

ENVIRONMENT JUSTICE MATTERS

A Bi-weekly News Digest from
the Environment Support Group

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Disha gets bail. But what does it indicate about the state of India's democracy?

Even as [activists](#), [teachers' body](#), [farmers' unions](#) condemned the manner and reason for which Disha Ravi was arrested, Justice Deepak Gupta who recently retired as Judge of the Supreme Court of India [condemned](#) the use of [sedition law](#) in India. Naomi Klein argues that Indian climate activists are being targeted with assistance from [Big Tech](#), while Leo Saldanha [presents evidence](#) that Davos Summits provide a stage for promoting globalisation over fundamental freedoms. In this backdrop, Justice Dharmender Rana of Patiala House Court released Disha on bail holding [“citizens cannot be put behind bars simply because they disagree with the Government”](#). Such ‘powerful, courageous and honest’ efforts, [Apoorvanand argues](#), is “life giving”.

ESG Features



Press Release: On World Wildlife Day, Prime Minister And UN Secretary General's Intervention Sought To Safeguard Indigenous Peoples Of Loktak Wetland Region

The Meitei Indigenous Peoples of the Loktak Wetland Region in Manipur, India have lived in floating huts phumshangs on Loktak and also around it for centuries, harvesting fish in the most ecologically respectful manner. However, in recent years this community has been facing systematic threats from continuing their traditional lives and livelihoods that are intertwined with this ecologically sensitive and biodiversity rich wetland. In a major decision by the Indigenous Peoples of Loktak region, the intervention of the Prime Minister of India, United Nations Secretary General and other dignitaries has been sought to protect them from displacement and dislocation due to destructive developments proposed by Loktak Development Authority and other agencies. In addition, a representation has been made to Wetlands International to withdraw “An Integrated Plan for Wise Use, Loktak, Manipur, July 2020” prepared by Wetlands International’s Delhi-based South Asia office (WISA) and Manipur Government’s Loktak Development Authority (LDA). [Read a Press Release](#) made by Ngamee Lup and ESG in this regard.



Karnataka High Court Directs BBMP To Take “Clear Stand” on Removal of Idol in Begur Lake

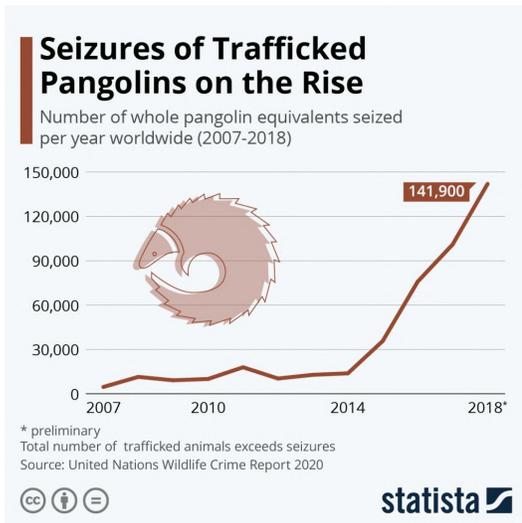
The Citizens Action Group PIL before the Karnataka High Court in which ESG had joined cause, has drawn attention to encroachment and pollution of lakes in Bangalore. In its latest hearing the High Court of Karnataka has passed specific orders for the rejuvenation of 3 disused lakes– Thavarekere, Arehalli and Kamakshipalya– based on [NEERI’s Phase- I reports](#). The Court has also taken note of ESG’s submissions about massive encroachments being planned on Begur Lake by an apartment complex, and directed the State Government and BBMP to survey the lake and remove any such encroachment. The Court also asked BBMP to make its stand clear on whether it plans to remove a massive idol installed on an island on Begur Lake. [Read More](#).



Karnataka must revive State Environmental Clearance Committee to safeguard Environment and Protect Human Lives

Yet another explosion has taken place in a quarry in Karnataka, this time in [Chikkaballapur](#), killing six people. Just about a month ago, eight people had died in another quarry explosion in [Shimoga](#), the Chief Minister’s own constituency. The Government of Karnataka was forewarned about the critical need for regulating with transparency and accountability all activities which have any environmental and social impact, especially those that involve hazardous substances, chemicals and explosives, even if they were small or medium.

