



THE LAST WORD

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It's a steady but a long way for India to get to the "Net Zero" post. Efforts though are in full swing

The Sustainability Conclave of the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) 2025, in Pune, was enlightening in more ways than one. First, it underlined how much interest there is in large, medium and even small corporations in defining and embarking on their pathways to sustainability and "Net Zero".

There were also a number of startups and entrepreneurial firms choosing their own place in the consulting or platform space to make a difference. And finally, the excellent presentation by dynamic Commissioner Shekhar Singh (IAS), Pimpri Chinchwad Municipal Corporation, showed the extent of awareness and commitment that our city administrators have to make this a better planet for all citizens.

India's ambition and strong moves in this space have been praiseworthy. The Government has declared its ambition to achieve 450 gigawatts of renewable capacity by 2030, and active moves are in place beyond *Swachh Bharat Mission* to reduce pollution, stem harmful emissions and conserve the biodiversity of all places where our factories are operating.

The *Namami Gange Programme* and *National River Conservation Plan* (NRCP), focus on green jobs and the National Action Plan on Climate Change, including the *National Mission for a Green India*, are all worthy initiatives and the mandate on sustainability and ESG reporting, which will address the core issues of climate conservation and clean cities. They will also give a boost to social initiatives in much needed areas of education, health and livelihoods, and strengthen governance mechanisms at the highest echelons of corporate India.

As India aspires to be more and more a manufacturing nation for the world, it will be incumbent on all product and part manufacturers, to conduct Life Cycle Analysis (LCA), to determine the carbon footprint of the products and manufacturing processes, make Environmental Product Declarations (EPDs) and communicate carbon footprint savings to customers. Particularly true for exporters, where it will be incumbent on the company to demonstrate its concern for the planet to discerning customers.

There are many global exemplars among corporates that can serve as role models for

Sustainability and Innovation



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Indian companies. The six-billion-euro Dassault Systemes, has articulated the Projects Integrating Sustainable Methods (PRiSM) approach, to build new Manufacturing Execution System (MES) and operating models for the enterprise, which will place sustainability at the core. Honeywell worldwide, in spite of its large proliferation of manufacturing facilities, has set 2035 as their target year to be carbon neutral in all facilities and operations. Aggressive actions are already underway to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, evaluate global supply chains to minimise carbon emissions, and invest millions of dollars in sustainability practices and projects.

While India itself has set 2070 as the target for Net Zero, and large manufacturing companies have target years ranging from 2030 to 2050.

Here are three essential things that companies must do to ensure long-term growth and use sustainability as an important cornerstone to meet the agenda of growth:

■ **Measure, monitor and report** on all parameters, and work towards achieving targets for reduction of carbon, energy, water usage and waste. Use tools and software and ideally a sustainability platform to track environmental impacts.

■ **Build resilient and responsible supply chains.**

Sustainable sourcing reduces risks tied to resource scarcity, regulatory penalties or reputational damage. It also strengthens relationships with eco-

conscious partners and customers.

■ **Plan for the long term with ESG at the core**—sustainability is about future proofing. Companies that embed ESG in their core strategy, are better positioned to navigate climate risks, regulatory shifts and investor expectations.

Another interesting interaction was at the Chrysalis Entrepreneur Forum, where nearly 200 entrepreneurs gathered for a discussion on the value of innovation in hyper scaling businesses. With my own experience in doing this at Aptech in the 1990s, Zensar Technologies from 2001 to 2016 and Global Talent Track (GTT) Data Solutions and Lighthouse Communities Foundation from 2016 to 2025, it was fun to share practical wisdom on choosing the road less travelled. The last two, which are ongoing stories, are particularly exciting because they straddle both profit oriented and social entrepreneurship.

Global Talent Track, started over a decade back by Dr Uma Ganesh, and I raised two rounds of early-stage funding, bought back one of our early investors and finally partnered with a private equity firm to integrate six other smaller firms, into a comprehensive Dual Intelligence solution. The company titled GTT Data Solutions Ltd got listed on the Bombay Stock Exchange, a few months ago.

The Lighthouses initiative, started as a six corporates collaboration called Pune City Connect (PCC) to support the Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC) in 2012, morphed into Lighthouse Communities Foundation in 2016, with the formation of a Public Private Partnership (PPP) with the PMC. The idea was to focus on slum youth and build skill lighthouses in every administrative ward that would provide agency and employable skills to youth. Capital expenditure would be done by the government, and operating expenses raised from corporates and foundations. Today, the model has scaled 40 lighthouses in 12 cities across five states, and is set for swift scaling.

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