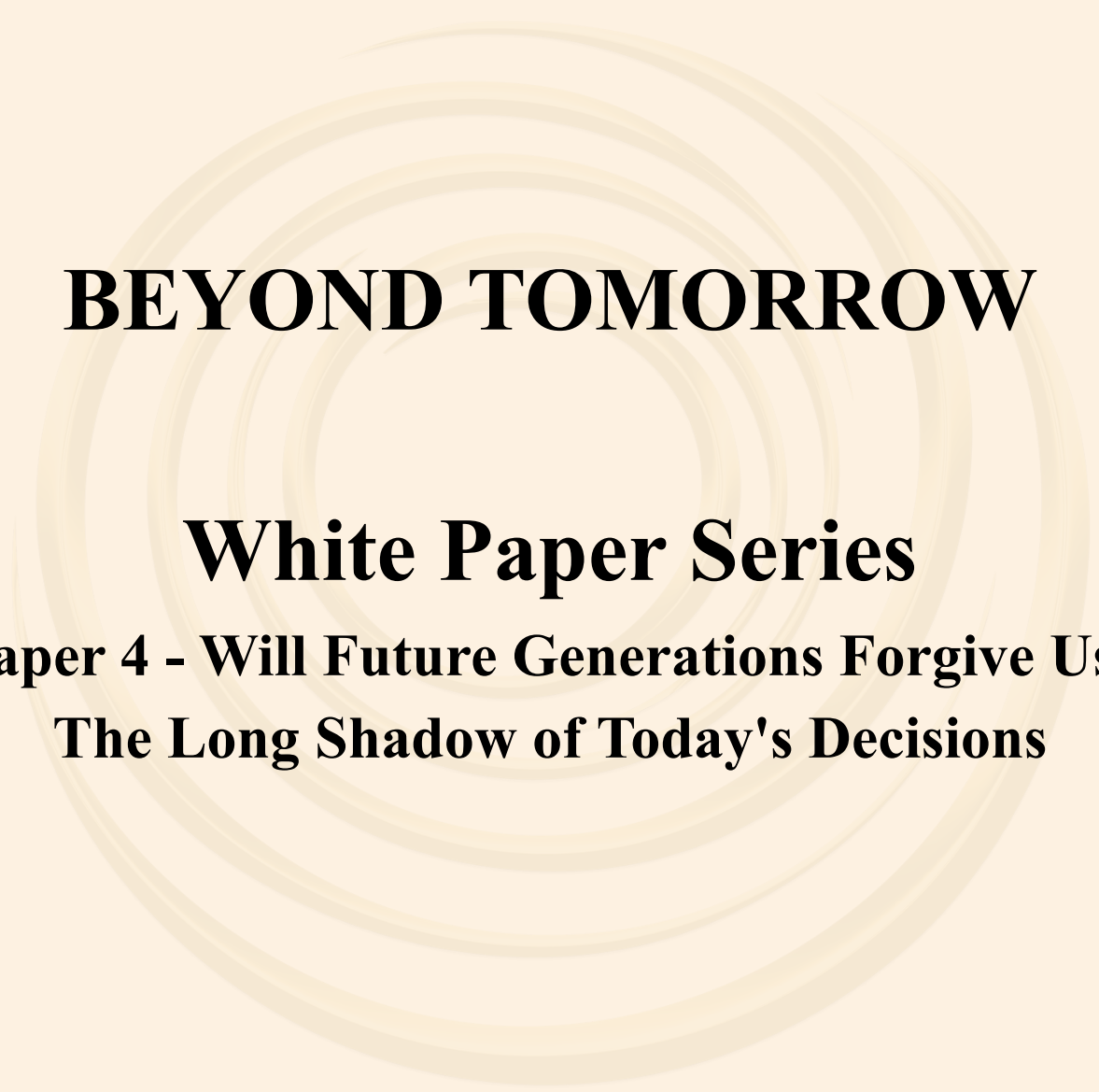
SYMPOSIUM

Where Visionaries Converge

BEYOND TOMORROW

White Paper Series

**Paper 4 — Will Future Generations Forgive Us?
The Long Shadow of Today's Decisions**



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WhitePaperSeries · Paper 4

Will Future Generations Forgive Us?

The Long Shadow of Today's Decisions

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Foreword

By Mr. Girish Mallpani

Chairperson & Trustee, Symposium

On the evening of 17 July 2026, I stood before a room of accomplished people and asked a question I had first asked myself. If you knew with absolute certainty what a warming world would do to your grandchildren, to their water, their air, their coastlines, would you live today exactly as you are living? The honest answer, mine included, is uncomfortable. Most of us would say no. And most of us carry on regardless.

That distance between knowing and doing is the subject of this paper. It is not a gap in information. Every person on that stage and in that room already knew what the science says. The gap lies in incentives, in institutions that do not converge, and in the quiet comfort of believing that responsibility belongs to someone else. This paper names that gap, audits it honestly, and proposes who must close it, by when, and how the closing will be verified.

I also speak as a builder. My industry has too often treated sustainability as a certificate on a wall rather than a discipline on a site. That criticism appears in these pages because I made it myself, from the floor, that evening. If this paper spares no one, it is because the evening spared no one, least of all its host.

The Symposium was not created to host conversations. It was created to create changemakers. That is why the evening did not end with applause. It ended with a ballot box at the door, into which every guest placed a written personal commitment to the planet. I made a promise from the stage that night: every pledge would be published, with names attached, permanent, public and accountable. This paper honours that promise. The room that gathered on 17 July did not attend an event. It signed a ledger.

And a ledger is exactly what follows. Eight actors. Specific commitments. Dated milestones stretching from 2027 to 2047, the very horizons India has set for itself. The Symposium will return to this subject, as we have returned to sport and to space, and next time the question will not be what was said, but what was delivered.

Will future generations forgive us? The question is premature. Forgiveness is not yet due because the ledger is not yet closed. What is due, starting now, is the accounting.

