

ENVIRONMENT JUSTICE MATTERS

A Bi-weekly News Digest from
the Environment Support Group

ESG Features



In The Name Of “Green” Solar Power Project, Azure Power And APDCL Snatching Lands Of Ryots In Mikir Bamuni Grant: Press Release

Adivasis and farming communities of Mikir Bamuni Grant village in the north eastern Indian state of Assam have been protesting forceful takeover of their land for a 15 MW solar power plant promoted by Azure Power Forty Private Ltd. The village falls in the constituency of two-time Chief Minister Prafulla Kumar Mahanta who has not extended any help to the distressed communities.

A fact finding committee formed by Delhi Forum constituted of 2017 Goldman Environmental Prize Awardee and National Alliance of Peoples Movement Advisor Prafulla Samantara from Odisha, Leo Saldanha and Bhargavi Rao from Environment Support Group, Karnataka and Amit Kumar from Delhi Forum visited the impacted communities and met with various officials of the State and also the company during 26-29 January 2021. Prima facie there appears to have been systematic violation of various laws and policies, and also brutal violation of human rights which includes arrests of at least four who are in jail for several months now. [Read more](#)

The Need to Protect Lake Systems



In [this report](#) in the Deccan Herald, Akhil Kadidal reports that several heavy metals from Bangalore's contaminated lakes are finding their way into crops and vegetables consumed by Bengalureans. Leo Saldanha of ESG [weighs in](#) and describes how these toxic contamination pathways have closed and what needs to be done to rejuvenate and protect lakes, and ensure people can access healthy food.



Saving Loktak Lake and the Local Communities it Supports

Governments of Manipur and India are proposing a slew of mass tourism and infrastructure projects in the Loktak Wetland, Manipur. These projects are being backed by Wetlands International through its so-called ‘wise use’ plan for Loktak. On the occasion of International Wetlands Day 2021 (2nd February), [Ngamee Lup](#), a federation of fishing unions of Manipur, in coordination with Indigenous Perspectives and ESG, launched a campaign demanding Wetlands International withdraw its ‘wise use’ plan that has been developed undemocratically, does not conform to the Ramsar Guidelines and attack human rights and environment. This event witnessed active participation of local communities, fish workers and civil society. See a [press release](#) of the campaign released from Phumlen Pat, Manipur.

We also invite you to support this critical initiative to save Loktak for posterity by signing this [campaign statement](#). You can also follow updates on the campaign on [Facebook](#) and read more about the issue at this online [database](#). Background to this campaign is accessible [here](#).



Changing Lives And Livelihoods Of Challakere: Impressions of The Unscientific Science City

In January 2021, the team from ESG visited villages of Challakere, in Karnataka’s Chitradurga district which are impacted by the ‘Science City’ project. The accounts of the impacted communities reveal how much they have lost, and how their grievances remain unattended by the State. They have, however, resiliently persisted to continue their farming, pastoral and artisanal livelihoods in the face of a climate of fear unleashed by security forces, and continue their struggle to protect last remaining patches of Amrit Mahal Kavals - once pristine grasslands that supported the Indian Cheetah and large populations of Great Indian Bustard and other species now critically endangered. See this [photo essay](#) by Ashwin Lobo of ESG.

Climate Change



By Manu Moudgil, IndiaSpend, 19 January 2021

India's Biggest Spenders Cause 7 Times More Emissions Than The Poor

"The top 20% of high-expenditure households in India are responsible for seven times the emissions traceable to the poor who spend less than \$1.9 a day, says a recent [study](#) by the Japan-based [Research Institute for Humanity and Nature](#). The mean carbon footprint of every Indian was estimated at 0.56 tonne per year--0.19 tonne per capita among the poor and 1.32 tonne among the rich." [Read More](#)

What's your 'Carbon Footprint'? [Check here.](#)



By Staff, Business Insider, 25 January, 2021

India among top 10 most affected countries in Global Climate Risk Index 2021, says environmental think tank Germanwatch

"India is among the top 10 most affected countries in the [Global Climate Risk Index 2021](#) published by the Bonn-based environmental think tank [Germanwatch](#). It said vulnerable people in developing countries suffered the most from extreme weather events like storms, floods and heat waves, while the impacts of climate change are visible around the globe." [Read More](#)

Energy



By Julien Bouyssou, Investors' Corner, 21 January 2021

Rare earth metals – How to limit the impact of the clean energy transition?

