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India turns to Norway's water initiatives



Author
EMILY CHANTIRI | 16/10/19

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India's Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, is leading his country through sustainability and water conservation changes.

Last year, during his customary radio address on Indian radio station Mann Ki Baat, Prime Minister Modi called upon his people to make conservation of water a collective responsibility.

"We often hear that there might be wars due to scarcity of water in [the] future," he said. "Therefore, we must assume our responsibility to conserve water and we must ensure conservation of water in every possible manner."

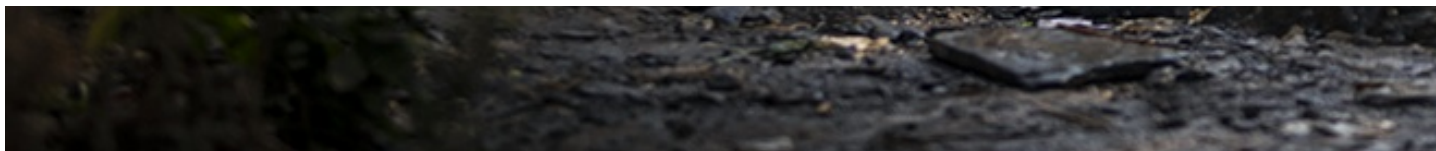
His efforts towards conservation saw him honoured (<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/news/pm-modi-gets-uns-champions-of-the-earth-award/article25051867.ece>), with the United Nations' Champions of the Earth' award in October 2018.

During his acceptance speech, Modi dedicated the award to the invisible faces of India who contribute to conservation of nature. He said climate and calamity are directly linked to culture.

"It will be difficult to avoid calamity as long as concerns for the climate do not become part of the local culture."

He said the honour belonged to tribal forest dwellers who play an important role in forest conservation, to the fishermen who abstain from fishing during the breeding season and to the farmers who are dependent on the seasonal weather cycle for their livelihood.





Sustainable water management

In early 2019, the Norwegian Prime Minister Erna Solberg visited Delhi. Her visit marked the beginning of a collaboration of water initiatives between both the two countries.

During her two-day stay, the Norwegian Prime Minister inaugurated the new green compound at the Royal Norwegian Embassy in Delhi. The embassy has obtained a Green Rating for Integrated Habitat (<https://www.grihaindia.org/about-griha>), by the Government of India.

The building has been adapted to the local climate, taking into consideration Indian climatic concerns. The main challenges were to ensure sustainable water management and energy efficiency. The compound has wells constructed for rainwater harvesting and geothermal wells, which are used for cooling by circulating water from 30 wells sunk 100 metres into the earth. Solar panels are used for heating. The panels produce 200 kWh energy per day, which is equivalent to powering a 40w bulb for almost seven months or a 3W LED for around seven years.

At the time, Prime Minister Solberg said: "The inauguration today marks the beginning of a new era of cooperation between our two countries. As a green embassy, I hope it can serve as an inspiration for our shared efforts to achieve the green transition and the Sustainable Development Goals. I look forward to seeing our partnership bear more fruits, in business, politics and development".

Marine conservation

Another joint water initiative between the two countries is the India-Norway Marine Pollution Initiative (<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/india-norway-sign-first-joint-initiative-to-combat-marine-pollution/articleshow/67948354.cms>), which aims to combat marine pollution, one of the fastest growing environmental concerns.

On the world scale, Norway is seen as a leader in global thinking and policy formulation on water and ocean management. Under the partnership, Norway and India will share experiences and competence, and collaborate on efforts to develop clean and healthy oceans, sustainable use of ocean resources and growth in the blue economy (<https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/infographic/2017/06/06/blue-economy>).

Through a range of implementing partners, the Initiative will seek to support local governments in implementing sustainable waste management practices and develop systems for collecting and analysing information about sources and scope of marine pollution.

The Initiative will also work towards beach clean-up efforts, awareness raising campaigns and pilot a project that uses plastic waste as a fuel substitution for coal in cement production.

About the author: Emily Chantiri writes as a correspondent for the International WaterCentre, charged with exploring water challenges and the ways these challenges are managed around the world.

Images: Rhett Parker and Dylan Crawford.

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