



INSIGHTS REPORT

THE FUTURE OF THE THIRD POLE AND HIMSAGAR (EASTERN HIMALAYA)

12TH EASTERN HIMALAYAN NATURENOMICS™ FORUM

— 26th & 27th November, 2024 —
Guwahati, Assam, India





16 Countries

1000 Youth

100 Speakers

800 Attendees

Insights for Transformative Action

Environmental Risks and Economic Resilience



1. The risks of climatic shifts impact every sector and affect the real economy. Any economic plan and action must account for these risks.
2. Environmental and social due diligence must be central to any investments to ensure sustainability and resilience.

Collaboration and Systemic Action



1. Collaboration is critical among all stakeholders, especially between corporates, governments, and communities, to address biodiversity challenges.
2. Action must occur at a landscape level, engaging multiple stakeholders and levers of change to drive systemic adoption of better practices.

Decolonising Knowledge Systems



1. Indigenous knowledge holds significant experiential value, rooted in decades and centuries of engagement with complex socio-ecological realities.
2. There is a need to integrate indigenous knowledge into policy design by incorporating training modules in civil service curricula, fostering a cooperative approach with communities.
3. Integration of training modules on indigenous knowledge into civil service curricula is key to fostering a cooperative approach with communities.

Ecosystem-Based Carbon Financing



1. An ecosystem perspective on carbon financing is essential, whether for REDD+ projects on the ground or for decarbonising grids and transportation systems.

Contextualised Forest Policies for the North East



1. Forests should be viewed as food systems, recognising the centrality of commons-based governance and land use in the North East.
2. Building on commonalities and leveraging existing ministries dedicated to the North East is crucial for creating effective forest policies.

Landscape Approach to Asian Elephant Conservation



1. A landscape approach to Asian Elephant conservation is necessary, considering the interlocking factors driving elephant behavioral change, including human behavior and responses.
2. Habitat restoration should prioritize traditional elephant fruit foods rather than crops like rice or bananas.

LEARNINGS FOR THE THIRD POLE AND EASTERN HIMALAYA

1. The unique ecological and cultural significance of the Third Pole and the Eastern Himalayas requires an integrated approach to conservation and development.
2. Efforts must prioritize the preservation of fragile ecosystems while empowering local communities through sustainable livelihoods and governance rooted in traditional knowledge.
3. Addressing cross-border environmental challenges in the Third Pole necessitates regional cooperation and shared knowledge frameworks.
4. Climate resilience in the Eastern Himalayan region depends on the restoration of degraded landscapes and sustainable management of water resources, considering the interdependencies of communities and ecosystems.
5. Raising awareness through building the right partnerships is essential to tackle the challenges of the Third Pole and Eastern Himalaya effectively. Partnerships across corporates, governments, and civil society can mobilize resources, foster innovation, and implement practical solutions.
6. Serious challenges include escalating human-wildlife conflict, rapid deforestation, melting glaciers, and unregulated urbanization, which threaten both biodiversity and the livelihoods of local communities. These require urgent multi-stakeholder interventions and long-term policy commitments.

HIGHLIGHTS



HIGHLIGHTS



Inaugural Leadership Address : Chanakya Chaudhary, Vice President -Corporate Services, Tata Steel

Link : <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hDzGjdgYwiw>



Rabindranath Barthakur Memorial Lecture : Dr Praveer Sinha, CEO and MD, Tata Power

Link : <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zggDmmbtRJI>

Guiding Leadership Remarks : Dia Mirza, UN Environment Goodwill Ambassador

Link : <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zggDmmbtRJI>



Leadership Address : Kaizad M. Bharucha, Deputy Managing Director, HDFC Bank, India

Link : <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-CMusGAFkNw>

Valedictory Speech : Ambassador Eric Garcetti, Ambassador of the United States of America to India

Link : <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NFD0azlf-Cc>



Leadership Address: Rohit Jawa, Managing Director and CEO, Hindustan Unilever Limited

Link : <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VSPiBykHVpg>



Leadership Address : Lord Nicholas Stern, London School of Economics

Link : <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8AymQ3LjA2o>



Leadership Address : Runa Khan, Founder, Friendship NGO, Bangladesh

Link : <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=osv8nHnwYaQ>



Valuation of Nature: Jessica Cheam, Founder, Eco Business, Singapore

Link : <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6Pnw9HPp414>



Leadership Address : Sourav Roy, CEO, Tata Steel Foundation, India

Link : <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D-gGBm5CD0w>



Concluding Remarks: Ranjit Barthakur, Founder Forester, Balipara Foundation

Link : <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bx000LmZlms>




Charting The Future Of The Third Pole & The Eastern Himalaya
At The
12th Eastern Himalayan Naturenomics™ Forum 2024


Balipara Foundation presented the 12th edition of the annual Eastern Himalayan Naturenomics™ Forum in Guwahati, with conversations on **The Future of the Third Pole & the Eastern Himalaya** exploring the need for urgent action on climate and action in the Third Pole for the future of lives and livelihoods across the Eastern Himalaya. Bringing together 100 leaders from 15 countries, discussions explored the vital global role the Third Pole plays in regulating climate systems and watersheds for billions across South and Southeast Asia, through its glaciers.