Because of the [transition to low-carbon technologies](#), demand for rare earths is expected to shoot up. More and more, rare earth metals are being used in sustainable energy applications such as wind power generation and electric vehicles, via permanent magnets containing the metals. While end products using rare earths will help lower greenhouse gas emissions through cleaner energy production and use, there are environmental and social issues that need to be addressed." [Read More](#)

History made: Renewable energy surpassed fossil fuels for European electricity in 2020

“Europeans got more of their electricity from renewable sources than fossil fuels for the first time last year, according to an annual [report](#) from [Ember and Agora Energiewende](#). The report, which has been tracking the EU's power sector since 2015, found that renewables delivered 38% of electricity last year, compared to 37% delivered by fossil fuels. The shift comes as other sources, such as wind and solar power, have risen in the European Union.

[Read More](#)



By Jazmin Goodwin, CNN Business, 25 January 2021

A Worrying Windfall

“In late 2019 loggers started arriving in Ewegono, a village on the Curaray river in the Ecuadorian Amazon. They were looking for balsa, whose wood is used in blades for wind-power turbines. At first, villagers grabbed chainsaws, axes and machetes to cut it down”, says Ewegono’s leader. Soon the harvest became a free-for-all. The origin of the crisis lies oceans away, in growing demand for wind power from the world’s largest economies.”

[Read more](#)



By Staff, The Economist, 30 January 2021

Solid Waste Management

Indigenous remedy for efficient management of solid waste

As cities grapple with challenges of solid waste management , social activist Vishwanath Patil comes up with an indigenously-developed Swachh Swast Waste Bin Project aimed at facilitating efficient solid waste management, particularly of wet waste. After a lot of trial and error, he has converted a sports utility vehicle into a fully automated auto tipper. But can it be replicated? [Read More](#)



By Special Correspondent, The Hindu, 29 January, 2021



Waste agency gets legal clearance

The proposal to establish Bengaluru Solid Waste Management Ltd by carving it out of the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) has just received the first of many clearances, reports Bangalore Mirror. But can solid waste management, an obligatory function of the municipality, be outsourced? The legality of this proposal may need to be tested by Courts. [Read More](#)

By Naveen Menezes, Bangalore Mirror, 5 February, 2021



NGT pulls up Kerala for failure to comply with Solid Waste Management Rules, 2016

Kochi Corporation of Kerala has come under heavy criticism from the National Green Tribunal which records:

“The Municipal Corporation is still continuing unauthorised operations. Work is yet to start for bio-mining. Compensation has been assessed but not recovered. Windrow composting plant is in dilapidated condition. The affidavit of the Chief Secretary does not show that any effective action has been taken on the ground. Thus, the situation is far from satisfactory. One wonders whether the officers dealing with the matter lack competence or their Constitutional obligation to provide a clean environment to the citizens.” [Read More](#)

Biodiversity



'This Is Not A Committee Of Experts' : Karnataka HC Asks State Govt To Reconstitute Committee To Protect Great Indian Bustard

Karnataka High Court Chief Justice Mr. Abhay Oka and Justice Mr. Sachin Shankar Magadum has directed the Karnataka Government to reconstitute the advisory committee for conservation of the critically endangered Great Indian Bustard formed per its direction in a PIL filed by conversationalist Santosh Martin and others. [Read More](#)

By Mustafa Plumber, LiveLaw, 26 January 2021

Urban Issues



By Naveen Menezes, 1 Feb, 2021

Greens not upbeat over walk-in-the-woods plan

Turahalli Minor Forest in south Bangalore is again in the news for all the wrong reasons: the Karnataka Forest Department proposes to turn this wonderful landscape of boulders and valleys into a ‘tree park’ yielding to the demands of the *Bangalore Vision 2022* of Chief Minister B. S. Yediyurappa. This has brought out an interesting debate on how we can relate with forests that are urbanised. As ESG works on developing a deeper analysis of how the city can become comfortable with wild spaces, here’s an article that brings focus to the controversy. [Read More](#)

