



ANNUAL REPORT

LIGHTS

SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES

UNDERTAKEN

DURING

1, APRIL 2025 - 31, March 2026

**504, Bhikaji Cama Bhawan,
Bhikaji Cama Place,
New Delhi-110066**

1. Release of *A Breath of Frost – India's Antarctic Story* At the 25th Foundation Day Celebrations of the National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research (NCPOR) 3–5 April 2025 | Vasco, Goa

The National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research (NCPOR) marked its **25th Foundation Day (Silver Jubilee)** with a series of significant scientific and outreach events held at its campus in **Vasco, Goa**. The three-day celebration highlighted India's growing leadership in polar and ocean sciences and reflected on NCPOR's contributions since its establishment in 2000. **Dr. Sulagna Chattopadhyay attended the event and delivered a talk centred on her book, *A Breath of Frost – India's Antarctic Story*, which was officially released as a key highlight of the Silver Jubilee celebrations.** In her address, Dr. Chattopadhyay reflected on India's remarkable journey to Antarctica, drawing upon the lived experiences and insights of the scientists, researchers, and support personnel who spent extended periods in extreme and challenging polar conditions in service of science and the nation. She highlighted how their courage, dedication, and contributions shaped the narrative of the book, making it both authentic and accessible to a wider audience. Undertaken with the support of the **Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES), Government of India**, the project reflects the Ministry's sustained commitment to advancing polar science, exploration, and public understanding. The release of the book, accompanied by Dr. Chattopadhyay's presentation added significant scholarly, institutional, and public outreach value to NCPOR's 25th Foundation Day commemorations.

The event was graced by eminent dignitaries, including **Dr. Pramod Sawant**, Hon'ble Chief Minister of Goa; **Dr. M. Ravichandran**, Secretary, Ministry of Earth Sciences; and **Dr. Thamban Meloth**, Director, NCPOR, along with leading scientists, policymakers, and stakeholders. The Silver Jubilee celebrations served as a platform to reflect on past achievements and chart future pathways for India's polar and ocean research initiatives, with Dr. Chattopadhyay's contribution adding notable intellectual and outreach significance to the programme.



2. Mobius Event- Water Towers of Asia: 22 April, 2025. - Bikaner House, Pandara Road, New Delhi

On Earth Day 2025, the Mobius Foundation hosted a high-level panel discussion titled "*Water Towers of Asia: Cryosphere, Climate Change, and Solutions*," focusing on the urgent challenges posed by Asia's rapidly melting glaciers. Moderated by Dr. Sulagna Chattopadhyay, the session brought clarity and coherence to a complex subject, guiding a dynamic conversation between leading experts. Panelists included Mr. Brij Mohan Singh Rathore, Prof. A.P. Dimri (Director, Indian Institute of Geomagnetism), Prof. Anil Kulkarni (Divecha Centre for Climate Change, IISc), and Captain (Retd.) Anurag Bisen. Together, they explored the science behind glacial retreat, its implications for water security and regional stability, and actionable solutions for the future. Dr. Chattopadhyay's role as moderator was instrumental in weaving together diverse insights and emphasizing the need for urgent, collaborative responses to safeguard Asia's cryosphere.



3. Meeting with the Ambassador of Iceland to India, Nepal and Sri Lanka. - Thursday, 1st May 2025

Dr Sulagna Chattopadhyay, Secretary General and Dr Narmadeshwar Prasad, Treasurer met the Ambassador of Iceland to India, Nepal and Sri Lanka H.E Mr Benedikt Hoskuldsson at 11 am on Thursday, the 1st May 2025. It was a courtesy visit as the Ambassador has recently been posted in New Delhi. Dr Chattopadhyay introduced the work of LIGHTS and SaGAA to him in the field of climate change and development. She also informed him about the dates for the SaGAA 8 to be 24-25 November 2025. Dr Prasad reminded HE about the long term association of the Iceland Embassy with SaGAA and requested him to continue the relationship in the future too. H.E gave his commitment regarding continued support of the Embassy to SaGAA events and activities. H.E talked about the technological support to India on harnessing the Geo-thermal energy in the Himalayan states notably Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand and some north-eastern states like Assam. Dr Chattopadhyay appreciated the interests of HE in the field of energy and climate change and invited him to our office for a podcast on the subject to which he readily agreed. An hour-long meeting ended on a very positive note cementing our relationship with the Embassy for future collaborations.



4. India Forum on "The Polar Order: The Arctic and Asia" - 03 and 04th May 2025

The India Forum on *"The Polar Order: The Arctic and Asia"* was held on May 3 and 4, 2025. This significant event was organised by the Observer Research Foundation (ORF), India, in collaboration with the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, and the Ministry of Earth Sciences. Bringing together diplomats, scientists, and scholars, the forum served as a platform to explore the increasing relevance of the Arctic in Asian strategic, environmental, and scientific considerations. The event aimed to facilitate dialogue on the evolving geopolitical landscape of the Arctic, the urgent environmental concerns emerging from climate change, and the potential for deeper scientific cooperation between Asia and the circumpolar North.

On May 4, 2025, Ambassador Pankaj Saran delivered a keynote address titled *"An Arctic Transformed: Potentials and Politics"*. His talk explored the shifting dynamics of Arctic governance and the implications for emerging powers, including India. He emphasized the need for a rules-based and inclusive approach to Arctic engagement. Joining him on the panel were several esteemed speakers including Professor Sanjay Chaturvedi, Director of the Institute of South Asian Studies and Dean of the Faculty of International Studies at South Asian University, India; May-Elin Stener, Ambassador of Norway to India; Dr. Stuti Banerjee, Senior Fellow at the Indian Council of World Affairs; and Torsten Kjolby Nielsen, Senior Arctic Official from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Kingdom of Denmark. The panel collectively examined the geopolitical and environmental challenges of the region, with particular emphasis on Asian participation in Arctic affairs and the value of multilateralism in preserving Arctic stability.