With representatives from leading global and national corporates, experts from academia, the conservation and development sectors and policymakers, the Forum hosted two days of conversation on critical issues in sustainability and environment for the Eastern Himalaya. Insights from leading voices such as Kaizad Bharucha, Deputy Managing Director – HDFC, Chanakya Chaudhury, VP – Corporate Services at Tata Steel and Director at Tata Steel Foundation, HRH Queen Diambi Kabatusuila of the Bakwa Luntu tribe in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Praveer Sinha, MD & CEO – Tata Power, Dr. Vibha Dhawan, Director General – The Energy & Resources Institute, Dr. Lobsang Sangay, Senior Visiting Fellow – Harvard Law School, Sourav Roy, CEO-Tata Steel Foundation, Spencer Low, Regional Sustainability Head – Google Asia Pacific steered a pathway towards building a regenerative economy that protect the fragile ecosystems of the Third Pole.

Speaking on the need to decolonise our thinking about solutions to the biodiversity and climate crisis, and to look home in the global south for answers, Queen Diambi Kabatusuila said, “We have to come together to start redefining the terms of our engagement. We have to redefine what we want in terms of corrective measures.”

“We need to make use of traditional knowledge from local communities who know their challenges and realities much better than a policy maker living in a city. Organisations need to be cognizant of corporates and communities working hand in glove rather than in conflict with each others best interest,” said Chanakya Chaudhury, VP of Corporate Services at Tata Steel and Director of the Tata Steel Foundation.

A key focus of the forum was the need for driving valuation of ecosystems in the Eastern Himalayan region, for both harnessing business investments in the environment and for putting externalised environmental costs on accounts to drive better decision-making for ecosystems both by businesses and policymakers. In a panel on leveraging natural capital accounting and valuation methodologies to strengthen business’ ESG commitments, Abhejit Agarwal, Head – Sustainability & CSR at Axis Bank Limited said, “Collaboration is such an important aspect in everything that we are doing - stakeholders don't seem to realise that everything is interconnected especially biodiversity and its role on corporates.”



In-depth panels explored the pathway to catalysing the renewables transition, managing watersheds and water security, building sustainable livelihoods, managing agricultural lands sustainably in the Eastern Himalaya, eliminating plastic waste in rural areas and protecting Asian Elephants at a landscape level.

Speaking on the issue of Asian Elephant conservation in the North East, Smt. Pasupuleti Monica Kishore, DFO at the Guwahati Wildlife Division said, “The issue is not the elephants, it is the people. It is us who have failed in protecting them. The narrative needs a change - it is not about creating habitat for elephants, but about protecting the ecosystem.”

“We should stop depending on government to government collaboration, rather focus on the other dimensions, i.e. exchanges and collaborations to and from science to science, business to business and community to community,” said Dr. Eklabya Sharma, Strategic Advisor and Senior Fellow at the Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology & Environment (ATREE) in a panel discussing issues on watershed management.

The 12th edition of the Eastern Himalayan Naturenomics™ Forum concluded with the Balipara Foundation Awards on 27th November, celebrating the success stories of 14 community leaders, scientists and conservationists in protecting and restoring the biocultural heritage of the Eastern

Himalaya, from Loktak Lake, Manipur and Deepor Beel, Assam, to national parks in Bhutan and the Sundarbans in the presence of Ambassador Eric Garcetti, US Ambassador to India, Ravi Kota, Chief Secretary of Assam, Harmeet Singh, IPS, Director General Civil Defence and Commandant General of Home Guards, Govt. of Assam. The critical work of these earth heroes was celebrated by actress & media leader Kim Sharma. The Awards programme also celebrated 50 years of The Energy and Resources Institute’s critical and forward-looking work on science, research and sustainable development in both India and around the world.

“Out of 365 days last year, India had 300 days of extreme weather conditions – whether heat in the north, or whether extreme rains in the South. It is becoming extremely difficult for humans to live – and also other life on this planet, including organisms whose role in our survival we don’t fully understand as yet. We need to use science to ensure we protect our biodiversity and that is why we’re all gathered here together,” said Praveer Sinha, MD & CEO of Tata Power, celebrating the extraordinary achievements of these grassroots conservationists.

The 13th edition of the Eastern Himalayan Naturenomics™ Forum will return next year on 11th - 12th December 2025 in Guwahati, Assam.



MAXIMIZING IMPACT THROUGH NATURENOMICS™

12th Eastern Himalayan Naturenomics™ Forum

In collaboration with
Gauhati University



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