

International Coastal Clean-up (ICC) Day 2024 New Digha Beach, West Bengal, 21 September 2024



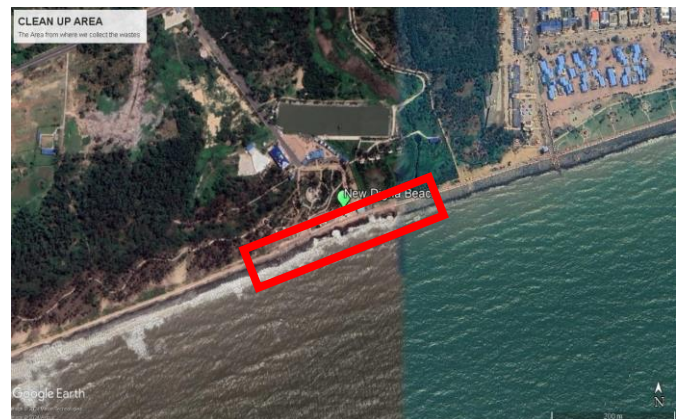
The International Coastal Clean-up (ICC) Day 2024 was successfully organized on 21 September 2024 at New Digha Beach, East Midnapore district, West Bengal. The program was coordinated by Dr. Punarbasu Chaudhuri, Department of Environmental Science and Genetics, University of Calcutta, in association with the National Centre for Coastal Research (NCCR) under the Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES), Government of India.

ICC Day is observed globally on the third Saturday of September, in collaboration with UNEP and SACEP in South Asia. In 2024, the event was part of the national Swachh Sagar,

Surakshit Sagar 3.0 campaign, during which more than 80 coastal locations across India were cleaned. The initiative aimed to restore coastal ecosystems, raise public awareness, encourage community participation, and collect scientific data on marine litter.

Study Area

New Digha Beach is a semi-urban sandy beach and one of West Bengal's most popular tourist destinations. Located at 21.6185° N, 87.5076° E, it lies approximately 190 km southwest of Kolkata. The cleaned area extended 1200 m in length and 210 m in width, covering a total area of 252,000 m². The beach is bordered by a seawall and road and is lined with numerous food stalls, shops, and recreational facilities. Routine beach cleaning is conducted weekly by the Digha Sankarpur Development Authority (DSDA). Due to intense tourism, fishing activity, and seasonal influx of visitors, the beach experiences significant waste accumulation, making it a critical site for intervention.



Objectives

The primary objectives of the program were:

1. Environmental restoration through removal of marine litter
2. Awareness generation and education on coastal conservation
3. Community and stakeholder engagement
4. Data collection for research and policy development
5. Biodiversity protection from harmful debris
6. Promotion of citizen science through volunteer participation

Participation and Implementation

A total of over 80 participants took part in the event, including:

- 45 members from the University of Calcutta
- Students from Ramnagar College and Jadavpur University
- Members of Howrah Vigyan Chetna Samannaya
- Local fishermen from Ananda Disha Foundation

The event began with an awareness rally from the Digha Science Centre and National Science Camp. Volunteers were trained in safety protocols, waste segregation, and data recording. They were equipped with gloves, bags, caps, and T-shirts and divided into groups to systematically clean the beach in strips. Waste was segregated into plastic, glass, metal, paper, rubber, cloth, wood, and other categories following the NCCR questionnaire format. The segregated waste was later handed over to KGN Enterprise for proper recycling and disposal. Expert talks by scientists, forest officials, and waste management professionals enhanced awareness among participants, tourists, and local stakeholders.



Key Achievements

- 56.91 kg of waste removed from the beach
- 3,675 litter items collected
- Engagement of diverse stakeholders including students, NGOs, fishermen, and tourists
- Successful segregation and recycling of collected waste
- Widespread public awareness through rallies, direct interaction, and media coverage

Findings

The clean-up resulted in the removal of 56.91 kg of waste counting a total of 3675 litter items. The collected wastes are

- Plastic: 41%
- Cloth: 20%
- Rubber: 34%
- Wood: 2%

Commonly found items included plastic cups, food wrappers, fishing nets, foam materials, footwear, cigarette butts, and polythene bags. The findings indicate tourism-related litter and fishing gear as major contributors to beach pollution. A notable observation was the discovery of a six-legged ground beetle trapped in ghost fishing gear, highlighting the severe ecological impacts of discarded fishing materials on both terrestrial and marine organisms.



Separation of each type of waste collected from the beach

Community Outreach Extension

The coastal clean-up program was extended as a World Rivers Day 2024 outreach activity on 22 September 2024, linking river health to coastal pollution. An awareness rally and seminar focused on river conservation and protection of the endangered Ganges River Dolphin. Scientists, university officials, forest officers, students, and local fishermen participated, emphasizing the connection between riverine pollution, estuarine ecosystems, and coastal health.



Prof. Debasis Das, Registrar of University of Calcutta participated on the programme of World Rivers Day 2024

Challenges

Key challenges included limited long-term funding, logistical constraints in large coastal areas, and the persistent issue of behavioural change related to littering and waste disposal.

Recommendations

1. Secure sustainable funding and institutional support
2. Strengthen education and awareness initiatives
3. Advocate stricter waste management and plastic reduction policies
4. Enhance collaboration with local vendors, authorities, and communities
5. Integrate routine monitoring of microplastics and mesoplastics into cleanup protocols

Conclusion

The ICC Day 2024 program at New Digha Beach demonstrated the effectiveness of collaborative action in mitigating coastal pollution, generating scientific data, and fostering environmental stewardship. The integration of cleanup activities with scientific research and community outreach provides a strong model for future coastal conservation initiatives.

Acknowledgement

The organizers sincerely acknowledge the support of NCCR, Ministry of Earth Sciences, participating universities, NGOs, local communities, volunteers, recycling partners, and media organizations for making the event a success.