On May 3, 2025, Dr. Rasik Ravindra delivered a session titled *"Bridging Hemispheres: A Global Arctic Science Initiative"*. On May 4, 2025, Dr. Sulagna Chattopadhyay presented her talk titled *"Preserving the Icy Edge: Rethinking Climate Action for Arctic Biodiversity"*. Her presentation focused on the **critical intersection of climate change and ecological preservation in the Arctic region**, underscoring how **rapid warming and ice retreat threaten key Arctic ecosystems and species**. Dr. Chattopadhyay highlighted the **Arctic's role as a global climate regulator** and

discussed the cascading impacts of biodiversity loss from microscopic marine organisms to iconic mammals such as polar bears on both local Indigenous communities and broader climate systems. She argued that **rethinking climate action with an integrated biodiversity perspective** is essential, advocating for **collaborative research, sustained monitoring, and policy frameworks that align ecological conservation with sustainable development goals**. Her remarks underscored the urgency of **inclusive, science-driven climate strategies** that recognise the interconnectedness of Arctic biomes, global climate patterns, and human wellbeing.



5. Consultation with ICWA on Research and Academic Collaboration – 6 May 2025

Prof. N. C. Pant, Senior Vice President, and Dr. N. Prasad, Treasurer of LIGHTS, held a meeting with Dr. Nivedita Ray, Director of Research at the Indian Council of World Affairs (ICWA), Sapru House, New Delhi, between 11:45 a.m. and 12:45 p.m. on Tuesday, 6th May 2025. The hour-long discussion included reconnecting and exploring potential areas of collaboration between LIGHTS and ICWA in the fields of research, designing and running courses on polar issues and sustainability, publications, and jointly organising conferences and workshops on subjects of mutual or similar interest. Dr. Nivedita Ray and the LIGHTS team agreed on the following:

- submitting a proposal for organising a LIGHTS Lecture Series, citing the lectures organised so far, which ICWA may consider supporting;
- sending a proposal seeking ICWA's collaboration in SaGAA 8, with ICWA indicating a possible support of up to Rs. 2 lakhs;
- and initiating correspondence with the Administrative Section to explore the possibility of signing a Memorandum of Understanding based on LIGHTS' past achievements and its body of work and activities.

The meeting concluded on a positive note, with the prospect of a meeting between the Secretary General of LIGHTS and Dr. Nivedita Ray at the earliest possible time to take the discussions forward.

6.Engagement with SankalpTaru Foundation on Forest-Based Climate Action – 9 May 2025

Dr. Sulagna Chattopadhyay participated as a panelist in SankalpTaru Foundation’s inaugural conclave, *ST_Next 2025 – Action Beyond Pledges*, held on May 9th, 2025, at the India Habitat Centre, New Delhi. She spoke in the panel discussion titled “*Forests That Breathe – Growing Habitats, Not Just Trees*”, alongside Padma Shri Jadav “Molai” Payeng, renowned environmentalist and creator of the Molai Forest, and Mr. Hem Kumar Pandey, IAS (Retd.), former Additional Secretary, Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change. The session focused on reimagining forests as dynamic ecosystems rather than mere tree plantations. The conversation explored the role of forests in sustaining biodiversity, supporting soil health, maintaining hydrological cycles, and promoting long-term ecological balance. Dr. Chattopadhyay contributed her insights on the need to shift the afforestation narrative from quantity to quality, emphasizing meaningful habitat restoration as the foundation of effective environmental action.



7. ICWA - LIGHTS Meeting: Exploring Joint Programmes on Youth Engagement and Global Affairs

On June 24, 2025, a productive and forward-looking meeting took place between Dr. Nivedita Ray, Director (Research) at the Indian Council of World Affairs (ICWA), and Dr. Sulagna Chattopadhyay, President of SaGAA and Secretary General of LIGHTS, to discuss potential aspects for collaboration aimed at deepening youth engagement on global issues.

As part of ongoing efforts to deepen public understanding of international affairs and global scientific challenges, Dr. Ray and Dr. Chattopadhyay met to explore possible collaborations between ICWA and LIGHTS. During the conversation, Dr. Ray suggested that, since ICWA has

existing MoUs with institutions like JNU, DU, and Nalanda University, it would be meaningful to organise **joint seminars or workshops** within different departments at these universities—particularly around themes related to the Arctic. Dr. Chattopadhyay welcomed the idea. Both agreed that such initiatives could help bring critical, often under-discussed international issues into academic spaces in a more engaging way.

A key highlight of the conversation was the discussion of potential event themes. Dr. Chattopadhyay proposed a powerful and timely topic:

“Hydrocarbons and Rare Earth Elements in the Arctic: The Geopolitics of Strategic Resources.”

Dr. Ray found the topic thought-provoking, recognizing its potential to spark interest and debate among students about how science, strategy, and sustainability intersect on the global stage.

Reflections:

The meeting marked a promising step towards **a meaningful partnership between ICWA and LIGHTS**, underscoring their shared commitment to promoting science diplomacy and international awareness.

8. International Dialogue Participation at Nordic-India Dialogue 2025 - 4-5 September 2025

Dr. Sulagna Chattopadhyay, President, SaGAA; Secretary General LIGHTS, participated in the Nordic-India Dialogue on September 4-5, 2025 at the Parliament Hotel in Reykjavík, Iceland. The dialogue is a joint initiative by the Ananta Centre, Swedish Institute of International Affairs, Finnish Institute of International Affairs, Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, Institute of International Affairs of Iceland and the Technical University of Denmark. This year’s dialogue was based on the theme “India-Nordic Relations: Tackling Challenges and Unlocking Opportunities”. Dr. Sulagna delivered a talk on the topic “Planetary Resilience: The Arctic and Global Sustainability”. She weaved her talk into two engaging stories, highlighting the need for renewable energy, India’s energy mix, dependence on coal, and calling for the alternative ideas, as well as, new principles in informed living.

