

ENVIRONMENT JUSTICE MATTERS

A Bi-weekly News Digest from
the Environment Support Group

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ESG Events

Lakes constitute the few remaining open spaces in dense crowded and concretised cities like Bengaluru. To appreciate their role and why we need to protect and conserve them, and to also learn how to use the judgments delivered by the Karnataka High Court in ESG's PIL initiatives to protect and conserve lakes, ESG is organising a series of 'lake walks' in various parts of Bengaluru.

The first 'Lake walk' (originally scheduled for Saturday, 7th August 2021) is now rescheduled for Saturday, 21st August at *Subramanyapura kere* and *Uttarahalli kere* in Bangalore South. By participating in this walk, you would be able to appreciate the importance of protecting the natural terrain to ensure lakes are functional, besides also appreciating distinctive narratives of the lakes: their history, ecology, life of lake communities, in addition to overarching legal frameworks that assist in building progressive imaginaries. To participate in this educational process, click [here](#).

ESG Features

Exploring some dimensions of lakes as commons, Janani S of ESG writes that there is an urgent need for communities to reclaim and connect back with the waters and render them living in '[Let us embrace lives!](#)'

Public Health



Soon after India's Health Minister claimed in Rajya Sabha that [no deaths](#) were reported due to the lack of oxygen, [several states](#) have made similar claims, some even [making complete U-turns](#) from their previous assertions. Chhattisgarh, however, has ordered [an audit](#) of deaths recorded during the second wave to counter the Union Government's submission in the Rajya Sabha.

Incidentally, the claims made by the Union Health Minister coincided with the release of a report authored by Arvind Subramanian, Justin Sandefur and Abhishek Anand which terms India's Covid crisis as the [worst human tragedy](#) since the partition of the Indian subcontinent. The study argues that India's Covid toll could be as high as 5 million (50 lakhs) and not 4 lakhs as has been officially claimed.

Despite the inept handling of the Covid crisis thus far, Chris Kay and Muneeza Naqvi report that few lessons are being learnt and point to [ICMR's approach](#), which they argue is costing the country's preparation for coming waves of the pandemic.

Climate & Environment



The pace at which the climate crisis is unfolding globally through extreme weather is shocking many scientists, who view these events to be [much worse than what was predicted](#) by earlier climate models. India is being deeply impacted too according to [this report](#) in First Post. Chirag Dhara and Roxy Mathew Koll report in The India Forum that first-ever governmental [climate change impact prediction report for India](#) stresses the dire need to fight compounding effects of extreme heat, rainfall and drought,

intertwined deeply with health and livelihoods. Such warnings are already impacting communities adversely as in the devastating floods in [Chiplun, Maharashtra](#), exacerbated by unregulated urban planning, large-scale wetland destruction, and mismanagement of dam waters. To prevent such disasters, ecological wisdom needs to be foregrounded in planning, Xavier Benedict highlights by drawing attention to the [vanishing mangroves of Chennai](#).

Nityanand Jayaraman writes that the prevailing [perils in the nature climate advocacy](#) and undue focus on carbon emission mitigation, which is divorced from broader concerns of environmental protection and social equity, can do more harm than good to present and future generations. Equally, questions of environmental and social equity cannot be solved without addressing injustices in economic and institutional structures, Shailendra Yashwant points out in Money Control, indicting particularly [30 years of parochial economic reforms](#) in India. This needs to be contrasted with billionaires cashing in on a potential [space tourism enterprise](#) disregarding its obscene social implications and destructive environmental impacts, that when the planet grapples with existential crises.

Energy



Half a million homes in the UK could be pushed into fuel poverty this winter due to the financial fallout from the pandemic and the soaring gas prices. To address this situation, a [social tariff](#) is

being considered to support struggling families to pay their energy bills. Meanwhile, in India, which is also struggling with soaring fuel prices, the Government has [continues to subsidise](#) the fossil fuel industry while denying the same for consumers and also the renewable energy sector. Meanwhile, the promotion of centralised [large solar parks](#) continues to be a major part of the in generating solar energy, without addressing the importance of supporting small and decentralised [rooftop solar power projects](#) which are struggling to survive.

Agriculture & Biodiversity



In Delhi a '[Kisan Sansad](#)' (Farmers' Parliament) is being held at Jantar Mantar by farmers who have been protesting - for almost a year now - the controversial Farm Acts passed by the Narendra Modi administration. Organised to coincide with the Monsoon session of the Indian Parliament, this unprecedented Parliament has received widespread support from Opposition parties. Importantly, the *kisan sansad* has witnessed

active and massive participation of [women farmers](#), who passed resolutions demanding greater recognition for women in farming and for 33% representation in the Parliament and the Legislative Assemblies.

In the midst of the controversies over the proposed Mekedatu dam across Cauvery, members of Tamil Nadu Vivasayigal Sangam (Association of Tamilnadu Farmers) [petitioned the Prime Minister](#) highlighting riparian rights of farmers which will be violated if the proposed dam is built. On the Karnataka side meanwhile, the Mr. B. S. Bommai, the new Chief Minister, has [resolved to move forward](#) with the construction of the dam confident that it would receive support from the Union Government.

Meanwhile, in North East India, biodiversity-rich Behali Reserve Forest of Assam is seriously threatened with neglect, also fragmentation, [due to an ongoing dispute](#) over territorial claims with neighbouring Arunachal Pradesh. Chirgaon, a small village in Maharashtra's Raigad district, on the other hand, is [setting examples with its community conservation endeavours](#), Sneha Mahale's writes.

Law & Society



In yet another 'zero claim', the Union Government stated in Parliament that there have been [zero manual scavenging deaths](#). This happens when such deaths are reported almost every week in one or the other part of India.

As the Supreme Court gears up to hear the first batch of petitions over the Pegasus hacking

scandal, it is being reported that the snooping also included a [judge of the Supreme Court](#). Does this mean India's democracy is in [jeopardy](#)?

Urban Issues



The [Delhi Master Plan 2041](#), prepared by the National Institute of Urban Affairs on behalf of the Delhi Development Authority, is out for public feedback. It is argued that [the master plan lacks in various aspects](#) such as allocation of land for decentralised water and waste management systems, preparing protocols for declaring a water emergency for the megalopolis, guaranteeing inclusive design and access of commons, etc. While redevelopment of the

floodplains of the Yamuna river feature dominantly in the document, their uses are limited to elite aesthetic and recreational demands, such as greenways for cycling and walking, commercial riverfront activity, recreational parks, etc., all of which seem to ignore the ecological impacts they would have on the river. There is simply no consideration of the devastating impact the project will have on the livelihoods of [2,500 to 3,000 fisher families of Delhi](#), who have lived there for generations.

Communities & Livelihoods



In a survey conducted by IndiaSpends, women Self Help Groups, who have played an overwhelmingly active role in supporting COVID impacted communities, find themselves [deep in debt](#). In Dosawada village in Gujarat, residents gathered in a public hearing to protest against Vedanta's Zinc Smelter Plant asserting it would devastate their livelihoods.

Literature review

Stepping away from a predominantly anthropogenic view of our planet, science fiction leaps ahead to imagine a world which is more than for just humans. A new *genre*, dubbed "[climate fiction](#)" or "cli-fi", sees climate change through the lens of apocalyptic and dystopian works in literature. Such science fiction presents metaphorical narratives for the consequences of climate changes.

**LET'S HELP THE MOST AFFECTED
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