Enviro Monitor

July 2015

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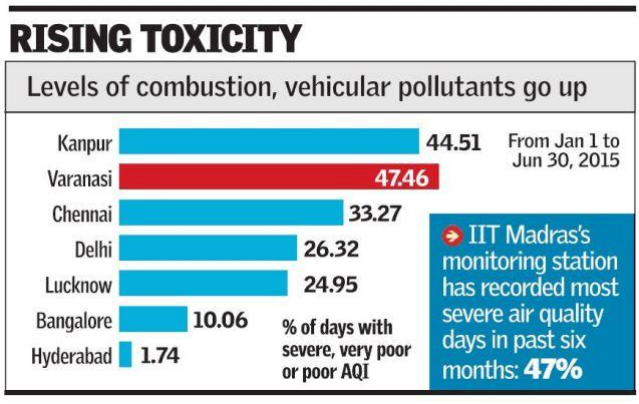
Air quality

The quality of air you breathe in Chennai is worse than in Delhi. Official air quality data for the first half of this year shows that while Delhi faces high levels of air pollution, Kanpur, Varanasi and Chennai are worse off. Averaging across the ten pollution monitoring stations in the city, a little over a quarter of the days from January to June this year in Delhi had an Air Quality Index value of severe (3.2 per cent), very poor (8.7 per cent) or poor (14.4 per cent). In comparison, nearly half of all days in Kanpur were of severe, very poor or poor air quality. Varanasi had no 'severe' days, but nearly half of all days were either of very poor or poor air quality. Averaging across its three monitoring stations, Chennai had the highest proportion of 'severe' days (17.7 per cent), and a third of all days were either of severe, very poor or poor air quality.



Source. The Hindu, 15 July 2015

IIT-Delhi to study pollution sources in Ghaziabad. The Uttar Pradesh Pollution Control Board has written to IIT-Delhi, seeking a proposal to conduct a study to determine various sources of air pollution in Ghaziabad. The source apportionment study of various pollutants in Ghaziabad would help determine the ultrafine particulate matters less than 2.5 microns in size released into the air from various sources, including vehicles, road dust, construction work, diesel-run generator sets and industries. Besides, the proportionate contribution of these different sources to the total pollution build-up in the air would further be determined in the study, which would be spread over a minimum period of six months.

Ghaziabad had been declared a critically polluted area' by the Central Pollution Control Board in a survey conducted among 88 industrial clusters in the country in 2009. The city had recorded a score of 87.37 on a scale of 100 in the comprehensive environmental pollution index (CEPI) in the survey and was tagged as the most polluted city of NCR.

Pollution takes toll on Golden Temple's sheen. A World Health Organization (WHO) report says Amritsar is the ninth most polluted city in the country. While the number of private vehicles plying in the area around the shrine is also high, the rickety auto-rickshaws running on adulterated fuel also pose a severe threat to the architectural marvel that the Golden Temple is. As per a study on air pollution around the shrine conducted by IIT Delhi, the particulate matter (PM10) concentration breached the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS), which was attributed by the study to high background concentrations of PM10 (55.00 µg/m3) within the city.

Pune report card: Pollution, number of vehicles rise. The environment status report of Pune city for 2014-15, tabled by the Pune Municipal Corporation during its general body meeting recently, has thrown up alarming rise in the levels of air and noise pollution, giving a wake-up call to civic authorities to take necessary steps to address the issue with immediate effect. As against 26,66,488 vehicles that plied on city roads in 2013-14, a total of 28,70,281 hit the city traffic in 2014-15, registering a rise of 2,03,793.

The already congested Pune roads had to accommodate one-and-a-half lakh more two-wheelers and 36,000 new cars in 2014-15.

Despite fast-paced growth, Coimbatore's air quality has improved. The national ambient air quality survey (NAAQS) shows that Coimbatore's ambience has been improving in the past two years. The survey conducted by the Union ministry of environment, forest and climate includes the Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board recording air quality in the city at regular intervals. In 2012, the city had 68g/m³ (micrograms per cubic metre) particulate matter in its air, and the survey shows that the particulate matter levels reduced to 56g/m³ and 48g/m³ in 2013 and 2014 respectively.

