

MOUNTAINS CONNECT

November 2022

IMI NEWSLETTER

Sustainable Mountain Development Summit XI at Leh, Ladakh



Sustainable Mountain Development Summit (SMDS-XI) was hosted by Sustainable Development Forum of Ladakh and Ladakh Hill Development Council at Leh, Ladakh from October 10 to 12, 2022 with the theme 'Harnessing Tourism for Sustainable Mountain Development'. Over 500 delegates from mountain states, IMI members and Ladakh participated in the summit. Honourable Minister, MoEFCC- Shri Bhupender Yadav graced the inaugural session as Chief Guest. Shri Jamyang Tsering Namgyal Hon'ble MP, Ladakh and Adv. Tashi Gyalson CEC, LAHDC were in attendance along with other dignitaries.

The summit was preceded by the 5th Himalayan Youth Summit with the theme 'Sustainability and Entrepreneurship' which had youth participants from various Himalayan states. The youth declaration was presented to the Honourable Minister, MoEFCC during the inaugural session of SMDS-XI. The proceedings of SMDS X held in Darjeeling in 2021 was also released by the Hon'ble Minister which highlighted the need to locate "One Health in the Indian Himalayan Region" context.

Dr. Harshwanti Bisht delivered the Dr. RS Tolia Memorial lecture for 2022. A renowned mountaineer from Uttarakhand, Dr. Bisht was one of the first women to scale the Nanda Devi and the first woman to be elected as President of the Indian Mountain Federation.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Focus on assessing carbon neutrality of all the tourism products. All tourism products to be inclusive across all sectors. Understanding of the cultural context of communities for whom the products were being designed.

Intergenerational transmission of knowledge and the need of documentation of all cultural heritage or sites of IHR. Recognition of roles played by women in promoting sustainable tourism. Special attention was needed for agencies run by women entrepreneurs.

Issue of conservation, quality and quantity of water, waste management and energy security. Ensure women's role not only in participation but role in decision making was a key highlight.

Integration of policies among all the sectors, recognition of payment of ecosystem services, Convergence of not just the policies but also schemes and projects. Landscape perspective and vision going beyond working at site level.

Role of defence in development to be recognised and integrated for sustainability. Emerging issues of the waste crisis, biodiversity conservation and role of defence establishments to be converged with local strategies.

SMDSXI Sub themes

- Tourism products of Mountains
- Inclusive society and cultural values
- Environmental Sustainability and Natural resources
- Ecological Restoration and Carbon Neutrality
- Sustainability and National Security

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

Dear friends in our IMI Network or outside it,

On the 12th October 2022, we successfully concluded the SMDS XI in Leh, Ladakh, that we had talked about in our last newsletter. The Ladakh chapter (SDFL) were the prime movers for the successful organising of this event. I congratulate them. The LAHDC and the Chairman, Shri Tashi Gyalson, deserves much praise in managing the Summit right from the day they called for it in Darjeeling in November 2021. Besides, other outcomes, the Mountain Legislators' Meet (MLM) Declaration on EPR is very significant. Presently, we are getting endorsements from the Legislators of other Mountain States and then we will jointly, with the CEC LAHDC, take it to the Minister, MoEFCC, Shri Bhupinder Yadav for incorporating the amendments to the EPR rules.

Now turning our attention to Egypt, where all the leaders will reflect on the State of the Climate during COP 27. A battle which humanity seems to be losing. The havoc that Climate has unleashed around the world is there for everyone to see. Yet nations remain unmoved. This is bizarre. We need action now.

We in the Mountains are experiencing enough disasters throughout the year. The duration seems to be extending. This year some of the biggest landslides happened in October. So let me repeat what I had written last time around since it is so relevant today.

"Our Himalaya is especially vulnerable and hence we have to think of all the adaptations and resilience that we can build. Do spare a thought for all of this and let us do whatever we can as individuals as well as collectively. Whether it is in our homes or in the larger community we have to act now."

I call on our State Chapters to report on their activities. Besides, write ups from the States will be very helpful. Again I reiterate, please write in with all your comments on the newsletter and how we might improve it.

With best wishes and happy reading.
P. D. Rai
President IMI



Mountain Legislators' Meet – 2022

MLM 2022 was centred around the issue of Extended Producer Responsibility: Policy to Practice. The meeting held on October 11, 2022 at Assembly House, LAHDC and chaired by Chief Executive Councillor of the Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council and had a presence of President, IMI, Council Members, Mayor of Dehradun and other important dignitaries.

