

The Godavari Initiative launches its Nashik Regional Consultation on collective action for Godavari River Basin

The Godavari Initiative (TGI), in collaboration with Diageo India as the founding corporate partner, hosted a regional consultation on collective action for the Godavari River Basin on Monday, September 23, 2024, in Nashik. The consultation brought together corporates, industrial bodies and associations, government agencies, civil society organisations, and academia to tackle the urgent ecological challenges faced by the Godavari River and its surrounding regions. The event was held in the presence of Shashikant Patil, Deputy Engineer, Maharashtra Industrial Development Corporation; Sanjay Sonawane, Vice President, North Maharashtra, Maharashtra Chambers of Commerce Industry and Agriculture (MACCIA); Dhananjay Bele, President, Nashik Industries and Manufacturers Association; and Lalit Boob, President, Ambad Industries and Manufacturers' Association. The consultation also witnessed the presence of leading corporates from the Nashik region around the Godavari River basin.

Launched earlier in Mumbai with Mukesh Sinha, Chairman, the Godavari River Management Board, TGI is a collaborative effort aimed at enhancing the resilience of the Godavari Basin in Maharashtra through collective action, knowledge sharing, and sustainable water management practices.

Navdeep Singh Mehram, Head of CSR and Sustainability, Diageo India, said, "At Diageo India, water stewardship has been a longstanding priority for us under our 'Spirit of Progress' ESG action plan. Initiatives like this consultation are critical because they bring together government, industries, nonprofits, academia, and communities to collaborate on practical solutions. We are proud to be a founding corporate partner of this initiative and believe collective action is the way forward to restore Godavari's ecological balance and ensure its sustainability for future generations."

As the next steps, the TGI team will share an outcome document with all key participants to ensure continued engagement, followed up with direct consultations with relevant stakeholders to discuss action plans. This moment is a crucial step in preserving Nashik's water resources for future generations.

Highlights from the regional consultation

The event highlighted the need for tech-forward methods and actions for the sustainable management of the Godavari River Basin in Maharashtra. It opened with representatives from corporates outlining TGI's mission and Nashik's critical role in the future of the Godavari River Basin.

Senior officials from government organisations also shared insights on policies aimed at river conservation. A significant highlight of the regional consultation was the inking of Letters of Understanding (LoUs) with three industry associations working at the state, district, and block levels. The inking of the LoUs signifies our collective resolve to take concrete steps towards a sustainable future for the Godavari River Basin.

“There are pressing challenges facing the Godavari River, and right now the need for collaborative engagement among stakeholders is critical and paramount. Initiatives such as The Godavari Initiative can work with the Maharashtra government's ‘Gaal Mukta Dharan, aiming for the river's natural beauty, and I call for collective action to clean the Godavari, ensuring that we can once again experience its pristine beauty,” said Sanjay Sonawane, Vice President of North Maharashtra at the Maharashtra Chambers of Commerce, Industry & Agriculture (MACCIA).

“Nashik is my home and our connection with the Godavari River is very emotional. The Godavari River basin in Maharashtra needs urgent attention and intervention from all stakeholders, including government, corporates, and communities that are dependent on the Godavari River for its abundant

resources. We are happy to work with the team at The Godavari Initiative to nudge collective action for improving the health and resilience of the Godavari River basin in Maharashtra,” shared Dhananjay Bele, President, Nashik Industries & Manufacturers Association.

“The Godavari River is not only a lifeline for agriculture and industry but also a crucial part of the cultural and ecological fabric of Nashik and the surrounding region. The challenges facing the river are significant, but through collective action, we can drive impactful solutions. This consultation is an opportunity for stakeholders across sectors to come together, share insights, and develop strategies that will ensure the sustainable management of the Godavari River Basin for future generations. We are committed to facilitating meaningful collaborations that will restore and protect this vital resource,” said Lalit Boob, President, Ambad Industries & Manufacturers Association.

TGI also presented how collective action can be instrumental in driving impactful change, with detailed research outlining key challenges and proposed strategies to address issues impacting the Godavari River Basin regionally. Major civil society organisations presented their work and initiatives in the Nashik region. The consultation concluded with a detailed presentation on how sustainable tourism and culture can be prevented in Nashik through specific initiatives for the Godavari River basin.

Why now?

Globally, 100 river basins have been identified as critical priorities for water stewardship, representing regions with immense potential for collective action. Eight of these priority basins are in India, with the Godavari River Basin a central focus for TGI. As part of the UN Global Compact’s CEO Water Mandate, TGI’s collective action platform seeks sustainable solutions for river basin management. The Godavari Basin, spanning key agricultural and industrial zones, has come under increasing pressure from urbanisation,

industrial growth, and unsustainable practices, making collective action more urgent than ever.

Call for collective action

The Nashik Regional Consultation provided not only a platform for dialogue but also an opportunity to develop a tailored action plan for the Nashik district, addressing local challenges within the broader framework of Godavari River conservation. Attendees explored how their respective organisations could contribute to sustainable solutions.