The event was attended by R. Ravindra, Ambassador of India to Iceland; **Porgerður Katrín Gunnarsdóttir**, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Iceland; **Shri Kirti Vardhan Singh**, Minister of State for External Affairs and Minister of State for Environment, Forest & Climate Change, India; **Silja Bára Ómarsdóttir**, Rector of the University of Iceland; **Pramit Pal Chaudhuri**, India Practice Head, Eurasia Group; **Guðni Th. Jóhannesson**, President of Iceland 2016-2024, Professor of History and Chairman of the Board of The Institute of International Affairs at the University of Iceland, **Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson**, President of Iceland 1996-2016 and Chairman of Arctic Circle; **Pia Hansson**, Director of the Institute of International Affairs at the University of Iceland; **R. Mukundan**, Managing Director and CEO of Tata Chemicals, President-Designate CII for FY 2025-26; **Pooja Kapur**, Additional Secretary, Ministry of External Affairs and Former

Ambassador to Denmark; **Indrani Bagchi**, Chief Executive Officer, Ananta Centre; **Vice Admiral Sanjay Singh (Retd.)**, Formerly Flag Officer Commanding in Chief Western Naval Command, among others.

The two-day event marked a significant milestone in the growing partnership between India and the Nordic countries and brought together diplomats, policymakers, academics, business leaders, and strategic thinkers for a multi-dimensional exchange of ideas.



9.National-Level Scientific Engagement at National Conference on Polar Sciences (NCPS) - Goa - 16-18 September 2025.



Dr. Sulagna Chattopadhyay attended the **National Conference on Polar Sciences (NCPS)** held from **16-18 September, 2025** in Goa, India. The conference was organised by the **National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research (NCPOR)**, Ministry of Earth Sciences, Govt. of India. Dr. Sulagna was invited to deliver a talk on the theme “Polar Operations, Governance and Outreach” in the session chaired by Dr. Naresh Chandra Pant, Visiting Honorary Scientist, NCPOR. She spoke of India’s hard-earned foothold in Polar science and India’s entry into the Antarctic Treaty System (ATS). Her talk stressed on the importance of understanding the changing Polar perspectives within the nation, from a scientific to geopolitical trajectory, and from an Antarctic to an Arctic engagement, a shifting of the Polar spotlight.

The event was attended by **Dr. Thamban Meloth**, Director, NCPOR; **Prof. Gary Wilson**, President, Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research (SCAR); **Prof. Naresh Chandra Pant**, Visiting Honorary Scientist, NCPOR, Goa; **Dr. Anil V. Kulkarni**, Distinguished Visiting Scientist, IISc, Bengaluru; **Dr. M. Sudhakar**, Visiting Professor, Sai University & Former Director, CMLRE; **Prof. D. Pallamraju**, Senior Professor & Dean, PRL, Ahmedabad; **Dr. Suryachandra A. Rao**, Director, IITM Pune; **Prof. N. V. Chalapathi Rao**, Director, NCESS, Thiruvananthapuram; **Prof. Arun Deo Singh**, Senior Professor, BHU, Varanasi; **Prof. G.N. Nayak**, Senior Professor, Goa University; **Dr. Vandana Chaudhary**, Scientist G, MoES; **Ms. Nora Harboe Dokken**, Royal Norwegian Embassy, New Delhi; **Capt. Anurag Bisen (Retd.)**, Senior Fellow, The Vivekananda International Foundation, among others.

10. International Expert Seminar “The American Factor in Russia-India Relations in the Arctic”, Moscow, Russia

Dr Sulagna Chattopadhyay attended the **International Expert Seminar “The American Factor in Russia-India Relations in the Arctic”** held in **Moscow, Russia** from **24-25 September, 2025**. The seminar was held in the Conference Hall of the Hotel Artcourt Moscow Center. Dr Sulagna was one of the guest speakers in the Panel Discussion titled “**Cases, research and tools of Government-Business-Indigenous engagement**” on 24 September, 2025. Maksim Dankin, General Director of the Project Office for Arctic Development, Moscow was the moderator of the Panel Discussion.

The panel discussed the following points:

- The role of non-Arctic countries in the Arctic economic development
- Combating climate change and preserving biological diversity as topics of the dialogue of indigenous peoples in the North-South context.
- Norilsk Nickel's Company Policy on Indigenous Peoples' Rights in 2018-2025.
- The role of indigenous peoples in promoting international cooperation in the Arctic: opportunities for interaction between Russian and Indian NGOs.

Dr Sulagna was also one of the experts on the **Youth Strategic Session** of the Seminar held on 25 September. The session was themed “*Arctic Chessboard: Russian-Indian Diplomacy in the Context of the Third Actor*”. The other experts on the panel include **Vice Admiral Pradeep Chauhan** (AVSM & Bar, VSM, IN (Retd), Director-General, National Maritime Foundation, Delhi), **Dr. Uttam Kumar Sinha** (Senior Fellow, Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, Delhi), **Dr. Alexander Sergunin** (Doctor of Political Sciences, Professor of the Department of Theory and History of International Relations, St. Petersburg State University, Director of the Center for Arctic Research and Projects, RANEPa St. Petersburg), **Dr. Mikhail Vasekha** (Doctor of Technical Sciences, Head of the Department of Marine Oil and Gas Engineering, Murmansk Arctic University, Murmansk), **Natalia Vyakhireva** (Ph.D, Senior Research Fellow, Head of the Canadian Department, Institute for U.S. and Canadian Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow)



11. Courtesy Meeting with the Chairman, ISRO in Connection with the SaGGA VIII Conference

Dr. Sulagna Chattopadhyay, Secretary General, LIGHTS, and **Dr. N. Prasad**, Treasurer, LIGHTS, held a courtesy meeting with **Dr. V. Narayanan**, Chairman of the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) on **3 November 2025** as part of preparatory and outreach activities for the forthcoming **SAGGA Conference**.