The Times of India, 12 July 2015 | The Hindu, 15 July 2015 | The Indian Express, 30 July 2015 | The Times of India, 31 July 2015 | The Tribune, 31 July 2015

Potable water found contaminated with chemicals across states. Quality of potable water in at least 66,761 habitats across the states has been found to be contaminated by either one or more chemicals like arsenic, fluoride, iron, salinity and nitrate, threatening the health of over 3 crore people living in these pockets, as per the latest Government data. With 22,254 contaminated drinking water habitats, Rajasthan tops the list followed by West Bengal (11,429) and Assam (8977). In Rajasthan, a total 89,75,350 people face health threat due to chemically contaminated water while health of as many as 97,26,690 locals is in peril in West Bengal. Similarly, in Assam 33,50,893 people face health threat due to toxic water, according to the statistics available from the Union Water and Sanitation Ministry.

Arsenic contamination has been reported widely across northern Indian states like Punjab, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh with a total 1800 pockets in the country found to have water laced with the metal.

12,727 habitats across the states have been hit by fluoride. Heavy metals is through industrial waste dumped untreated into water-systems while nitrates is due to excessive and prolonged use of fertilisers. As per the statistics, 15,617 habitats across the states have gone saline.

Conserving lakes in Bengaluru. The High Court has directed the Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board that it had three months to update its status report to prevent contamination of storm water drains with sewage.

The Karnataka Lake Conservation and Development Authority is now in its final stages of becoming a full-fledged powerful body. Once this is formed, the expectation is that the city lakes will start seeing some improvement. The Authority will have legal powers to take action against the errant officials and the organisations.

Vadodara's wetlands in troubled waters. Vadodara has lost over five lakh square meter of wetland area in the last decade, a recent study indicates. Moreover, the wetlands in the city are fast losing their ability to serve their main purpose — to provide drinking water. According to data collected by Gujarat Ecological Society between 2005 and 2014 shows that all the 49 ponds in the city shrunk by a total area of 32.95 per cent. The loss in the area resulted to an approximate loss of 521.2 million liter of water.

IIM-Ahmedabad to launch India's first water accelerator programme. With an aim to kick-start the ecosystem for water innovation and technology in India, the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad's technology business incubator – Centre for Innovation Incubation and Entrepreneurship (CIIE) – is launching the country's first water accelerator.

The programme aims to accelerate, nurture, and invest in early stage start-ups by selecting 10 to 12 teams that have the potential to become scalable and competitive

The CIIE is launching it in partnership with Asian Development Bank, Arghyam Foundation, Luminous Water Technologies' Livpure, the World Bank's Water and Sanitation Program, and the other reputed purification solution providers.

enterprises. Selected start-ups will be provided intensive capacity building, mentoring and advisory support by leaders in industry, government, academia and practitioners.

The Times of India, 3 July 2015 | Indian Express, 13 July 2015 | The Economic Times, 14 July 2015 | Bangalore Mirror, 28 July 2015 | The Pioneer, 30 July 2015 | Deccan Herald, 31 July 2015

Government takes steps to grow forest cover, save endangered species. The Government has approved a slew of initiatives for increasing country-wide forest cover and protecting endangered species by allocating an initial amount of Rs 162 crore to carry out these schemes. After chairing the 6th meeting of National CAMPA Advisory Council, Environment Minister Mr Prakash Javadekar said that the council has approved the funds from the total sum of Rs 250 crore which had accumulated over the last five years. He said various programmes like encouraging urban forestry, school nursery programme, giving online education and protection of endangered species of flora and fauna will be started in various parts of the country.

Mangar forest home to 6 lakh trees. According to the forest department report, Mangar is home to almost 6 lakh trees, making it a strong contender for the 'natural conservation zone' tag. The report, which was submitted to National Green Tribunal on July 7, says that the forest department carried out random sampling and found that there were 5,99,889 trees in an area of 4262 acres.

