

MOUNTAINS CONNECT

June 2023

IMI NEWSLETTER



THE
Himalayan
CLEANUP
2018 - 2023



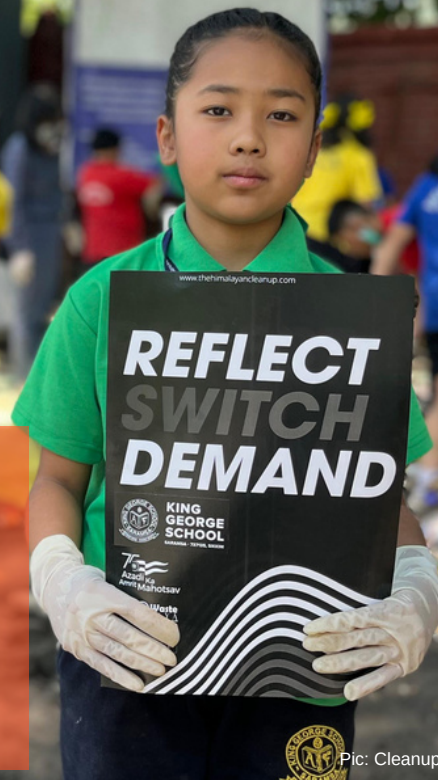
5 YEARS OF RAISING OUR VOICES AGAINST PLASTIC POLLUTION.

5 YEARS OF DEMANDING PRODUCER RESPONSIBILITY.

5 YEARS OF CLEANING UP THE MOUNTAINS.

5 YEARS OF SOLIDARITY AMONG MOUNTAIN PEOPLE.

5 YEARS OF SHOWING OUR LOVE FOR THE MOUNTAINS.



Pic: Cleanup at Saramsa by King George School, Sikkim

IMI's annual event conducted in collaboration with Zero Waste Himalaya was organised from May 26 - 30, 2023. 2023 was the fifth year of the Himalayan Cleanup (THC) which was conceived in 2018 on the World Environment Day call #BeatPlasticPollution to highlight the waste crisis in the Indian Himalayan Region and the region specific challenges of waste management. The same theme is back for WED 2023 showing how grave the crisis is, and makes THC2023 even more relevant.

THC through its waste and brand audit, contributes to the much needed change in the waste narrative, challenge the notions of a clean, pristine Himalaya and advocate for systemic changes that goes beyond the bin, broom, burning and rolling down the hill. THC data has been key in conversations at Sustainable Mountain Development Summits X, XI, and at Mountain Legislators' Meet in Darjeeling, Ladakh and Meet of Mountain States 2023.

THC is taken forward with the stewardship and volunteerism of individuals and organisations across the Himalaya. 2018 to 2023, more than 1500 organisations and institutions have been part of the cleanup mobilising over 36000 volunteers to clean up and audit over 850 sites across the Himalaya.

THC is organised with the theme of 'Reflect, Switch and Demand', and is a powerful process to motivate participants to move towards mindful and sustainable lifestyles. It creates collective spaces for individuals to demand for improved systems and products to redress plastic pollution.

THC 2023 was taken forward with online trainings on uniform global protocols to conduct waste and brand audits as well as to ensure that the cleanups are zero waste. It was recommended to choose key sites that could include sacred, biodiversity, social and tourist importance for THC.

350+

CLEANUP SITES

10

MOUNTAIN STATES

11,000+

VOLUNTEERS

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

Dear friends in our IMI Network or outside it. You are reading the June 2023 issue – the 5th edition of our newsletter. We are happy to bring this to you. Please stay updated with many of our day-to-day activities and initiatives.

We have successfully completed the Annual Indian Himalayan Clean-up – the 5th one in succession. The more policy makers we meet the more I hear them say that plastic pollution is now certainly a priority area for change. We must give up our addiction to single use plastic and contain the use of Multi-layered ones. The Extended Producer's Responsibility (EPR) needs to be enforced fully. That said, the Indian Himalayan Region does pose many challenges of collection logistics' and costs' dilemma.

I am happy to report my very successful two-day trip to Shimla, Himachal Pradesh which concluded on 14th June 2023. The prime movers for this have been Dr. Rajan Kotru, Mr. M. P. Sood, Mr. Ramesh Negi, Dr. Gopal Rawat and Mr. Sushil Ramola, immediate Past President.

We called on the Chief Minister, Shri Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu and got a favourable response from him. Besides we had very good conversations with the potential HP Chapter members. We now have a list of about 20 names. From amongst them they will choose the founding members and register the HP Chapter as a Society within July this year. That is very good news.

We also held preliminary discussions with Shri Arvind Mehta, IAS (retd) former secretary to the 15th Finance Commission. He also served as Finance Secretary in HP. He was very forthcoming, and we look forward to working with him when we start our 16th FC work. He has promised to devote one day every fortnight to IMI. First to understand us and then to contribute to our vision and mission goals.

