

Enviro Monitor

August 2015

Trending topics

Air quality



- Toxic air choked 35,000 to death in 10 years
- Congestion, pollution in South Delhi alarming
- Over 50 polluting units identified in Ghaziabad
- Air in Mumbai has more SO₂, ammonia now than three years ago
- Vehicular air pollution increases health risk

Water resources



- Water resources depleting in Ganga catchment area
- India headed for climatic drought
- Asia's water supply under threat from climate change
- DJB to increase use of recycled water in Delhi
- Rainwater harvesting structures to be set up in Delhi
- West Bengal sets up drinking water treatment plants
- Water conservation plan in 5000 villages in Rajasthan
- Odisha water dept plans Rs 2500 crore corpus fund

Forests



- Forest cover declines in 12 states and UTs
- Centre proposes to develop 200 city forests in next five years
- India embarks on national drive to protect its forest inhabitants
- Gujarat: Forest dwellers get title rights
- Kerala: Forest land of 1977 sq km missing

River pollution



- Geospatial map of Ganga to be made
- Clean Ganga Fund
- Panel set up to clean Yamuna
- Directions by NGT
- New STP to stop Yamuna pollution

Climate change



- Government establishes National Adaptation Fund on Climate Change
- Climate plan to have sectoral goals
- Organic, indigenous rice back in Bengal, owing to taste, cost and climate change
- UK to fund Kolkata's climate action plan
- CCIP will help Odisha in tackling climate change
- Central Asian glaciers shrinking fast

Organic agriculture



- Total organic farming in Kerala by 2016-end
- SGPC to take up organic farming for chemical-free 'langar'
- Organic farming to get a big boost in Maharashtra
- District in Tamil Nadu promoting organic farming
- Panel exposes the weak certification system

Biodiversity conservation



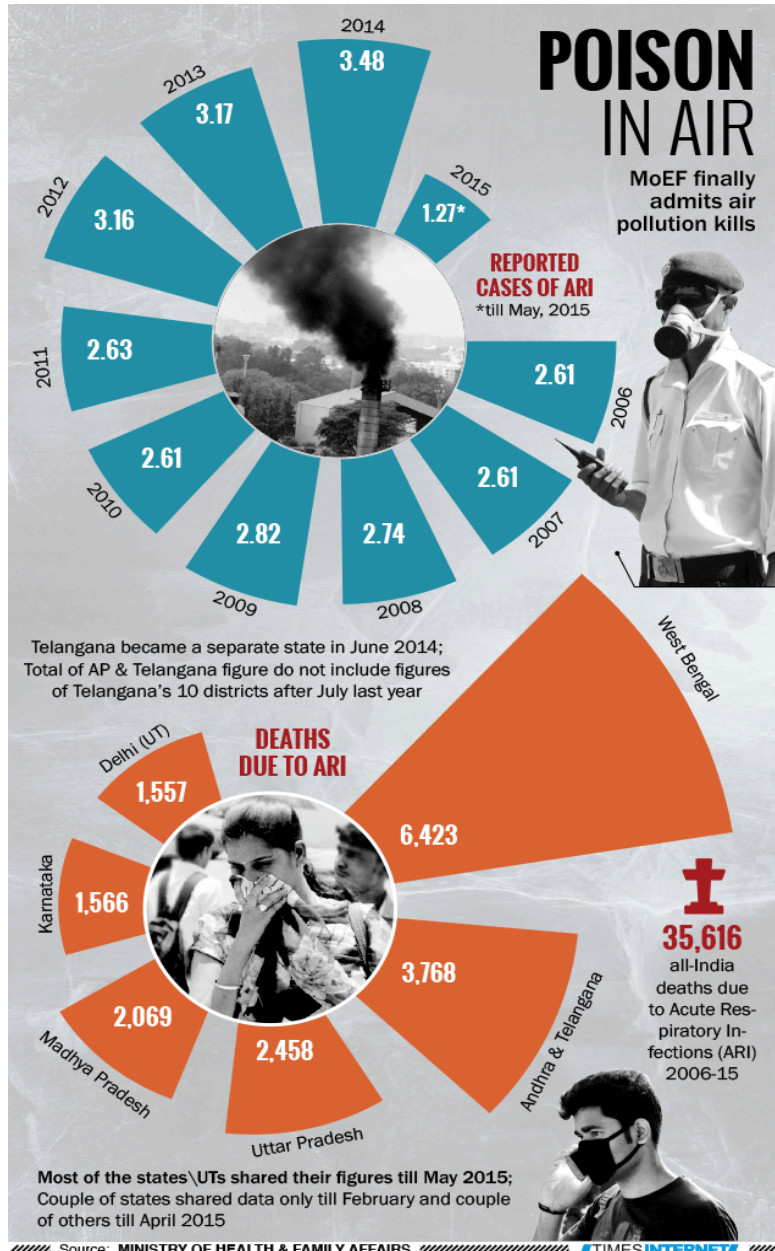
- International biodiversity projects in Maharashtra
- Government clears eco-sensitive zone around Okhla bird sanctuary
- Hydroelectric projects will adversely impact Tawang biodiversity
- Tiger habitat declined by 41 % in 17 years, says IUCN report

