

Foreword

DATA: FOUNDATION FOR DEVELOPMENT DESIGN

“We must hold on to numbers.” I have been emphasising. This is because you get what you measure; more importantly, what gets measured is what, subsequently, gets done. Data, thus, is central to driving actions

You are reading the 11th edition of our data-centric annual report “State of India’s Environment 2026: In Figures”. Like previous editions, this one offers impeccable assessment of progress on environment and development. Data is definitive, and so this report is most definitive in its assessment. Numbers help us understand trends—what is shaping our world and our future; what is changing; what is improving; and what is not. Analysis of a development is only as good as the data behind it. Numbers reveal the current state of affairs without bias or prejudice. Thus, they offer a clear view of the state of the environment.

The report brings together the latest evaluations of states’ progress on environmental and developmental policies. More than that, by collating data from multiple sources, it makes a case for where to direct further attentions and where existing gains must be sustained.

This report also examines other pressing concerns. Consider the state of weather. Year after year, our analysis has shown that extreme weather events are getting worse, with grave implications for people and their livelihoods. Every day, we hear news about extreme rain, hailstorms or some other weather event that is not normal. But the pattern emerging from these daily snapshots often goes unnoticed. The report provides a national assessment of the extreme events, and delivers a stark message: “In the changed climate, extreme weather is the neo-normal.”

By tracking temperatures across seasons, the report reiterates that the world is at a tipping point in terms of temperature increase. This is borne out by the data in this report: there is clear evidence that heat is rising in India. The consequences will be more devastating

in the years ahead. Our analysis of internal displacement in India clearly shows that such devastation will increasingly force people from their homes. These data points compel us to ask, “What do we need to do next?”—and to act on the answer.

As you delve into the report, you will sense the country’s priorities for planning: from addressing water scarcity to mitigating water pollution; from combating air pollution in cities to reversing the decline of public transport. Policymaking today has to be crafted keeping in mind the many environmental crises. To know is also to learn. The “State of India’s Environment 2026: In Figures” thus provides an opportunity to fix what is broken. This is where data plays its critical role.

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