The primary objective of the meeting was to formally invite the ISRO Chairman to participate as a speaker at the SAGGA Conference and to brief him on the conference's objectives, thematic focus, and institutional vision. During the interaction, Dr. Chattopadhyay outlined LIGHTS' work across geography, humanities, and science & technology, with particular emphasis on its engagement with strategic studies, polar research, and science-policy interfaces.

The discussion focused on the growing significance of **polar research** in the context of climate change, environmental monitoring, geopolitics, and global scientific cooperation. The conversation also highlighted the critical role of **space science and satellite-based technologies** in advancing polar and earth system research, including climate modelling, cryosphere studies, and strategic situational awareness in the Arctic and Antarctic regions.

The ISRO Chairman appreciated the relevance and interdisciplinary approach of the SaGGA Conference and expressed his support for the initiative. Owing to prior commitments, he **agreed to contribute through a recorded video message**, which was subsequently shared with the organisers.

The meeting proved to be **meaningful and valuable for LIGHTS as an organisation**, enabling an in-depth exchange on India's capabilities in space science, the national and global importance of polar research, and the need for stronger linkages between scientific institutions and policy-oriented platforms. The interaction reinforced LIGHTS' commitment to fostering dialogue at the intersection of geography, humanities, and science & technology, and strengthened its engagement with key national scientific stakeholders and advancing LIGHTS' broader mission of promoting informed, interdisciplinary, and policy-relevant discussions on science, strategy, and global affairs.



12. India-Nordic Dialogue Series: “India & The Nordics - Breaking Barriers, Building Futures” - 12th November 2025

The “India & The Nordics - Breaking Barriers, Building Futures” dialogue was held on **12th November 2025** in New Delhi. This inaugural event was organised jointly by the *Women Inspiring Network (WIN)* and *Det Moderne India (DMI)* as part of their new series, “*The First & Only*”, aimed at fostering meaningful exchange on leadership, sustainability, innovation, and gender-balanced global partnerships.

The dialogue brought together distinguished leaders, innovators, and changemakers from India and the Nordic region to engage in cross-cultural conversations on inclusive growth, sustainable leadership and collaboration. The event underscored the shared vision of strengthening India-Nordic ties through inclusive frameworks that champion equality, sustainability, and innovation.

Dr. **Sulagna Chattopadhyay**, Secretary General of LIGHTS and President of SaGAA, participated as a key speaker in the event. Her contribution highlighted the role of science communication and policy engagement in bridging research, public understanding, and societal impact. Drawing on her extensive expertise, Dr. Chattopadhyay emphasised the importance of connecting climate research with advocacy and policy discourses to advance collaborative solutions that address global environmental challenges. Her insights enriched the dialogue on how India and the Nordic region can co-create inclusive and impactful pathways for future leadership and sustainable development.

The event marked a significant milestone in advancing gender-balanced progress, fostering India-Nordic collaboration, and showcasing the role of diverse voices in shaping global leadership narratives



13. Science and Geopolitics of Arctic and Antarctic (SaGAA) VIII Conference **“Confrontation to Collaboration in a Fractured World - Science | Business | Policy”**

Date - 24 - 25 November 2025

Venue - India International Center, New Delhi



The eighth edition of SaGAA (SaGAA VIII) was organised on 24–25 November 2025, following the successful seventh chapter held in 2023 as part of SaGAA’s biennial tradition. The Secretariat had to ensure wide national and international participation across science, law, policy, ocean governance and polar sustainability domains. The LIGHTS Organising Committee and SaGAA Secretariat collectively conducted more than 50 conceptual, coordination and review meetings leading up to the conference, engaging stakeholders from over 20 universities and multiple departments, Arctic and non-Arctic embassies, and scientific institutions to bring future scientific leaders and global experts on board. More than 40 national and international organisations participated in SaGAA VIII, including the Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES), Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research (NCPOR), Indian Council of World Affairs (ICWA), the Embassies of Norway, Denmark and Iceland, the Norwegian Polar Institute (NPI), Space Applications Centre (SAC), Department of Fisheries, National Institute of Ocean Technology (NIOT), Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), and the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), among others.

SaGAA cohorts more than 60 distinguished delegates on the dais and an overall gathering of more than 200 participants, including scientists, experts, policymakers, academia, industry representatives, and young researchers from India and partner polar nations. The conference was preceded by the SaGAA Ice-Breaker Cocktail Dinner on Sunday, 23rd November 2025, organised by the LIGHTS Organising Committee to facilitate informal interaction, early networking, and cross-disciplinary rapport-building before the formal scientific deliberations commenced. The evening was addressed by Dr. Sulagna Chattopadhyay, Convenor, SaGAA VIII, followed by strategic reflections from Ambassador Pankaj Saran, and expeditionary anecdotes from Dr. Rasik Ravindra, while Admiral Pradeep Chauhan shared insights from his Antarctic experience. The gathering was further enriched by perspectives from Dr. Camilla Brekke, Director, Norwegian Polar Institute (NPI), and Dr. Thamban Meloth, Director, NCPOR, highlighting Arctic and polar research linkages. Closing remarks for the evening were delivered by Dr. Narmadeshwar Prasad, Organising Secretary, SaGAA VIII.

