

ENVIRONMENT JUSTICE MATTERS

A Bi-weekly News Digest from
the Environment Support Group

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ESG Features

[Legal Awareness Workshop on Functioning Of Lake Protection](#)

[Committees At Municipal, District, And Apex Levels](#)

We are happy to share the [final report](#) of the legal awareness workshop series conducted by Environment Support Group (ESG) at the invitation of Karnataka State Legal Services Authority (KSLSA) as part of the pan-India awareness and outreach campaign proposed by National Legal Services Authority (NALSA) to commemorate 75 years of India's Independence, 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav'. The workshop related to the functioning of Lake Protection Committees at the Municipal, District and Apex Levels, bodies constituted in accordance with directions of the Hon'ble High Court of Karnataka in ESG's Lakes PIL (WP 817/2008). Over 600 participants attended the workshop series, including district administrators and officials of various government agencies, and senior representatives of District Legal Services Authority of all 31 districts of Karnataka. Access the report in English ([here](#)) and in Kannada ([here](#)).

[Workshops on Solid Waste Management in Imphal and Mangalore](#)

On 31 October, ESG conducted a workshop on **"Making Imphal An Environmentally Just City Of North East India"** in collaboration with Indigenous Perspectives, Manipur. The workshop was conducted in Imphal and also over Zoom. Participants included a range of representatives from government agencies, trade unions, civil society, academia, etc. A key focus was on ensuring Imphal can be sensitised to the regional impacts of its consumerism and the consequent damage to environment and human rights in a wider region, especially the Loktak Wetland region. Read the report of the workshop [here](#).

The second workshop of the series was held in the Council Hall of the Mangaluru City Corporation on 13 November 2021 on the theme **“Making Mangaluru An Environmentally Just City Of South India”**. The evolution of Mangaluru from a sleepy coastal town of the 1980s to a burgeoning metropolis, and the implications to its environmental viability, especially due to solid waste pollution of estuaries, beaches, the sea and even the forests was deeply interrogated. Clear commitments emerged from Dr. Akshy Sridhar, Commissioner of the Corporation to ensure the city becomes an environmentally just metropolis, even as Mr. Rayappa, Commissioner of Ullal Municipality committed to comprehensively decentralise waste management and [not send any waste to the massive Pacchanady landfill in Mangalore](#). See the report [here](#).

This series is supported by **Break Free From Plastic**, and the last workshop will be held in Bhubaneswar soon.

ESG Survey on Namma Metro

ESG is undertaking a study to assess how inclusive the Bangalore Metro is from perspectives of ease of physical accessibility, affordability across classes, and also safety to commuters and others around Metro stations. An intersectoral and intersectional approach is being adopted identifying gender, age, economic and social class, language, physical ability and interchangeability across travel modes to determine the levels of inclusivity. The impact of the COVID pandemic and what the future of such systems are in a world besotted with pandemics is also a focus of the study.

We welcome your participation in this ongoing study. Do check out this [survey form](#) and join this journey to make public transport inclusive and responsive to Bengalureans' needs.

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COP26 & Climate Justice

The [United Nations Climate Change Conference](#), more commonly known as COP26, at Glasgow concluded with [many](#) pledges: an agreement to reduce methane emissions, to halt deforestation, and to reduce international financing of fossil fuels. [The Glasgow Climate Pact](#) was also adopted promising reliance on the best available science on climate change, paving ways for reduction of coal use, swifter revisions of NDCs, greater attention to adaptation finance, and ratcheting up financial assistance to poorer countries. COP26 President Alok Sharma claimed that the goal of 1.5C is “[still alive](#)”, whilst there has been global criticisms that this COP, [mainly filled with men](#), achieved [very little](#) actually, forcing the UN Secretary General to state - “[Never give up. Never retreat. Keep pushing forward.](#)” Despite its obvious failures to step up to the grave impacts of climate change the world is now suffering from, the conservative view is that “[it is better than letting the effort slide, just as the UN-sanctioned circus of the COPs is better than leaving the world without any such forum at all](#)”.