Air quality



Toxic air choked 35,000 to death in 10 years. Union environment minister has said in Parliament that more than 35,000 people had died due to acute respiratory infections (ARI) across India in close to 10 years. More than 2.6 crore cases of acute respiratory infections were reported every year during the period. According to the data, 3.48 crore cases came to light in 2014, which means more than 95,000 Indians of all ages were reporting acute respiratory infection every day. Responding to a Parliament question on

impact of air pollution, the minister in his written response in Rajya Sabha stated that asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, chronic bronchitis, etc are the diseases caused by exposure to increasing air pollution.



Source. The Times of India, 7 August 2015

Congestion, pollution in South Delhi localities alarming. Congestion and pollution are snuffing the life out of Delhi's neighbourhoods, according to a recent Centre for Science and Environment study [Move Free: Unlocking The Traffic Gridlock In Our Neighbourhoods, A case study of Alaknanda residential complex](#). The CSE has carried out a detailed traffic and mobility assessment of the prominent South Delhi neighbourhood of Alaknanda flanked by Greater Kailash II and Chittaranjan Park, which has exposed that these areas are highly affected by the parking pressure and unprecedented congestion. This study has revealed that poor street connectivity, ill-designed roads and very large block sizes of residential colonies do not allow efficient dispersal of traffic, increase distances from the nearest public transport nodes and services in these areas.


Over 50 polluting units identified in Ghaziabad. More than 50 predominantly polluting units have been identified in Ghaziabad against which "priority" action will be taken, the Environment Ministry said. During April 2014 to March 2015, show cause notices have been issued against 13 defaulting units in Ghaziabad and 11 in Noida and closure orders issued against seven defaulting units.

Air in Mumbai has more SO₂ and ammonia now than three years ago. Data from the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation's yet-to-be-released *Environment Status Report 2014-15* indicates that suspended particulate matter, ammonia and sulphur dioxide (SO₂) levels have gone up at varied pace in different localities across the city since 2012-13.

THIS DATA WILL MAKE YOU CHOKE

What BMC's yet-to-be-released Environment Status Report (ESR) 2014-15 says

Air pollution levels were monitored at three traffic junctions in the city—Worli, Wadala and Andheri



Particulate Matter 10 (PM10)

Station	2012-13	13-14	14-15	Permissible level
Worli	148	150	148	60 ug/m3
Wadala	169	161	194	
Andheri	150	95	190	

Ammonia

Station	2012-13	13-14	14-15	Permissible level
Worli	38	41	43	100 ug/m3
Wadala	39	50	51	
Andheri	33	44	45	

Sulphur Dioxide (SO₂)

Station	2012-13	13-14	14-15	Permissible level
Worli	4	11	13	50 ug/m3
Wadala	4	12	15	
Andheri	5	8	13	

Particulate Matter 2.5 (PM2.5)

Station	2012-13	13-14	14-15	Permissible level
Worli	59	68	52	40ug/m3
Wadala	61	50	56	
Andheri	84	46	80	

DANGEROUS POLLUTANTS, AT A GLANCE

1 Sulphur Dioxide (SO₂)
Sulphur compounds are present in fossil fuels. Their combustion generates sulphur dioxide
Impact on health | It leads to diseases of the lung, wheezing and shortness of breath

2 Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂)
This reddish-brown toxic gas has a characteristic sharp,

biting odor. Its most important sources are internal combustion engines
Impact | It can make children susceptible to respiratory diseases, especially in winter

3 Suspended Particulate Matter (SPM)
The most critical of all air pollutants, SPM is a mix of solid and liquid particles,

including dust, sand, smoke, lead, nickel and arsenic
Impact | It lodges in lung tissues and causes respiratory problems

4 Ammonia (NH₃)
A compound of nitrogen and hydrogen, it is a gas with a characteristic pungent odour
Impact | It severely affects the respiratory system

Source. The Times of India, 26 August 2015

Air pollution levels were monitored at three traffic junctions in the city—Worli, Wadala and Andheri. The results indicated that suspended particulate matter, ammonia and SO₂ levels have gone up at varied pace in different localities across the city.