Executive Summary

On 17 July 2026, Symposium convened its fourth edition in Hyderabad around a single question: if India knew with certainty what a warming world would do to the next generation, would it live any differently today? The panel's answer, and this paper's, is that the country is not short on knowledge. It is short on institutional convergence, financial incentives, and follow-through. This white paper turns that evening's testimony into an audited record and a dated framework for closing the gap.

Chapters I and II set the scene: a panel of policymakers, scientists, industry leaders, and youth activists established that climate impacts fall first and heaviest on those least able to absorb them – the small farmer, the widow with no independent income, the household already priced out of piped water. Chapter III audits India's own record and finds an environmental governance architecture that is younger than most of the adults who built it, and a crisis that has already outpaced the science used to plan for it. Locally, this shows up as groundwater in Hyderabad falling from fifty feet to as much as a thousand, and a City of Lakes whose lakes and Musi River now run encroached, polluted, or dry.

Chapter IV identifies four structural pillars behind the gap between knowledge and action: an awareness-action gap in which young Indians can name a global activist far more easily than their own local water body; a vanishing green city, evidenced by satellite land-cover data showing Hyderabad's green space collapsing between 1975 and 2015 with almost none projected to remain by 2035 on current trends; a duty to mitigate rather than a right to pollute; and a governance system that places the burden of change on individuals without the institutional convergence to make that change possible. Chapter V shows that the fixes are largely already known to India – green-building economics that pay back within three to four years, youth-led campaigns like the Plastic Free Picnic Challenge, an indigenous tamarind-seed water treatment, and a recycling culture the country is in the process of forgetting.

Chapter VI translates the evening's testimony into eight dated commitments, one per stakeholder group: Telangana's Irrigation Department, GHMC and HYDRA, CII Telangana and the real estate sector, the Department of School Education and NCERT, TERI and IIT Hyderabad, the corporate and CSR sector, civil society and youth, and media and broadcasting. The Accountability Scorecard that follows Chapter VI consolidates these eight commitments,

their deadlines, and how each will be verified, into a single reference table. Chapter VII stages all eight against the horizons India has already set for itself – 2027, 2030, 2036, and 2047 – so the framework has a delivery clock, not just a direction.

Chapter VIII closes where the evening began. Will future generations forgive us? This paper's position is that the question is premature: forgiveness is not yet due, because the ledger it sets out is not yet closed. What is due, starting now, is the accounting.

Chapter I

The Setting

Hyderabad, 17 July 2026, and the moment a panel discussion become a policy brief

THE ARGUMENT IN ONE SENTENCE

Symposium's fourth edition asked its most consequential question yet and answered it not with certainty but with an honest accounting of the distance between what India knows about the climate crisis and what it has done about it.

On the evening of 17 July 2026, Symposium convened its fourth edition in Hyderabad. The theme, ‘*Will Future Generations Forgive Us? The Long Shadow of Today's Decisions*’, followed three prior editions that had each, in their own register, asked whether India's institutions were building fast enough for the ambitions they had set for themselves - Indian sport's federation question, the Telangana model of state-led reform, and the space capacity gap that separates India's satellite capability from its satellite requirement. The question in this fourth edition was of a different kind. It had no institutional owner. It belonged to everyone in the room, and not one department, federation, or ministry.

Wing Commander Asha Vasisht, Symposium's Chief Executive Officer, opened the evening with a personal account rather than a statistic. As a young flying officer posted at Agra, on 29 October 1999, she had flown a relief sortie into Odisha hours after the Super Cyclone struck, hoping to reach her own parents in Puri, where communication lines had collapsed. What stayed with her was not the relief effort but a realisation that disasters are not measured by wind speed or rainfall intensity, but by the silence that follows. That silence is why the evening's conversation was personal rather than academic, and why it mattered that according to the World Meteorological Organisation's record 2024 was the hottest year ever measured, and the decade from 2015 to 2024 the warmest decade on record.

Mr. Girish Mallpani, Symposium's founder, opened his own remarks with the question whether the room, knowing with certainty what a warming world would do to the next generation, would change how it lives today. He then introduced a panel assembled to answer the evening's

title question from every relevant vantage point: policy and energy transition, applied climate science, industry, and frontline environmental activism.

Dr. Vibha Dhawan, Director General of The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI) and a veteran of India's climate policy community since the organisation's founding by the Tata Group in 1974, moderated the panel. Professor Asif Qureshi, Head of the Department of Climate Change at IIT Hyderabad, brought two decades of research in environmental health and cycling of health and climate-relevant chemicals. Mr Gautham Reddy, Chairman of the Confederation of Indian Industry's Telangana chapter and an entrepreneur who helped build one of India's largest integrated waste-management companies, brought the industry and built-environment perspective. Mr. Ranjan Panda, known across the country as the Waterman of Odisha, brought 30 years of frontline river advocacy and youth mobilisation experience. And two schoolgirls, Avyana Mehta and Ariana Agarwal, both winners of the Global Earth Prize 2026, opened the evening's substantive discussion with a presentation on their microplastics initiative before joining the audience for the panel that followed.

The evening's chief guest was Shri N. Uttam Kumar Reddy, Telangana's Minister for Irrigation, Food & Civil Supplies, a former Indian Air Force fighter pilot whose department is now the state's frontline institution against exactly the kind of climate uncertainty the panel had spent two hours describing. His address and the fireside conversation that followed with Dr Dhawan form the governance core of this paper's later chapters.

What followed over nearly three hours was not a presentation of solutions in search of a problem. It was closer to an audit of what India has built, what it has allowed to erode, and what the country's stated commitments (net-zero by 2070, Viksit Bharat by 2047, and the intermediate horizons of 2036 that Symposium's prior papers have already examined) will actually require between now and the dates by which they are due to be accomplished.

This paper takes the panel's diagnosis, pairs it with the public record, and translates it into a framework addressed to the institutions whose decisions will determine the answer to the evening's title question. We begin, in the next chapter, with the shadow itself - who casts it, and who is made to stand in it.