The [exclusion of indigenous concerns](#)-- and the large space ceded to fossil fuel lobbyists at the summit-- reflects the renewed reliance on carbon markets which have a history of promoting offset schemes that facilitate massive land grabs from indigenous communities. There also has been very little effort to address the need for concrete mechanisms in dealing with the loss and damage already being suffered from climate disasters by frontline communities. Due to these grave concerns, [many indigenous groups have denounced](#) the outcome of the COP, while there have been rare welcomes to sparing [financial pledges to strengthen indigenous land tenure systems and resource rights](#).

Seen in contrast with IUCN World Conservation Congress held in September, where indigenous voices were heard loud and clear, resulting in the adoption of the [Marseille Manifesto](#), the manner in which this COP was organised reaffirms the critical importance of centering the concerns of indigenous and natural resource dependent communities in developing a global strategy to address climate change. This is crucial in light of widespread evidence that COP26 kind of

processes actually promote climate policies of rich countries which actually are [colonial projects couched in green](#) language, for example the agreement reached by some nations and international financial institutions to halt the [funding of fossil fuel projects overseas](#). The US, which returned to this process post Trump, refused to sign a separate pledge to [end domestic and overseas investment in coal](#).

But all calculations of how we will fare in the future are finally based on the empirical evidence gathered. [Climate Action Tracker](#) has calculated that only in the best case scenario is stopping global warming to 1.5C achievable. Current real-world trends indicate warming could result in horrifying 2.4C increase by 2100 compared to pre-industrial levels. Most worryingly, as a Washington Post analysis based on [Global Carbon Project](#) studies reveals, [flawed data](#), gross under-reporting, even mis-reporting, is the basis of most global and national calculations that form the basis of global warming predictions. The extent of underreporting is so massive that currently proposed mitigation efforts do not reflect the required action in real terms.



SOURCE: Washington Post

India at COP26

India remained in the spotlight from the beginning till the end: with its announcement of [net zero emissions by 2070](#), [its refusal to back a key agreement on ending deforestation](#), and [a last-minute intervention](#) that led to the Pact asking for a “phasedown” of coal instead of a “phaseout”.

This when the country’s [forest cover is receding](#) at an alarming rate due to reckless urbanisation, industrialisation, infrastructure development and mining. Those most affected by these decisions are typically [indigenous](#) communities and rural poor, who continue their struggle against displacement, dispossession and degradation of their natural resources. As Salam Rajesh asks in the [Frontier Manipur](#): how far away, then, is India from policies that would honour the spirit of the Marseille Manifesto?

A worrying aspect about India’s climate plans is the promotion of renewable energy, whether large-scale solar [connected through an international grid](#) or hydro-electric projects, in a manner that not only jeopardises ecological and cultural securities of millions (as ESG research has [repeatedly highlighted](#)) but also promotes aggressive [green capitalism](#). Ashish Kothari highlights several [problems with India’s net zero announcement](#) for the Indian Express. Perhaps it is worth revisiting what Nityanand Jayaraman wrote many months ago in the context of Tamil Nadu, but which is relevant for the entire planet today: we need a political philosophy that [combines environmental sustainability, social justice, and intergenerational equity](#).

