

# MOUNTAINS CONNECT

May 2024

IMI NEWSLETTER

## MEET OF THE MOUNTAIN STATES 2024



### THEMATIC SESSIONS

- Geo-Hydrology of the Himalaya and Disasters
- Linkage between Himalayan geology, river system disaster and disaster response
- Management of Water in IHR, Evidence based DRR and Way Forward

11th Meet of the Mountain States (MoMS) was organized by Integrated Mountain Initiative on March 22nd, 2024 coinciding with World Water Day on the theme of "Water Resources in the Himalayas – Disaster Resilience and Reduction". MoMS is an annual event of IMI that brings together policymakers, elected representatives, partners of IMI, and other relevant agencies to jointly work on priority actions related to key mountain issues. The Chief Guest for the inaugural session focusing on Geo Hydrology of the Himalayas and Disasters was Smt. Rita Khanduri, Hon'ble Speaker of Uttarakhand.

In his opening address, Mr. Ramesh Negi, President IMI, outlined the objectives of MoMS 2024 to inform policymakers about the need for greater mountain sensitivity of policies on disaster and the allocation of appropriate financial resources to mitigate the collateral and multi-sectoral long-term damage.

Mr. Roshan Rai, Secretary IMI set the context for the meet, highlighting how disasters impact people in the mountains, with very little national focus. This year, the meet was supported by the Govt of Arunachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand Council for Science and Technology (UCOST) and Sustainable Development Forum of Uttarakhand (SDFU).

### KEY NOTE ADDRESS

The keynote address was delivered by Padmashree Dr. Eklabya Sharma who is currently the Strategic Advisor & Distinguished Fellow, ATREE. He highlighted how mountains face the brunt of climate change, and with a 1.5 degree C rise in temperature, Himalayan glaciers would lose 1/3rd of their volume by 2100. Evidence of this was also being witnessed by mountain states, he warned, remembering the recent Himachal and Sikkim and Darjeeling Kalimpong Disasters.

Speaking on solutions, Dr. Sharma recommended the need for high altitude monitoring, early warning systems for disasters, river basin planning with zonal action, and an integrated approach for sustainability.

In her address, Smt. Khanduri, Chief Guest spoke on the urgent need to bridge research with policy and practice, and there was a need to fall back on good traditional practices with strong community engagement. She highlighted that tourism pressures were also having a major impact in the Himalayas, and talked about the issue of limiting numbers in ecologically fragile areas. Himalayan communities were important stakeholders, and must be included in the policy spaces, she stated

## FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

Greetings from IMI,  
Recalling the past year with devastating disasters across the Himalaya, IMI focussed the Meet of the Mountain States on 22 March 2024 on 'Water Resources in the Himalaya: Disaster Resilience and Reduction'.

2023 had devastating disasters in Himachal, Uttarakhand, Sikkim and West Bengal and many unaccounted ones across the Indian Himalayan Region that did not get due attention at the national level. This lack of adequate acknowledgement of Himalayan disasters in the context of increasing disaster impacts and frequencies in the Himalaya is a huge challenge to the wellbeing of the people of the mountains. For these reasons we wanted to bring the discussion on water and disasters to Delhi so that our voices are heard and acknowledged.

MoMS2024 was held appropriately on World Water Day with the keynote address by Padmashri Dr. Eklabya Sharma, a mountain man and friend of IMI.

Climate change impacts, development trajectories and the mountain people, and its criticality is being highlighted in Ladakh. These concerns that are central to the people's movement in Ladakh are close to the vision and objectives of IMI. I was invited by NewsNine to an interview where I highlighted the need for dialogue among all stakeholders at the earliest for amicable solutions.

Our MoU with National Institute of Urban Affairs has also borne fruit with IMI playing a major role in Parvat Manthan - Improving WASH Service Delivery in the Indian Himalayan Region.

Our challenges are many yet with collective efforts and working with like minded people and organizations we are confident of steady progress towards our collective goals.

Ramesh Negi,  
President IMI



Technical session I on "Linkage between Himalayan geology, river system disaster and disaster response" was chaired by Dr Durgesh Pant, DG - UCOST. In his address, he highlighted the Dehradun Declaration on Disasters coming out of the World Congress on Disasters organised in Dehradun in 2023.

Dr. Ashim Sattar- IIT Bhubaneswar shared his research experience from Sikkim of monitoring the glacial lakes. Dr. Smriti Basnett from Divecha Center for Climate Change, and Mr. Stanzin Chosphele, Ex-councilor from Ladakh Hill Council spoke the various challenges.