"If producers can bring their waste up the mountains, they should also work to take it back"

CEC – Tashi Gyalson

Dr. Sumit Sharma from UNEP gave an overview of the current EPR policy and Ms. Priyadarshinee Shrestha (IMI) presented on the brand audit findings conducted in Leh along with Ms. Preeti Chauhan. Existing gaps for implementation of the EPR framework in mountain states were also highlighted.

The Leh declaration adopted by MLM 2022 sought to amend the rules of Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) framework as applicable for the Mountain States. This was a corollary to the Declaration of the MLM held in Darjeeling in 2021. Endorsements from other Mountain States' Legislators and MPs will be sought and which will be followed by a meeting with the officials of the MoEFCC for seeking an amendment to the EPR framework to bring in mountain specificities.

Indian Himalaya Photography Contest



The Indian Himalayan Photography contest was organised during the SMDSXI at Leh, Ladakh on the theme of 'Impacts of Tourism in the mountains'. Due to the short notice, there were few entries. Winners were declared during the valedictory session of SMDSXI.

First place: Fayaz Ahmad (Ladakh)
Second place: Isaac Gergan (Ladakh)
Third place: Pokhraj Rai (Sikkim)



IMI UPDATES

Workshop-Plastic Waste Management in the Hills and Tourist Destinations

A workshop in Dehradun was organised by SDFU and IMI on September 30, 2022 with the collaboration of UNEP and TERI. It focussed on debating and discussing the issues in solid and plastic waste management and specifically the significance of Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) in the Indian Himalayan States. The IHR Policy and Policy for Uttarakhand on plastic waste drafted by IMI were shared with the participants.

Other dignitaries and experts from SPCB- UK, UNEP, Elected representatives of Local Bodies, Civil Society members participated in the workshop and shared their concerns and discussed pathways for addressing plastic waste management.

The sharing of knowledge, debate, concerns and deliberations during the course of the workshop discussed the importance of people's participation but also that it is critical for producers of plastic waste to be held accountable. Segregation at source, and involvement of a wide range of stakeholder – hotels, restaurants, educational institutions, government offices, etc. were also discussed along with the adoption of a decentralised approach for waste management.



Shri Saurabh Bahuguna, Minister in the government of Uttarakhand was the Chief guest of the workshop. In his address he highlighted the issue of waste management in Char Dham Yatra mentioning that public participation is key to bring about change. He further stated that companies also have to be held accountable for the plastic waste crisis not only in Uttarakhand but the entire IHR.

Partner's Corner

On November 3, 2022, Centre for Biodiversity Conservation and Management of GBPIHED organized a Workshop on Forest-based Resources and Livelihood Options.



ECOSS facilitated a learning trip funded by GIZ (under Sustainable Management of Forest Ecosystem Services project) for Himachal Pradesh Forest Dept to Sikkim from October 31 to November 4. The purpose of the visit was sharing of lessons from springshed management, oak forests conservation, grazing management, and community based ecotourism.



The 15 member team visited Tsomgo Lake, Chalamthang Village, Maenam Sanctuary, Upper Perbing and Sadam Suntaley block.

MSDF has organised a series of events since May. The Himalayan Cleanup was organised by the chapter followed by a webinar on World Environment Day. Members have also been part of Roundtable Discussion on Sustainable Palm Oil



Governing Council Meeting

IMI's 32nd GC meeting was organised in hybrid manner at Leh on the sidelines of SMDSXI on October 9, 2022, chaired by President, Mr. PD Rai. Six Councillors were present in person and 3 joined the meeting online. Mr. Rai congratulated the newly formed chapter - SDFL on taking charge of organising SMDSXI, and expressed his gratitude to Councillor from Ladakh Mr. Rigzin Spalbar and the SDFL team.

Some key discussion points were -

- The need for IMI strengthening and improving coordination with the State Chapters and members.
- IMI's membership process to be reviewed in the near future to create space for new interested members.
- Outcomes from all summits to be looked into and how the recommendations could be put into action.
- Endorsement of Leh Declaration from all Mountain Legislators to be taken forward.

Meeting of DHI



Darjeeling Himalaya Initiative organised a hybrid meeting of its members on November 7 to discuss on SMDSXI, Leh Declaration for EPR amendment and upcoming International Mountain Day.

In the meeting chaired by DHI President, Mr. Praful Rao, youth representatives and DHI delegates who participated at Leh Summit provided feedback and updates on the various sessions, especially MLM, and how the outcomes could be taken forward. A strategy planning meeting was also discussed for DHI which is to be organised soon.

Meeting of SDFL Executive

The Executive Committee members of SDFL met in Leh in late October 2022. Decision to formally create a youth wing of SDFL for sustained engagement with the youth was taken at the meeting. Dr Enoch Spalbar, Joint Secretary of SDFL has been nominated to lead the wing and ensure that the issues emerging from the Youth Summit during SMDSXI are taken forward.

