

ENVIRONMENT JUSTICE MATTERS

A Bi-weekly News Digest from
the Environment Support Group

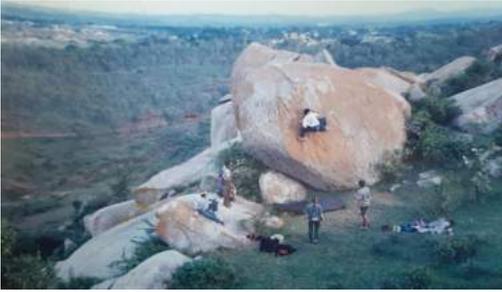
Urgent!



Outrageously violating rule of law, Delhi Police pick up Disha Ravi from Bangalore and arrest her in Delhi next day

In an act that is condemned as [blatantly illegal](#) and constituting a case of '[extra-judicial abduction](#)', Bangalore based [climate activist Disha Ravi](#) was taken out from the safety of her home by Delhi Police, flown to Delhi without transit remand and produced the next day (14th February) in a Magistrate's Court where she was [remanded to 5 days police custody](#). The case? Disha, along with lawyer Nikita Jacob and Shantanu Muluk have worked with international climate activist and youth icon [Greta Thunberg](#) to support the ongoing farmers protest using online toolkits, which Delhi Police say contains seditious material and '[defamed India](#)'. [Coalition for Environmental Justice in India](#) has launched an [online Petition](#) demanding Disha's unconditional release and asserting that India's [youth](#), and environmental and social justice activists, [must not be targeted for speaking truth to power](#). Bombay High Courts extended transit remand bail to Nikita and Shantanu, even as this case draws [international attention](#) and raises questions about [why all this is happening](#).

ESG Features



A Major Victory in the Efforts To Conserve Bangalore's Urban Forest, Turahalli Gudda

Responding to [widespread public opposition](#), the Karnataka Forest Minister Mr. Arvind Limbavalli [temporarily dropped](#) the idea of [converting Turahalli Minor and Reserve Forests in Bangalore](#) into a 'tree park' proposed as part of Karnataka Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa's "[Bangalore Vision 2022](#)". The 'tree park' to be undertaken in the forest by Karnataka Forest Department would involve the building of walking tracks, yoga centres, gymnasiums, etc. and [restrictive right of entry](#). Turahalli forest has for long been [protected by people](#) (both local communities, birders and climbers from across the city), and thereby such [public concerns](#) and [questioning](#) of the need for a tree-park has repercussions beyond [this patch of the forest](#).



Chamoli disaster revives tales of Gaura Devi and her role in Chipko movement

The [catastrophic flood](#) on the morning of February 7 2021 that swept through the Chamoli district of [Uttarakhand](#) has left a trail of [unimaginable destruction](#). As brave rescue [missions](#) by the [NDRF](#) are replaced with big questions, [reasons](#) for the [cause](#) of this [disaster](#) also point to [callous disregard](#) to the geological and ecological fragility of the Himalayas, and draw attention to the [destructive](#) potential of tens of dams under [construction](#), hundreds more proposed, and also the hundreds of kilometres of [road projects](#) being undertaken that is wrecking a young and developing [mountain ecosystem](#) in the name of [development](#). A [CEJI press release](#) draws attention to this [maldevelopment](#) and demands the Government must "recalibrate and integrate [developmental priorities](#) into socially inclusive and ecologically wise paradigms".



Only 10% of Bengaluru lakes have good water quality: Study

In the Citizens Action Group PIL before the Karnataka High Court in which ESG has joined the cause, drawing attention to encroachment and pollution of lakes, CSIR-NEERI has submitted its [phase-I report](#). NEERI states only [21 out of 210 lakes](#) in Bengaluru city have good water quality. Based on this report, and [submissions made by various parties to the PIL](#), the High Court is now taking action to rejuvenate lakes across bangalore, including those which were considered 'disused', drawing upon the recommendations of [Justice N. K. Patil Committee Report](#).

