

ENVIRONMENT JUSTICE MATTERS

A Bi-weekly News Digest from
the Environment Support Group

Vol 2. Issue 6- March 31 2021

Webinar Series

5 April 2021
**MAKING
BENGALURU
WATER SECURE**
REGISTER NOW
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Week 3 of the Webinar Series
Bengaluru's Climate Action Plan
Making it Participatory and Inclusive

SPEAKERS

- Mr. L K Atheeq, IAS, Principal Secretary, Rural Development and Panchayat Raj, GoK
- Mr. A. R. Shivakumar, Senior Scientist & Water Management Adviser
- Ar. Neelam Manjunath, Founder, Centre for Green Building Materials and Technology
- Ms. Jayna Kothari, Senior Advocate, Supreme Court of India
- Mr. Sagar Nambiar, Wildlife Researcher
- Ms. Rema Kumar, Director, Bhoomi College

MODERATOR

- SHRESTHA CHOWDHURY, ESG

Conceptualized by Environment Support Group
Visit www.esgindia.org for more details
Every Monday, 6:30 PM, until 17 May 2021

[Week 3: Making Bengaluru Water Secure](#)

On March 22nd, World Water Day, ESG kickstarted a webinar series: “Bengaluru’s Climate Action Plan - Making it Participatory and Inclusive”. Drawing participation from senior officials of the State and civic administration, elected representatives, student activists, pourakarmikas, civil society organisations, etc., the idea is to collate a range of views about what constitutes a workable strategy to make the metropolis carbon neutral and meet Paris Climate Agreement targets. Read a report in [The Hindu](#) about the inaugural session and a detailed summary [here](#).

The second session of the webinar series featured a discussion on “Public Health, Sanitation and Waste Management: Is a Decentralised Approach the Way Out?” and was held on 29th March 2021. The report is accessible [here](#). We welcome you to join in subsequent sessions of this critical series, every Monday, 6:00 - 8:00 pm.

The next session will be held on 5th April 2021 and will focus on "**Making Bengaluru Water Secure**". [Register here to participate](#).

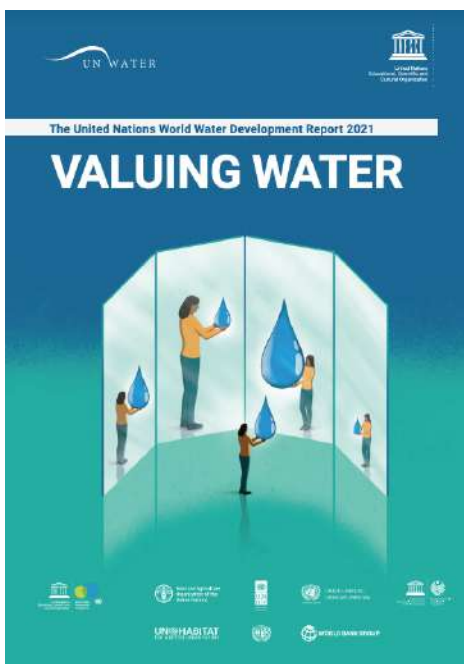
Help Us Build A Better Tomorrow: Donate Now

2020 was a year of upheaval and uncertainty due to the pandemic. Everything came to a standstill. Yet at ESG we continued to work and reached out to thousands of people in so many ways. In these challenging times, we can do much more with your constant support.

As the financial year draws to a close, we invite you to consider donating to ESG generously! Please also take a moment to share this cause with your family, friends and in your networks.

Support Us

Water



To mark the World Water Day, the [United Water Development Report](#) was released on 22 March 2021. The report is a reminder of the tremendous value water holds for all. Therefore, the report urges that the perspective of [water being a commodity needs to be re-thought and re-evaluated](#).

In the area of water rejuvenation, heartening news has come from [Odisha](#) and [Tamil Nadu](#). These examples highlight the community role in effective rejuvenation, conservation and management of natural resources.

The United Nations World Water Development Report highlights [built water reservoir capacity per person is](#)

decreasing globally as reservoir expansion has not been able to keep pace with population growth.

Climate



Catastrophic Climate Change is now a reality of our times and the world is warmer by 1.2° C above pre-industrial levels. It seems practically impossible now to meet the target of capping global temperature rise at 1.5° C. A study published in Geophysical Research Letters explains reports summers are already 20 percent longer than what they used and warns winter season soon will be no more than a month long. For South Asian countries the study predicts deadly heat waves which will increase exposure to lethal temperature by 2.7 times.

Events of extreme climatic conditions like the flood that ravaged Sydney along with large swathes of New South Wales last week, point to the fact that catastrophic climate crisis is already a lived reality for large populations in vulnerable regions. In such a precarious scenario, the rapid spread of fake news is proving to be a major challenge to tackling climate crisis. Meanwhile, a new study has found that carbon released from bottom trawlers is equivalent to emissions generated by the entire aviation industry. And Jonathan Watts of The Guardian reports on a study which links increased risk from pandemics in areas that are deforested and raise monocultures.

In India, growing concerns surrounding climate change and deforestation has prompted the Supreme Court of India to constitute an Expert Committee to formulate guidelines on felling trees for development projects.

Agriculture



As the incredible Farmers' Protest at the borders of Delhi against three farm laws completes four months, farmers from other states are joining the movement. Vidhan Soudha Chalo! has become a war-cry across Karnataka, a state which also recently removed restrictions on non-agriculturalists purchasing farmland. This harks back to 70 years ago, when farmers in Kagodu village of Karnataka's Shimoga district caught the attention of the entire nation as tenant cultivators rose up in revolt against the landlords. The protest by the farmers have assumed greater significance in light of the recent findings by Punjab Agricultural University that suicide rates among women farm labourers is skyrocketing.

