

ENVIRONMENT JUSTICE MATTERS

A Bi-weekly News Digest from
the Environment Support Group

Vol 2. Issue 18

Lake Walk @ Uttarahalli Kere & Subramanyapura Kere



Come join us for the walk and conversation on lakes woven around history, ecology, livelihoods, legality and imaginations of food and water security.

Time

7:00 AM- 10:00 AM, 9th October 2021

Venue

Meeting point: Uttarahalli Kere Gate, Opposite Rajathadri Palace Restaurant

<https://maps.app.goo.gl/Y2vZ5zt77kvjiQr17>

Register

<https://pages.razorpay.com/lakewalk>

Climate Change, and its Policy and Politics



Cyclone Gulab, and its [Arabian Sea counterpart Shaheen](#), are drawing interest from experts who have commented on the rarity of cross-peninsula cyclonic activity. This

is only the latest evidence of how the climate crisis is manifesting in India, bringing with it new vulnerabilities and amplifying existing ones. Anil Padmanabhan, drawing upon the work of meteorologist Sulochana Gadgil, [argues](#) that it is time for a tectonic shift in how we understand the monsoon and its increasingly uneven distribution - across regions and time - due to climate change.

At the recent Quad summit, India indicated its intention to [update its NDCs](#) ahead of the COP26 in Glasgow. This is when India continues to expand its coal capacity, open up coal mining for private investors, and subsidise fossil fuels: efforts that have led [Climate Action Tracker](#) to gauge our mitigation efforts as “[highly insufficient](#)”, given [subsidies on fossil fuels are in fact on a continued rise](#).

Meanwhile, a [global declaration](#) has been issued by over 300 organisations from 69 countries, to call on governments to stop financing false solutions like hydroelectricity which are neither clean nor good for free flowing rivers, wetlands and natural lakes. We recall a similar statement by the [Coalition for Environmental Justice in India](#), issued earlier this year in the aftermath of the

Chamoli disaster in Uttarakhand. There have been indeed more than enough wakeup calls to policymakers promoting hydro in India.

Public Health, the Environment and Social Justice



If anything can be taken away from the horrific second wave, it should be the importance of a functional public healthcare system that caters to all. And yet a random assessment of Public Health Centres (PHCs) by the Karnataka

State Legal Services Authority has revealed that the state **suffers from a severe lack of healthcare professionals and infrastructure**, a situation it shares with **many other states**.

In the meantime, poor environmental quality continues to pose serious health risks, felt disparately across groups. Authorities are slowly acknowledging the ubiquitousness of the problem. The **WHO's new air quality guidelines** imply that almost all of India will be classified as a polluted zone for most of the year. In cities, mismanagement of sanitation and storm water is also posing health hazards. The **Comptroller and Auditor General** has even found that Bangalore, where more than half of daily sewage is **ending up in lakes**, could be on the verge of a major outbreak of waterborne diseases.

A Legal Victory

The Bombay High Court recently **awarded compensation and rehabilitation**



for widows of three persons who lost their lives while cleaning septic tanks. People mostly from the Dalit community continue to lose their lives to the outlawed practice of manual scavenging. The award of compensation also renews hope for

others suffering the caste-mediated impacts of waste, including the predominantly Dalit and Muslim communities at Mavallipura village, Bengaluru, where **1,000 tonnes of Bangalore's waste used to be dumped every day** until 2012. The landfills were eventually shut down because of a sustained **campaign and legal efforts** by ESG and Mavallipura's residents. As we continue our own legal efforts, we congratulate **Legal Initiative for Forest and Environment** for being a worthy recipient of the **Right Livelihood Award**, given its consistent use of legal resources to assist vulnerable communities struggling to protect their environment.

To be sure, there are many challenges to overcome to realise inclusive environmental governance in India. When it comes to **plastic waste**, Pinky Chandran rightly argues that efforts to hold corporations accountable through Extended Producer Responsibility are incomplete without viewing waste workers as partners in the conversation.

