

Press Release

CII Water Start-up Conclave 2026

From Idea to Impact

9 April 2026, Silver Oak, India Habitat Centre, New Delhi

“From Idea to Impact” Collaborative efforts required to accelerate scale up of Water Startups and Technology Adoption: CII Startup Conclave 2026

“Water sector remains underleveraged. However, by 2030–2040, climate change will place severe stress on both water availability and quality, making innovation and technology adoption absolutely critical.” stressed Dr Ram Prasath Manohar, IAS, Chairman, Bengaluru Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB). He was speaking at the CII Startup Conclave with the theme “From Idea to Impact” organized by CII Water Institute, in New Delhi today.

Dr. Manohar highlighted the critical role of collaboration across industry, startups, academia, and public utilities in addressing water challenges. Drawing from Bengaluru’s recent water crisis, he shared examples of how innovative startup solutions—such as water-saving devices, IoT-based groundwater monitoring, leak detection, energy optimization, and decentralized sewage treatment helped in improving efficiency, reduced losses, and supported in financial sustainability of the utility.

He also highlighted the need for tackling emerging threats like PFAS and microplastics and stressed on innovation, startup–industry collaboration and adoption of pilot-to-scale frameworks for bringing sustainable water management solutions.

Mr Jayateerth Nadgir, Chief Executive, Murugappa Water Technology & Solutions, Nadgir highlighted the need to shift focus in the water and cleantech startup ecosystem from valuations to real, measurable impact. He noted that while high-profile startups often gain attention, critical innovations in water remain under-recognized despite their significant societal value. He emphasized the importance of building technology cohorts where complementary solutions can jointly address complex water challenges.

He urged stakeholders to move beyond water neutrality towards achieving water positivity. He also underscored that the success of such initiatives depends on sustained partnerships, pilot-to-scale approaches, and meaningful engagement.

He stressed on the need for shaping water policies and regulatory frameworks such that the solutions are tailored to national needs and realities, thereby enabling a strong, scalable, and impact-driven water ecosystem.

Mr Vishal Mehra, Vice President and Strategic Business Unit Head, Water and Wastewater Solutions, Thermax Limited, Director, TSA Process Equipment Pvt. Ltd. highlighted how integrating startup ideas and technology can drive transformation across industries. He emphasized leveraging young talent and innovation to solve complex challenges.

He stressed that delivering real value to customers must remain central to providing solutions. Drawing parallels to the water sector, he called for problem-solving, innovation, and collaboration to address critical challenges, and urged a collective commitment to protect water resources for future generations.

Ms Usha Subramaniam, Country President, Grundfos Pumps India Private Limited emphasized that India's water challenges require systemic convergence across policymakers, industry, startups, and institutions. She highlighted water as a critical resource linked to development, energy, climate, and economic competitiveness, stressing that fragmented approaches are no longer sufficient.

She underlined the need for integrated, system-level solutions supported by digital technologies such as AI and IoT to improve efficiency, reduce losses, and optimize energy use. However, she noted that many proven solutions remain at pilot stages and must be scaled through enabling policy frameworks, innovative procurement models, and stronger partnerships. She called for enabling policy frameworks, innovative procurement models, and stronger partnerships to drive adoption. She also stressed investing in skills and capacity building, calling for a holistic ecosystem approach to drive sustainable, technology-led transformation in the water sector.

Ms Shilpa Nischal, Executive Director, CII Water Institute concluding the session underscored that water is a shared resource and its conservation and management calls for integrated, system-level solutions, stronger partnerships, and moving innovations from pilots to scalable, impactful outcomes.

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