Vehicular air pollution increases health risk. Short term exposure to particulate matter and nitric dioxide air pollution that originate predominantly from the combustion of fossil fuels such as emissions from industrial plants or vehicles increases risk of severe heart attacks, research has found. The study investigated the effect of short term exposure to air pollution on the risk of ST-segment elevation myocardial infarction (STEMI), a deadly type of heart attack caused by a prolonged blockage of blood supply in the heart. The findings were presented at European Society of Cardiology Congress 2015 in London in August 2015.

Outdoor air pollution contributes to the deaths of an estimated 1.6 million people in China every year, or about 4400 people a day, according to a newly released [scientific paper](#). Published in the journal *PLOS ONE*, the research paper also maps the direct sources of air pollution throughout China using these ground-level measurements.


[The Times of India](#), 7 August 2015 | [Business Standard](#), 13 August 2015 | [The Times of India](#), 13 August 2015 | [The Times of India](#), 15 August 2015 | [The Statesman](#), 20 August 2015 | [The Times of India](#), 26 August 2015 | [The Economic Times](#), 31 August 2015



Water resources depleting in Ganga catchment area. Over 1500 billion cusecs of water flow has reduced in the Ganga catchment area of Himalaya due to falling of trees and destruction of other vegetation areas to make way for urbanisation and road construction in the Himalayan region. It has been revealed in a study done jointly by Australian National University of Canberra and Kumaon University, Nainital. According to the study, due to high encroachment rate into the water zone of Himalaya, over 45 per cent natural water sources from Kumaon region, 39 per cent from Garhwal region, 47 per cent from Yamuna catchment area and 37 per cent of Byans catchment area in Himachal and 37 per cent natural water resources of Teesta river catchment area of Sikkim have been depleted in the last decades.

India headed for climatic drought 2nd year on the trot. With three-quarters of the monsoon season over, India is staring at a drought-like situation for the second year running. The country as a whole received only 77 per cent of the normal rainfall in August, and September is unlikely to be any better. Most meteorologists feel this year's southwest monsoon season could end with a minimum shortfall of 8-10 per cent, and the rains could be in the range of 90-93 per cent of the long-period average (LPA). The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has forecast the June-September rains to be deficient at 88 per cent of the LPA, while weathermen feel that the actual rains could be in the range of 90-93 per cent of the LPA. The LPA for June-September is the average rainfall of 50 years starting from 1951 and is estimated to be around 89 centimetres.

Data from the IMD showed that except for parts of Bihar, Marathwada, north interior Karnataka, Kerala, Haryana, Telangana and Uttar Pradesh, there has been no consecutive three weeks of scanty rainfall in most places. There have been some showers after a lean patch; the intensity below normal. The off and on rains did fill the reservoirs though and, till August 8, water levels in over 90-odd reservoirs were 99 per cent of past year's level. However, rating agency CRISIL, in a report titled **Angsty Farms** released recently, said that the four states – Bihar, Karnataka, Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh – and five crops – jowar, soyabean, tur, maize and cotton – are most likely to be hurt by below-normal rains this year. The analysis is based on CRISIL's own Deficient Rainfall Impact Parameter (DRIP). These states contribute 34 per cent to total foodgrain production in India, while jowar, soyabean, tur and maize total up 26 per cent of the total foodgrain and oilseed output.

 HIGHLY-VULNERABLE STATES					
States	High share of agriculture households	High indebtedness	Low irrigation cover	Low reservoir storage levels	Poor crop insurance
Maharashtra	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Haryana	✓	✗	✓*	✗	✓
Punjab	✗	✓	✓*	✗	✓
Uttar Pradesh	✓	✗	✓*	✗	✓
Rajasthan	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗
Karnataka	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓
Odisha	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗
Gujarat	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓
Andhra Pradesh	✗	✓	✗	✓	✗
Madhya Pradesh	✓	✗	✓	✗	✗
Kerala	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓
West Bengal	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓
Tamil Nadu	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗

*A second year of weak monsoon can affect the efficacy of irrigation systems even in states with high irrigation cover
Source: CRISIL Research

Source. Business Standard, 20 August 2015

STATES PRONE TO MAXIMUM RISKS					
	% rain deficit, as of Aug 16	Irrigated area as % of cropped area	Water reserves (% chg from normal)	% of indebted farm households	Area insured as a % of gross cropped
All-India	-9.7	46.9	-13	51.9	19.2
Maharashtra	-23.3	18.7	-37	57.3	6.2
Uttar Pradesh	-32.9	76.7	22	43.8	12.4
Karnataka	-24	34.3	-32	77.3	8.8
Bihar	-32.4	67.4	NA	42.5	41.2