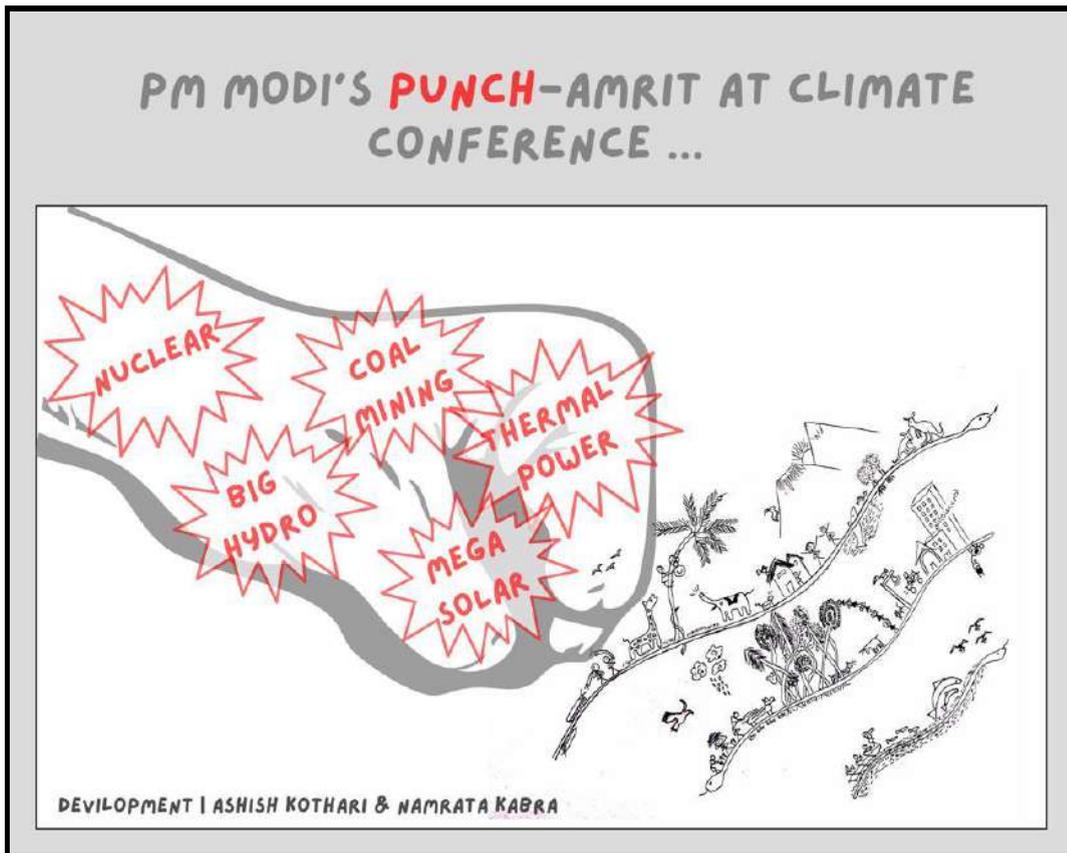
India’s Environmental Governance Slides rapidly down a Slippery Slope:

[India’s global posturing](#) of being a progressive nation working to reverse climate change is hardly reflected in the Government’s actions at home. Efforts to comprehensively dilute [EIA norms](#) and the [Forest \(Conservation\) Act](#), is underway, as is the push to promote [oil palm](#) monoculture cultivation in the highly ecologically fragile and biodiversity rich North East and the Andaman regions. In addition, “development” is the weapon employed to homogenise the biological and cultural

diversities of [Lakshadweep and A&N islands](#). In many ways India seems to be colonising its islands, which [small-island nations](#) globally have been struggling against.

Some heart warming news

The contribution of individuals fighting for environmental justice-whether Karnataka's [Tulasi Gowda](#), who has painstakingly contributed to forest conservation, or the late [Abdul Jabbar](#), who fought relentlessly to secure justice for the victims of the Bhopal gas tragedy-- is finally being honoured through prestigious national awards. But in planning the way forward, India needs to go beyond individuals and systematically work to promote environmental justice. This must be done by honouring the rights of communities to sustainably manage forests, waters and other natural resources. One important way to do this is to [strengthen frameworks such as the Panchayat \(Extension to Scheduled Areas\) Act](#), rules to operationalise which are in place in only six out of the ten states where the law applies. At the same time, India's political economy needs to be disentangled from continuing its prevailing heavy reliance on the use of coal, which does allow [cheap passenger railway fares](#) for the country's millions, yes. But it also needs a pathway towards sustaining the economy without destroying the country's capacity to deal with, and reverse, climate change impacts.