Law & Society



By Special Correspondent, *The Hindu*, 24 January 2021

Farmers abandon male calves at cattle fair

The Bharatiya Janata Party with its Hindu nationalist ideology has been finding ways to promote laws that seek to protect cows, but it has several ecological, economic and social consequences. “With no takers for male calves at the cattle fair in Channarayapatna, farmers abandoned 31 animals, forcing the taluk administration to take care of them....Many farmers had brought male calves expecting some buyers. However, there were no merchants interested in purchasing them, reportedly because of the new stringent anti-cow slaughter law.” [Read more](#)



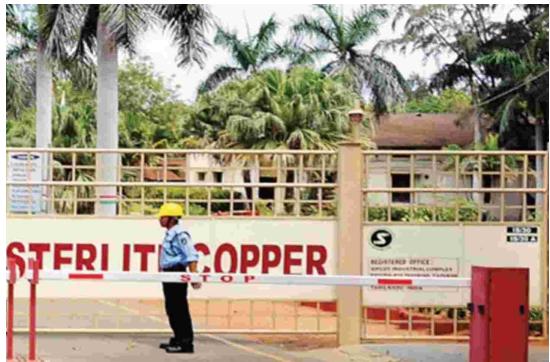
By Manuela Andreoni and Letícia Casado, *The New York Times*, 4 February, 2021

Vale Mining Company to Pay \$7 Billion in Compensation for Brazil Dam Collapse

“The Brazilian mining giant Vale signed an agreement on Thursday to pay \$7 billion in compensation to the state of Minas Gerais, two years after the collapse of one of its dams killed 270 people, also causing vast environmental damage. While the amount to be paid was less than what the state government initially demanded, state officials still called it the biggest settlement in Brazilian history.” [Read More](#)

Supreme Court Refuses To Recall Order Rejecting Vedanta's Interim Plea To Reopen Sterlite Plant Pending Appeal

"The Supreme Court on Friday refused to recall its order rejecting Vedanta's interim plea to reopen its Sterlite Copper smelting plant at Thoothukudi, Tamil Nadu till the pendency of the appeal. The company had moved the top court following the Madras High Court verdict in August that dismissed Vedanta's writ petition to reopen its copper smelter and upheld the state government's decision to shut it down." [Read More](#)



By Mehal Jain, LiveLaw, 22 January, 2021

After COVID, Davos Moves to Great Reset

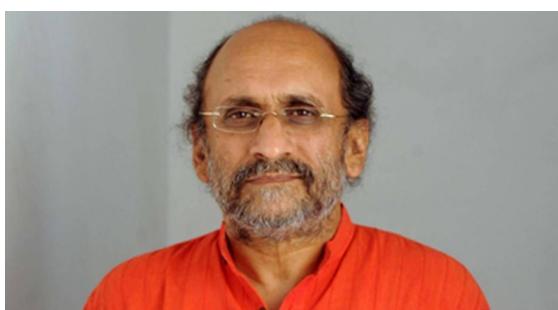
William Engdahl draws attention to a very dangerous development as the world reeled under the COVID pandemic. He analyses the "cabal of the world's most influential corporations and billionaires sit on the board of WEF with Kissinger's student, Klaus Schwab, along with the head of the UN and of the IMF, with the CEOs of the world's largest financial giants including Blackrock, BlackStone, Christine Lagarde of the European Central Bank, David Rubenstein of Carlyle group, Jack Ma, richest billionaire in China, is proof enough this Great Reset is not being done with our true interests at heart, despite their silky words. This dystopian agenda is 1984 on steroids. COVID-19 was merely the prelude." [Read More](#)



By F. William Engdahl, 25 January 2021

Defamation case: HC suspends non-bailable warrant against journalist Paranjoy Guha Thakurta

"The Gujarat High Court on Thursday suspended a non-bailable arrest warrant against senior journalist Paranjoy Guha Thakurta issued by a lower court in connection with a criminal complaint filed by Adani Power in 2017 alleging Thakurta of defamation... The criminal complaint was filed by Adani Power in December 2017 for a June 2017 article in Economic and Political Weekly (EPW) titled, "Modi Government's Rs 500-Crore Bonanza to the Adani Group". [Read more](#)



By Express News Service, 28 feb, 2021



By Adam Morton and Lisa Cox, The Guardian, 24 January, 2021

Net zero, saving koalas and forest wars: the crucial environment battles looming in Australia

