

# Enviro Monitor

February 2018

## Forest resources



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**India posts marginal increase in forest cover.** India posted a marginal 0.21% rise in the area under forest between 2015 and 2017, according to the biennial [State of Forest Report 2017](#) published by the Forest Survey of India. According to the document, India has about 7,08,273 sq km of forest, which is 21.53% of the geographic area of the

country (32,87,569 sq km). The total tree cover, according to this assessment, was 93,815 sq km or a 2% rise from the approximately 92,500 sq km estimated in 2015. The forest survey for the first time mapped 633 districts and relied on satellite-mapping.

Top five states where maximum forest cover increased 	Top five states where maximum forest cover decreased 
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Andhra Pradesh</li> <li>• Karnataka</li> <li>• Kerala</li> <li>• Odisha</li> <li>• Telangana</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mizoram</li> <li>• Nagaland</li> <li>• Arunachal Pradesh</li> <li>• Tripura</li> <li>• Meghalaya</li> </ul>

Except Assam and Manipur, other Northeastern states are fast losing its forest cover. During the last ten years, Northeast’s forest cover has been declining at a fast pace of about 300 sq km every year. However, due to afforestation activities, Assam gained 567 sq km of forests while Manipur’s forest size increased by 263 sq km. Nagaland, Mizoram, Tripura, meghalaya and Arunachal Pradesh are among those states which have been consistently losing their forest cover.

**Centre notifies draft rules for use of Rs 50k crore afforestation funds.** The environment ministry has notified draft rules under the Compensatory Afforestation Fund Act 2016, that lay down how and for what purposes funds collected in lieu of deforestation are used. When forest land is diverted for non-forest purposes like development projects, the developers must deposit funds for not just afforestation of land equal to that being deforested but also compensate for the economic value of services provided by the lost forest area for 50 years, called Net Present Value (NPV). As per the draft rules, 80% of the NPV should be used by the state for activities like assisted natural regeneration and protection of forests. The remaining 20% can be used for developing forest-related infrastructure.

The Ministry of Tribal Affairs has raised concerns with the draft rules for implementation of the Act. A major concern, according to ministry officials, is the way *gram sabha* has been defined in draft rules. The ministry has also called for a consultation of civil society and tribal organisations on the draft rules. [Forest Rights Act 2006](#) defines gram sabha as “a village assembly which shall consist of all adult members of a village and in case of states having no panchayats, padas, tolas and other traditional village institutions and elected village committees, with full and unrestricted participation of women.”

[The Hindu](#), 12 February 2018 | [Livemint](#), 13 February 2018 | [Hindustan Times](#), 18 February 2018 | [Northeast Now](#), 26 February 2018



**Ammonia in Yamuna: NGT directs Delhi, Haryana to resolve issue.**

The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has directed the Delhi and Haryana governments to hold a meeting to resolve the issue of high ammonia content in the water of the river Yamuna. According to the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), the ammonia was found at Tajewala in Haryana, Wazirabad water treatment plant, Okhla and ITO barrage in Delhi. The CPCB reported that ammonia level at Hathnikund Barrage was 0.6 mg per litre (mgpl), 1.9 mgpl at Wazirabad, and 24.9 mgpl at ITO barrage as on February 14. At Okhla, ammonia content was 0.8 mg per litre on February 15.

**Bellandur lake water under lowest grade since 1990.** The water in Bellandur lake falls under E-Class of the Central Pollution Control Board since 1990. E-Class is the lowest category and water bodies classified under it are only fit for industrial cooling and irrigation. However, officials and experts warn that the lake water should not be used for irrigation.

**Centre sanctions new project to control pollution of river Sal at Navelin, Goa.** The Centre sanctioned a new project to control pollution in River Sal at Navelim town in Goa. The project was sanctioned by the Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change under the National River Conservation Plan and would cost of Rs 61.74 crore. The Centre and State will share the cost on 60:40 basis. Under the project, around 32 kms of sewers will be laid and sewage treatment plant of 3 million litres per day constructed.

[Business Standard](#), 5 February 2018 | [The Pioneer](#), 17 February 2018 | [Deccan Herald](#), 22 February 2018



**In Kerala, village on path to become country's first carbon-neutral panchayat.**

Meenangadi, in Kerala's Wayanad district, is looking to become 'carbon neutral' — a state of zero carbon footprint achieved when carbon emissions in the atmosphere are cancelled out by an equal amount of sequestration. The local panchayat took extensive household surveys to measure the amount of carbon emissions emanating from domestic waste. With the help of officials from the NGO Thanal, students from several universities and scientists at the

MS Swaminathan Research Foundation, detailed audits were undertaken to understand the major sources of emissions in air, water and soil. A forest survey was also set in motion to count the number of trees and to estimate thereupon the vegetation cover that has been lost in recent years.

