

## **ICC's 18th Environment Partnership Summit Focuses on Circular Economy for Sustainable Growth**

*Leading voices from government, business and diplomacy converge in Kolkata to shape the future of green technologies and circular economy strategies*

**Kolkata, 7th January 2025:** Indian Chamber of Commerce (ICC) organised its 18th Environment Partnership Summit, focusing on the theme of Circular Economy for Sustainable Development. The summit featured insightful discussions on key topics such as the Policy & Implementation of Circular Economy, Financing the Future and Green Technologies for Sustainable Solution. The session witnessed valuable insights and was graced by notable speakers, including Dr Shashi Panja, Hon'ble Minister-In-Charge, Department of Industry, Commerce & Enterprises & Department of Women and Child Development and Social Welfare, Government of West Bengal; Mr Abhinav Chandra, IAS, Secretary, Environment Department, Government of West Bengal & Director, IESWM; Ms Roshni Sen, IAS, Additional Chief Secretary, Environment Department, Government of West Bengal; H.E. Barbara Voss, German Consul-General in Kolkata; Mr Sanjay Budhia, Past President, Indian Chamber of Commerce & Managing Director, Patton; Dr Rajeev Singh, Director General, Indian Chamber of Commerce; and Mr Alope Mookherjea, Chairman, Jury Board, ICC Environment Excellence Award.

Highlighting the government's initiatives for sustainable development, circular economy and environmental policies in West Bengal, **Dr Shashi Panja, Hon'ble Minister-In-Charge, Department of Industry, Commerce & Enterprises & Department of Women and Child Development and Social Welfare, Government of West Bengal**, said, "West Bengal is at the forefront of environmental initiatives, guided by a vision for sustainable development. Our Honorable Chief Minister has championed policies to address climate challenges, including the Green Hydrogen Policy and the New & Renewable Energy Manufacturing Promotion Policy, launched during the Bengal Global Business Summit (BGBS) 2023. These policies aim to establish West Bengal as a hub for green energy, offering incentives such as waivers on land conversion fees, stamp duty, and electricity duties to promote decarbonization and clean energy projects. We are also making strides in the electric vehicle (EV) market, ewaste management, and the development of green buildings. A notable milestone is the inauguration of India's largest integrated bottletobottle recycling plant by Magpet Polymers in Kharagpur, enhancing our local recycling capacity. Additionally, initiatives in the weaving industry aim to integrate circular economy practices, ensuring waste from textile activities is recycled and reused effectively. Our state's mangroves, particularly in the Sundarbans, serve as a natural defense against cyclones and climate challenges. Recognizing their critical role, the government has undertaken extensive plantation drives to restore these vital ecosystems. Despite our efforts, India's rank in the 2024 Environmental Performance Index is a reminder that we must collectively do more. Data and innovationdriven approaches can help us improve outcomes and achieve our sustainability goals. West Bengal's industries, including secondary steel manufacturing, are aligning with global decarbonization goals. Our strategy involves seamless integration of green hydrogen into carbonintensive sectors and leveraging urbanization to meet rising energy demands sustainably."

Addressing on sustainability and its deep connection with the economy, **Abhinav Chandra, IAS, Secretary, Environment Department, Government of West Bengal & Director, IESWM**, said, "Sustainability and the economy share a symbiotic relationship, grounded in the delicate balance between population and resources. The top 10 entrepreneurs control more assets than the GDP of the 50 last countries combined, according to UNDP statistics. Last year, \$12 billion was spent on pet food and \$15 billion on cosmetics worldwide, while the annual budget required to feed a country like

Ethiopia is merely \$4.2 billion. These stark contrasts call for a rethinking of our priorities and a shift towards sustainable practices. Our planet, often called the 'water planet,' paradoxically has just 1% of its water available as fresh, accessible resources with the rest being saline, locked in glaciers or inaccessible. Overuse, contamination and mismanagement only worsen this critical situation. The path to sustainability begins with six R's: Regulation, Reduce, Repair, Reuse, Recycle and Regenerate. Effective governance and social accountability are vital to prevent resource overutilisation and waste. Minimalism fosters discipline, as seen in semi-arid regions like Maharashtra, where water usage is cautious, unlike resource-abundant areas such as parts of West Bengal, where overuse often leads to waterborne diseases. Repairing resources extends their lifecycle, while reusing and recycling ensure sustainability. Regeneration, such as creating systems that renew resources, is equally crucial. For instance, in Kolkata, a pilot project addressed single-use plastic waste by repurposing shredded plastic bags into pillows for bus drivers, transforming waste into value. Learning from the next generation, sustainability principles was four C's such as creating with purpose, collaborating for shared goals, choosing resources wisely, and cherishing what we create serve as guiding lights. To build a sustainable and inclusive future, collaboration—whether G2B (Government to Business), B2C (Business to Consumer), B2G (Business to Government), or G2C (Government to Consumer)—is key."