Chapter II

The Long Shadow

Who casts the climate shadow and who is made to stand in it

THE ARGUMENT IN ONE SENTENCE

Every environmental decision made today extends far beyond the present, casting a long shadow over the health, prosperity, and opportunities of generations yet to come.

Dr. Dhawan framed the panel's central tension early: the countries and communities that benefited least from industrialisation are disproportionately the ones living its consequences more. But she was careful not to let the room's more comfortable members stand outside that indictment. Everyone in a room with air conditioning, mobile phones, and a car in the parking lot is a beneficiary of the same industrial and energy expansion that produced the emissions now warming the planet beyond the 1.5 °C threshold. A rise that the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) had once projected as a 2030-35 event, had arrived much earlier than forecasted.

Dr. Dhawan recounted a visit to Uttarakhand during a climate-smart agriculture project, where a young woman serving food at the project site mentioned in passing that she had lost her husband, a driver, in a flash flood; she was now raising two children with no income of her own apart from what she receives as goodwill. The same flood, Dr. Dhawan observed, if striking New York or a comparably resourced city, would register as an insured loss of a few percentage points of income. However, in Uttarakhand, it ended a livelihood and a family's security in a single night.

"Someone who is in her thirties has no access to even a single rupee. It's only that she is still happy that someone is feeding her, taking care of all her needs. Now that is the impact of the flood on her. And if the same flood happens in New York, it doesn't matter - maybe two per cent of my income is gone, or maybe even that is insured, so I don't suffer that much."

- Dr. Vibha Dhawan, Director General, TERI

The Minister returned to the same point from the vantage of policy rather than anecdote. It is not the large landholder with reserves, options, and other sources of income who feels the effects of failure of water availability first. It is the small and marginal farmer - the family with limited land, limited savings, and very little room for error - who cannot simply wait comfortably for the next season to recover.

“It is not usually the large landholder with reserves, options, and other sources of income who feels this first. It is the small and marginal farmer. The family has two acres, limited savings and very little room for error. When water fails, they cannot simply wait comfortably for the next season to recover.”

- Shri N. Uttam Kumar Reddy, Minister for Irrigation, CAD & Civil Supplies, Government of Telangana

Telangana’s own water story illustrates how quickly a seasonal concern becomes a structural one. Original Hyderabadis at the panel recalled that groundwater existed at fifty feet depth during their childhood. But now, as discussed between Dr. Dhawan and the Minister, current groundwater depths have been reported as deep as a thousand feet in parts of the city. There is also dependence on private water tankers in areas, especially in areas not fully covered by the state’s Godavari and Krishna pipeline networks. The Minister disclosed in the same conversation that Telangana is bracing for what appears to be a severe rain-deficient year, possibly a drought, as a consequence of an approaching El Niño, after two and a half years of comparatively good monsoons.

The shadow extends to both the built and natural environments. The panel’s discussion of Hyderabad’s own transformation from a self-described City of Lakes, whose water bodies once anchored the city’s ecology and identity, to a city of vanishing lakes, encroached and polluted, and a Musi River that runs dry, dirty, and polluted through the heart of the city was an evidence of a pattern that natural drainage systems can easily be destroyed by legal and illegal constructions and the resulting vulnerability to both flood and drought compounds with every year of unplanned growth.

The same pattern repeats beyond Telangana. Dr. Dhawan described water mismanagement in hilly towns and coastal destinations. Hoteliers pay more and more per litre for water tankers instead of recycling their own wastewater.

Closing Synthesis

The long shadow of today’s decisions does not fall evenly. It falls first, and heaviest, on those with the least capacity to step out of it, the small farmers, the less resourceful households, the widow with two children and no income of her own. Any framework for intergenerational responsibility that does not begin by addressing with this distributional imbalance is incomplete.

The next chapter turns from the shadow to an audit of where India stands in relation to it.

Chapter III

India's Sustainability Audit

What the record shows - and how recently India began keeping it

THE ARGUMENT IN ONE SENTENCE

India's journey towards sustainable development will be determined not by the pace of its economic growth alone, but by its ability to balance development with ecological resilience and social equity.

In general, the institutional response to environmental harm occurs only after harm to human health has already occurred. It is reactive, rather than proactive. The very category of hazardous waste, substances whose handling causes measurable human health damage, was not formally defined until the early 1970s, although the global industrial revolution and economic development had started much earlier. India had no municipal solid waste rules until about 2000. These rules have since been renamed and expanded, because the waste management problem has moved from one which is exclusively urban to one that is now a rural problem as well.

Dr. Dhawan noted that TERI's own institutional history mirrored a similar lag. The organisation was established by the Tata Group in 1974, not out of climate concern but out of energy security concern, following the oil price shock that led to the belief that energy would become India's binding constraint on development. It was not until 1989, fifteen years later, that TERI organised India's first international conference on climate change. It was at a moment when, as Dr. Dhawan recalled, scientists felt that food security was a more urgent priority. It was discussed that food security would suffer most from a changing climate, and that addressing climate change would take care of the rest. This has, by the panel's own account, been proven correct.

There is more evidence of our reactive approach. The IPCC's own 1.5 °C threshold, once projected as a 2030-35 milestone, has already been crossed. The working assumption in scientific circles has shifted to 2 °C, with some estimates running to 2.5-3 °C. The consequences of climate change are not only abstract but also felt in real time. London's Climate Week in mid-2026 saw temperatures near 38 °C. In the Swiss Alps, a landscape whose

entire cultural identity assumes cool air, residents have been purchasing table fans for the first time in living memory.

Much closer to our homes in Telangana, groundwater levels in Hyderabad, by residents' own recollection, have fallen drastically. The city's lake network, a feature that once earned Hyderabad its identity as a City of Lakes, has been encroached upon and polluted. The Musi River, Hyderabad's central waterway, runs dry, dirty, and polluted through the city today, with rejuvenation work now a stated government priority. The pattern of resource unsustainability is observed in almost all of urban India. For example, water tables and waterbody pollution in Bengaluru and Chennai show an identical pattern.