Biodiversity



As nature declines, so does human quality of life, study finds

By Ashoka Mukpo, Mongabay, 9 February 2021

“The past 50 years have seen a catastrophic decline in the planet’s ecosystems and natural environments. But while the debate over the costs and benefits of humanity’s march deeper and deeper into nature rages across the globe and [targets remain unmet](#), few studies try to quantify one of the central questions of that debate: Is all this change making us better or worse off?” [Read More](#)

NITI Aayog's megacity plan for Little Andaman alarms conservationists

By Pankaj Sekhsaria, The Hindu, 1 February 2021



NITI Aayog has proposed to urbanize Little Andaman to compete with Hong Kong, Singapore. The vision document proposes massive construction in the island. This has alarmed conservationists as the “plan threatens an already-fragile ecosystem and will lead to habitat loss for the vulnerable Onge tribe and rare wildlife.” [Read More](#)

Budget & Environment



An ecologically illiterate Budget

By Ashish Kothari, The Hindu, 9 February 2021

Mr. Ashish Kothari explains how “the 2021 Budget is no different.” He explains how budgetary allocations for the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change suffer from structural flaws and corruption and accounts for the negative impacts of rising allocations to non-environmental sectors. [Read More](#)

Climate Change



Climate change "may have played a key role" in coronavirus pandemic

By Jeff Berardelli, CBS News, 5 February 2021

“Human-caused [climate change](#) "may have played a key role" in the [coronavirus](#) pandemic. That's the conclusion of a new [study](#) which examined how changes in climate have transformed the forests of Southeast Asia, resulting in an explosion of bat species. These findings have scientists concerned about the probability that climate change will make future pandemics more likely.” [Read More](#)



How wetlands are linked to our climate

Adapted by Neil King, Deutsche Welle

Wetlands are unique ecosystems that remain flooded by water. Even though they cover less than 4% of the earth’s surface, they support myriad life forms besides delivering other significant ecological benefits like countering climate change. The value of wetlands is indispensable and beckons us to protect them. [Read More](#)

We invite you to endorse a [campaign](#) to protect the Loktak Wetland in Manipur, which is being targeted for reckless development of

mass tourism and infrastructure projects, promoted by [Ngamee Lup.](#)

Energy



Air pollution from fossil fuels causes over 30% deaths in India every year: Harvard study

By Mohana Basu, The Print, 10 February 2021

A new [study](#) by Harvard University has found that air pollution from fossil fuels caused more than 30% of all annual deaths in India with the state of Uttar Pradesh topping the charts. At the [global level](#) the figures are similarly intimidating with over 8 million people dying in 2018 from fossil fuel pollution. [Read More](#)



Union Budget 2021-22: India to launch Hydrogen Energy Mission

By Ishan Kukreti, Down to Earth, 1 February 2021

“Hydrogen energy technologies across the world have still not become commercially viable, but the energy source is seen as the next big thing as its usage would lead to [zero emissions](#). This raises the question ‘[Is green hydrogen the sustainable fuel of the future?](#)’ With the announcement of the Indian budget 2021-2022 on February 1, India has officially joined the race in this energy sector.” [Read More](#)

Farming



Why People in Himachal and Uttarakhand Need to Know More on the Farm Laws and Protests

By Manshi Asher, The Wire, 4 February 2021

“The BJP-led Himachal and Uttarakhand governments have vehemently supported the three new farm laws, which the farmers’ agitation is demanding be repealed. Now one may ask “What have *pahari* or hill farmers on tiny terrace-fields got to do with mainland farmers’ cause?” The states of Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand have high dependence on the PDS system and with MSP gone they face high risk of food insecurity and market fragmentation. [Read More](#)



The Big Tech takeover of agriculture is dangerous

By Larissa Ambrosano Packer, Henk Hobbelink, Devlin Kuyek & Kartini Samon, Aljazeera, 5 February 2021