**Ms Roshni Sen, IAS, Additional Chief Secretary, Environment Department, Government of West Bengal,** said, "For decades, our global economy has adhered to a linear 'take-make-dispose' model, resulting in resource depletion, overflowing landfills and widespread pollution. Transitioning to a circular economy offers a transformative solution—eliminating waste by emphasising reuse, recycling and resource efficiency. This approach aligns economic growth with environmental stewardship, significantly reducing carbon emissions and preserving ecosystems. India is actively driving this change by improving recycling technologies, establishing robust waste management systems and fostering transparent, traceable value chains. Key focus areas include solid waste, plastics, e-waste, hazardous waste and renewable resources like biomass pellets. West Bengal, under the visionary leadership of Hon'ble Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, has emerged as a leader in sustainable practices. Kolkata's Dhapa landfill has been reimaged into a waste-to-energy project and the New Town Kolkata Development Authority now processes 5 tons of organic waste daily to generate electricity for streetlights. Biomass gasifier plants in the Sundarbans provide sustainable energy solutions to remote areas, while initiatives like post-harvest machinery distribution by the Department of Agriculture convert crop residues into biofuel. Gangasagar Mela has been declared plastic-free and the state is equipping 345 blocks with Plastic Waste Management Units by March 2025. Single-use plastics are banned in heritage and tourist areas, and repurposed plastics are being used to construct roads. Community-led initiatives, such as women self-help groups producing eco-friendly sal-leaf plates and bowls, exemplify how sustainability can empower livelihoods. Additionally, industrial practices like waste heat recovery systems in steel plants and the use of biomass pellets in thermal power plants are significantly reducing pollution. Strengthening the circular economy presents immense opportunities—not only for job creation and economic resilience but also for reducing dependency on imports. By transforming waste into valuable resources and adopting sustainable practices, we can address pressing environmental challenges and ensure long-term prosperity."

**H.E. Barbara Voss, German Consul-General in Kolkata,** said, "Germany has long been committed to environmental protection and is at the forefront of combating waste. Notable examples include the introduction of reusable bottles and the widespread separation of household garbage to enable the efficient reuse of plastic, paper and organic waste. However, the battle to keep our planet clean and livable for future generations will not be won solely in Germany, whose declining population will eventually reduce environmental strain. Instead, it will be countries like India, with its high

population density, that will bear the brunt of the challenges. India, whose environmental consciousness is still in its early stages, faces unique challenges and responsibilities. The contributions of pioneers like those present today are invaluable as unpredictable extreme weather events due to climate change become more frequent. The implementation of a circular economy and the preservation of India's natural resources will help mitigate issues like droughts and crop failures. India is on the verge of a new era of a more environmentally conscious economy and I am confident that Germany will continue to support India in its journey wherever needed."

**Mr Sanjay Budhia, Past President, Indian Chamber of Commerce & Managing Director, Patton**, said, "Adopting circular economy principles is essential in today's resource-constrained world. It offers immense potential, with studies showing India could gain INR 40 lakh crore (USD 600 billion) annually by 2050. Achieving this requires harmonized policies, stronger supply chains, effective enforcement, reliable data, and advanced recycling technologies. Under Hon'ble Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's leadership, West Bengal is leading the way with initiatives like transforming Kolkata's Dhapa landfill into a waste-to-energy project, exemplifying innovative sustainability practices."

**Dr Rajeev Singh, Director General, Indian Chamber of Commerce**, said, "There is significant growth in infrastructure, investments and MSMEs, as we just heard from the Minister, with 90 lakh units, the highest in the country. This translates into a significant number of jobs being created. Bengal is also emerging as a hub for trade, tourism and transport."

**Mr Alope Mookherjea, Chairman, Jury Board, ICC Environment Excellence Award**, said, "Sustainability and the economy are inseparable, requiring balance between resource use and regeneration. Our current systems risk depleting resources for future generations, highlighting the urgent need for a circular economy—one that eliminates waste, keeps materials in use and regenerates natural systems. Unlike linear models, the circular economy is restorative by design, integrating innovation to minimise waste and protect natural and social capital. Examples like Tata Steel Netherlands show the potential of recycling technologies to reduce emissions and promote sustainable practices. To secure a viable future, circular principles must be embedded in product and process design, ensuring resources are reused rather than exhausted. As the Nobel Laureate, Abhijit Banerjee aptly said, 'The economy is too important a matter to be left to economists alone.' This conference emphasises the need to align growth with sustainability, fostering collaboration and innovation for a better tomorrow."