A Pre-Conference Mentorship Session for Young Scientists set the tone before the inaugural proceedings, laying the foundation for guidance-driven collaboration and inspiring future polar leaders. The inauguration of SaGAA VIII, graced by the Chief Guest, Dr. M. Ravichandran, Secretary, Ministry of Earth Sciences and chaired by Ambassador Pankaj Saran, Convenor, NatStrat with Dr. Shailesh Nayak, Director, National Institute of Advanced Studies and Ambassador Sibi George, Secretary (West), Ministry of External Affairs as the Guests of Honour, set the intellectual foundation for the conference theme – *Confrontation to Collaboration in a Fractured World*. Across the two-day event, the conference featured 13 high-level panel discussion sessions, each designed to bridge science, law, governance, sustainability, and diplomacy in fragile cryospheric and oceanic domains. The conference also hosted 4 plenary sessions, delivered by eminent national and international polar research leaders, offering strategic perspectives on Arctic-Himalayan climate linkages, ocean governance, cryosphere change, and science-policy diplomacy. A Rapid Shot Session brought concise, high-impact scientific narratives, while 1 first-ever SaGAA Rapid Shot session enabled young scientists to present cutting-edge research ideas in a fast-paced format. One of the most original highlights of SaGAA VIII was the Reverse Panel Session, introduced for the first time at SaGAA, where 6 young researchers presented advanced work on permafrost thaw, carbon feedback risks, climate teleconnections, hydrocarbon impacts, bioresources, and governance challenges, followed by real-time expert responses from senior discussants.

SaGAA VIII was consciously organised as a zero-waste and plastic-free conference, translating sustainability from principle into practice. The event eliminated single-use plastics entirely, adopting reusable, biodegradable, and eco-sensitive alternatives for conference kits, badges, foodware, décor, and logistics. The sustainability ethos was further reflected in the conference mementos, which were crafted from natural wax and recycled brass/bronze, promoting circular material use while symbolising warmth, resilience, and environmental responsibility. The event décor also incorporated Shola flowers, reinforcing nature-inspired aesthetics. The event demonstrated that sustainability must extend beyond deliberation to execution, making SaGAA VIII one of the most environmentally responsible scientific diplomacy forums.

The award segment during the valedictory ceremony commenced with the Certificate for the Best Reverse Panel Idea, awarded to Dr. Archana Singh, Scientist, NCPOR, with the citation presented by Dr. Rasik Ravindra, Former Director, NCPOR. The second citation award was given to Ms. Arushi Sharma, Research Scholar who emerged as a standout winner among the top three finalists of the Future Leaders' Forum, demonstrating exceptional research acumen and scientific articulation as part of SaGAA's first-ever Future Leaders' competitive forum. Her recognition reaffirmed SaGAA's commitment to identifying and nurturing the next generation of polar science leaders. Finally, the SaGAA VIII research team and all LIGHTS team members were formally acknowledged by the Organising Committee, including Dr. Sulagna Chattopadhyay, Dr. Narmadeshwar Prasad, Dr. Rasik Ravindra, Dr. M. Sudhakar, Admiral Monty Khanna and Mr. Ishaan Gera, appreciating their rigorous coordination and planning meetings, commitment to scientific stewardship, and flawless conference execution. The conference concluded with a collective reaffirmation that the legacy of SaGAA must be carried forward through sustained cooperation, credible science, responsible stewardship of fragile polar regions, and science-led diplomacy for peace and sustainability.

14. Mental Health Awareness Initiative – Step Up ‘N Speak (Ongoing Project)

Under its ongoing CSR-supported programme with Krafton India, LIGHTS is implementing the *Step Up ‘N Speak (SU’NS)* initiative aimed at promoting mental health awareness and early-stage psychosocial support among senior secondary students in government-aided schools in Delhi. The programme focuses on preventive intervention, building student resilience, strengthening peer-support systems, and enhancing the capacity of teachers and parents through a structured, school-based approach.

As part of this initiative, a **Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)** was signed on 02 December 2025 between LIGHTS and the **Institute of Human Behaviour and Allied Sciences (IHBAS)** in New Delhi, in the presence of Dr. Sulagna Chattopadhyay, Dr. Narmadeshwar Prasad, and Dr. Rajinder K. Dhamija. The collaboration focuses on advancing research, outreach, and policy engagement in brain health, with emphasis on youth well-being, social isolation, and cognitive health. The partnership establishes a strong foundation for interdisciplinary work and long-term engagement in mental health and community outreach.



Additionally, a **Stakeholder Brainstorming Meeting** for SU’NS was held on **06 February 2026** at India International Centre, New Delhi, bringing together experts from IHBAS, academicians, psychologists, and school representatives. The meeting aimed to refine the programme framework by incorporating field-level insights, identifying key psychosocial challenges among students, and strengthening implementation strategies such as peer-support structures, training modules, and early identification mechanisms. The outcomes of this session are guiding the next phase of programme rollout, ensuring that the initiative remains practical, inclusive, and impactful.



15. Dr. Sulagna Chattopadhyay Academic Support to Defence Research Scholars on India's Arctic Policy

In January, Dr. Sulagna Chattopadhyay, Secretary General, LIGHTS, as well as a recognised expert in Arctic and Polar Studies, provided academic inputs to defence research scholars pursuing work on India's Arctic policy.

This included **Commandant Jaydeep Paul (NHCC 38)**, who is pursuing a dissertation titled "*Evaluating India's Arctic Policy: Strategic Imperatives and Implementation Challenges*," focusing on reviewing India's current Arctic policy and suggesting an implementation strategy for the next two decades. Additionally, **Commander Urvish Kukreja** approached with a set of research questions seeking expert insights on the Arctic region.