On Plantations



The Karnataka High Court's judgment on Cauvery Calling continues to attract scrutiny. [Debadityo Sinha](#) argues that the Court's equation of "tree plantation" with "afforestation" is not only a departure from environmental jurisprudence but can lead to ecological harm. Meanwhile, Baba Ramdev has attracted the scrutiny of [competition regulators](#) by enticing people to invest in his palm oil venture Ruchi Soya. This is even as Mizoram's experience with oil palm plantations gives a glimpse into the possible future that the Oil Palm Mission can create for the entire northeast. This quote from an article by Kimi Colney for the [Caravan](#) provides a grim insight:

"... the state's experiment with oil palm has been a failure for everyone both farmers and companies. Several farmers told me that oil palm, which is an incredibly nutrient and water intensive crop, has left fields and the surrounding forests infertile. Many farmers said they made absolutely no profit in the decade and a half since the crop was first planted, most often because companies that were legally required to buy their produce did not, often because of poor road access. The farmers also accused the companies of failing to pay the compensation stipulated by Mizoram's laws. Mizoram's

experiment with oil palm cultivation has led to a host of impoverished farmers, and unaccountable companies.” It raises the question- who really stands to benefit from oil palm, and how?

In Memoriam



Urvashi Butalia evocatively recalls a lifetime's worth of contribution to the feminist cause by [Kamla Bhasin](#).



It is all the more critical to recall what one of India's greatest freedom fighters of post independence India, Stan Swamy, [said in 2015 about what Gandhi Jayanthi must be about](#). RIP Fr. Stan Swamy

Vernacular Section

বাংলা

[Thik Jeno Rajneeti'er Duorani](#) - আনন্দবাজার পত্রিকার জন্য বাংলায় লেখা, এই নিবন্ধটি প্রশ্ন করে কেন ভারতের কিছু জলাভূমি রামসার তালিকায় স্থান পায় কিন্তু অন্যরা তা পায় না। শুধুমাত্র "উন্নয়ন" কি প্রকৃত নির্ধারক ফ্যাক্টর?

हिंदी

बिहार के पूर्वी चंपारण में 24 सितम्बर को RTI कार्यकर्ता बिपिन अग्रवाल की सरेआम गोली मारकर हत्या कर दी गई। उन्होंने सरकारी भूमि अतिक्रमण पर लगभग 90 RTI आवेदन दायर किए थे। केवल बिहार में पिछले 10 वर्षों में लगभग 20 RTI कार्यकर्ता मौत के घाट उतारे जा चुके हैं। वहीं हाल ही में गुजरात के उच्च न्यायालय ने भाजपा के पूर्व सांसद दीनू भोगा सोलंकी को RTI कार्यकर्ता अमित जेठवा की हत्या के लिए दी गयी आजीवन कारावास की सज़ा निलंबित की। जेठवा गिर वन क्षेत्र में अवैध खनन का पर्दाफाश करने का प्रयत्न कर रहे थे। प्रो. वेंकटेश दत्ता पत्रिका में लिखते हैं कि रेत खनन रोकने के लिए नयी नीति ज़रूरी है। पर क्या प्रशासन के पास खनन माफ़िया को काबू करने की इच्छाशक्ति है ?

Environment Support Group [Environmental, Social Justice & Governance Initiatives], is an independent not-for-profit organisation that works to mainstream environmental and social justice in decision making through research, documentation, advocacy, training and campaign initiatives. We endeavor to mainstream the rights of local communities and voiceless ecosystems taking into account contextual complexities, especially their socio-cultural histories and traditional knowledge and practices. We work inter-sectorally, inter-sectionally and with an intent to ensure our actions are inter-generationally relevant.

[Donate Now](#)

Team ESG

Environment Support Group (Trust)

1572, 36th Cross, Ring Road

Banashankari II Stage

Bangalore 560070. INDIA

Tel: 91-80-26713560

Voice/Fax: 91-80-26713316



Website: esgindia.org **Email:** socialmedia@esgindia.org

Follow our [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [Linkedin](#) and [Twitter](#) **page**