"An interim report in July found Australia's environment was in [an unsustainable state of decline](#), and that the national conservation laws – the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act – were ineffective and needed substantial change. Meanwhile, the auditor general's office found the government and federal environment department [were failing in their duty to protect nature.](#)" [Read More](#)

Public Health

Covid deepened inequalities: wealth, education, gender

"A new report by [Oxfam](#) has found that the Covid pandemic deeply exacerbated existing inequalities in India and around the world. The report, titled '[The Inequality Virus](#)', has found that as the pandemic stalled the economy, forcing millions of poor Indians out of jobs, the richest billionaires in India increased their wealth by 35 per cent. India's top 100 billionaires saw their fortunes increase by Rs 12.97 trillion — enough money to give every one of the 138 million poorest Indians a cheque for Rs 94,045 each. In stark contrast, 170,000 people lost their jobs every hour in the month of April 2020, the report points out."

[Read More](#)



By Udit Misra, The Indian Express, 25 January 2021

Pharmaceutical giants not ready for next pandemic, report warns

"The world's biggest pharmaceutical firms are little prepared for the next pandemic despite a mounting response to the Covid-19 outbreak, an independent report has warned. Jayasree K Iyer, executive director of the Netherlands-based [Access to Medicine Foundation](#), highlighted an outbreak of the Nipah virus in China, with a fatality rate of up to 75%, as potentially the next big pandemic risk." [Read More](#)



By Julia Kollewe, The Guardian, 26 January, 2021



By Rowan Hooper, The Guardian, 28 January, 2021

Cash injection: could we cure all disease with a trillion dollars?

"When the dust settles on the Covid-19 disaster, we should have learned that preventing disease from spreading – or at least limiting it as much as possible – not only spares lives and improves our physical and mental wellbeing, but also saves jobs and the economy. And we will understand that prevention of illness through vaccines has to be equitable and it has to be global. Investment now in healthcare and in preparation for future threats prevents deaths and economic destruction later. And it opens the way to a longer, happier life – it opens the way to achieving more human potential." [Read More](#)

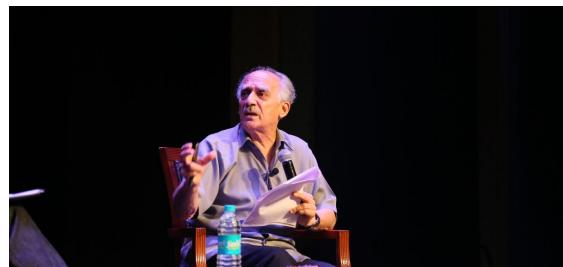


By Kairvy Grewal, The Print, 28 January 2021

India ranks 86 of 98 countries in Covid response index, New Zealand, Vietnam, Taiwan in top 3

"India has [ranked](#) 86th in a coronavirus performance index out of 98 countries, while New Zealand, Vietnam and Taiwan have been ranked the top three spots, respectively. The index was conducted by the [Australia-based Lowy Institute](#). [Read More](#)

Farming



By The Wire Staff, The Wire, 25 January 2021

Farmers' Protest Should Teach the Govt That Cleverness Doesn't Pay: Arun Shourie

Former Union Minister and a former leader of the Bharatiya Janata Party, states that "while farm laws have been the occasion, the protest is against the way the government does things. Demonetisation, a half-baked GST, the sudden decision to construct a new parliament, to reshape the Rajpath, bringing these laws by ordinance, and then ramming them through parliament without discussion, without referring them to the Standing Committee, without allowing a proper vote – what do these and a dozen other steps have in common? That things will just be announced as fait accompli, and you just have to swallow them". [Read More](#)

Rich Farmers, Global Plots, Local Stupidity

“Cutting off water and electricity to lakhs of human beings, exposing them to serious health hazards by doing so, having police and paramilitary barricade them into cut-off zones while imposing dangerously insanitary conditions on them, making it almost impossible for journalists to reach the protesting farmers, punishing a group that has already seen perhaps 200 of its own die, many from hypothermia, in the past two months. Anywhere in the world this would be seen as barbaric and an assault on human rights and dignity. What is worrying is the studied silence of so many otherwise articulate voices, some of whom have never failed to spring to the defence of power and cheerlead all such laws. You’d think even they would disapprove of this everyday trashing of democracy.” [Read More](#)



