



culture

world environment day

INDULGE
THE NEW INDIAN EXPRESS
FRIDAY, JUNE 5, 2026 | BENGALURU

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Environment Day, the Bengaluru's much-loved Earth Festival, is scheduled to be held on June 5th at the Visthar Campus. This year's theme, 'Restore, Reclaim', explores how communities, artistes, farmers, storytellers and sustainable enterprises are collectively responding to the climate crisis through culture, creativity and everyday action. The festival will feature immersive workshops on indigenous food traditions and climate resilience, folk music and storytelling performances, theatre engagements, sustainability-focused activities, alongside a regenerative marketplace featuring over 70 ethical and eco-conscious brands and collectives. We speak to Mercy Kapen (co-founder of Visthar) and Nazar PS (co-curator of *Bhoomi Habba*) to learn what festival-goers can expect from this year's edition.

Could you break down the philosophy behind this year's theme and how it has been physically and conceptually woven into the layout, design and interactive spaces across the campus this year?

Mercy Kapen: We focused heavily on specific crises — like the water crisis, plastic pollution or building general climate resilience. This year, 'Restore, Reclaim' moves the focus from surviving climate change to actively exploring solutions. 'Restore' is about healing our damaged ecosystems, soil and water bodies and restoring our symbiotic relationship with the earth.

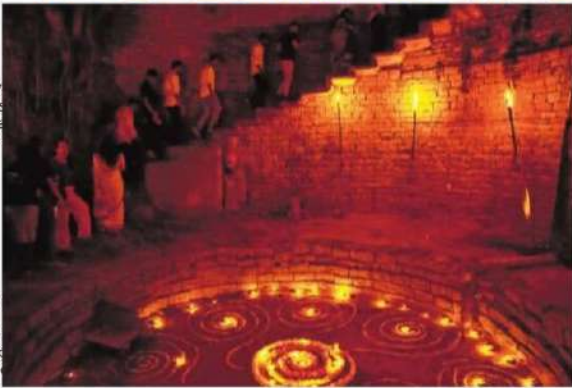
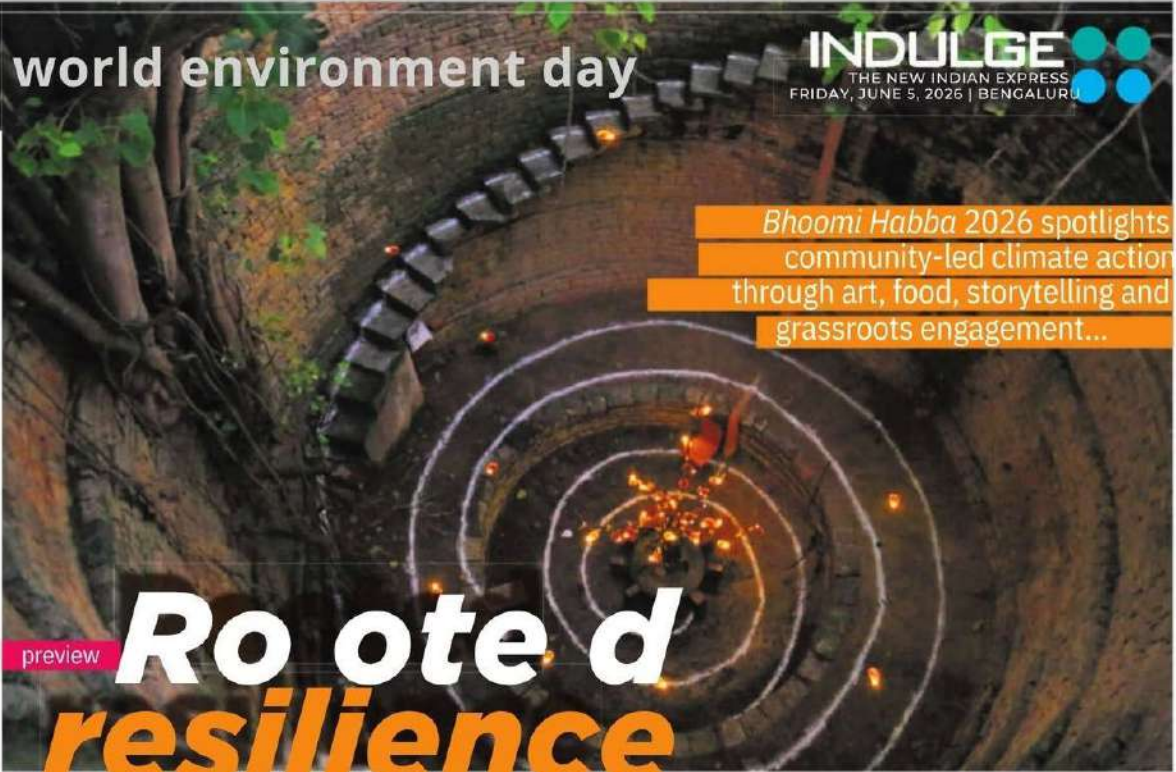
'Reclaim' is about common people taking back their power and ownership over environmental solutions. The core philosophy is that the most sustainable paths to climate action belong to communities working together at the grassroots level. This year, the physical layout is explicitly categorised to map out community paths to climate action.