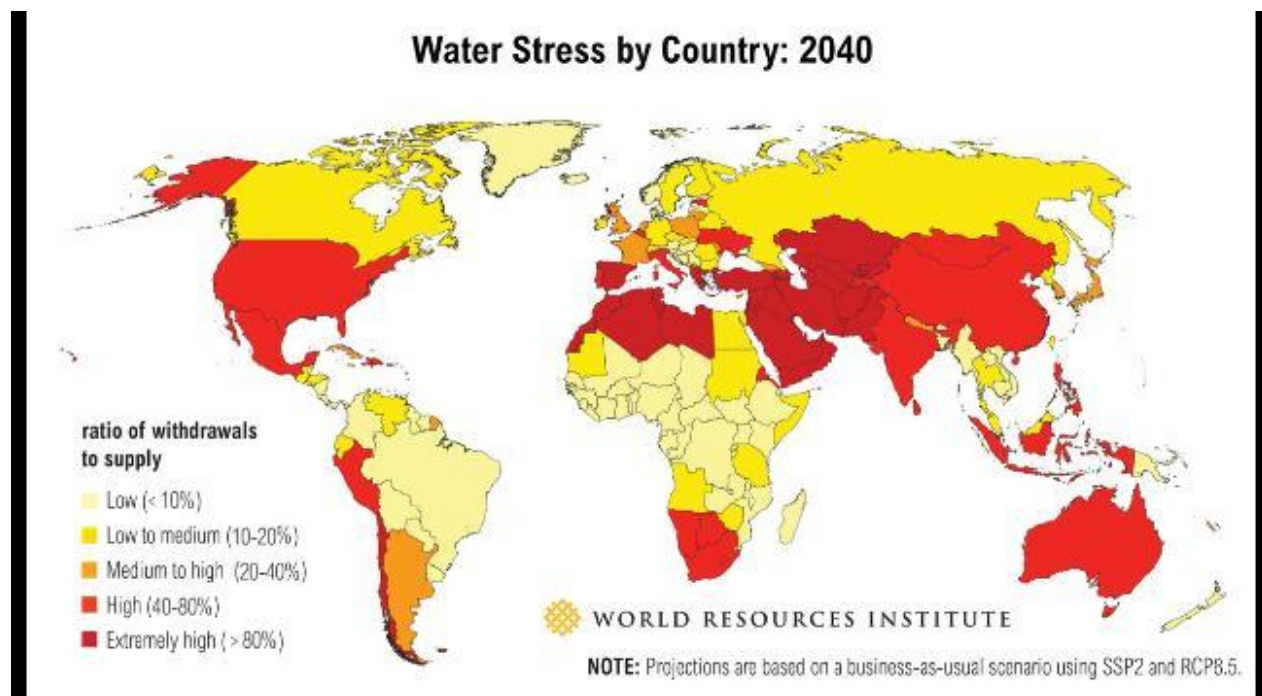
Source: Crisil Research

Source. Indian Express, 20 August 2015

Asia's water supply under threat from climate change. Out of world's estimated 1.1 billion people without access to safe water, nearly 70 per cent or 700 million come from Asia and the Pacific regions. Many countries are experiencing an increasing scarcity of water, particularly during dry seasons, and climate change will exacerbate this situation. An Asian Development Bank (ADB) report released recently says that more than three quarters of the countries in Asia face serious water shortages, which if not managed, poses a real threat to continued growth and prosperity for the region. The reasons are many, complex, and intertwined, ranging from a rapidly growing population, increasing and diversifying food demands, urbanisation, unsustainable land-use change, to the excessive extraction of groundwater, water-related disasters, and climate change.

Middle East may be extremely water stressed by 2040. Most of the Middle East and parts of Africa have a high probability for extreme water shortages by 2040, says a [study](#) from the World Resources Institute, due to a combination in "changes in climate, economic development, urbanization, and

population growth." The top six — Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, San Marino, Singapore, and the United Arab Emirates — remain constant while the remainder of the top 10 includes Israel, Palestine, Oman, Yemen, and Saudi Arabia in varying years. Other countries that fall into the extreme category by 2040 include Spain, Greece and Turkey, while the United States, China, Australia, India, Mexico, and Peru fall into the second highest category.