By P. Sainath, *The Wire*, 5 February, 2021

Environmental Governance

China’s Brahmaputra dam: A new paradigm of water governance needed

“China plans to develop a large-scale dam on the lower Yarlung Tsangpo (Brahmaputra). The mega dam is proposed inside the Grand Canyon of the Yarlung Tsangpo, where the river drops by 2,000 metres in a short span, making it an ideal place to harness hydropower. This could be the world’s largest dam, providing some 300 billion kilowatt hour of power every year. There is a fear that such large-scale damming of the river would affect the water flow downstream in India and Bangladesh. [Read More](#)



By Venkatesh Dutta, *Down to Earth*, 06 January, 2021

Comment: The lurking danger of India’s dying dams and failing reservoirs

“It is very encouraging to hear that India can [currently store](#) 257 billion cubic metres (BCM) of surface water in its reservoirs. Even more welcome is the prognosis that this quantity of water held in reservoirs [could be extended](#) to a maximum of 385 BCM in the near future. But are the storage capacities currently projected reliable? Indian dams and reservoirs are not getting any younger. In fact, many are dying or are already dead, and are alive only on paper. [Read More](#)



By J Harsha, *The Third Pole*, 1 February, 2021



By Nandini Oza, The wire, 5 February, 2021

Mulshi Satyagraha: Remembering India's First Anti-Dam Struggle in its 100th Year

Nandini Oza who has for decades organised opposition to the Narmada dam as part of Narmada Bachao Andolan, recalls "the first anti-dam struggle in India and possibly even the world, popularly known as the Mulshi satyagraha" which "was against the Tata company" a struggle that was "led by Pandurang Mahadev (Senapati) Bapat and V.M. Bhushkute in the early 1920s, spreading across not only the 52 submergence villages of the dam, but even outside, right up to Pune and beyond. What is important about this struggle a hundred years ago is that [even women participated in large numbers](#), and were jailed."

[Read More](#)

Biden to place environmental justice at center of sweeping climate plan

"President Biden made tackling America's persistent racial and economic disparities a central part of his plan to combat climate change Wednesday, prioritizing environmental justice for the first time in a generation. Biden signed an executive order establishing a White House interagency council on environmental justice, creating an office of health and climate equity at the Health and Human Services Department, and forming a separate environmental justice office at the Justice Department."

[Read More](#)



By Juliet Eilperin, Jan. 27, 2021, Washington Post



By Manoj Genani, The Third Pole
Jan. 20, 2021

Women in Pakistan's Sindh win historic recognition to manage water

"A [landmark amendment](#) passed by the Sindh province's legislative assembly for the recognised – for the first time – the role of women farmers in water management. The Sindh Water Management (Amendment) Bill, 2018 now guarantees women's representation in around 45,000 water course associations, over 350 farmer organisations, and 14 area water boards in the province.[Read More](#)



By Krishnadas Rajagopal, *The Hindu*, 4 February 2021

'300 felled trees will cost ₹2.2 billion in products, including oxygen'

"The Supreme Court on Wednesday took judicial notice of its expert committee report, which said the felling of 300 heritage trees to construct five Railway over-bridges in West Bengal will cost India a staggering ₹2,23,50,00,000 (₹2.2 billion). The 10-digit figure was arrived at by the committee after calculating the products these trees would produce over 100 years of their natural lifetime. The committee's valuation included oxygen, micro-nutrients, compost and bio-fertiliser, besides the trees being valuable members of the natural environment." [Read More](#)



By Beth Pitts, *Extinction Rebellion*, 4 February, 2021

Yaku Pérez: The Indigenous Water Defender Who Might be Ecuador's Next President

As the world reels under the leadership of tyranny, in Ecuador, a miracle is waiting to happen. An environmental lawyer of rare prescience is poised to be the next President! There is after all the certainty of daybreak after a long dark night, it appears. "Against all odds, an indigenous water defender is among the top three candidates in Ecuador's presidential election, to be held on 7th February. If he wins, Yaku Pérez, who has been imprisoned several times for his struggle to protect water sources from transnational metal mining, plans to stop the expansion of extractive industries in Ecuador. Refusing corporate donations and running a campaign staffed entirely by volunteers, Pérez risks assassination daily as he tours the country in the run-up to the election, arriving in town after town on his bamboo bicycle." [Read More](#)



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