Closing Synthesis

The audit is not a story of a country that has done nothing. It is a story of a country whose environmental governance architecture was perhaps younger than most of the adults in the room that evening. It is a story of a crisis that has already outpaced the scientific projections used to design that governance architecture in the first place. The next chapter turns from what the record shows to a discussion of four structural pillars standing between India's stated intent and the delivered outcomes.

Chapter IV

Four Pillars of Intergenerational Responsibility

The awareness-action gap, the duty to mitigate, and the failure of governance convergence

THE ARGUMENT IN ONE SENTENCE

Four structural failures separate what India knows about the climate crisis, from what it has done about it, and each pillar is addressable without waiting for a global agreement.

Pillar 1 - The Awareness-Action Gap

Mr. Mallpani's framing of the evening's central tension was also its most precise diagnosis: the distance between what a person knows with certainty about the future and how that person lives today is a behavioural one. The evidence for this gap was not limited to individual consumption choices. Mr. Ranjan Panda's youth survey, conducted among 2,000 young Indians, found that 72 per cent could identify Greta Thunberg, while only 7 per cent could name the water body nearest their own home. The gap is then due to a lack of connection between climate awareness and the immediate, local, personally actionable reality each person inhabits.

Pillar 2 - The Vanishing Green City

Professor Qureshi's contribution was the evening's only data-led audit of a single city's physical trajectory. Answering a direct question on whether Hyderabad's urban planning is heading in the right direction. He opened with satellite imagery comparisons showing Hyderabad's green cover against built-up area in 1975, 2000, and 2015, projected to 2035 within a fixed boundary. It showed that the green space visible in the city in 1975 had, by 2015, largely vanished and been replaced by built-up land. The projections to 2035 showed that almost no green space would remain if the current growth trajectory continues.

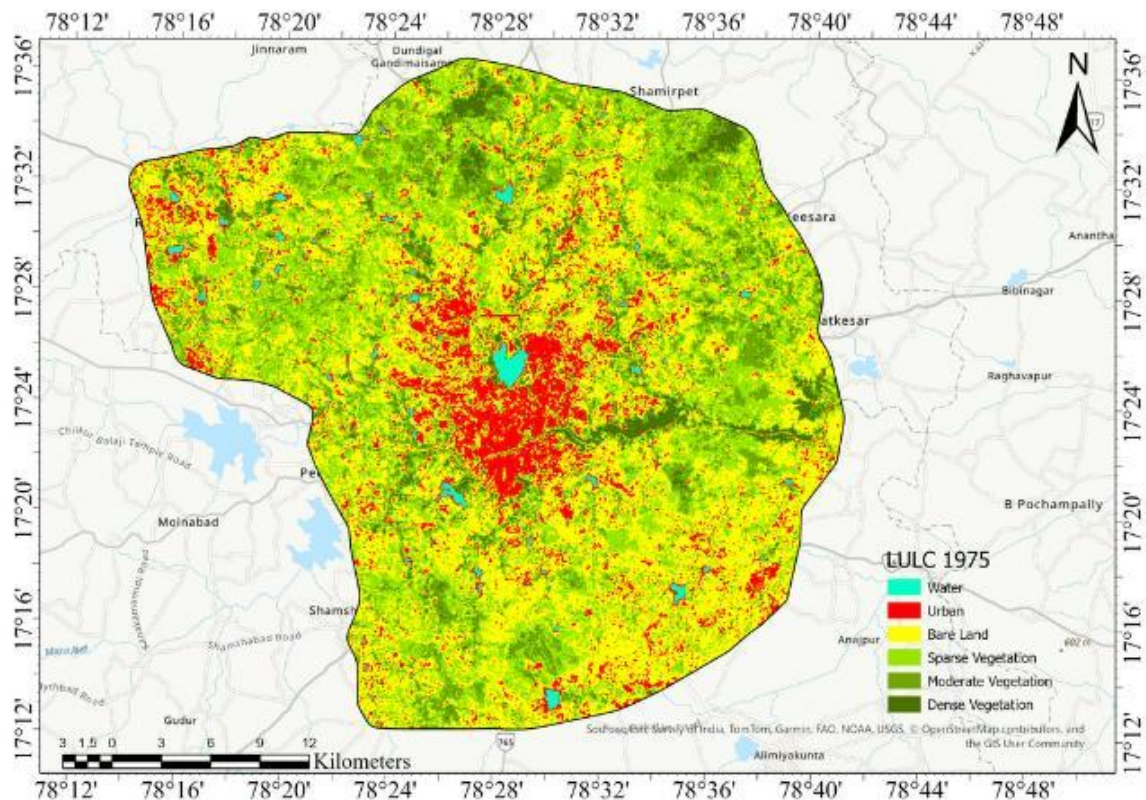


Figure 1. Hyderabad land use / land cover, 1975. Green cover (sparse, moderate, and dense vegetation) still dominates the district; built-up (urban) and bare land are concentrated in a small central core. Source: land-use/land-cover classification, Esri, TomTom, Garmin, FAO, NOAA, USGS, OpenStreetMap contributors, GIS User Community.

[Editor's note: the corresponding 2015 land-use/land-cover map referenced in this paragraph – showing the same district with urban and bare land expanded across the core – was received during production but not saved to disk as a distinct file from the 1975 map above. Please re-upload the 2015 map separately so it can be placed here as Figure 2 for the full before/after comparison.]

He distinguished this from the "I am planting some trees" gesture common among industrialists, introducing some quantitative metrics, the biotope area factor and the green space factor that measure how much urban land remains permeable and vegetated, example metrics than can be used in building urban climate resilience of a city. Some of the panel's proposed solutions, suited to a city with no remaining ground-level space, were to explore more vertical gardens, rooftop gardens, constructed wetlands, and permeable paving (especially in parking areas). He closed with a caution about greenwashing and carbon-neutrality claims, based on secondary consultant data and selectively defined emission scopes, rather than on a genuine life-cycle assessment.