The second session that focused on evidence based DRR and way forward was chaired by Mr. Arvind Mehta, Ex Member Secretary - 15th Finance Commission. Panelists in this session highlighted the need to embed disaster risk reduction in planning processes. Mr. Anil Raj Rai, Secretary- Land Revenue and Disaster Management Department, Sikkim Government, Mr. PK Joshi from JNU and Dr. Nanda Kishore from ICIMOD were part of the session.

Presenting the summary of the meet, Mr. Sushil Ramola spoke on the need for having focused actions through common platforms engaging all stakeholders and investing in capacity building. He emphasised also on acknowledging the socio ecological fragility of the mountains that should reflect in devolution of funds in the 16th FC to mountain states.

In his remarks, Mr. Mehta spoke on the importance of having a river basin approach, with stringent mitigation measures with community participation put in place in all development interventions.

Elected representatives of the Indian Himalayan Region (IHR), key policymakers, government department representatives, academia, researchers, funding agencies and IMI members from the mountain states participated in the workshop. A photography exhibition on the recent Teesta Disaster was also put up on the sidelines of the meeting.

## IMI UPDATES

### President, IMI interview with News9 Live

President, IMI, Mr. Ramesh Negi gave an interview on the issues that Ladakh currently faces and the solutions thereof on News9 Live. In this interview, he stressed on the role of government, researchers, scientist and the local communities. He highlighted the vulnerability of the Himalayan region that was prone to disasters, be it from cloud bursts, glacial lake outbursts, mentioning that developmental projects needed to be more sensitive. Watch [here](#)





## IMI and Zero Waste Himalaya's Himalayan Cleanup contributes to global brand audit

The report 'Branded' was released by Break Free From Plastic highlighting the top global plastic polluters. The collective effort involved 8,804 volunteers across 41 countries, that meticulously cataloged 537,719 pieces of plastic waste; with items such as beverage bottles, food wrappers, and containers dominating the list of pollutants. The efforts of IMI and ZWH came in second in the world, next to Malawi.

Coca-Cola Company was the world's leading plastic polluter, marking its products as the most prevalent in global plastic waste, followed by Nestlé, Unilever, and PepsiCo. Food packaging with items such as beverage bottles, food wrappers, and containers dominating the list of pollutants.



The 5 years audit data was also used to determine that 56 companies were responsible for more than 50 percent of branded plastic waste globally. The researchers also found that there was a direct relationship between a company's production of plastic and the amount of branded plastic waste found in the environment.

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## Partner's Corner

On 27th March, 2024, products (mainly aromatic oils and spices) manufactured by MIMDI was launched at the North East Startup and Entrepreneurs Conclave at Guwahati on the 27th March, 24 by the Director General, NECTAR, DST, Govt. of India in the presence of President, Indian National Science Academy, Chairman, National Innovation Foundation and Professors from IIT, KGP, Kanpur & Guwahati. It drew appreciation from the dignitaries.



Thaur 'The Doon Haat' organic market was inaugurated on March 9, 2024 by Honorable Minister Sri Ganesh Joshi, Minister of Agriculture, Rural Development. The market is established by Sarg Vikas Samiti as a unique initiative dedicated to benefiting farmers, artisans, consumers, and tourists. This vibrant market serves as a showcase for the organic richness of the state, featuring a diverse array of products including organic millets, pulses, rice, vegetables, honey, soap, and clothing, to name a few.



## NIUA MOU with lighthouse municipalities

As a follow up to the Parvat Manthan workshop that got together elected representatives of urban local bodies in Delhi in January 2024, National Institute of Urban Affairs has identified 3 municipalities to work with in the future - Shimla (Himachal Pradesh), Nainital (Uttarakhand) and Darjeeling (West Bengal).

The MOU with Darjeeling Municipality for specific collaborative action was signed on March 27, 2024 between Director, NIUA and Chair, Darjeeling Municipality in the presence of the Principal Secretary of Gorkhaland Territorial Administration.



## IMI members planning meeting for The Himalayan Cleanup 2024

A meeting to discuss The Himalayan Cleanup 2024 was organised on April 17, 2024. IMI members from Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Darjeeling, Meghalaya, Tripura, Sikkim and Delhi were present for the meeting that discussed -

- The background of THC and the need for more state chapter engagement, as the event was more Sikkim - Darjeeling centric.
- Reaching out to Swachh Bharat Missions and Education Departments in every state by State Chapters
- The dates for THC 2024 to be made flexible to accommodate the election dates.