Meanwhile, the MoEFCC has passed the onus of conducting trials of GM crops to states. This comes hot on the heels of news that Bayer's Monsanto and India's NSL have settled their long-running dispute on royalties associated with intellectual property rights over GM cotton seed. The interdependence of GM crops and deadly chemicals persist, as is evident from Syngenta promoting Gramoxone with bad science, all for maximising profit, and which is costing many lives.

Energy



The world's largest coal miner - Coal India, is planning to make a major shift to investing in solar wafer manufacturing and power projects. This is going to cost thousands of jobs, and raises questions about the use of fossil fuel money in solar development. At a time when the shift away from coal is being championed across India, movement against expansion of Kulda coal mines by Adivasis is

facing brutal repression by the Odisha government and the police.

Environmental Governance



In India, common resources like community ponds, rivers, grazing lands, forest groves, etc. are increasingly degrading due to intensification in anthropogenic factors. Shiv Viswanathan argues it is time for social sciences to reinvent the idea of commons in ways that make marginal and dissenting imaginations more central and so their arguments are heard with more clarity by political and the economic decision-makers.

This assumes importance in the context of Haryana government approaching the Supreme Court to allow stone mining in large areas of Gurugram, Nuh and Faridabad, which include common property resources. In Jharkhand's Koderma, illegal mining and trade of mica has come under the scanner, particularly the widespread use of child labourers for scavenging minerals in the illegal mines.

But there is some good news! The Mandarin duck has been spotted in Assam's Maguri wetland complex - after almost a century. This marks an opportune moment in wetland conservation efforts, and drives the need for bringing lesser known, but ecologically significant, wetlands of the country under improved protection.

Solutions to 'Waste'

The Karnataka State Cabinet recently gave its assent to setting up Bengaluru Solid Waste Management Limited (BSWML), a corporation to

manage the city's waste. While some residents see this centralised model as welcome, others have [raised their concerns](#).



An oft-ignored aspect of waste management is the disposal of sanitary waste, particularly menstrual waste which is largely non-biodegradable, polluting and poses a serious health hazard to waste workers. Thankfully, many NGOs, start-ups and workers unions have been making efforts towards offering women [environment friendly menstrual management products](#) by promoting responsible disposal of menstrual waste.

The scourge of manual scavenging continues to remain widespread across India. Pragya Akhilesh, the 'toilet woman' of India, explains [struggles she has witnessed of manual scavengers](#) and sanitation workers during a tour across the country to assess the state of toilets in semi-urban and rural areas.

Law and Society



A 2019 Government Order which allowed the lease of government land, including water bodies, to a private cement company, [recently drew the ire of the Madras High Court](#).

A shocking development: The Central Bureau of Investigation has raised multiple [charges against 71 people who were involved in Anti-Vedanta protests](#) in Thoothukudi three years ago.

The Supreme Court held [the citizens' right to free speech cannot be stifled](#) by implicating them in criminal cases, unless such speech has the tendency to affect public order.

Public Health



As COVID cases skyrocket across India, a recent study highlights that outbreaks of diseases and epidemics are more likely in areas which face deforestation and consequent biodiversity loss. Even as public health deteriorates with increased deforestation, rising pollution is another significant threat. School students in Odisha's Taparia village are up in arms over severe air pollution in the area which is caused by coal dust as several hundred trucks roll through their village filled with coal.

Urban Issues



Namma Bengaluru's waterway network looks all set to be getting a facelift, with Chief Minister BS Yediyurappa laying the foundation stone for the K-100 Rajakaluve project - a project that is about rehabilitation of the 11 kms long K. R. Market to Koramangala storm water and sewage drain into a space for recreational activities. There are concerns that the project may not be in conformance with the Justice N K Patil Committee recommendations, and natural flood zones may be used to build the walking paths, cycle tracks and parks.

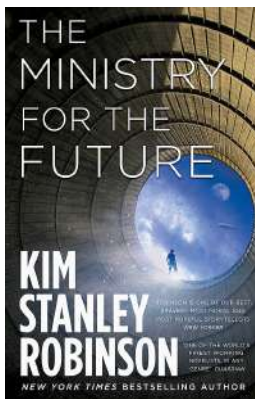
This year's Pritzker Prize being awarded to two architects better known for refurbishing existing buildings, a rare recognition that construction is a highly polluting activity. Another innovation that needs acknowledgement is Bengaluru's Mangammanapalya Ward made history becoming the first ward to propose its own budget. Residents here worked with their Ward Committee to raise the budget, articulating the kinds of projects they seek investment in.

Communities & Livelihoods



Natural resource dependent [communities and their traditional lands](#) continue to face challenges from methods employed by State as well as private agencies. The [plight of Attappady residents](#) brings to light the consequences of conservation zones, while [Simlipal forest fires](#) are affecting livelihoods of adivasi women. Meanwhile, Gond people in Chattisgarh want to [save trees](#), and therefore are going to bury their dead henceforth.

Book Review



[Ministry for the Future](#) by Kim Stanley Robinson is a “roller coaster of a book, one of the most significant pieces of fiction on the climate and ecological crises thus far and must be read by all those in any position to act on what is clearly humanity’s biggest challenge”, [writes Ashish Kothari](#).

Representative Images via [Unsplash](#)



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