When you walk in through Gate 1, you are immediately greeted by interactive soil exhibitions and composting zones to visually document agricultural struggles and adaptation strategies through oral traditions. The goal was to give marginalised voices a major platform to tell their own stories, shifting the climate narrative away from academic panic and toward human resilience.

Who are the headline performers this year and how do their specific acts translate complex climate issues into accessible art? Mercy: Art simplifies what science can sometimes make intimidating. This year, our lineup features the Indian Folk Band, who will deliver environmental songs breaking down how shifts in weather patterns

Bhoomi Habba 2026 spotlights community-led climate action through art, food, storytelling and grassroots engagement...

preview **Rooted resilience**



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Glimpses from last year's edition

impact traditional crop cycles. Nearby on the same stage, Parvathy Narippatta and Ajay Srinidhi present *Echoes of Kobir*, translating deep oral wisdom into human stories. Over at the Amphitheatre, Megha Malhar will perform *Breathing Roots*, a somatic movement performance that visualises data about forest degradation. The musical energy culminates in a heavy percussion concluding event from 5 pm to 7 pm at the Amphitheatre, featuring Balu Djembe, a *tamate* team from Chitradurga and special theatre and dance presentations.

Theatre engagements at the *habba* are known for being deeply thought-provoking. What specific contemporary environmental plots or grassroots struggles will the theatre groups focus on this year?

Nazar: Our theatre section is focusing heavily on contemporary, real-world conflicts this year. Audiences will see performances tackling the human cost of rapid urban expansion, corporate exploitation of indigenous lands and the systemic realities of environmental injustice — particularly how climate change hits marginalised women and rural communities hardest. These real-world struggles will be brought to life across the campus landscape rather than on traditional stages. Renuka Renu will stage *Poetree* right under the shade of the tamarind tree, while a dedicated production by Mariyamma Chudi will be performed under the mango tree.

What kind of talks are scheduled to help attendees translate policy-level climate anxieties into collective civic actions?

Mercy: We know people are anxious about the environment, but don't know where to start. Our conversation circles are specifically designed to bridge that gap. Instead of boring, top-down lectures, we have interactive talk circles featuring community leaders, urban activists and grassroots organisers. At the Main Office space, Ramya Iyer will host *Story Heart Circles* to help attendees process climate anxieties. To translate these feelings into direct civic action, we have hands-on interactive sessions like the *Waste Management Workshop* by the *ClimActive Initiative*, as well as the *Theatre for Climate Action* led by Ravi Ramaswamy and performative storytelling by Anish Victor.

Why is reviving indigenous culinary wisdom critical to reclaiming our climate future and what hands-on experiences do participants expect?

Nazar: Reclaiming our food system is one of the fastest ways to fight climate change because indigenous culinary wisdom relies on biodiversity and hyper-local, climate-resilient ingredients that require minimal water and zero chemical fertilisers. At the Mandapa, Kashmira Rao from the *Athmashakti Trust* will lead a specialised workshop on *Indigenous Food Traditions*. Stalls like the *Timbaktu Collective* will serve authentic *Ragi Mudde* and *Natu Kodi* Chicken, while Smitha's Kitchen showcases regional coastal resilience with *Appam*, *Stew* and *Malabar Fish Curry*. You can also sample traditional, nutrient-dense regional meals at the Bandhavi Khanavali stall and healthy, gut-friendly millet dishes at The Tummy Temple.

The marketplace features over 70 ethical and eco-conscious brands and collectives. What can consumers shop for here? Mercy: For shoppers, the marketplace is a massive, low-waste lifestyle destination spread across specialised curation zones. The CRC Courtyard serves as a core hub for organic farm staples, heirloom millets and sustainable crafts. The Aala Zone forms a dedicated clus-

ter for naturally dyed handlooms, *khadi* and upcycled garments. What sustainability-focused activities and interactive learning setups can green-minded adults actively participate in during the day?

Mercy: *Bhoomi Habba* is very much an active, participative festival rather than a passive viewing experience. For adults, we have a packed lineup of practical workshops running all day concurrently across our campus. Visitors can learn the physical craft of recycling fibres at Visthar's Srujana Recycled Paper Unit, engage in tactile creation with the *Abheek Academy* team or give DIY upcycling and block-printing activities a try. For those interested in sustainable engineering, Antara Mukherjee will guide participants through mechanical *Karakuri* puppet-making using eco-friendly materials. Finally, for attendees looking to understand urban biodiversity firsthand, David Selvaraj will lead an *Immersive Nature Walk* directly through our eco sanctuary.

Entry: ₹50. June 6, 10 am – 7 pm.
At KRC Road, Dadda Gubbi.
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Mercy Kappen