India and China are rocked by massive protests on “takeover of food systems by some of the world’s largest technology companies”. In a new report, [Aljazeera](#) and [GRAIN](#) look at how Big Tech is promoting industrial agriculture and contract farming and undermining agroecology and local food systems through its development of digital agriculture platforms.” [Read More](#)

Law and Society



The Future of Democratic Protests in an Illiberal Democracy

By Dr. N.C. Asthana, The Wire, 10 February, 2021

Dr. N.C. Asthana, (retired IPS officer) opines how the state garners excessive powers and “how illiberal democracy can crush people’s movements”. He analyses various events of the past and quotes

popular thinkers to deliberate on “the gradual death of democracy.”
[Read More](#)



Nirbhaya Fund underused, slotted for services that don't help women directly — Oxfam report

By Taran Deol, The Print, 9 February 2021

“The Nirbhaya Fund, announced eight years ago to reduce violence against women, goes “underused” and underfunded, and is “predominantly slotted for services that don’t directly help the women”, a new [report](#) by NGO Oxfam India said. Former finance minister P. Chidambaram had then allocated Rs 1,000 crore to the fund, meant for women empowerment, and safety and security for women and girl children.” [Read More](#)

Public Health



The Pandemic Has Caused a Steep Decline in Living Standards

By Diana Kwon, Scientific American, 5 February 2021

After Oxfam’s [report](#) citing exacerbated rates of inequalities during the pandemic, a new [study](#) projected increased levels of food insecurity in developing economies. The survey included workers from both the formal and the informal sector. The findings reported steep declines in income and employment leading to increase in food insecurity, meaning missed or reduced meals. [Read More](#)



Covid may bring with it diabetes epidemic too

By Chetana Belagere, The New Indian Express, 10 February 2021

Virologists claim that not only does the Covid virus have the ability to worsen existing diabetes, but also trigger new onsets. “Health experts and virologists warn that a diabetes epidemic is set to sweep the country soon, if there is no plan on meticulously eradicating Covid- 19. [Read More](#)

Urban Governance



We need a gender-sensitive public transport system

By Aila Bandagi, IDR, 10 February 2021

“Access is gendered, whether it is to land, money, property, rights, or even skills. [Transport is no different](#). Urban transport planning in Indian cities is not [gender-sensitive](#). It does not cater to the travel patterns and needs of a large portion of women, particularly those working in the informal sector. This needs to change if we want women to be independent and empowered.” [Read More](#)



How Sweden is taking back parking spaces to improve urban living

By Richard Orange, The Guardian, 8 February 2021

An urban [experiment](#) known as the ‘[one minute city](#)’ prioritizing pedestrians and cyclists instead of cars is transforming urban life in Sweden. This experiment is “part of a government project called [Street Moves](#), which aims to investigate what happens when cars are displaced...” The concept gained traction after the restriction on movement during the pandemic. The project is a hyperlocal version of the [15-minute city](#) concept being implemented in Paris. These experiments empower the residents of the city to [re-imagine](#) how street space is used. [Read More](#).

Obituary



Shataj, Organising Secretary, Women's Voice, Karnataka Gruha Karmikara Sangha and a leader of the Urban poor and Unorganised Labour in Bangalore, passed away on 7th February 2021. She worked with extraordinary guts and grit advancing various causes of vulnerable communities for over three decades. Her sudden demise is a great loss for the people and the movements she was working with.

Environment Support Group has proactively addressed environmental and social justice issues, collaborating across sectors and disciplines. ESG has worked relentlessly to keep the interests of project affected communities and voiceless ecosystems alive. Our spirit is to fight for solutions that are socially, environmentally and democratically just and inclusive. Your support helps us advance such just causes. Every contribution, big or small, matters and is invaluable for the sustenance of ESG.

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Environment Support Group (Trust)

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