Source. The Weather Channel, 31 August 2015

States gear up to meet the challenge

DJB to increase use of recycled water in Delhi. Gearing up to meet the growing demand for water supply, Delhi Jal Board (DJB) aims to increase use of recycled water to 40 per cent from the present 25 per cent which will help meet the purposes of agriculture, horticulture and washing. DJB produces around 2100 million litres of recycled water across its 30 waste water treatment plants. The plan aims at increasing use of this water from present 25 per cent to 40 per cent in one year for purposes like irrigation/horticulture, flushing/washing, cooling plants, etc – thereby making available additional water for drinking.

Rainwater harvesting structures to be set up in Delhi. The New Delhi Municipal Council will come up with 40 rainwater harvesting structures at prime locations in Lutyens' Delhi which will also help restore depleting groundwater table. Locations identified for the Phase I of the project include Shantipath, Commonwealth Games village, Singapore Embassy road, Sardar Patel Marg and Lodhi Garden among others.

West Bengal government sets up drinking water treatment plants. Aiming to supply quality drinking water to the people in both urban and rural areas, West Bengal government has set up 11 drinking water treatment plants in Jalpaiguri, Coochbehar, Malda, Murshidabad, Birbhum, Nadia, Bardhaman, Bankura, North 24 Parganas including two in South.

Water conservation plan in 5000 villages in Rajasthan. The Rajasthan state government will undertake water conservation programme in 5000 villages initially. Under the programme, people's participation would be sought in rainwater harvesting at a large scale. Water-harvesting structures would be created in these villages using local resources. The programme aims at involving people's participation as has been done in Maharashtra.

Odisha water resources department plans Rs 2500 crore corpus fund. The state water resources department has planned to create a corpus fund of Rs 2500 crore by levying a fee of Rs 2.5 crore per cusec of water allotted to industrial units. The proposed fund would be utilised to construct 20 in stream storage structures that can be used by industries in lean months. To conserve its water resource and ensure optimal utilisation, the government has decided in principle to turn off water allocation for industries which are delayed or unlikely to come up.

[Business Standard](#), 3 August 2015 | [Dawn](#), 8 August 2015 | [The Tribune](#), 11 August 2015 | [The Statesman](#), 16 August 2015 | [Business Standard](#), 20 August 2015 | [The Financial Express](#), 20 August 2015 | [The Tribune](#), 22 August 2015 | [The Times of India](#), 26 August 2015 | [The Times of India](#), 27 August 2015 | [Your Story](#), 31 August 2015 | [The Weather Channel](#), 31 August 2014 | [The Indian Express](#), 2 September 2015



Forest cover declines in 12 states and UTs. The forest cover of 12 states and Union Territories has declined by over 1200 sq kms due to a variety of reasons including encroachment and mining, Lok Sabha was informed. Replying to a question, Environment Minister Mr Prakash Javadekar said as per [India State of Forest Report 2013](#), the total forest cover in the country is 697,898 sq km, which is 21.23 per cent of the total geographical area of the country. Nagaland, Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Tripura, Manipur,

Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram, Karnataka, Chhattisgarh, Haryana, Maharashtra and Andaman and Nicobar Islands have reported decline in forest cover due to encroachment, open cast mining, drying up of mangroves after tsunami and shifting cultivation practices.

India embarks on national drive to protect its forest inhabitants. India is embarking on a national campaign to help millions of indigenous people protect their forest land and resources using a seven-year-old landmark law that has gone largely ignored, according to the tribal affairs minister. The Forest Rights Act (FRA) of 2008 was hailed by campaigners as a watershed law that would improve the lives of impoverished tribes by recognizing their right to inhabit and live off the forests where their forefathers settled centuries before.

According to a recent study, [Potential for Recognition of Community Forest Resource Rights Under India's Forest Rights Act](#), by the Washington-based Rights and Resources Initiative, the Forest Rights Act has the potential to give an estimated 150 million people rights over at least 40 million hectares (100 million acres) of forested land. If properly implemented, the study said, the law would shift forest governance from "an undemocratic, colonial system to a decentralized, democratic one" where local village councils are the main decision-makers over the forest land and produce.

The study makes a preliminary assessment of the potential area over which Community Forest Resource (CFR) rights can be recognized in India under the FRA. The estimate provides a baseline for planning and effective implementation of CFR rights recognition under the FRA, and allows policy makers and forest dependent communities to assess the extent to which the law has been implemented.

Centre proposes to develop 200 city forests in next five years. As part of its effort to increase and protect green cover in urban areas, the Centre has proposed to develop 200 'city forests' in the country in next five years and launch a 'school nursery' scheme to create awareness about environment protection. Under this scheme, 1000 schools of the country will be selected every year and each will raise at least 1000 saplings by involving students. Selected schools will receive grant of Rs 25,000 in the first year and Rs 10,000 per year for the subsequent two years.

