

THE TIMES OF INDIA

An innovation challenge: India and Denmark are engaging the young generation of technologists in the future of water

13 May 2021

India is currently facing massive water challenges, which in recent years have become one of the most urgent policy issues. The problem ranges across depleting underground water levels, unsafe drinking water, water loss due to inadequate sewerage systems, and untreated wastewater polluting India's major rivers.

According to 'The Composite Water Management Index 2018', published by Niti Aayog, if the required measures are not implemented, the country's water demand is further projected to be double of the available water supply by 2030. If this unprecedented situation did come to pass, which policy makers are determined will not be allowed to happen, it could mean severe water scarcity for hundreds of millions of people and could potentially cost 6% of GDP, which obviously would be a severe impact on the economy.

Due to the scale of the problem this is not an issue that can be easily resolved, with water pumps and water purifiers alone. Additionally, in the light of the urgency of this challenge, sustainable and innovative approaches to management of water resources have acquired more importance than ever.

Together, the Indian government's flagship initiative, Atal Innovation Mission (AIM), Niti Aayog, and Innovation Centre Denmark – India (ICDK), tasked with promoting science and innovation collaborations between the two countries, have collaborated to host an open innovation water challenge as part of the Next Generation Water Action, which is an international event organised by the Technical University of Denmark.

By joining forces, AIM and ICDK are working towards creating and promoting a culture of entrepreneurship and innovation with a key focus on water. Through this process cost-effective and digital water management innovations such as AI-enabled sewage treatment plants, non-revenue water solutions, bio-absorbent capsules etc are being developed.

When combining the students' and startups' diverse backgrounds and skills, there is the perfect foundation to develop bold ideas on how to solve the world's most pressing sustainable water challenges. Note also that 50% of the entrepreneur teams are led by women, and the students engaged in the programme all come from high quality universities, with global standard engineering institutions from both countries.

The open Water Challenge between AIM and ICDK gives an international platform for the young students and entrepreneurs to showcase their innovations. Moreover, it ensures that the participants from both India and Denmark are mentored and associated with relevant water experts, universities and organisations in both countries to explore the opportunities of scale-up. At the Next Generation Water Action finals on May 18, AIM and ICDK will collaboratively select the winning team to be further supported and promoted at the International Water Association's conference in September 2022.

India and Denmark both have ambitious goals within the climate agenda and are including more sustainable practices day by day. In September 2020, India and Denmark entered into a new age Green Strategic Partnership following a virtual summit chaired by both prime ministers. The Green Strategic Partnership provides a perfect framework because it emphasises how international collaboration can help accelerate the green transition and deliver on global goals.

PM Modi has said at the IIT 2020 Global Summit that there is a "culture of hackathons" that is developing across Indian campuses that aim to resolve emerging problems through innovative ideas by youngsters. The collaboration in innovation and entrepreneurship discussed here shows how Denmark and India are going a step further, for an outcome and impact-driven delivery on the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

Source: <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/blogs/toi-edit-page/an-innovation-challenge-india-and-denmark-are-engaging-the-young-generation-of-technologists-in-the-future-of-water/>