The report divides the entire Mangar Bani into five parts. The first one is the core area spread over an area of 17.59 hectare around the Bani temple in the foothills, which has 8300 trees. The second part has medium density vegetation and is spread over an area of 244 hectare along the slopes of the hills. This area has 86,000 trees. The third stratum has sparse vegetation, where the granite core of the Aravali hills is exposed. This is spread over an area of 357 hectare and has 1.50 lakh trees. The fourth part comes under the Punjab Land Preservation Act and is spread over an area of 464 hectare and has 3.12 lakh trees. The fifth part is located on the eastern part of Manger and is characterized by a rocky surface having old mining pits, low soil depth and sparse vegetation. This area is spread over an area of 452 hectare and has 42,000 trees.

Nashik third in region in forest produce earnings. Nashik earns the third highest amount of revenue from forest produce among the four districts in the region, with Thane and Dahanu mopping up the maximum revenue for the Forest Development Corporation of Maharashtra. Nashik region comprises four districts -- Nashik, Thane, Dahanu and Nandurbar. The corporation acquires reserved forest land from the territorial forest department on lease for tree plantation. Root shoot teak plants and polybag seedlings are used for the plantation. The department deals in product forestry that fetches revenue. Formed under the Companies Act in 1974, corporation is one of the few profit-making corporations.

Karnataka: 71 mining companies owe over Rs 1000 crore forest tax to government. The government said that mining companies owed forest development tax to the tune of Rs 1056 crore from mines in

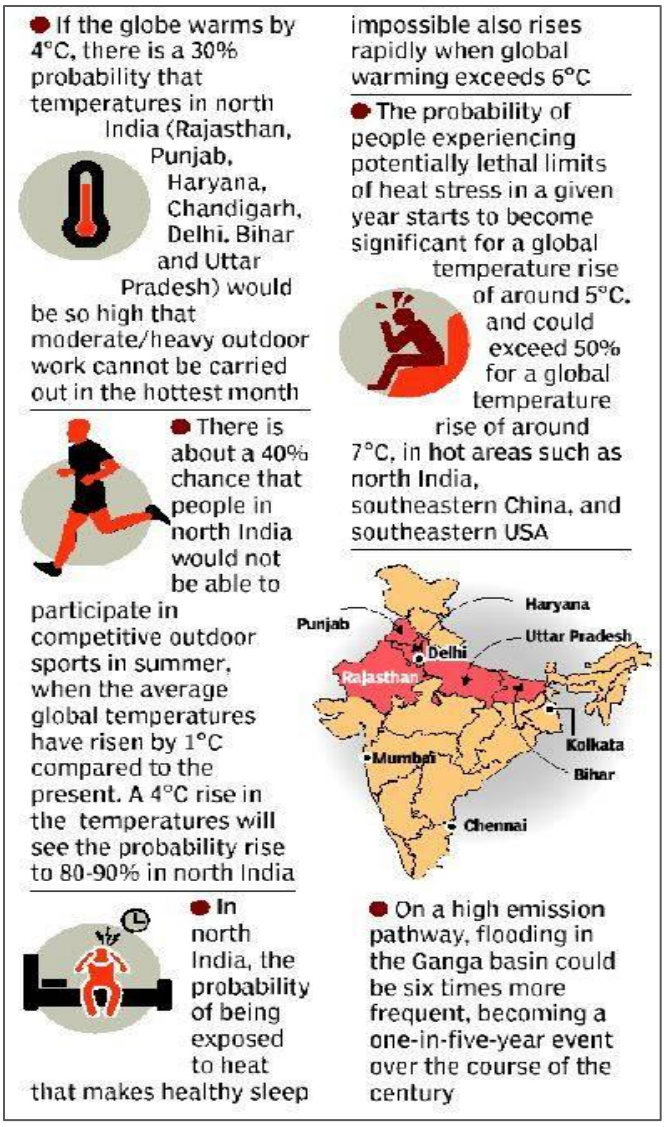
Ballari and Chitradurga districts. Replying to a question, the state's Forest Minister Mr B Ramanath Rai said the dues amounted to Rs 991.12 crore from 69 mining contractors in Ballari district and Rs 64.92 crore from two mining contractors in Chitradurga district.