Gujarat: Forest dwellers get title rights. The Gujarat government has decided to give legal possession rights to forest dwellers so that they could enjoy benefits of various government schemes for regular farmers and avail bank loans against property. Parts of forest area were allotted to these tribal farmers under the Forest Rights Act, 2006, but ownership of the land still rested with the government. To facilitate the process, tribal settlements in forest area would be listed as revenue villages. According to the forest department, despite getting the ownership, a tribal family would be allowed to sell the land to a non-tribal person or use it for any purpose other than farming.

Kerala: Forest land of 1977 sq km missing. According to the latest report released by the Kerala State Remote Sensing and Environment Centre, 1977 sq km of forest land in the state is missing. As per the KSREC report, Kerala has 7130 sq km of forest land. However, the Centre's notification based on the information provided by the Oommen V. Oommen committee there is 9107 sq km of forest land spread over 123 villages of ecologically sensitive areas in the state.

[The Times of India](#), 4 August 2015 | [The Economic Times](#), 11 August 2015 | [Manorama Online](#), 13 August 2015 | [The Indian Express](#), 15 August 2015 | [Reuters](#), 17 August 2015

July 2015. [Potential for Recognition of Community Forest Resource Rights Under India's Forest Rights Act](#), Rights and Resources Initiative, 20 pg



Geospatial map of Ganga to be made. Fitted with powerful cameras, a Special Purpose Aircraft may soon fly over the Ganga to survey the river for geospatial mapping of its basin, to help rid it of pollution and encroachment. The survey would be conducted under the government's Namami Gange programme, which aims at rejuvenating the highly polluted river. The aerial survey would be conducted in the five states through which the Ganga flows — Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand and West Bengal.

Clean Ganga Fund. The Clean Ganga Fund (CGF), an initiative launched by the government as part of its ambitious mission to cleanse the Ganga river, has received donations to the tune of over Rs 66 crore till August this year. Of the amount, public sector undertakings alone have contributed about Rs 13 crore between April and mid-August 2015. Private companies have contributed over Rs 45 lakh in the current fiscal, while individual contributions stood at Rs 15 lakh during the period. Non-resident Indians too have shown interest to make the river Ganga pollution-free. The fund would be managed by a Trust to be headed by the Finance Minister, and the secretariat of the Trust will be set up in the Ministry of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation under the Clean Ganga Mission Director.

Utilisation of Clean Ganga Fund

- ◆ Cleaning up of the Ganga
 - ◆ Setting up of waste treatment plants
 - ◆ Conservation of biotic diversity of the river
 - ◆ Development of public amenities
 - ◆ Activities such as Ghat redevelopment, R&D and innovative projects
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Panel set up to clean Yamuna. A six-member committee has been set up to study various options for cleaning the 49-km stretch of the Yamuna flowing through Delhi. The six-member committee to be headed by the Secretary (Water Resources), Union government, will include representatives of the Ministries of Urban Development, Water Resources, Surface Transport, Environment besides those of the Delhi Government. The committee will submit its report in September for further consideration by the governments of India and Delhi.

Directions by NGT. The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has directed Central Pollution Control Board, Delhi Pollution Control Committee and IIT-Delhi to conduct a joint inspection of 13 common effluent treatment plants (CETPs) which are located in various industrial clusters in the national capital. The NGT came down heavily on the Delhi government for permitting sand mining in the name of dredging and directed the authorities concerned to stop illegal mining on the Yamuna river bed and its surrounding areas. The Agra Municipal Corporation has been fined Rs 1 lakh (\$1500) for dumping garbage into the Yamuna river by the NGT.

New STP to stop Yamuna pollution. The additional chief secretary of the department of town and country planning (DTCP) on July 28, notified the National Green Tribunal (NGT) about the construction of a 175 million litres per day-sewage treatment plant on a 53-acre plot, tenders for which have already

been floated by HUDA. The move comes after the green court summoned senior Haryana government officials over Yamuna water being polluted by untreated sewage discharged via the Najafgarh drain.

[The Times of India](#), 3 August 2015 | [The Economic Times](#), 9 August 2015 | [NDTV](#), 12 August 2015 | [The Asian Age](#), 17 August 2015 | [PTI News](#), 24 August 2015 | [The Tribune](#), 27 August 2015 | [NDTV](#), 28 August 2015 | [The Hindu](#), 30 August 2015



Government establishes National Adaptation Fund on Climate Change.