**If sea levels rise by 1 metre, Tamil Nadu losses could be worth half its current economy.** If global warming causes sea levels to rise one metre by 2050, Tamil Nadu could face financial losses amounting to around Rs 6 lakh crores — or half the size of its economy in 2016. This is the projection made by a study conducted by the Indo-German Centre for Sustainability at the Indian Institute of Technology, Madras, and presented at the Madras Institute of Development Studies recently. The study concludes that such a rise in sea levels would impact the lives and livelihoods of 1.3 million people, including 125,547 fisherfolk living along the coast of Chennai, Kancheepuram and Tiruvallur districts. The study, "Future Sea Level Rise: Assessment of Loss and Damage in Chennai in 2015", projects that 143-356 square km of land in Tamil Nadu will be submerged if sea levels rise by 1-3 metre by the middle of the century.

[Scroll](#), 3 February 2018 | [Indian Express](#), 27 February 2018



**CSIR project to find pollution spots.** To warn people of pollution hotspots, the National Institute of Science, Technology and Development Studies (NISTADS) — the policy arm of the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) — is rolling out a project to install pollution sensors at the Capital's traffic junctions. The aim of the project is to develop a messaging alert system that will warn people of spikes in pollution in certain localities. The process of data collection is still on and the NISTADS is also looking to develop a prototype of pollution sensor that can be easily affixed atop traffic junctions.

**IIT-D sets up centre for research on clean air.** The Indian Institute of Technology-Delhi has set up a Centre of Excellence for Research on Clean Air (CERCA) to take up a research to study air pollution issues in Delhi and the National Capital Region. The centre will be a platform for undertaking multidisciplinary research projects by the faculty of IIT-Delhi, especially focused to study and resolve clear air issues in Delhi-NCR. Besides providing scientific information to policymakers, it will also give feedback on effectiveness of various pollution management programmes.

**Focus on indoor air too, study claims it could be far worse.** A study by the environmental studies department of Delhi University shows that poor ventilation and structural designs can trap volatile organic compounds (VOCs), bioaerosols and particulate matter inside that can lead to various health ailments, including acute respiratory illnesses and impairment of lung function. The nearly five year-long research, conducted on 900 people across several households of varied income groups, pointed out that the high and low level groups were most vulnerable to respiratory diseases due to the lifestyle and design flaw of their houses.

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The research found that most houses had high volatile organic compounds — dust, radon, CO<sub>2</sub> and high concentration of bioaerosols (organisms or dust that consists of pathogens, viruses, fungi, allergens and pollen).

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[The Hindu](#), 17 February 2018 | [The Times of India](#), 26 February 2018 | [The Hindu](#), 28 February 2018



**Cauvery verdict: Apex court reduces TN's share.** The Supreme Court has reduced Tamil Nadu's allocation of Cauvery water from Karnataka from 192 TMC to 177.25 TMC. Tamil Nadu will have to now bank on 10 TMC ground water available with it. The court said the tribunal did not consider the growing needs of Bengaluru and had thought the city could make do with its 60% groundwater supply. But ground water has dried up with the burgeoning population of the city. Thus, the court allocated 4.75 tmc Cauvery water to Bengaluru, even

though the city is located outside the Cauvery basin. The court said that subject to the formulation of a scheme, the water allocation arrangement should stand unchanged for the next 15 years. The court upheld the award of 30 tmc water to Kerala and allowed Puducherry's request to grow a second crop. However, cultivation should be limited to 43,000 acres. It did not allow any enhancement in the

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Supreme Court says principle of equality among riparian states does not imply equal division of water; suggests just and reasonable use.

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Cauvery water allocation to Puducherry from the seven tmc allotted by the tribunal in 2007.

**Groundwater in half of Cauvery basin overexploited.** A joint study conducted by the Karnataka state public works department and Central groundwater board shows that groundwater is overexploited in the basin. The latest report from the agencies says groundwater in half of 239 revenue sub-divisions (firkas) in the Cauvery basin is over exploited, critical, semi-critical and saline. The situation is no different in the rest of the state as 61% of total firkas in Tamil Nadu fall under these categories.

**Cabinet approves setting up a Tribunal on river Mahanadi.** Seeking to resolve the long-standing dispute between Odisha and Chhattisgarh

on sharing Mahanadi river waters, the Union Cabinet has approved constitution of a Tribunal. This inter-state water dispute Tribunal will be required to adjudicate the matter within a timeframe of maximum five years. The Tribunal will be constituted under the [Inter-State River Water Disputes Act, 1956](#).

#### Five existing river tribunals

- Cauvery : Karnataka and Tamil Nadu
- Ravi-Beas: Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan
- Krishna: Maharashtra, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh
- Vansadhara: Odisha and Andhra Pradesh
- Mahadayi: Goa, Karnataka and Maharashtra

The Hindu, 17 February 2018 | [The Times of India](#), 18 February 2018 | [The Times of India](#), 20 February 2018