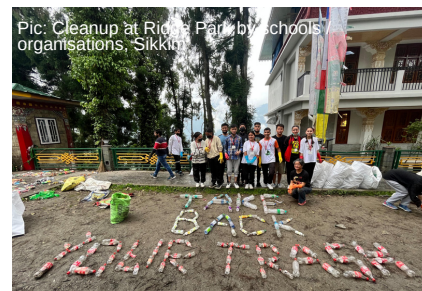
The election process to the next Governing Council of IMI, which takes over on 1st October 2023, has been initiated. Dr. Satyadeep Chettri, has been given the charge as Returning Officer. He will, ably supported by Mr. Krishna Rautela, complete the task within September.

So, happy reading and hope to hear your comments and responses to our Newsletter – Mountains CONNECT.

PD Rai
President IMI

In Sikkim, 'The Himalayan Cleanup 2023' was supported by the Education Department and Rural Development with schools of Sikkim and Gram Panchayats taking part.

350 cleanup sites with over 11000 volunteers across the IHR took forward to the THC2023 and we look forward to the waste and brand audit results that adds to the conversations around Extended Producer Responsibility in the Mountains; single use plastic ban one year anniversary and Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) negotiations to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution.



IMI UPDATES

GOVERNING COUNCIL MEETING

The 33rd Governing Council was conducted virtually on 6th May, 2023. All GC members attended with the exception of Dr. Vincent Darlong and Mr. Egam Basar who were absent with leave from Chair.

The meeting was started with a welcome address by the President, Mr. PD Rai who began with a mention about the unrest in Manipur and hoped for a peaceful resolution of the problem. He stated that in last meeting of IMI members at Delhi, there were a host of issues that continue to resonate which may hope to resolve some of them today. Ms. Priyadarshinee Shrestha, Secretary IMI presented the Action Taken Report of the last GC meeting and IMI activities of the past few months. Ms. Binita Shah, Treasurer IMI shared the accounts and expenditure details and the fund status of IMI.



IMI Membership issue was also discussed at length with an update on the suggestions provided by various state chapters. This included both individual membership and the inclusion of State Chapters representative into the general body.

The election process for the new Governing Council was also discussed and the ball has been set rolling with resolution on appointment of Mr. S Chettri and Mr. K Rautela as the returning officers.

C20 PARTICIPATION



Ms. Priyadarshinee Shrestha represented IMI and WWF- india's work at C20 summit in Gangtok on May 13 on plastic waste in the IHR. Her presentation focused on advocating for Extended Producer Responsibility in the mountains, drawing from the data generated from The Himalayan Cleanup movement.

MISSION HIMACHAL

Himachal Pradesh's vision of making Himachal Pradesh a 'Green State' resonates with the mandate set by IMI for sustainable mountain development. IMI is keen to extend its working avenues for immediate and future collaboration with GoHP.

A committee was set up to establish a HP chapter, and various discussions were held with members planning a visit to HP on 2nd week of June 2023 to meet Hon'ble Chief Minister as well as few other potential members of the state.

A document has been prepared especially focussing on few thematic areas i.e. climate change challenges, community based nature tourism as a lever for sustainability and economic development, plastic waste crisis by aligning policies practice for sustainable waste management and re-envisioning agroecology.

IMI team called on Hon'ble Chief Minister, Shri Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu on June 12, 2023. Shree Sukhu being a champion of renewable energy sets a fine example by using an electric vehicle as his main transport.



Hon'ble Chief Minister gave the team a very patient hearing to the Integrated Mountain Initiative (IMI) team. He also expressed his views on the subject of Mission Green Himachal Pradesh by 2026. The overlaps are in the policy areas of the State as well as some of the issues related to climate change. IMI's 15th Finance Commission work has found good resonance. This meeting was an introductory one and IMI had the opportunity to place the organisation's agenda in correct light.

A clear road map for intersection with the State Government has to be prepared by IMI on the request of the Hon'ble Chief Minister

PARTNER'S CORNER

SAVE THE HILLS founder and DHI, President, Praful Rao presented best practices as part of C20 meeting organised by Disaster Management Department and Amrita University in Gangtok. The best practice showcased was about Hazard Alerts a crowd sourced information dissemination platform using whatsapp.



WWF- India's Project SERVE celebrated 25 years in Darjeeling from April 21 - 23, 2023. As part of the celebration, an interactive exhibition was put up for display at Chowrasta for students that highlighted issues of biodiversity, water, community based conservation and zero waste.



Darjeeling Himalaya Initiative organised a talk series in Darjeeling from April 21 -23, 2023. The talks had member organisations of DHI delivering talks on various issues pertinent to the Darjeeling Himalaya. Mr. Praful Rao from Save the Hills, Mr. R.P. Gurung from ECOSS, Dr. Sarala Khaling from ATREE, Mr. Roshan Rai from Zero Waste Himalaya & DLR Prerna and Ms Anamika Sharma from DLR Prerna participated as speakers.