Biodiversity



Trade behind massive decline in wildlife populations

About 100 million plants and animals are [trafficked internationally](#) each year, contributing to a global industry worth an estimated \$4 billion to \$20 billion each year, according to a paper in [Nature Ecology & Evolution](#). Pangolin, the world's most trafficked mammal is on the [verge of extinction](#). Which, the authors of the paper argue could worsen with mega infrastructure projects such as China's Belt and Road Initiative, which will open up protected areas and forests to unprecedented extraction of species and resources. Mongabay reports that Sumatran rhinos, one of the most endangered large mammals on the planet with no more than 80 left in the wild, are at high risk of extinction, as this [podcast](#) by conservation biologist Wulan Pusparini reveals. [Read more](#)

Climate Change



The India-China border dispute seems to have had multiple repercussions, [affecting collaborative ecological research of the fragile Himalayas](#) on the one hand, and giving rise to [suspicions](#) that China may be behind the blackout of Mumbai. Such political impasse is deeply worrying as recent research into satellite data about the [Chamoli disaster](#) reveals [cracks in the glacier probably emerged over six months before the disaster](#), even as a massive [iceberg of Antarctica's Brunt Ice Shelf breaks off](#). Meanwhile, billionaires continue their indulgent lifestyles, proposing a range of technocratic solutions, which some researchers say demands “[shaming](#)” super rich people for “their energy-intensive spending habits” and “revealing them as models of overconsumption that people shouldn't emulate”.

Farming



Video: The Great Reset: Bill Gates & Farming

By Russell Brand, YouTube, 20 February 2021

Even though India's own [school exam paper calls protesting farmers 'violent maniacs'](#), Russell Brand speaks eloquently about the new farm laws of India, that may facilitate a shift [in India's agricultural export policy](#). Russell takes a dig at the sinister attitude of big companies trying to revolutionize and digitize agriculture. He continuously refers to the [interview](#) of renowned environmental activist, Vandana Shiva with France 24 to contextualize the concept of '[The Great Reset](#)' and draw parallels to the hazards of digital agriculture. [Watch Here.](#)



Agroforestry-grown coffee gives Amazon farmers a sustainable alternative

By Sibélia Zanon, Mongabay, 11 February 2021 | Translated by Maya Johnson

“After nearly giving up on their coffee plantations, farmers in Apuí, in Brazil’s Amazonas state, have turned to a different farming model. Through agroforestry, they have found they can both generate an income and keep the forest standing. Studies show that agroforestry systems diminish the impacts of climate change, and allow farmers to cultivate additional plants for extra income.” [Read More](#)

Law and Society



Safoora Zargar And Disha Ravi: A Tale of Two Bail Orders

By Gautam Bhatia, *Live Law*, 26 February 2021

“The order granting bail to Disha Ravi in a sedition case is remarkable not so much because of its outcome, but because of the short shrift that it gives to the State's hysterical accusations of [conspiracy-by-Google-Docs](#). Consequently, what makes the bail order remarkable is how (sadly) uncharacteristic it is. Indeed, the order stands in stark contrast to the order that denied bail to Safoora Zargar, in what have come to be known as "the Delhi Riots cases." A comparison between the two, therefore, merits scrutiny.”

[Read More](#)



CUTS cover up for Vedanta

By Sibélia Zanon, *Mongabay*, 11 February 2021 | Translated by Maya Johnson

In a deeply disturbing argument, Pradeep Mehta of [CUTS International](#) suggests people of Thootukudi who resisted the reopening of the highly polluting Vedanta's Sterlite Copper plant, and several of who were massacred by Tamilnadu police, [are in the wrong](#) for demanding the industry be closed. Mehta and colleagues suggest “proper remedy the judiciary should ask the businesses to respond accordingly rather than to tell them to stop their operations”. [Read more](#)

Public Health



The Broken Science in Patanjali's Coronil Study

By Dharamveer Tatwavedi, *The Wire*, 26 February 2021

Baba Ramdev launched Coronil, a product of his Patanjali company, claiming the drug cured COVID-19. Controversially, the drug was released in the presence of not one, but [two Union Ministers, Health Minister Dr. Harshvardhan and Transport Minister Nitin Gadkari](#), and on a commercial platform of Patanjali. The drug, it was claimed, was an “evidence-based medicine” approved by WHO. WHO was quick in debunking the claim with a [tweet](#) even as the [Indian Medical Association protested](#) the promotion of such specious cures. This has raised deeper questions if [science in India is broken](#).



