

Religious institutions pledge climate action at the first ever Climate Conference at Mahakumbh

- *First ever conference on faith and climate change held at Mahakumbh.*
- *UP CM Yogi Adityanath inaugurates the conference and calls for greater role of religious and faith-based organisations in solving climate crisis.*
- *Over 30 speakers from religious institutions, government, academia and civil society discuss climate change and sustainable living.*
- *UP Government pledges support and announces programme to “green” religious centers and gatherings.*

February 16, 2025, Prayagraj: The Mahakumbh mela 2025, the world’s largest spiritual gathering, which drew a record 50 crore people, hosted the first ever Conclave on Faith and Climate Change. Organised by Directorate of Environment, Government of Uttar Pradesh, and supported by environment research organisation, iFOREST, the event titled ‘Faith of Kumbh and Climate Change’ saw over 1,000 participants and 30 speakers representing religious institutions, government bodies, civil society and academia.

Hon’ble Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, inaugurated the conclave and highlighted the profound and deep-rooted connection India has always had to its environment.

He said, “We are proud to have welcomed 52 crore people to the Mahakumbh this year. The preparations began a long time ago. We broadened our river channels, cleaned our rivers and greened our lands for pilgrims to arrive. Our forest department planted 210 crore plants over the last several years. The message from this holy Mahakumbh is that we need to channel our faith to conserve our environment”.

The climate conclave comes at a time when climate change and environmental degradation are intensifying globally. With its deep connection to sacred rivers and spiritual traditions, the Kumbhmela offers an extraordinary platform to influence societal consciousness. Seeing this as the perfect opportunity to galvanise climate action, the Uttar Pradesh Government organised the event.

“Our upanishads teach us that the entire world is a creation of the almighty. We should use it not exploit it. Vasudaiva Kutumbakam sees the world as one. Our rivers, animals, forests, every life form in this entire ecosystem not only takes but give back to the environment. Even the small creatures like bees give back. Humans are a part of this ecosystem. We must understand our duty to the environment and learn to give,” said Swami Mukundananda, Founder, Jagadguru Kripalu Yog Trust.

“At a time like this, when climate crisis is impacting every part of the world, religious and spiritual leaders must play a pivotal role in inspiring sustainable practices and climate action,” said Manoj Kumar Singh, Chief Secretary, Government of UP, while releasing the ‘Mahakumbh Declaration on Climate Change’.

The conclave seeks to bridge the sacred and the sustainable, recognising that faith communities—with their moral authority and grassroots reach—are indispensable allies in the fight against the climate crisis.

“We have worshipped the creator for so long, let us now forget the creation. We must preserve and protect it. If we go on like this, we will neither have Ganga nor Yamuna. These will be mere stories. Our nation can only progress if our environment progresses. It isn’t just water. This is Amrit. If there is no climate action, the next Kumbh will be on mere sand, not river,” said Swami Chidanand Saraswati, President of Paramarth Niketan.

“Religion and faith hold immense power to influence society. Climate action cannot succeed unless it resonates culturally and emotionally with the masses. Unlike scientists or policymakers, faith leaders know how to take a message to a people,” said Dr. Chandra Bhushan, President and CEO of iFOREST.

A cornerstone of the conclave is the Uttar Pradesh Government’s pledge to “green” religious institutions. The state envisions religious centers and shrines becoming models of sustainability. This includes installing solar panels, implementing rainwater harvesting systems, recycling waste, banning single-use plastics, and creating green zones around sacred spaces. The state’s pledge also includes funding faith-based organisations to promote environmental and climate education, campaigns, and actionable practices. Initiatives like eco-friendly pilgrimages, green festivals, and sustainable temple management can reduce the carbon footprint of religious practices.

Panel sessions included role of religious leaders in environmental protection and climate change mitigation; sacred rivers, water security and climate change and role of governments in supporting faith-based organisations in climate action.

The conclave saw speakers such as Shalini Mehrotra (from Shri Ram Chandra Mission), Gauri Singh (International Renewable Energy Agency) and academics such as Shri Upendra Tripathi (National Institute of Advanced Studies, Indian Institute of Science), Shri Rajendra Ratnoo (National Institute of Disaster Management (NIDM)) and Sachin S Gunthe (Indian Institute of Technology Madras). It also saw civil society leaders such as Dr. Rajendra Singh (Waterman of India) and Industry leaders such as Prabodh Acharya (JSW group).