The scholars sought guidance on key issues such as the role of the Arctic in India's geopolitical strategy, India's contribution to peaceful and cooperative governance, preservation of indigenous cultures, and challenges in building effective international partnerships. In response, Dr. Chattopadhyay provided detailed expert inputs, drawing upon her extensive experience in polar research, science diplomacy, and governance frameworks.

Further, Dr. Chattopadhyay also engaged with **Sainandan Sridhar Iyer, PhD Scholar in International Relations at BITS Pilani, K.K. Birla Goa Campus**, who is conducting research on the role of ocean science and oceanographic cooperation as instruments of diplomacy and governance in the Indian Ocean Region. The scholar shared his PhD research proposal along with a set of semi-structured interview questions intended for practitioner-level interactions. Dr. Chattopadhyay reviewed the scope and framing of the research questions and provided expert inputs to refine their structure and analytical relevance.

These engagements significantly supported the scholars in strengthening their analytical frameworks, incorporating interdisciplinary perspectives, and aligning their research with contemporary geopolitical and governance challenges.

Overall, this reflects LIGHTS' continued commitment to supporting high-quality research, fostering academic engagement, and contributing to informed policy discourse in the domains of geopolitics, ocean governance, and polar studies.

16. LIGHTS Initiative on Aravalli Hills: Policy Recommendations in Response to Supreme Court Order

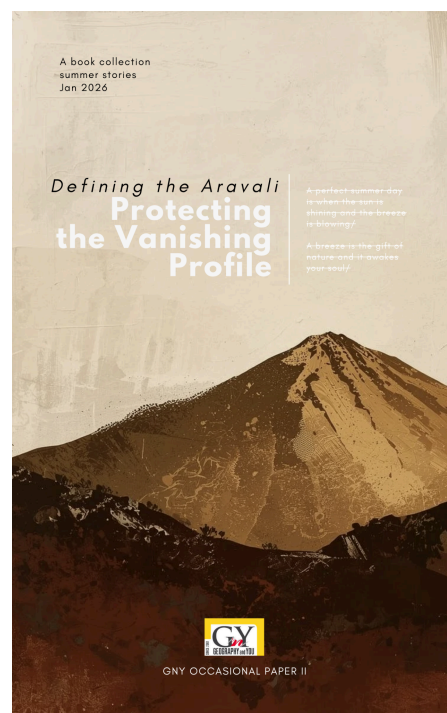
On **January 20, 2026**, LIGHTS, through its *Geography and You* platform, undertook a significant policy initiative by providing expert recommendations on the critical issue of conservation and sustainable management of the Aravalli Hills, in light of the directions issued by the Supreme Court of India. Recognising the ecological, geographical, and strategic importance of the

Aravalli range, one of the oldest mountain systems in the world, LIGHTS actively contributed to the policy discourse aimed at addressing the growing environmental challenges affecting the region.

In response to the Supreme Court's order concerning the protection, demarcation, and restoration of the Aravalli ecosystem, LIGHTS formulated and submitted a set of comprehensive recommendations. These focused on strengthening regulatory frameworks, ensuring strict compliance with environmental norms, preventing illegal mining and deforestation, and promoting sustainable land-use practices. The recommendations also emphasised the need for integrated governance mechanisms, inter-state coordination, and the use of geospatial technologies for effective monitoring and enforcement.

Further, LIGHTS highlighted the importance of balancing ecological preservation with developmental needs by advocating for long-term, science-based planning and community engagement. Special emphasis was placed on restoring degraded areas, conserving biodiversity, and safeguarding the Aravallis' role as a natural barrier against desertification and climate change impacts in northern India.

This initiative reflects LIGHTS' proactive role in engaging with nationally significant environmental issues and contributing informed, research-driven inputs to support policy formulation and judicial processes. It underscores the organisation's commitment to sustainable development, environmental governance, and evidence-based advocacy in addressing pressing ecological challenges.



17. Expert Lecture on “AI in Research for Geography and Environment Management”

Dr. Sulagna Chattopadhyay, Founder and Editor of *Geography and You* and Secretary General, LIGHTS, was invited as a Resource Person for the Ph.D. Coursework session organized by H.R. College of Commerce and Economics, HSNC University, Mumbai, for the academic year 2025–26. She delivered an insightful online lecture on “AI in Research for Geography and Environment Management” on 23rd January 2026. The session focused on integrating emerging AI tools into geographical and environmental research, offering both conceptual clarity and practical applications to doctoral scholars.

Her lecture was highly appreciated for its academic depth and relevance, significantly contributing to strengthening the research methodologies and analytical capabilities of the participants. The session not only enhanced scholars’ understanding of advanced research techniques but also encouraged critical engagement with contemporary technological developments in the field. This engagement reflects LIGHTS’ continued commitment to fostering academic excellence and promoting interdisciplinary knowledge exchange.

18. 22nd Annual General Body Meeting (AGBM) - LIGHTS (2026)

The 22nd Annual General Body Meeting (AGBM) of LIGHTS was held on **28 January 2026** in **virtual mode** under the chairmanship of Ambassador Pankaj Saran. The meeting reviewed the organisation’s key achievements during FY 2024–25 and the ongoing year, highlighting major initiatives such as the publication of “*A Breath of Frost: India’s Antarctic Story*,” the successful organisation of SaGAA VIII, expansion of digital outreach through podcasts and publications, revival of the Hindi magazine *Bhugol aur Aap*, and active engagement in national and international forums on polar research and climate diplomacy. The organisation also strengthened academic collaborations through multiple MoUs and launched a CSR-supported mental health awareness programme in collaboration with Institute of Human Behaviour and Allied Sciences (IHBAS).