Flood attenuation in times of climate change

Increasing frequency in extreme weather events is interacting with poor infrastructure and bad planning causing [massive flooding, as in Chennai which is experiencing devastation from the North East Monsoon. As Citizen Matters Chennai](#) argues, these urban floods can be attributed to unchecked urbanisation leading to large-scale encroachments of natural water flow networks and proliferation of impervious surfaces, effectively reducing percolation of water and causing unnecessary flooding.



Map depicting encroachment into Velachery lake, Chennai due to unplanned urbanisation disrespecting water flow
SOURCE: Citizen Matters, Chennai

Chennai urgently needs a focussed effort to [free up its concretised floodplains](#), which would include a revival of its *eri* (lake/ tanks) system that can build groundwater reserves and mitigate flooding. Such traditional approaches are increasingly [finding support from modern science](#): research from a graduate student from the University of Iowa indicates that small water reservoirs and ponds, created at strategic points to collect surface runoff, are a far more effective way of flood management compared to large dam projects, which are largely failing.

In Karnataka, ESG's recent engagement with administrators through training workshops are only one in a long series of efforts to strengthen the governance framework for protecting lake/tank commons that can protect us against the increasing impacts of climate change, and build ecological and economic securities in sustainable ways.

Protecting - and Celebrating - Grassland ecosystems

The research wing of the Uttarakhand Forest Department has built a one of a kind [grasses conservatory](#) by growing 90 varieties of grass in a 2 acres plot to demonstrate their ecological, scientific, medicinal and cultural value, using Compensatory Afforestation (CAMPA) funds. The role of grasslands in sequestering carbon, the property of certain grasses to stop the spread of wildfire, as critical habitats and as fodder for livestock, besides being the most effective plants to revive degraded land, is usually underestimated, given the country's misconceived focus on only trees as greening! Karnataka's Amrit Mahal Kavals are an example of how over thousands of years communities have conserved grassland ecosystems, which prevailing policies are recklessly destroying, as is documented in ESG's [Forfeiting Our Commons](#). These [Kavals have now almost been wiped out](#) in Chitradurga district of Karnataka due to the 'science city': a defense, nuclear, military, industrial complex. This assumes importance with Dodda Ullartha's annual celebration of festivities in honour of Gowramma, the Goddess of the grasslands, during 21st-23rd November

Sand and Water Exploitation in Karnataka

Bangalore is running out of water and depleting groundwater fast. Who is responsible for the looming water crisis? Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment (ATREE) study suggests [commercial, industrial and institutional \(CII\) establishments are consuming 380 million litres per day](#), equivalent to a quarter of the city's domestic water use. A staggering 71 percent of this water is by extracting groundwater.

Karnataka has also been grappling with soaring prices of sand which has led the present government to pass a new Sand Mining policy that focuses on securing riverine and coastal ecosystems health. The question is whether the policy [will survive the sand mafia](#).

