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PRESS-RELEASE

IIT (ISM) Dhanbad Organises Sea Beach Cleaning Campaign at Digha Ahead of Rath Yatra

In a proactive step towards marine conservation and the Sustainable Development Goal 14 – *Life Below Water*, the Department of Environmental Science and Engineering, IIT (ISM) Dhanbad, in collaboration with Visionlife Human Rights Foundation, organised a two-day Sea Beach Cleaning Campaign at Digha, West Bengal, on June 24 and 25.

Over 100 volunteers took part in the campaign, which focused on reducing, recycling, and reusing plastic waste. The initiative was strategically timed ahead of the upcoming Rath Yatra on June 27, 2025, and the recent inauguration of the Jagannath Temple, which is expected to draw over 20 lakh visitors in the first 15 days alone. The massive influx of pilgrims is likely to significantly strain the solid waste management infrastructure of the town.

Volunteers cleaned the areas surrounding the Jagannath Temple premises, the sea beach, and the marine drive, collecting several quintals of plastic waste. The collected waste was handed over to Digha Municipality for proper disposal. The initiative received appreciation from local residents, tourists, and civic authorities alike, with many lauding the effort for raising awareness about marine pollution caused by plastic waste.

Digha, known as the "Brighton of the East" since 1760, is a popular tourist destination, attracting around 5 million visitors annually. It is home to a diverse ecosystem, including red crabs, olive ridley sea turtles, and rich mangrove vegetation. However, the exponential growth of tourism, coupled with the rise of commercial establishments, has intensified challenges related to plastic waste management, especially during peak seasons.

The campaign was spearheaded by Shri Rakesh Kumar Singh, PhD Scholar, and Prof. Biswajit Paul, Head, Centre for Mining Environment, Department of Environmental Science and Engineering, IIT (ISM) Dhanbad. Speaking on the campaign, Prof. Paul said, "This initiative not only cleans the beach but also educates the public on the urgent need to protect our marine ecosystems from plastic pollution."

With events like this, IIT (ISM) Dhanbad continues to take meaningful steps toward environmental sustainability and community engagement.

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