Government has established the National Adaptation Fund on Climate Change (NAFCC) with a budget provision of Rs 350 crore for the year 2015-16 and 2016-17, with an estimated requirement of Rs 181.5 crore for financial year 2017-18. The objective of the fund is to assist state and union territories that are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change in meeting the cost of adaptation. NABARD has been appointed as

National Implementing Entity responsible for implementation of adaptation projects under the NAFCC

Climate plan to have sectoral goals. India's climate action plan ahead of the United Nations' Paris summit in December will come with sector-specific emphasis on emission reduction. The Union environment ministry has held several rounds of meetings with key infrastructure ministries to help clarify the definition, scope and approach for preparing India's Intended Nationally Determined Contributions to be submitted to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change.

Organic, indigenous rice back in Bengal, owing to taste, cost and climate change. Having lost the race to high-yielding varieties after the green revolution, a number of indigenous varieties of rice are now making a comeback due to their aroma, taste, low input cost and resilience to climate change. Experts say hundreds of farmers in rice growing areas of Burdwan, South and North 24 Parganas, Midnapore, Nadia, Howrah etc have now left the modern high-yielding varieties, which were popularised during the 1960s and 70s. Among the folk varieties, premium variety of aromatic rice Gobindobhog is the most popular and is now grown over 30,000 hectares in Burdwan district, the rice bowl of West Bengal. Many of the folk varieties are getting attention as they are more resilient to the vagaries of nature. Farmers, particularly in the islands of Sundarbans spread across North and South 24 Parganas, are favouring flood tolerant varieties like Bhasamanik and Bhadoi as they have been hit hard by rising water levels due to global warming.

UK to fund Kolkata's climate action plan. UK will fund a capacity building programme for making Kolkata a low carbon city. The programme will cover over 20 multi-sectoral projects, including roof-top solar plant, a mobility plan, a master plan for energy-efficient street lighting, a disaster management plan and a green city business and investment plan.

CCIP will help Odisha in tackling climate change. UK has affirmed support to Odisha in tackling climate change. The Climate Change Innovation Programme taken up in six Indian states under a 12 million pound technical assistance would ensure low-carbon and climate resilient development in the state.

Central Asian glaciers shrinking fast. Central Asian glaciers have melted at four times the global average since the early 1960s, shedding 27 per cent of their mass, according to a study. By 2050, warmer temperatures driven by climate change could wipe out half the remaining glacier ice in the Tien Shan mountain range, reported the [study](#), published in *Nature Geoscience*. Tien Shan glaciers have lost an average of 5.4 billion tonnes of ice per year since the 1960s, totalling some 3000 square kilometres (1158 square miles). At stake is a critical source of water for people in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, as well as a section of northwest China.

Climate models point to higher summer temperatures in coming decades along the 2500 kilometres of the Tien Shan range, thus making the glaciers even more vulnerable, the study said.

[Your Story](#), 9 July 2015 | [Odisha Diary](#), 5 August 2015 | [Business Insider](#), 17 August 2015 | [The Economic Times](#), 25 August 2015 | [The Hindu Business Line](#), 27 August 2015 | [Zee news](#), 27 August 2015 | [Energy Live News](#), 28 August 2015



Total organic farming in Kerala by 2016-end. Kerala will be transformed into a fully organic farming State by the end of 2016, according to the state's agriculture minister. Stating that the country needed to give topmost priority in achieving food security, he called for serious initiatives to go back to the traditional organic farming methods.

SGPC to take up organic farming for chemical-free 'langar'. To provide chemical-free 'langar' to the devotees visiting the Golden Temple and other historic shrines, the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) has decided to adopt organic farming. In the first phase of the project, 5 acres in each of the SGPC-run 35 gurdwaras will be covered. The SGPC is hoping that its initiative would promote organic farming in the state where the people urgently need to get rid of agricultural produce laced with chemicals due to the indiscriminate use of pesticides. SGPC has declared its intention of producing organic seed of different types of food grains, vegetables and pulses, and then distributing these among farmers for growing in their agricultural fields.

Organic farming to get a big boost in Maharashtra. The Maharashtra government is drawing up a comprehensive plan, under the banner of *sashwat sheti*, to promote organic farming in a phased manner as an alternative to chemical fertilisers. The Ministry of Agriculture is preparing the draft and special allocations will be made to meet the targets.

District in Tamil Nadu promoting organic farming. At a time when pesticide residues in agricultural produces are becoming a matter of concern, a group of 300 farmers in Tirupur district in Tamil Nadu have come together with a novel initiative of promoting organic farming through a consortium approach. To carry the movement forward, the farmers have constituted a company named 'Aathma Organic Producers Company' not just for promoting cultivation using organic farming methods but also to market their produces under a common brand both as raw product and value-added items.