Business Standard, 8 July 2015 | The Hindu, 9 July 2015 | The Times of India, 10 July 2014 | The Times of India, 15 July 2015

Mumbai, 4 other metros to see highest rise in heat-related mortality. Five urban areas that are projected to experience the highest increases in heat-related mortality after accounting for the population increase are Mumbai (15,300 deaths), Delhi (15,200 deaths), Ahmedabad (17,600 deaths), Bangalore (14,900 deaths) and Kolkata (19,400 deaths), says a study by the IIM Ahmedabad. The results of the study reveal that urban areas in India are projected to witness two-fold or more increases in heat-related mortality, that is summer season, under the projected future climate. Mortality is projected to increase 71 per cent and 140 per cent in the late 21st century under the RCP 4.5 and 8.5 scenarios, respectively. The findings of the paper titled 'Predicted Increases In Heat Related Mortality Under Climate Change In Urban India' show that increases in the heat-related mortality will overshadow declines in the cold related mortality.

Climate Change: A Risk Assessment' Report launched. A 1-metre rise in global sea levels increases the probability of what is now a once-in-a-hundred-year flood by 1000 times in Kolkata, 40 times in Shanghai and 200 times in New York, showed a multi-nation, multi-organization study by the Council on Energy, Environment and Water on a risk assessment for climate change. The study was commissioned by the British government. While pointing to an increasing risk of floods in coastal cities, including Mumbai, due to a rise in sea levels, the report pointed out that, even if global temperature is stabilized, the sea level will continue to rise for many centuries as the deep ocean warms. $200 billion worth of wheat, rice and maize crops could be lost by 2050 globally if the issues arising from global warming are not addressed on a war-footing.

The study also warned around 750 million people in South Asia could face extreme water shortage, or 1.8 billion people could face chronic water shortage by 2050, due to population growth. A decline in crop yields mainly considers shortening of the growing season caused by higher average temperatures, the report added. The study looked at three major crops in three growing areas; wheat in Punjab, rice in Jiangsu, China, and maize in Illinois in the US.



Source. The Times of India, 13 July 2015

Fund to fight climate change will be routed via Nabard. National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (Nabard) got an accreditation from the Green Climate Fund (GCF) -- a global multilateral fund that is meant to assist developing and poor countries in taking up their respective mitigation and adaptation measures to fight climate change. Accreditation to the Nabard, means that the national financial institution will act as a channel through which the GCF will deploy its resources in India. It also makes the bank eligible to identify communities and areas which are most vulnerable to climate change and submit proposals to the Fund for financial support. The funding will support a range of activities including installation of renewable (solar, wind and biomass) energy, enabling farmers to grow drought-resistant crops and reducing deforestation.

The Times of India, 12 July 2015 | The Times of India,… 14 July 2015 | Indian Express, 17 July 2015

Six new processing units in Bengaluru to quell garbage menace. For the past four years, Bengaluru has been facing an acute garbage disposable problem with nearly 4 lakh tonnes of unprocessed garbage lying about in various dumping yards in the outskirts of the city. To tackle this, the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) has decided to immediately commission six new garbage processing units in different parts of the city. The state government has decided to set up municipal solid waste (MSW) processing units in BBMP areas in and around the city. An amount of Rs 270 crore has been earmarked for the project. The six plants are coming up at Lingadheernahalli, Doddabidrakallu, Subbrayanapalya, Seegehalli, Kannenahalli and Chikka-nagamangala.

Non-disposal of waste damaging fragile ecology in Uttarakhand. Rough treatment of trees by pilgrims and non-disposal of waste containing polythene and plastic littered during last year's Nanda Raj Jaat Yatra in Uttarakhand is damaging the fragile ecology of the alpine meadows of Chamoli district, a team of environment experts and activists has found. A study tour was conducted on Raj Jat Yatra route, covering the area from Sutol village, Lata-Khopri, Jamundali, Bhujyani and Chandaniyaghat-Shilasamudra, by Centre for Environment and Development, an organisation run by noted environmentalist Chandi Prasad Bhatt. The area from Sutol to Chandaniyaghat and Shilasamudra near Trishul Parvat situated at 13000 feet is still littered with non-bio-degradable waste, including polythene and plastic packets, causing immense damage to the ecology of the region.