Pillar 3 - The Duty to Mitigate, Not the Right to Pollute

Mr. Reddy offered the panel's clearest philosophical reframe, opening with Greta Thunberg's 2023 "How dare you" address before turning the challenge back on the room. Every human activity produces some form of pollution. In his words, the claim that anyone can live pollution-free is simply untrue. What sustainable development demands is not zero impact but a duty to mitigate: living without compromising one's own quality of life while ensuring that the next generation's equivalent rights to the earth's resources remain intact. He offered this as a ladder rather than a binary. For example, from diesel to petrol based vehicles, petrol to gas, gas to electric vehicle, electric vehicle to public transport, public transport to bicycle; with every step down that ladder a legitimate, sufficient contribution, rather than an all-or-nothing standard that discourages incremental progress.

"We have no right to pollute. We still cause pollution. We have a duty to mitigate. This is the sum and substance of sustainable development."

- Mr Gautham Reddy, Chairman, CII Telangana

Pillar 4 - Governance Without Convergence

The evening's most structurally important observation came in response to an audience question about who, exactly, is responsible for closing the awareness-action gap. Mr. Panda's answer identified a failure: departmental convergence is at present largely absent. The tendency across Indian environmental governance is to place the entire burden of behaviour change on individuals - "you should do this, you should do this". However, institutional convergence is required to make that individual behaviour change meaningful or even possible.

A related audience intervention invoking Mahatma Gandhi's observation that the earth provides enough for everyone's needs but not for everyone's greed, pressed the panel on whether India's very definition of development, as distinct from its environmental policy, is the deeper obstacle. Dr. Dhawan's response did not dispute the point. It located the remedy in mindset rather than in legislation alone, in a society that honours a simple lifestyle rather than treats consumption as the default marker of success.

Closing Synthesis

The four pillars compound one another. An awareness-action gap that is not met with a duty-to-mitigate framework produces guilt without direction; a duty-to-mitigate framework that is not backed by governance convergence produces individual effort without institutional support.

The Pledge Wall

A THOUGHT TO LEAVE BEHIND

*Well organized meet!!
Congratulations!*



— By —

SHRI UTTAM KUMAR REDDY

Hon'ble Minister for Irrigation & CAD,
Food & Civil Supplies, Government of Telangana

A thought to leave behind

Enjoyed being part of great discussion. What I really liked was stakeholders from all spheres of life but with one mission — Make this planet more livable. All of us are contributing to climate change & we can reverse it — without compromising of comforts. That is what is sustainable development.

Ujjhwa Dhawan.

A thought to leave behind

SYMPOSIUM is a great convergence forum- of ideas. Let it now graduate into a consortium of actions that complements with each other to take this world into a sustainable future.

A thought to leave behind

First of all, this a super great initiative! It is hard to find forums where there is a honest conversation about the goods but also the bad. from the panelists to the patrons, everyone engaged with the discussions. Hopefully this will evolve into actionable points, that end being acted upon.

Finally, thank you for the invite and great organization!

A THOUGHT TO LEAVE BEHIND

How do we do? It's exciting we begin asking the question to learn, with a self-reflection, a sustainability man can change definitely way.

A THOUGHT TO LEAVE BEHIND

Thank you so much for inviting us to at Symposium. We are truly honored and really loved listening to all the speakers and panelists, we learned so much!

The Pledge Wall

(N)

I will certainly be more conscious in the following:

- 1) Wastage of food
- 2) Wastage of water
- 3) optimal consumption of AC
- 4) Saving fuel whenever possible.

Pankaj Diwan
Founder, Ideatalks

(N)

(N)

Dear Team Symposium,

Until my last breath, I will strive to educate the head with wisdom, the heart with compassion, and the hands with purpose, while protecting nature and empowering communities; so future generations can thrive in harmony with each other and the planet.

Regards
Meghana Musunuri
Founder & chairperson
Fountainhead Global School
Save Water And Nature (WGO).

17/7/22

MODERATION FROM SYMPOSIUM

Dear Symposium,

Thank you for the topic on climate sustainability.

"I made a commitment to myself that I will bring P.L.'s [public] interest [litigation] for the sustainability of the climate

with Reverence
Ajay Kumar Jaiswal
Advocate
Supreme Court of India.

Being in the plastic industry for more than 30 years, with all humbleness I may say that I know plastic little better than few others.

Through my experience I vow to see that most of the plastic are recycled in the best possible manner to make a 'Sustainable and Viable Recycling System'

Regards,
Vineesh Gupta

SUSTAINABILITY SHOULD NOT END WITH THE OCCUPANCY OF THE BUILDING, IT SHOULD CONTINUE TILL THE LIFE TIME OF THE BUILDING.

— PRAVEEN
EAPL GROUP

I WILL NOT
ADD TO POLLUTION

K. SAMBI REDDY
17-02-26

It's sad to see that commonly people are full of misconceptions on this topic. They can be easily misinformed/mislead.

Therefore, My Resolution is to dig deeper into this subject matter in pursuit of genuine information along with pragmatic solutions and convey it to the future generations!

→ Ali Mukarram

I will consciously reduce my daily water usage

— Kabir Malpani

(N)

I TAKE my pledge:

I'm hereby informing you, that i'll not allow any citizen's use below required micron plastic - bags, net i, use. And am here to protect Environment, & water's, & others etal -

Thanking you
with Warm Rgds
VBReddy
VEERENDHAR BORRA-REDDY

I will consciously reduce my water usage daily water usage

— Kabir Malpani

(N)

Chapter V

From Awareness to Action

What is already working in industry, in youth movements, and what India's grandparents already knew

THE ARGUMENT IN ONE SENTENCE

The future will not be shaped by what society knows about sustainability, but by the choices it is willing to make and the actions it is prepared to sustain.