The financial review indicated effective utilisation of earlier funding from the Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES), with an improved outlook for FY 2025–26 supported by institutional partnerships and CSR funding. Members discussed strategic priorities including expanding student engagement, strengthening research and science communication, enhancing institutional collaborations, and increasing outreach and visibility. Key decisions taken at the meeting included approval of the financial budget and annual report, continuation of auditors, creation of additional leadership positions, introduction of an associate membership structure, and the transition of LIGHTS from a state-level to a national-level NGO. The office bearers for the 2026–2028 term were elected unanimously. The meeting concluded with a forward-looking vision to scale up activities, deepen partnerships, and further strengthen LIGHTS’ role in bridging science, policy, and society at national and international levels.

19. Memorandum of Understanding for Training Programmes between IIM Sirmaur and PARI Training Institute

(Date: 6th April 2026)

A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between the Indian Institute of Management Sirmaur (IIM Sirmaur) and the Parliamentary and Administrative Research Institute (PARI), an initiative under LIGHTS, to collaborate specifically on capacity-building training programmes. The MoU establishes a framework for conducting short-term and long-term training courses for participants from government bodies.

The agreement outlines that the training programmes will be conducted jointly by both institutions and overseen by a designated committee comprising representatives from each side. It further specifies the operational procedures, eligibility criteria, financial arrangements, and mutual responsibilities necessary for the effective execution of these training initiatives. The MoU is valid for a period of three years, with provisions for renewal and termination as per mutually agreed terms.

20. International Leadership Training Programme on Anti-Corruption & Good Governance (AI Era) and PARI-IACA MoU Initiative

The **International Leadership Training Programme on Anti-Corruption and Good Governance in the Era of Artificial Intelligence (AI)** was successfully undertaken by the Parliamentary and Administrative Research Institute (PARI), leading the initiative in collaboration with the International Anti-Corruption Academy (IACA), Vienna, Austria.

The programme was conducted from **21-28 February 2026** and followed a blended format, beginning with a **one-day orientation and lecture session held in New Delhi on 21st February 2026**, followed by a **five-day international training programme in Vienna, Austria**. The New Delhi session served as a foundational platform, where participants, comprising mid and senior-level officers from various government institutions, were introduced to key themes such as leadership in governance, vigilance mechanisms, public procurement, cybercrime, and the growing role of artificial intelligence in combating corruption. The sessions were delivered by distinguished experts and practitioners, including **Dr. Sulagna Chattopadhyay (Director, PARI)**, **Dr. Garima Bhagat Lohani (Joint Secretary, Department of Defence Production, Government of India)**, **Dr. Muktesh Chander (IPS, Retd., Special Monitor for Cybercrime and AI, NHRC)**, and **Shri Anil Singhal (IRSS, Retd., Former General Manager, North Western Railway and Ex-Chief Technical Examiner, CVC)**, ensuring both conceptual clarity and practical relevance.



The international component of the programme, conducted at IACA in Laxenburg, Vienna, provided participants with a global perspective on anti-corruption strategies and governance frameworks. The training included modules on international anti-corruption conventions, anti-money laundering, ethical leadership, conflict of interest, and the use of AI in preventing and detecting corruption. The programme also emphasized experiential learning through interactive discussions, case studies, and exposure to international best practices, including a guided visit to the Vienna International Centre.



A key highlight of this initiative was the signing of a **Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)** on **25 February 2026** between PARI and IACA in Vienna. This landmark agreement formalizes a long-term strategic partnership aimed at strengthening anti-corruption capacity, promoting ethical governance, and enhancing institutional collaboration between India and global

institutions. The partnership builds upon a series of successfully conducted training programmes that have already benefitted officers from central ministries, state governments, legislative bodies, and public sector undertakings.

The MoU marks a significant step in LIGHTS/PARI' broader vision of strengthening democratic institutions and governance systems through capacity building, research, and international collaboration. It is expected to expand the reach of such programmes, facilitate knowledge exchange, and provide Indian officials with access to globally recognised training platforms and expertise.

Overall, the initiative reflects LIGHTS/PARI' continued commitment to promoting transparency, accountability, and integrity in public administration, while fostering global partnerships that contribute to building a robust and future-ready governance ecosystem.



21. Dr. Sulagna Chattopadhyay's Address at the World Ocean Science Congress (NIO, Goa)

On February 24, 2026, Dr. Sulagna Chattopadhyay, Secretary General, LIGHTS, delivered a key address at the World Ocean Science Congress, organised by the National Institute of Oceanography (NIO) in Goa. The event brought together leading experts, scientists, policymakers, and practitioners from across domains and was inaugurated by the Hon'ble Chief Minister of Goa, Pramod Sawant.

Dr. Chattopadhyay's talk, titled *"Rise of the Indian Ocean: Scientific Stewardship at the Fore,"* highlighted the growing strategic, economic, and environmental importance of the Indian Ocean region. She presented a multi-dimensional perspective on the "rise" of the Indian Ocean,

emphasising key trends such as increasing oceanic collaborations, rising sea levels, expanding economic output through the blue economy, and enhanced social engagement in coastal regions. Drawing upon scientific data, she underscored the accelerating rate of sea-level rise in the Indian Ocean basin, particularly in the Arabian Sea and Bay of Bengal, and its implications for coastal resilience and climate adaptation.

The address also examined the economic and policy dimensions of ocean governance, highlighting the significance of maritime trade routes and national initiatives such as the Sagarmala Programme, Blue Economy Policy, and Deep Ocean Mission in driving growth and strengthening ocean-based sectors.

A major conceptual contribution of her presentation was the introduction of a “Banded Indo-Pacific Regional Cooperation Framework,” a science-led approach to classifying ocean regions based on physical, ecological, and human-use parameters. This framework aims to facilitate targeted international collaborations across sectors such as climate regulation, fisheries, marine pollution, and deep-sea resource governance, thereby enhancing India’s role in regional and global ocean governance.