As part of the initiative, the member farmers will not only be adopting organic cultivation methods to grow various agricultural produces in their land holdings but also plans to carry out awareness campaigns to enthuse more farmers to take up organic farming.

Panel exposes the weak certification system.

Worried over fake organic farm produce entering into domestic markets without being tested and certified properly, a parliamentary panel suggested stringent punishment for individuals and entities involved in pushing non-organic products as organic (chemical pesticide-free) farm produce to buyers. The panel also recommended that the government should put in place a strict monitoring mechanism so that it does not affect international trade as India has potential to boost export of organic products to Rs 6000 crore from the existing level of Rs 1825 crore.

Organic farming has gained momentum with several states such as [Gujarat](#), [Himachal Pradesh](#), [Kerala](#), [Karnataka](#) unveiling policies to set the goal of converting the agricultural production in the states to organic. These organic farming policies capture the concerns over adverse impacts of scientific farming.

[The Hindu](#), 11 August 2015 | [The Times of India](#), 14 August 2015 | [The Hindu](#), 16 August 2015 | [The Tribune](#), 18 August 2015 | [Hindustan Times](#), 25 August 2015 | [Indian Express](#), 25 August 2015



International biodiversity projects in Maharashtra. The National Biodiversity Authority, a statutory body under the Ministry Of Environment, Forest And Climate Change, will implement two international projects in Maharashtra soon. One of the two global projects to be implemented in the state includes Biodiversity Finance Initiative (BIOFIN) by United Nations Development Programme. The three-year project will be a pilot initiative and later implemented in other states. It will be implemented in Chandrapur and Sindhudurg districts of Maharashtra. BIOFIN focuses on providing tools and

methodological framework for measuring expenditure on biodiversity, which the countries may choose to use in their efforts to mobilize resources required for achieving the global and national biodiversity targets. So far, 19 countries are implementing the project.

Another project will be about sensitizing and making people aware about biodiversity conservation. It will be implemented with the help of GIZ. The GIZ project will be launched in states like Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and Uttarakhand.

Government clears eco-sensitive zone around Okhla bird sanctuary. The standing committee of the National Board for Wildlife has approved the [draft notification](#) of the eco-sensitive zone around the Okhla Bird Sanctuary on the capital's border with Uttar Pradesh. A final notification is expected soon, ending a nearly two-year wait for flat owners in the Noida neighbourhood who were denied possession of their apartments after the National Green Tribunal (NGT) passed an order in October 2013 restraining

authorities from handing over completion certificates to buildings falling within a 10 km radius of the bird sanctuary.

However, despite home buyers and the real estate sector rejoicing after the order, the NGT has made it clear that the notification can be challenged by stakeholders after it is finalized. Environmentalists have raised questions about the decision, with many saying that the move will negatively affect the Okhla Bird Sanctuary – which is home to at least 10 threatened species of birds and countless migratory birds.

According to the new draft notification, the eco-sensitive zone will range from 1.27 km on the northern boundary of the sanctuary till the DND flyway and 100 meters on the others.

Hydroelectric projects will adversely impact Tawang biodiversity. A study submitted to the environment ministry on the cumulative impact of 13 proposed hydroelectric (HEPs) projects on the Tawang River Basin, Arunachal Pradesh, has said that the projects will affect unique biodiversity, undisturbed forests and cultural diversity of TRB and will have detrimental impact on habitats of endangered flora and fauna. The study, carried out by the North-Eastern Hill University, in one of its major recommendations has said that the HEPs located 3200 metres above sea level should be rejected. The 13 HEPs on Tawang river's main stem and tributaries – Tsa Chu-I, Tsa Chu-I lower, Tsa Chu-II, Thingbu Chu, New Melling, Mago Chu, Nykcharong Chu, Rho, Tawang-I, Tawang-II, Nyamjung Chu, Paikangrong Chu, and Jaswantgarh stage-I – will cut into 249 hectares of forest and have a total installed capacity of 2809.10 MW.

Tiger habitat declined by 41 % in 17 years, says IUCN report. IUCN, in its latest report, has pointed out that Madhya Pradesh and other states of country have lost an alarming 41 per cent of tiger habitat in last 17 years. Rising sea levels caused by climate change is a threat to Bengal tigers as sea level rise threatens to wipe out Sundarbans, a large mangrove forest area shared by India and Bangladesh and home to the Bengal tigers, according to IUCN.

[Business Standard](#), 29 July 2015 | [DNA](#), 8 August 2015 | [The Economic Times](#), 18 August 2015 | [Mint](#), 19 August 2015 | [The Indian Express](#), 19 August 2015 | [The Times of India](#), 25 August 2015 | [The Times of India](#), 31 August 2015