GB Pant's Ladakh Regional Centre of the Institute in Ladakh organised a celebration of International Day for Biological Diversity 2023 jointly with Municipal Committee Leh (MCL). The programme was chaired by Dr. Ishey Namgyal, President of Municipal Committee Leh (MCL).



ATREE organised Bioblitz-CityNatureChallenge on 29 - 30 April in which young nature enthusiasts documented the biodiversity around two mountain cities - Darjeeling and Gangtok. Students from St. Teresa's School, St. Robert's School, Government College, St. Joseph's College (Darjeeling) and Botany / Zoology Dept of Sikkim University, SRM University and NBBB College (Gangtok) participated.



DLR Prerna anchored the Maasika Mahotsav from 21 - 28 May, 2023 to break the silence on periods and switch to sustainability. Conversations on menstrual health and hygiene, biology, busting silence and myths and sustainable products were taken forward in 5 schools, 1 college and 12 CSOs in Darjeeling. The last day was observed in Chowrasta as a public event with artists and poets performing their pieces on menstrual health.

MOUNTAIN MATTERS!

Alligator gar fish found in Dal lake raises concerns



The discovery of an alligator gar fish in Jammu and Kashmir's Dal lake has raised concerns as it could pose a threat to the native fish species. The alligator gar is an alien fish species (species which occurs outside of its natural habitat), native to North America.

While the alligator gar's distribution and its exact impact on the Dal lake biodiversity is not yet established, its potential presence is a cause of concern as the species is primarily carnivorous and can feed on native fish.

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Mizoram's Chite Lui River is crying for help



Chite Lui River, that holds great sentimental value for local people, is in danger as it turns into a dumping ground in Aizawl. Popular Mizo poet Rokunga wrote verses about Chite Lui. Stories and songs about the river are popular in Mizoram and even among the Mizo tribes in Myanmar.

Unplanned urbanisation and encroachments and business establishments situated close to the river for destroying it. Eateries and garage owners who run their shops a few metres from the river empty their used water into the water body, destroying its aquatic life.

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Return of wild boars in Kashmir threatens the hangul habitat & crops



Wild boars (introduced in 1840s) resurfaced in Kashmir after 30 years, in 2013, and their number has been growing ever since, causing concern among the local residents and wildlife experts. The fast-breeding boars have been sighted in North Kashmir's Uri, Limber, Lachipora, and Balwar.

Increasing temperatures is cited as one of the reasons for the resurgence of wild boars, as they do not sustain in the cold weather that is typical of the region.

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Publications from International Year of the Mountains, 2022



Mountain Partnership Publications on the occasion of International Year of the Mountains 2022

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MEET A MEMBER DR. SATYADEEP CHETTRI

Dr. Satyadeep S. Chhetri is a Associate Professor of Chemistry at NBB Government College, Tadong and Life Member of IMI. He is also an author of two books - 'Gorkhaland Diaries' and 'Sikkim: from Autocracy to Half Democracy' which has been widely appreciated by the readers.



IMI ASSOCIATION

Dr. Chettri has been associated with IMI right from its formative days in 2012. Presently he is a Life Member of this organization in individual capacity from the Sikkim Chapter. He was one of the core members in the organizing committee of SMDS II in Gangtok, Sikkim. He has also served as returning officer for conducting IMI elections, a role he is currently undertaking as well.

CURRENT AFFILIATION

Presently Dr. Chettri is an Associate Professor in Chemistry at Sikkim's oldest and largest college in Gangtok. He also serves in the Governing Body of ECOSS as member. His interests are varied right from Environment and Conservation to Education to History to Literature to Public policy.

In recent years he has authored two books Gorkhaland Diaries (fiction, 2022) and Sikkim: from Autocracy to Half democracy (Non-Fiction 2023) which have done well.

CHALLENGES

The Western and Eastern Himalaya have varied issues pertaining to land rights and access, tribalism, and then the divide being augmented by more academicians and institutions in the western himalayan region. The challenge is the acceptance of these varied social and physical realities to build a strong and resilient organization based on mutual trust as a strong national body for the benefit of the entire Himalayan region.

FUTURE PLANS

It is interesting to see how IMI has slowly yet steadily grown over the years. For me IMI was and is still an organization which would bind all sections of people across the Himalayan region and capture the voices in a structured manner so that it could be placed at various forums for any social and economic development of the region. IMI should be beyond the realm of projects, yet should be well connected to every section of elected bodies, academia, governmental and non-governmental organizations.

What we have to understand is that there is not a single organization that binds people across the Indian Himalayan region, yet our problems are the same and so are our solutions. Sometimes these solutions run across state and international boundaries. I feel that IMI can be an organization to facilitate such discussions in order to provide equitable solutions for these problems. All said and done I see IMI as a strong voice of the Himalayan people in the next 10 years.