The event witnessed participation from a wide range of national and international experts, fostering interdisciplinary dialogue on ocean science, sustainability, and governance. Dr. Chattopadhyay’s contribution underscored LIGHTS’ continued leadership in advancing research-driven discussions and policy engagement on critical issues at the intersection of geopolitics, environment, and sustainable development.



22. Expert Panel Discussion: “Beyond Zone V: India’s Highest Risk Earthquake Zone – The Himalayan Dilemma”

On **March 14, 2026**, LIGHTS organised a virtual panel discussion titled “*Beyond Zone V: India’s Highest Risk Earthquake Zone – The Himalayan Dilemma*”, bringing together leading experts to deliberate on critical issues related to seismic vulnerability and policy challenges in the

Himalayan region. The session was moderated by Dr. Sulagna Chattopadhyay, Secretary General, LIGHTS.

The discussion featured eminent experts including **Dr. Rasik Ravindra (Vice President, LIGHTS; Former Professor, University of Delhi)**, **Prof. N. C. Pant, Prof. Kamal Nain Rai (Former Chief Engineer, DRDO)**, **Dr. Prabhas Pande (Former Additional Director General, Geological Survey of India)**, **Dr. Sujit Dasgupta (Former Deputy Director General, Geological Survey of India)**, **Mr. Rajpal Kaushik (Former Chief Town Planner, Noida)**, and **Dr. Deepak Bansal (Regional Chief, HUDCO)**, who brought diverse perspectives from geology, urban planning, disaster management, and infrastructure sectors.

The panel focused on key themes including seismic hazard assessment, implications of changes in zonation, governance challenges, and the need for resilient infrastructure and urban planning in high-risk regions. The discussion also emphasised strengthening institutional frameworks and aligning development with scientific evidence to enhance disaster preparedness.

The video recording of the panel discussion has been uploaded on YouTube, enabling wider outreach and dissemination of expert insights.



23. Seminar at JNU: Greenland & India - Resources, Climate Change & Strategic Routes

On March 23, 2026, LIGHTS, in collaboration with the Centre for the Study of Regional Development (CSRD), Jawaharlal Nehru University, organised a seminar titled "*Greenland & India: Resources, Climate Change & Strategic Routes*" at the Cartography Laboratory, JNU. Convened by Dr. Sulagna Chattopadhyay, Secretary General, LIGHTS and President, SaGAA, the seminar brought together scientists, academicians, policymakers, and young scholars to examine the growing linkages between Arctic transformations and India's strategic, climatic, and economic future.

The session commenced with a welcome address by Prof. Dipendra Nath Das, Rector-II, JNU, followed by opening remarks from Dr. Chattopadhyay, who emphasised the importance of

interdisciplinary approaches in understanding Arctic dynamics. The technical sessions included a presentation by Dr. Rasik Ravindra, Former Director, National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research (NCPOR), who provided a scientific overview of Greenland and its implications for global sea-level rise, and a plenary address by Dr. Jagvir Singh, Scientist G, Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES), highlighting India's scientific efforts in climate and polar research.

A key highlight of the seminar was the panel discussion on *"Policy Pathways Linking Greenland's Future to India's Resilience,"* moderated by Dr. Chattopadhyay, with participation from Prof. Bhaswati Sarkar, Chairperson, Centre for European Studies, JNU; Prof. Vinay Sinha, Professor, CSRD, JNU; Prof. Krishnendra Meena, Professor of Political Geography, CSRD, JNU; Dr. Rasik Ravindra, Former Director, NCPOR; and Commodore Jai Bedi, Executive Director, National Maritime Foundation (NMF). The discussion explored the geopolitical, environmental, and strategic dimensions of Greenland and its implications for India.

The seminar also featured a *"Rapid Shot Session,"* where young scholars presented interdisciplinary perspectives, reflecting growing academic engagement in Arctic studies. The event concluded with a vote of thanks by Prof. Bhaswati Das, Associate Professor, CSRD, JNU, highlighting the importance of continued dialogue and collaboration.

Overall, the seminar underscored that developments in Greenland and the Arctic have far-reaching implications for India, reinforcing the need for sustained research, policy engagement, and international cooperation, an area where LIGHTS continues to play a proactive role.



24. Dr. Sulagna Chattopadhyay's Lecture at University of Delhi on Spatial Econometrics and GIS

On March 27, 2026, Dr. Sulagna Chattopadhyay, Secretary General, LIGHTS, delivered an expert lecture at the One-Week Workshop on Indian Official Statistics organised by the Delhi School of Public Policy and Governance, University of Delhi. Her lecture, titled *"Interpreting Spatial Econometrics with GIS,"* was addressed to Ph.D. scholars of the Delhi School of Economics.

The session was introduced by Prof. Dibyendu Maiti, Programme Coordinator and Professor, Delhi School of Economics, who emphasised the relevance of integrating GIS with economic analysis. In her lecture, Dr. Chattopadhyay explained key concepts of spatial econometrics, highlighting how geographic, environmental, and institutional factors influence economic

outcomes. She demonstrated the integration of quantitative and qualitative datasets within a spatial framework to better understand regional dynamics and policy implications.

A major highlight of the lecture was a hands-on demonstration using GIS tools, where she illustrated spatial patterns of economic activity through real-world datasets and introduced analytical techniques such as spatial correlation and Principal Component Analysis (PCA). The session concluded with an interactive discussion, providing participants with practical insights into the application of geospatial tools in economic research and policymaking.

The lecture reflects LIGHTS' continued engagement in academic outreach and capacity building, promoting interdisciplinary approaches at the intersection of geography, data analytics, and public policy.