Centre sniffs out policy for manure from city waste. The Centre is now working on a policy to promote manufacturing of organic manure from compost and municipal waste. Officials said as per the policy, companies could be given a subsidy to manufacture organic manure from compost with an initial target to produce around 1 million tonnes of the same. Though, a very small fraction of India's total domestic urea demand of around 35 million tonnes, but production of 1 million tonnes of organic manure from city and municipal waste could lower reliance on imports in the long run. India imports around 8-9 million tonnes of urea annually to meet its domestic demand.

The Economic Times, 8 July 2015 | Business Standard, 9 July 2015 | Bangalore Mirror, 23 July 2015

West Delhi plant to turn sewage into drinking water. Delhi has taken its first step towards decentralized waste water treatment in the form of a pilot project at Keshopur where sewage will be treated to drinking water. Sujala Dhara was launched by Delhi Jal Board in collaboration with NGO SANA. The technology is in use in the US and will be replicated to treat sewage through five levels. However, with even cities like Singapore facing resistance from residents over consumption of treated sewage, the government is likely to be putting in major efforts to get people to accept this water. To start off, water from this plant will be bottled and supplied to Delhi Secretariat and offices of Delhi Jal Board.

Decentralised sewage treatment plants in the offing. Six new decentralised sewage treatment plants are expected to come up soon with the Delhi Jal Board (DJB) shifting focus from larger plants, which require wastewater to be taken to a far-off plant, to smaller ones in the locality itself. The DJB has started work on plants at Gautampuri near Aali gaon, Aya Nagar village, Sai Nagar, Kair village, Sonia Vihar A-Block and Begum Vihar B-Block. These pilot projects, which will come up at a cost of Rs.95.32 crore, will benefit about 50,000 people. The plants will treat sewage till a level where it can be used for non-drinking purposes like bathing. The treated water will be supplied through a dual pipe system to be installed in houses.

New sewage treatment plant could be boon for Gomti. Jal Nigam has proposed construction of a sewage treatment plant in the city and will also upgrade the existing two at Bharwara and Daulatganj. At an estimated cost of Rs 457 crore, the project proposal is complete and has been sent to the central government for approval. Once constructed, sewage water treatment will be more effective and the quality of treated water will improve significantly.

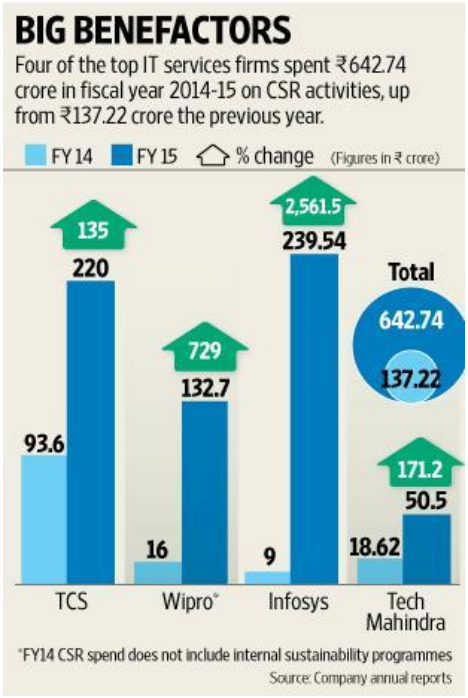
The Times of India, 10 July 2015 | The Times of India, 14 July 2015 | The Hindu, 21 July 2015

News briefs

Corporate Social Responsibility

In a disappointing start to the much-touted CSR regime, nearly two-third of the top listed companies have failed to spend the minimum 2 per cent of profits on social responsibility activities in the first year. On the other hand, corporate giant Reliance Industries Ltd (RIL) has exceeded the mandatory 2 per cent prescribed limit while spending the maximum amount (Rs 761 crore) among the Sensex companies that have so far disclosed their CSR spending figures for 2014-15 -- the first financial year for which the new law has been in force. Others who have managed to meet the target include Wipro, tobacco-to-fashion conglomerate ITC, FMCG major Hindustan Unilever and auto giant Mahindra and Mahindra.

