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Sustainability: India's Next Big Job Market

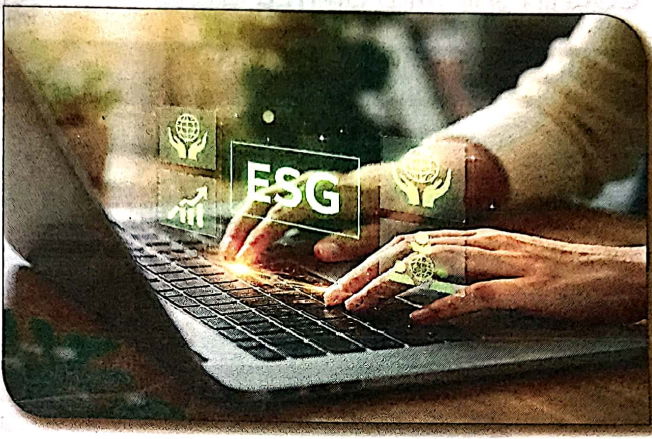
Dr. Muneer Ahmad Magry

The global economy is shifting from a sole focus on revenue generation to a broader emphasis on sustainability. In this transition, India is emerging as a significant player in the sustainability space. Guided by strong national climate commitments—such as the Prime Minister's *Panchamrit* pledge and enhanced Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)—India has launched several major initiatives. These include *LIFE* (Lifestyle for Environment) and national missions focused on solar energy, sustainable agriculture, Green India, green hydrogen, and the *Swachh Bharat Mission*. Together, these efforts are not only advancing India's environmental goals but also creating a rapidly growing job market in sustainability. This expanding ecosystem offers meaningful and future-oriented career opportunities for both young professionals and seasoned managers alike.

According to the *Renewable Energy and Jobs: Annual Review 2025* by the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) and the International Labour Organization (ILO), global renewable energy employment reached about 16.6 million jobs in 2024, marking a record high. Within this global landscape, India accounted for approximately 1.28 million jobs, representing around 7–8% of total global renewable energy employment.

In 2024, solar *photovoltaics* (PV) remained the largest source of renewable energy employment globally including India, supporting more than 7 million jobs worldwide. Other major contributors to global renewable employment included biofuels, hydropower, and wind energy, each accounting for substantial shares of the workforce.

The report emphasises that continued renewable energy deployment will sustain job growth, with education, upskilling, and inclusive workforce policies supporting strong expansion. Broader IRENA modeling suggests that under ambitious energy transition pathways, global renewable energy employment could rise to around 30 million by 2030 and approximately 43 million by 2050, indicating significant long-term opportunities. For India, parallel analyses project that accelerated renewable capacity expansion and broader green economic growth could generate tens of millions of jobs by 2047, with some estimates reaching up to 48 million full-time-equivalent jobs.



Demand from Industry

Multiple sectors/industries irrespective of their business operations are forging a greater demand for green jobs. The government established the Skill Council for Green Jobs (SCGJ) in October 2015 to cater the market demand and address skilled manpower requirements for emerging climate resilient technologies and India's commitments under the UNFCCC. So far, government has been able to develop 44 nationally-approved qualifications across various sub-domains (e.g. renewable energy, waste management, etc.), along with supplementing coursework and content. For example, with support from the International Solar Alliance, SCGJ has undertaken training of over 1300 stakeholders from 82 ISA member countries across various aspects of solar energy. Government is doing its part through SCGJ, but it is important for other players and stakeholders to come forward and play a bigger role in creating skill force that would cater the needs in green job market in the coming years.

Green Jobs: Roles and Responsibilities

Often referred to as green jobs, sustainability careers span roles that drive environmental protection, resource efficiency, and inclusive growth across sectors like clean energy, waste and water management, sustainable agriculture, circular economy, and environmental research. Today, demand for sustainability talent is rising sharply in corporate ESG teams, consulting, green finance, government missions, and development organisations. With India's clean energy transition accelerating, the job market is expanding fast with renewable energy alone already supporting over 1 million jobs. Key career pathways include Sustainability Manager, ESG Reporting Specialist, Climate Strategy Analyst, Green Finance Analyst, EHS Officer, Supply Chain Sustainability Lead, and Circular Economy Expert, making sustainability a core business competency, not a niche function.

Featured Example: MBA in Sustainable Development & Management at Nalanda University

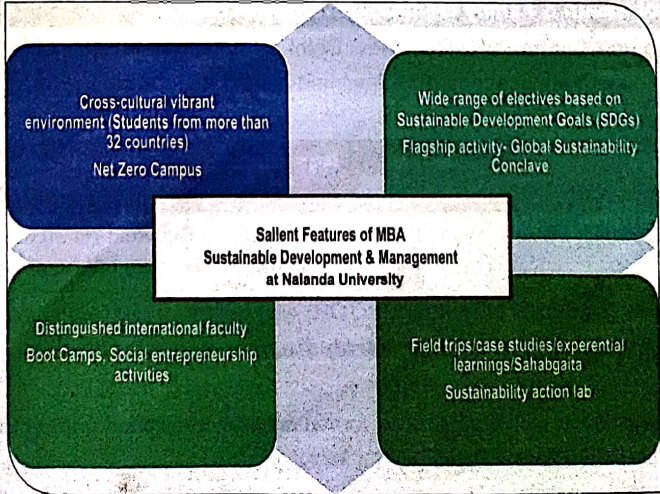
One leading programme in this space is the MBA in Sustainable Development & Management offered by Nalanda University. This 74-credit, two-year full-time programme, open to Indian and international students, blends interdisciplinary learning with experiential engagement. It emphasises case discussions, industry visits, simulations, and internships to build both practical and analytical skill-sets and aims to fulfill global businesses' human resource needs by providing specialised managerial force in sustainable development and management. These potential managers are not only conscious of the growing needs of businesses concerning profitability and risk management but they are well-versed in how businesses



respond to environmental and social risks and engage with stakeholders, including investors, communities, and customers.

Salient Features of the Course

- Strong Industry Integration:** The programme has established a growing presence in the sustainability talent ecosystem, with students gaining exposure and opportunities at leading national and international organisations such as GIZ (India), World Resources Institute India, Aga Khan Foundation, ONGC, Bukit Asam, Indian Oil Corporation, Bharat Petroleum, Oil India, UN Global Compact, GAIL, Earl V. Snyder Institute for Innovation, Syracuse University, Brillio, Tata Steel, Tata Fintech, and the Center for Responsible Business.
- Holistic Sustainability Framework:** The curriculum offers a comprehensive roadmap for achieving sustainable economic



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