Can global surveillance and more gathering of domestic data stop the next pandemic?

WHO Secretary General and US billionaire Michael Bloomberg [calls for](#) “More primary health care”, “More community engagement and communication”, “More coordination” and “More research” to get the world ready to tackle the next pandemic. But their proposal becomes deeply problematic when they say it needs to be built on “More global surveillance”, “More domestic data”, and “More vaccine platforms”, and without making any effort to problematize these controversial tasks.

Livelihood



Deplorable condition of Indian labour sector

A new [ILO report](#) accounts that [Indians are amongst the most overworked workers](#) globally, with Indian women getting far less time than men for leisure. This underscores the traditional gender roles that burden women with household work. [Female participation](#) in India's workforce continues to fall, and our [schemes continue to ignore female labour](#). All this call to [compensate for the unpaid labour](#) done by women by reducing, redistributing and paying for labour.

Environmental Governance



Mega 'Ecotourism' Project Questions Wetland Ownership and Livelihoods in Manipur's Loktak Lake

By Vaishnavi Rathore, The Bastion, 26 February 2021

"The Loktak Lake is set to see a 'Mega Ecotourism Project' which spans across more than 80 hectares. Boasting jetties, a resort, and a golf course, the project also privatizes what is otherwise a lake commonly used by local communities for fishing and agriculture. It all comes down to one question — who can own and use this lake? Is it the fishers and agriculturalists, or private corporations and government bodies?" [Read More](#)



The Central Vista Judgment and the Supreme Court's Blind Spot on Environment Law

By Sugandha Yadav, The Wire, 18 February 2021

"The Supreme Court of India upheld the Central Vista project in its entirety. The majority judgment reveals blind spots in the reasoning and several instances of blinders being put on. The objective of environmental law is not pollution mitigation alone. Environmental issues cannot be addressed by an approach that allows polluting activities and then suggests minimal mitigation measures. The law

and the state of the environment demand more ambition from the court and the decision makers in the country.” [Read More](#)



NFF opposes Sagarmala Project across the country, threatens nationwide agitation if Centre does not withdraw taxes on fishermen

Olencio Simoes, General Secretary of NFF said, “The Forum has decided to [oppose the Sagarmala Project](#) across the country. The Forum will [launch their movement](#) shortly as this project is aimed at annihilating the traditional fishermen and replace them with fish farmers who will be big industrial houses.” The Convenor of the Forum, Narendra Patel [threatened the central government](#) of a nationwide agitation in Delhi from March, if the central government does not withdraw the imposed surface road tax and several other taxes imposed on the fishermen community. He added that the NFF demands [a Coastal Rights Bill](#) similar to that of the Forest Rights Act which intends to protect the rights of the fish workers and coastal ecology.



Will an International Ecocides Court help the planet?

“The word “ecocide” is an umbrella term for all forms of environmental destruction from deforestation to greenhouse gas emissions. Since the 1970s, environmental advocates have [championed the idea of creating an international ecocide law...](#)” Dr. S. Faizi argues that this idea has evolved to a point where we now need an [International Ecocide Court](#). The planetary crisis is also a crisis in law, [argue researchers](#), who say “we must limit the familiar anti-politics of legalism and technocratic decision-making through a commitment to democratic politics. Democracy has to mean more than the manufacture of public opinion alongside elections”.



Why hydel projects in the Himalayas are worrying

“Uttarakhand has a tricky relationship with electricity. With a landscape that’s inhospitable to thermal power grid lines and with people too poor to pay for electricity, micro and mini hydro-electric power projects were seen as the answer. [Except that it wasn’t](#)”, argues Shivani Azad. There are “many [ironies implicit in the latest tragedy in Uttarakhand](#)” says Avay Shukla highlighting “Just one day before the flood, the NITI Aayog called for an “economically responsible approach by the judiciary” to projects, and a study on “the unintended economic consequences of judicial decisions that have hindered or stalled big ticket projects on environmental grounds”.

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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