In the first year of compliance with the Companies Act of 2013, IT firms' CSR spending rose from Rs137 crore to over Rs640 crore in FY 15. Four of the top IT services firms—Tata Consultancy Services Ltd (TCS), Wipro Ltd, Infosys Ltd and Tech Mahindra Ltd—spent Rs.642.7 crore in fiscal year 2014-15, the first year of implementation. That's 4.7 times what they spent the previous year on CSR, when the rules hadn't become mandatory.



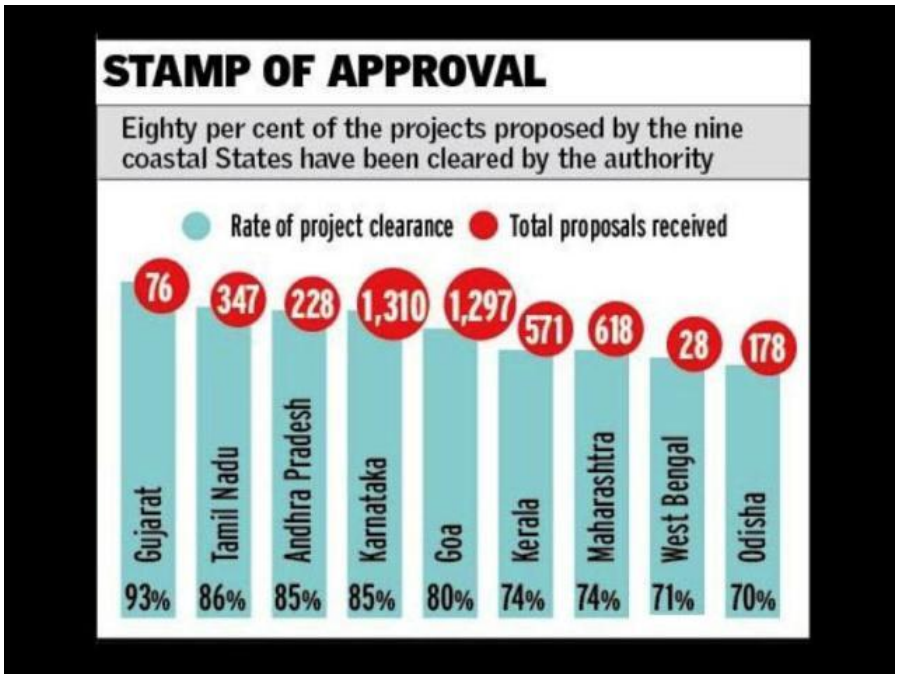
Source. Mint, 10 July 2015

Infosys spent Rs 9 crore on CSR activities in fiscal year 2013-14, and scaled it up 26 times to Rs 239.5 crore in 2014-15, according to its annual report. It spent most of its budget on education, healthcare and addressing malnutrition, working with nearly 30 non-governmental organizations.

Mint, 10 July 2015 | The Pioneer, 13 July 2014

Project clearance in coastal areas

The State Coastal Zone Management Authorities (SCZMA) of Gujarat and Tamil Nadu have topped in granting clearances to proposed projects in last two decades. A recent report by the Centre for Policy Research and Namati, titled "Coastal Zone Management Authorities and Costal Environments: Two decades of regulating land use change on India's coastline" shows that Gujarat topped the list with 93% rate of project clearance, with only one project was rejected out of 76 proposals.



Source. The Hindu, 11 July 2015

Tamil Nadu has the second highest rate of project clearance with 86%. It is followed by Andhra Pradesh (85%) and Karnataka (85%), while Odisha featured at the bottom in this list with 70% rate. In case of Karnataka and Goa, where the total number of proposals received is much higher, 1310 and 1297 respectively, majority are of renovation, reconstruction and repairing.

The Hindu, 11 July 2015