IMI Interaction with German MPs

Mr. PD. Rai, President IMI and Ms. Priya Shrestha, Secretary IMI attended a meeting with visiting MPs of German Parliamentary Committee on Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety & Consumer Protection on 30th October, 2022. Mr. Harald Ebner, MP from Green Party led the delegation and they exchanged notes on climate change and the impact it is having on the world, as well as locally.

Plastic pollution in the Himalaya came in for discussion was also discussed. SMDS X report and IMI's Policy Brief for Managing Plastic Pollution in the IHR were shared with the delegation.

MOUNTAIN MATTERS!



Vote only for those who oppose hydro power

Residents of both Kinnaur and Lahaul-Spiti districts, which have a similar topography, have been protesting against proposed hydel power projects in their respective regions.

'No means No' has been the slogan of Kinnaur residents against proposed hydel power projects here and they have stated that whoever opposes these projects, will get their votes. Few activists in the area have also sought affidavits from candidates against the construction of hydro projects.

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Record 20,000 visit Valley of Flowers

Valley of Flowers in the Garhwal Himalayas, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, saw over 20,000 visitors in five months this year, shattering previous records in the alpine valley with a diverse range of flora and fauna.

Experts, however, have said that they see it as a matter of concern rather than celebration, considering the fragile nature of the valley, and have called for a policy that puts a cap on the number of people who go to the ecologically sensitive spot.

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Must conserve Himalayas' fragile ecology for future generations - President Murmu

President Droupadi Murmu on her tour to Mizoram, said that the Himalayas, its fragile ecology and flora and fauna are "our priceless heritage and we must conserve them for generations to come".

She was on a 4 day visit to some of the North East states from November 3 - 6 during which she visited Mizoram and Sikkim.

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Members write

Shifting to Settled Agriculture: Experiences from Dzongu, North Sikkim. Dr. Sarala Khaling (ATREE) has contributed a chapter in TERI's publication- A Tradition in Transition. [READ HERE](#)

Are Eco-tourism and Ecosystem services in a symbiotic relationship? Mr. PD Rai (IMI) and Mr. RP Gurung (ECOSS) explore the meaning and challenges of ecotourism in this article for the Highland Post. [READ HERE](#)

Remembering the forgotten panda. Ms. Priyadarshinee Shrestha (WWF- India) talks about the endangered red pandas in Sikkim and the various challenges they face in her article. [READ HERE](#)

Meet A member Mr. Alemtemshi Jamir

IMI's second President, Alemtemshi Jamir from Nagaland has been with IMI since the very beginning. As an IAS officer, he served in Nagaland for 37 years retiring as Chief Secretary in 2014. Founder and Advisor to Sustainable Development Forum of Nagaland, Mr. Jamir has always spoken for the mountains and initiated programs that have not only benefited his state, Nagaland, but also enriched the IHR.



IMI ASSOCIATION (in his own words)

I was surprised to see an invitation from Dr RS.Tolia for a conference on Sustainable Mountain Development to be held in Nainital in Sept 2011. Being curious about any discussions on the mountains and also about why he had invited me, I had taken along Mr. Amba Jamir and Mr. Nalong Mize from Arunachal just to see what it was all about. Attending that conference changed my perspective on many things including the existence and development in the mountains.

I had then volunteered to hold the next conference at Kohima, however, Mr PD.Rai had already made the offer and Nagaland hosted the meet the following year. The idea of IMI was concretized further at Nagaland Summit followed by several meetings at Delhi to finalize its nature and structure. I remember meeting Mr B.K. Chaturvedi, Member of the Planning Commission who opined that it was better for IMI to be civil society driven, since membership from Governments would complicate the overall agenda which would complicate the functions of IMI.

CURRENT AFFILIATION

Mr. Jamir is currently a politician, and in this role too he continues to advocate for the mountains and its people.

IMI FUTURE WORK

All the states realise the importance of an institution like IMI and the annual summit. Some have even brought it up to a level of a festival. A big country like India has many issues and many a times, it cannot have separate policies for the mountains and the plains. On the other hand, mountains are not only remote, distant, poor and fragile but also suffer from low population leading to very poor representation. It is up to us mountain people to voice our needs and it is here that IMI comes in. A collective voice! I hope IMI grows and grows in that direction.

MOUNTAIN MOVES!



Dr. Sandeep Tambe (IFS) has joined as Chief Wildlife Warden and Additional PCCF of the Forest and Environment Department, Govt. of Sikkim. He was Professor at IIFM.