## Earth Day talk by DHI

The theme of Earth Day, April 22 this year was Planet Vs Plastics. Darjeeling Himalaya Initiative held an informative talk show on the day with a popular media channel in KTV with key members, Ms. Priya Shrestha and Mr. Roshan Rai, and Mr. Utsow Pradhan of TIEEDI.



The talk threw light on the extended producer responsibility and the need for embracing local food cultures as two key interventions to beat plastic pollution.

[WATCH HERE](#)

# MOUNTAIN MATTERS!



## HP High court Landmark order on Waste Management

In a landmark decision that underscores the judiciary's commitment to environmental sustainability, the High Court of Himachal Pradesh through Hon'ble Justice Tarlok Singh Chauhan, has issued a comprehensive order, setting a new precedent for waste management and environmental protection in the state.

The order, stemming from the case "Suleman vs. Union of India," encompasses a wide array of directives aimed at enhancing waste management practices, promoting sustainable environmental policies, and ensuring strict compliance with environmental laws. IMI has also been named as the main organisation to conduct brand audit in the state.

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## SC notice to Mizoram Government & NHIDCL for violation

The Supreme Court issued notices to Mizoram Government and the NHIDCL for sanctioning developmental work within the forest areas of riverine reserved forests and road side reserved forests of Mizoram without obtaining mandatory approvals from the Forest Department.

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## Experts warn of serious damage as loo blows in north Bengal

For the first time perhaps in the history of north Bengal, hot winds, a phenomenon in the northern plains of India, have been sweeping the region since the past two weeks.

As these winds have dangerous and potentially fatal effects on vegetation, humans and animals, both environmental and medical experts are enormously concerned about them.

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## Members' corner

India's Vision 2047 and Himalayan Vortex  
GC Member, Dr. Rajan Kotru has written on the country's vision for 2047 with a reflection on the Himalayan Challenges.  
[READ HERE](#)

Urgent steps needed to save towns from turning into trash hills  
Mr. Tikender Panwar writes about the ticking of the waste clock, and the need to address the mounting waste crisis and prevent towns from becoming overwhelmed by trash.  
[READ HERE](#)

Unpackaging Gangtok's waste crisis  
Ms. Priyadarshinee Shrestha writes about a short case study of the Guru Lhakhang monastery's initiative to reduce plastic waste.  
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## Meet A member Ms. Binita Shah

Ms. Binita Shah is currently the Treasurer of IMI and she is serving her second tenure in this position. She is also the Secretary of the State Chapter of Uttarakhand - the Sustainable Development Forum of Uttarakhand. She is known for her pathbreaking work in Organic Agriculture Adoption among small farmers and innovative marketing which was demonstrated in UOCB 2003-2015.



### IMI ASSOCIATION (in her own words)

My association with IMI was through Dr. RS Tolia ( former CS Uttarakhand, CIC Uttarakhand & Founder IMI). I was in the Uttarakhand Organic Commodity Board (UOCB) then and Dr Tolia shared his idea of IMI, and my organization became a life member of IMI. I was not too active in IMI until 2015, and my association with IMI was to participate in the different conferences when invited. In August 2016, when the Sustainable development Forum of Uttaranchal (SDFU) became a state chapter of IMI, I was asked to be the Secretary, overtime I became more involved in the organisation.

### CURRENT AFFILIATION

Ms. Shah is primarily an organic farmer and has domain expertise in Biodynamic Agriculture. She leads two organizations - SARG India, a non profit organization towards the adoption of Organic Agriculture in India and SUPA Biotech Pvt. Ltd that makes agriculture inputs. It also has a food division with organic food products under the brand name HOI . She is also a board member of Nainital Bank, a small subsidiary of BoB.

### CHALLENGES

The all-out commercialization of mountain tourism without any regulations is the biggest challenge for the Indian Himalayan Region currently. Vested interests and short-term policies are not allowing the stakeholders to think for the mountains, and that is where the challenge lies. From all institutions, forums, networks, etc. we have to fight this as long as this takes.

### IMI FUTURE WORK

IMI is targeting to strengthen its networks, create a robust list of donors and partners and bring about impact causing policy change for the Indian Himalayan Region. On the personal front, her focus for the next decade will be centered around capacity building of the training Center, Creating Markets for Organic produce & creating self-run institutions.

Impact of the Oct 2023 Teesta Valley GLOF on road communications - the continuing nightmare at Pedong and Toong

Mr. Praful Rao, President DHI and SavetheHills Founder continues to highlight the GLOF Teesta disaster of October that affected Sikkim and Kalimpong on his blog.

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