[ಸ್ವಾತಿ ನಕ್ಷತ್ರದ ಮಳೆ](#) ನೀರಿಗಿದೆ ಔಷಧೀಯ ಮಹತ್ವ; ಉತ್ತರ ಕನ್ನಡ ಜನರ ಪಾಲಿಗಂತೂ ಇದು ಅಮೃತಕ್ಕೆ ಸಮಾನ: ಸ್ವಾತಿ ಮುತ್ತಿನ ಮಳೆಹನಿಯೇ. ಈ ಹಾಡು ನಾವೆಲ್ಲ ಕೇಳಿದ್ದೇವೆ. ಇಲ್ಲಿ ಸ್ವಾತಿ ಎಂಬುದು ಒಂದು ನಕ್ಷತ್ರ. ಈ ನಕ್ಷತ್ರದಲ್ಲಿ ಬೀಳುವ ಮಳೆಯೇ ಚಿಪ್ಪಿನೊಳಗಿನ ಮುತ್ತಾಗುತ್ತದೆ ಎಂಬ ಒಂದು ನಂಬಿಕೆಯಂತೂ ಮೊದಲಿನಿಂದಲೂ ಇದೆ. ಆದರೆ ಇದಕ್ಕೂ ಮೀರಿ ಈ ಸ್ವಾತಿ ನಕ್ಷತ್ರದಲ್ಲಿ ಬೀಳುವ ಮಳೆ ನೀರಿಗೆ ಔಷಧ ಗುಣವಿದೆ. ಇದು ಅಮೃತಕ್ಕೆ ಸಮಾನ ಎಂಬುದು ಉತ್ತರ ಕನ್ನಡ ಮತ್ತು ಕರಾವಳಿಯ ಕೆಲ ಪ್ರದೇಶಗಳ ಜನರ ನಂಬಿಕೆ !

[ಯಮುನಾ ನದಿಯಲ್ಲಿ ಅಮೋನಿಯಾ](#) ಸ್ವೀಕಾರಾರ್ಹ ಮಟ್ಟಕ್ಕಿಂತಲೂ ಅಧಿಕವಾಗಿದ್ದು, ರಾಷ್ಟ್ರ ರಾಜಧಾನಿಗೆ ನೀರಿನ ಬವಣೆ ಎದುರಾಗುವ ಸಾಧ್ಯತೆಗಳಿವೆ. ಸದ್ಯ ಯಮುನೆಯಲ್ಲಿ ಅಮೋನಿಯಾ 0.5 ಪಿಪಿಎಂ ಅನ್ನೂ ದಾಟಿದೆ. ಇದನ್ನೂ ಓದಿ: ವಾಯುಮಾಲಿನ್ಯ: ದೆಹಲಿಯ ಸ್ಥಿತಿ ಇಡೀ ದೇಶಕ್ಕೆ ಎಚ್ಚರಿಕೆಯ ಗಂಟೆ ಪಿಪಿಎಂ ಎಂಬುದು "ಪಾರ್ಟ್ ಪರ್ ಮಿಲಿಯನ್" ಎಂಬುದಕ್ಕೆ ಸಂಕ್ಷೇಪಣವಾಗಿದೆ. ಪ್ರತಿ ಯೂನಿಟ್ ನೀರಿಗೆ ಸೇರಿರುವ ರಾಸಾಯನಿಕ ಅಥವಾ ಕಲುಷಿತ ದ್ರವ್ಯರಾಶಿಯನ್ನು ಅಂದಾಜು ಮಾಡಲು ಈ ಮಾಪನವನ್ನು ಬಳಸಲಾಗುತ್ತದೆ.