The Green Building Gap

Mr Girish Mallpani, speaking from the floor as Symposium's founder and a developer himself, delivered the panel's most pointed self-criticism of the industry. Green building certifications, IGBC ratings, have, in his own account, become a marketing exercise rather than an operational commitment, with many developers featuring the label without meaningfully pursuing the practice behind it. The financial argument for going further, it was argued, is not even a difficult one: green building construction costs, an extra twenty to thirty percent, are typically recovered within three to four years through operating savings. This payback period is well within any developer's normal investment horizon. At the end of this discussion, Mr. Reddy cited a Hyderabad building, built substantially from recycled cement, steel, aggregate, sand, tiles, copper wiring, and glass, as a proof that near-total material recycling is already achievable and is not a distant aspiration.

Youth-Led, Locally Anchored Movements

Mr. Panda's Youth for Water India campaign, running since 2019, and its Plastic Free Picnic Challenge in particular, targets one of India's most under-examined seasonal pollution sources. The winter picnic season runs from November to February, when institutions, schools, and families across the country gather in forests and along riverbanks and, in his words, leave behind a trail of destruction rather than the reconnection with nature the outing was meant to provide. The campaign's proposed solution include substitution of disposable material with reusable ones; for example, the use of a steel straw instead of a plastic one, a cloth bag, and one's own plates instead of thermocol and plastic disposables, are deliberately modest, but their benefits compound faster than legislation.

The Tamarind Seed Solution

Avyana Mehta and Ariana Agarwal's presented a technological invention that aligns with promoting sustainable solutions. Their material, developed from the natural polysaccharide xyloglucan extracted from discarded tamarind seeds, roughly 800,000 tonnes of which are treated as agricultural waste in India annually, binds suspended microplastics in water into flocks that can then be removed without electricity, specialised training, or ongoing budget. The design brief, in their own words, was deliberately not build for laboratory work. It was built for the child in rural Maharashtra who drinks from a shared, visibly clean but invisibly contaminated water container, for whom conventional filtration infrastructure is neither affordable nor accessible.

The Recycling Economy in India is Already Built

The evening's most widely resonant intervention came from an audience member who reframed the entire discussion in terms of inherited practice rather than imported technology. A used bottle in an Indian household rarely ends up in a landfill; it becomes a container for something else. Newspapers are still resold, not discarded. Biogas plants, powered by cow dung and agricultural waste, existed in Indian villages fifty years ago, converting what the panel now calls waste-to-fuel and waste-to-wealth. This process had already been perfected in the country but was then inexplicably set aside. Mr. Reddy deliberated that perhaps it is because we are becoming a society that can afford to throw things away. The Minister endorsed the same argument from the government benches: refuse-derived fuel, decentralised composting, and community-scale recycling are not new technologies requiring import.

"We are one of the biggest recyclers in the world, and we used to be ten times bigger. Every single technology we are talking about in waste management and water existed ages ago. We just forgot them because we could afford to throw things away."

- Mr Gautham Reddy, Chairman, CII Telangana

Residential Communities: The Last Mile of Urban Sustainability

Almost every recommendation this series has examined, government policy, corporate practice, and academic research, assumes that sustainability outcomes are decided at the level of the city, the state, or the boardroom. In practice, the decision about whether a household's water is reused, its waste is segregated, or its vehicle can be charged is made within the residential

community itself; for example, by a Resident Welfare Association (RWA), a builder's handover team, or a housekeeping contractor.

A green-certified building, by Mr Reddy's own account earlier in this chapter, is only as sustainable as its construction. What happens after handover is a separate and largely unexamined question. A sewage treatment plant installed to satisfy a building's approval conditions delivers no benefit if the RWA that inherits it lacks the budget or the technical staff to run it, and water that could otherwise irrigate gardens or flush toilets is discharged as waste instead. Waste segregation at source depends less on municipal policy than on whether people have actually been trained and are being supervised to keep wastes separate across hundreds of individual flats. And electric-vehicle charging, an increasingly common buyer expectation, is frequently constrained not by demand but by common-area electrical sanction loads designed before EV adoption was a planning consideration.

Closing Synthesis

None of the solutions described in this chapter requires a technology India does not already have or a practice its own recent history has not already perfected. What they require is a deliberate reintroduction, a financial incentive structure that makes the sustainable choice the economically obvious one, and an institutional convergence to scale what individual pioneers have already proven works. The next chapter translates this into a structured framework of stakeholder commitments.

Chapter VI

Stakeholder Action Framework

What eight actors must do, and the pledge mechanism Symposium is proposing to hold them, and every citizen in the room, accountable

THE ARGUMENT IN ONE SENTENCE

Closing the awareness-action gap will not happen through any single actor's decision. Symposium proposes commitments for eight stakeholder groups, anchored in the evening's own testimony.

Recommendation 1 - Government of Telangana, Irrigation & Water Resources Department

Telangana's water governance has operated reactively, responding to floods and drought after damage is already visible, rather than anticipating stress before it arrives. A pattern the Minister himself described as needing to shift from instinct-based reservoir decisions to real-time data-based decisions. He highlighted the need for action to shift from an infrastructure planned around historical monsoon averages to one planned around actual climate variability. He highlighted the need to align irrigation and agricultural procurement planning so that crop targets reflect what farmers can actually grow under present rainfall conditions rather than historical assumptions, and to establish an anticipatory drought-and-deficit protocol, triggered by early El Niño and rainfall-deficit indicators rather than by visible crop failure.

Recommendation 2 - Greater Hyderabad Municipal Administration & HYDRA

Natural drainage systems and lake bodies across Hyderabad and most major Indian cities have been encroached upon and polluted over decades, increasing both flood and drought vulnerability, a pattern the panel traced through Hyderabad's own transformation from City of Lakes to a city of vanishing water bodies. The municipal administration and the Hyderabad Disaster Response and Assets Monitoring and Protection agency (HYDRA) should complete and publicly report annual progress on Musi River rejuvenation and riverfront restoration; annual encroachment removal and lake restoration data; rainwater-harvesting compliance verification; and publish quarterly HYDRA water-body status data.