ಕೇಂದ್ರೀಯ ಮಾಲಿನ್ಯ ನಿಯಂತ್ರಣ ಮಂಡಳಿಯು ಶನಿವಾರ (ಸಿಪಿಸಿಬಿ) ಭಾರತದ 138 ನಗರಗಳ ವಾಯು ಗುಣಮಟ್ಟ ಸೂಚ್ಯಂಕಗಳನ್ನು ಬಿಡುಗಡೆ ಮಾಡಿದೆ. [ಅವುಗಳಲ್ಲಿ 17 ನಗರಗಳ ವಾಯುಗುಣಮಟ್ಟವು ಅತ್ಯಂತ ಕೆಟ್ಟದ್ದಾಗಿದೆ](#). ಉತ್ತರ ಪ್ರದೇಶದ ಘಾಜಿಯಾಬಾದ್ ಪರಿಸ್ಥಿತಿ ಅತ್ಯಂತ ಭೀಕರವಾಗಿದ್ದು, ಅದರ ವಾಯು ಗುಣಮಟ್ಟ ಸೂಚ್ಯಂಕವು 466 ಆಗಿದೆ. ಘಾಜಿಯಾಬಾದ್ ನಂತರದ ಸ್ಥಾನಗಳಲ್ಲಿ ಬಾಗ್‌ಪತ್, ವಲ್ಲಭ್‌ಗಢ್, ಬುಲಂದ್‌ಶಹರ್, ಚಾರ್ಖಿ ದಾದ್ರಿ, ದೆಹಲಿ, ಫರಿದಾಬಾದ್, ಫಿರೋಜಾಬಾದ್, ಗ್ರೇಟರ್ ನೋಯ್ಡಾ, ಗುರುಗ್ರಾಮ, ಹಾಪುರ, ಹಿಸಾರ್, ಜಿಂದ್, ಮೀರತ್, ಮೊರಾದಾಬಾದ್, ನೋಯ್ಡಾ ಮತ್ತು ವೃಂದಾವನ ನಗರಗಳು ಸಿಪಿಸಿಬಿ ಪಟ್ಟಿಯಲ್ಲಿವೆ.

[ವಾಯು ಪ್ರದೂಷಣ](#) के प्रकोप से त्रस्त राजधानी की वायु गुणवत्ता को सुधारने के लिए [सर्वोच्च न्यायालय](#) केंद्र व दिल्ली सरकार के द्वारा लिए गये कदमों की निगरानी कर रहा है | साथ ही न्यायालय देख रहा है कि किसानों को पराली न जलानी पड़े, इसके लिए क्या किया जा रहा है | और अब प्रदूषण को नियंत्रित करने के लिए CQAM (Commission

for Air Quality Management) ने कई [निर्देश](#) जारी किए हैं | दिल्ली सरकार [lockdown](#) लगाने के लिए तत्पर है, पर क्या यह एक स्थायी समाधान है ? दुःख की बात यह है कि दिल्ली की हालत ठीक करने की कोशिश में यह प्रश्न हमेशा कहीं खो सा जाता है कि वायु प्रदूषण का देश भर पर क्या प्रभाव पड़ रहा है, इसमें कोयला प्लांट, व औद्योगीकरण की क्या भूमिका है, और वायु प्रदूषण से लड़ने के लिए आवंटित पैसे को किस क्षेत्र में लगाना सबसे ज़रूरी है | [स्करोल की यह अंग्रेजी रिपोर्ट](#) हमें इन सभी प्रश्नों पर सोचने के लिए आमंत्रित करती है | ठीक यही सवाल [यमुना प्रदूषण](#) पर भी लागू होते हैं | स्करोल की रिपोर्ट से यह निष्कर्ष भी निकलता है कि पर्यावरण प्रदूषण- हवा हो या पानी - का हल कभी एक शहर या ज़िले के बारे में सोच कर नहीं किया जा सकता | पूरे airshed या watershed के बारे में सोचना अनिवार्य है |

वहीं विश्व स्तर पर [ग्लासगो जलवायु परिवर्तन सम्मलेन](#) में भारत ने कोयले के “फेज़ आउट” (यानी उसका प्रयोग अंत करना) को नकार बहुतांश को निराश किया | इसके बदले, ग्लासगो क्लाइमेट पैक्ट में “फेज़ डाउन” (यानी प्रयोग काम करना) का उल्लेख हुआ | लेकिन कुछ का मानना है कि असली मुद्दा यह है कि विकसित देश जीवाश्म ईंधन के प्रयोग को खत्म करने के लिए [अभी भी पूरी तरह से प्रतिबद्ध नहीं हैं](#) | सम्मलेन में अमीर देशों ने गरीब देशों की जलवायु परिवर्तन-सम्बंधित आपदाओं से जूझने के लिए आर्थिक मदद की तरफ़ कोई ठोस कदम नहीं उठाये, यह भी निराशा का बड़ा कारण बना |

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