Recommendation 3 - CII Telangana & the Real Estate and Construction Sector

CII Telangana should publish an annual, independently verified green-building compliance audit of major developments, and should actively promote GRIHA, the India-appropriate rating system, alongside locally sourced building-material standards. Green building certification has become, for a meaningful share of developers, a marketing feature rather than an operating standard. Mr. Reddy described calling IGBC ratings a marketing gimmick for many builders. He mentioned that none of eight to ten Hyderabad builders he surveyed were even aware of the stricter Dark Green Building standards already in use internationally.

This paper proposes that the government should be specific rather than general: a defined Floor Space Index bonus of 5-10% additional buildable area for developments that achieve independently verified green-building compliance. An FSI bonus and expedited approval are incentives a state government can act on directly, through existing planning-permission rules, without new legislation and together they convert green construction's 20-30% up-front cost premium into a same-project offset, rather than leaving it dependent on a three-to-four-year operating-savings payback that few buyers or developers weigh at the point of sale. CII Telangana should submit this specific FSI-and-fast-track proposal to the state government within 12 months, with the first independently verified Green Building Audit published from 2027.

Recommendation 4 - Department of School Education, Telangana & NCERT

The Department of School Education and NCERT may integrate local-watershed and local-ecosystem literacy, for example, in naming and mapping the nearest water body, forest patch, or lake, into the school science curriculum, alongside global climate science. Climate awareness among young Indians is high for global icons but low for local, actionable knowledge, as Mr. Panda's youth survey showed. Partnerships may be formed with youth-led initiatives to explore case studies grounded in Indian innovation rather than only international examples, with a pilot curriculum module developed with TERI and IIT Hyderabad within one academic year.

Recommendation 5 - TERI, IIT Hyderabad & the Research Community

India's environmental research base is comparatively young, and its findings are not always translated into locally deployable, low-cost solutions, a gap visible in the panel's account. TERI, IIT Hyderabad, and ISB should establish a joint applied-research programme focused

specifically on low-cost, non-electrified environmental technologies suited to rural and peri-urban deployment, building directly on demonstrated models, and should publish an annual State of Telangana Environment report on the model Symposium has already proposed for the sport sector, with a joint MoU signed.

Recommendation 6 - Corporate Sector, CII, and CSR Funders

The corporate sector, CII, and CSR funders should direct a defined share of CSR towards subsidies that close the price gap between sustainable and unsustainable defaults at the point of purchase, rather than only toward downstream awareness campaigns, and should adopt verified green-building and circular-material standards in their own corporate real estate as a visible proof of concept for the wider market, with CII Telangana publishing a CSR-for-Sustainability pooling framework. Sustainable choices, recycled construction materials, wastewater recycling, and non-electrified filtration are frequently more expensive at the point of decision than the unsustainable default, even when they are cheaper over the medium term, as Dr. Dhawan's experiences with hoteliers also showed.

Recommendation 7 - Civil Society, Youth Movements and Citizens

Civil society organisations and citizens should scale existing behavioural change models into state-wide campaigns. Individual behaviour change is frequently requested without the institutional convergence that would make it meaningful, resulting in fatigue rather than sustained action. And legislation without civic and common-sense internalisation does not change outcomes on its own.

Recommendation 8 - Media and Broadcasting

Media and broadcasting organisations should commit a defined share of environmental coverage to local water bodies and local-solution reporting, modelled on the format of this paper's own case studies, and should partner with Symposium to co-produce an annual televised or streamed accounting of the Telangana Sports and Environment reports this series proposes, with the first co-produced local-environment segment airing. Climate coverage in India remains weighted toward global icons, international summits, and after-the-fact disaster reporting, with comparatively little sustained coverage of local water bodies, local governance decisions, or local solutions. We must increase local coverage and local motivation.

The Accountability Scorecard

Eight actors. Eight commitments.

The eight recommendations of Chapter VI are consolidated below into a single reference table of commitments, deadlines, and verification points.

Actor	Commitment	Deadline	Verification
Telangana Government – Irrigation & Water Resources	Launch a real-time reservoir and groundwater dashboard, supported by an anticipatory drought protocol.	2027	Public dashboard and formal notification of the protocol
GHMC & HYDRA	Publish quarterly water-body status reports and annual data on restoration and encroachment.	2027 onwards	Public quarterly reports
CII Telangana & Real Estate Sector	Implement an independently verified Green Building Audit and submit an FSI/fast-track incentive proposal.	2027	Published audit and government submission
School Education & NCERT	Pilot a curriculum on local watersheds and ecosystems.	2027	Curriculum module and implementation report
TERI, IIT Hyderabad & Research Community	Establish an applied research programme and publish an annual State of Telangana Environment report.	2027 onwards	MoU and annual report
Corporate Sector / CSR Funders	Create a CSR-for-Sustainability pooling framework.	2027	Published framework and record of projects funded
Civil Society / Youth / Citizens	Scale the Plastic Free Picnic Challenge and related behaviour-change campaigns.	2027 onwards	Participation data and campaign reports
Media & Broadcasting	Increase sustained local environmental reporting and annual accountability coverage.	2027 onwards	Published coverage log or annual media review

This is not a record of what was discussed on 17 July. It is a record against which delivery can be measured.

Chapter VII

Roadmap (2026 - 2047)

Sequencing the framework across the horizons India has already committed to

THE ARGUMENT IN ONE SENTENCE

The eight recommendations in Chapter VI must be staged against the deadlines India has already set for itself- 2036, 2047, and 2070 or the framework will stall at the point every prior reform effort in this series has warned against: implementation.

Tier 1 - By 2027

- Irrigation Department public reservoir and groundwater dashboard goes live; anticipatory drought protocol notified ahead of the monsoon.
- CII Telangana first verified Green Building Audit published; floor-area incentive proposal submitted to the government.
- State-wide Plastic Free Picnic Challenge launched ahead of the November-February picnic season.
- Pilot local-watershed school curriculum module developed with TERI and IIT Hyderabad.

Tier 2 - By 2030

- Musi river rejuvenation reaches its first publicly reported milestone; HYDRA quarterly water-body data fully operational.
- Local-watershed curriculum lives in Telangana government schools statewide.
- CSR for Sustainability pooling framework operational, closing the first-cost gap on at least three verified technologies (for example, construction materials, treated wastewater recycling, rural water treatment).

Tier 3 - By 2036

- Telangana's water governance model with anticipatory planning, real-time reservoir transparency, climate-aligned infrastructure, documented for adoption by other Indian states, consistent with the state-led template Symposium proposed in its Beyond the Game series.
- First annual State of Telangana Environment report reaches its tenth edition, providing a full decade of comparable data.

- India's intermediate climate-adaptation infrastructure targets, aligned with the country's broader 2036 institutional horizon, independently evaluated against this paper's Chapter III audit baseline.

Tier 4 - By 2047

- India's Viksit Bharat @ 2047 ambition is evaluated not only on economic terms but on the distributional climate-risk terms. Chapter II of this paper sets out whether the small farmers are demonstrably less exposed than they were in 2026.
- A generation of Indian schoolchildren educated under the local-watershed curriculum reaches adulthood. India's trajectory toward its stated 2070 net-zero commitment is independently assessed at the two-decades-remaining mark, with this paper's Chapter III audit as one of its historical baselines.

Chapter VIII

Conclusion: The Ledger We Leave Behind

THE ARGUMENT IN ONE SENTENCE

The evening opened with a question its own host asked the room to sit with rather than answer. This paper closes by returning to it.

If you knew with absolute certainty that twenty years from now, your grandchild would stand in a world of permanent water scarcity, unbreathable air, and coastlines swallowed by rising water, would you live today exactly as you are living? Mr. Mallpani's answer, offered at the close of his opening remarks, was that most of us would say no and that most of us do the same thing anyway. This paper has sought to show that the gap between those two facts is not primarily a gap in knowledge. Every panellist on the 17 July 2026 stage, the policy veteran, the climate scientist, the industrialist, the frontline activist, and the two schoolgirls who opened the evening already knew what the science says. The gap lies in incentives, in institutional convergence, and in the deliberate reintroduction of practices that India's own recent history had already perfected and then set aside.

The four pillars this paper has traced, the awareness-action gap, the vanishing green city, the duty-to-mitigate framework, and the governance convergence, are each individually addressable without waiting for any further global agreement or a reform Act. The eight-actor framework in Chapter VI names what each institution represented in that room must now do, and what those not represented must do. None of it is speculative. Each recommendation traces to a specific claim made on that stage, or to the public record that verifies it.

What is not addressable by any single institution is the distributional injustice Chapter II documents, while the room that gathered to discuss it that evening, by its own founder's admission, is largely insulated from the immediate consequence of its own choices. Closing that gap is not a technical problem. It is the deeper meaning of the duty to mitigate that this paper has repeatedly returned to. The obligation runs not only forward to the next generation, but also sideways to the neighbour already living in the shadow this generation has cast.

Before the room left the hall on 17 July 2026, each guest was asked to write one personal commitment to the planet and place it, unread by anyone but themselves at the moment of writing, into a ballot box at the door. Every commitment, Wing Commander Vasisht told the

room, would be published with the writer's name attached permanent, public, and, in the fullest sense of the word the evening kept returning to, accountable.

Symposium intends to hold itself, and everyone who wrote a pledge that evening, to the same standard this paper asks of Telangana's government departments, its builders, its researchers, and its media: publish the commitment, track it, and report back. We will return to this question, as we have returned to Indian sports federation reform and India's space capacity gap, with a future paper in this series that asks not what was pledged on 17 July 2026, but what was delivered.

Will future generations forgive us? The honest answer this paper can offer is that the question is premature. Forgiveness is not yet due because the ledger is not yet closed. What is due, starting now, is the accounting.

Annex

Speaker Bios & Methodology

The Panel - 17 July 2026

Mr. Girish Mallpani — Chairperson & Trustee, Symposium; CMD, MPM Group; ISB alumnus; founder of Symposium.

Wing Commander Asha Vasisht — Chief Executive Officer, Symposium. Delivered the opening address framing the evening's stakes, drawing on her own experience flying relief missions during the 1999 Odisha Super Cyclone.

Dr. Vibha Dhawan (Moderator) — Director General, The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI). Four decades at the intersection of climate science, energy policy, and applied research; trained originally in plant biotechnology.

Professor Asif Qureshi — Head, Department of Climate Change, IIT Hyderabad. An alumnus of ETH Zurich and Harvard University; research spans climate science, environmental health, and the cycling of health- and climate- relevant chemicals.

Mr. Gautham Reddy — Chairman, Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), Telangana. Built one of India's largest integrated waste-management companies.

Mr. Ranjan Panda — Environmentalist and river-rights advocate known nationally as the Waterman of Odisha; thirty years of frontline river advocacy; founder-mentor of the Youth for Water India campaign since 2019.

Ms. Avyana Mehta — Winner, Global Earth Prize 2026; founder of a global nonprofit organisation focused on plastic-waste mitigation; host of a sustainability-focused podcast; author of a book profiling twenty sustainable organisations worldwide.

Ms. Ariana Agarwal — Winner, Global Earth Prize 2026; co-founder of the same microplastics initiative; founder of a separate initiative focused on the informal economy and domestic workers' rights.

Shri N. Uttam Kumar Reddy (Chief Guest) — Minister for Irrigation, Food and Civil Supplies, Government of Telangana. Former Indian Air Force fighter pilot.

Methodology

This paper draws primarily on claims and testimony made during the Symposium 4th Edition panel discussion and fireside conversation (Hyderabad, 17 July 2026), supplemented by publicly available reference points - World Meteorological Organisation data, IPCC threshold reporting, and India's environmental legislative history - used to contextualise, not substitute for, the panel's own statements. Direct panel statements are attributed inline by speaker name. Symposium synthesises; the panel speaks.

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