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# **Environment in the Print Media: An Analysis**

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**World Wide Fund for Nature-India**  
**ENVIS CENTRE**  
*(NGO's Parliament & Media)*

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## Introduction

The analysis primarily focuses on the news pieces, some of which rattled nations /states, while others proved to be a welcome change. The analysis focuses on a gamut of environmental issues as well as a plethora of relevant news articles throwing light on questions raised by environmentalists. The basic idea of this piece of work is to bring into picture the role of print media in today's world, a world that is being plundered of its precious natural resources. Growth of economies of various nations, with the help of their respective mechanized industrial sectors unquestionably requiring innumerable amount of resources, proved to be their Achilles heels with respect to developmental growth vis-à-vis environmental concerns.

Since this is an explorative initiative resting on one of the most interesting and at the same time challenging subjects, this analysis be allowed to be provocative, in the sense that it may raise some challenging questions.

Media plays the role of a socializing agent in terms of environmental protection. It is a fact that Public actions and attitudes toward environmental protection are largely shaped and influenced by the media. Media is one of the key channels for creating awareness about environmental conservation and related issues.

The environmental issues have been categorized into 25 (twenty-five) different subject heads. Each subject is having its own area of coverage. The Quarterly News Analysis for the months Jan-March is based on the below highlighted subjects in the field of environment. Importance has been given to subject heads (highlighted below) which comprises of the maximum number of news clippings whose chart has been provided at the end of the report

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<b>Subject</b>	<b>Area of Coverage</b>
Agriculture	Agriculture, Animal Husbandry, Fisheries.
Animal Rights	Animal Rights/Welfare
Alternative Technologies	Eco-friendly Techniques, Alternative Power, Non-Conventional Energy, Application of Remote Sensing & GIS, R&D.
Biosafety	Gene Revolution, Genetically Modified Foods, Biohazards.
Environment Education	Awareness campaigns, School events on environment education, Publicity of Environment Consciousness etc
Climate Change	Global Climatic Change, Ozone Depletion, Asian Brown Cloud.
Conservation	Eco-Development, Biodiversity Conservation, Social Forestry, Agro Forestry, Soil Conservation, Wildlife Conservation, Participatory Forest Management Programmes, Energy Conservation
Disaster	Natural And Man-Made Hazards/ Management
Ecology (Land)	Terrestrial Features, Degradation, Erosion, Landslide etc.
Ecology (Water)	Degradation of both Freshwater And Marine.
EIA	Dams, Case Studies On Impacts, Project Clearance.
Environmental Law	Litigation, Legislation, Policy, Committees, Bureaus, Boards.
Health	Health/Hygiene, Sanitation.
Medicinal Plants	Ethno –Plants, Medicinal Use.
Mining	Related Occupational Diseases, Impacts On Ambience.
NGOs/Others	Contributions by NGOs, Funding, Awareness, Others.
Pollution	Air, Water, Land, And Others With Their Impacts And Controls.
Population	Plant Population, Animal Population And Human Population.
Rural Development	Rural Development – Government Schemes, Role Of Panchyat And Gram Sabha.
Socio- Economic Issues	Gender Equity, Human Rights, Human Settlements, Social Responsibility Of Industry/Corporates.
Sustainable Development	Debates On SD, Intra-Inter Generational Equity, Ecotourism.
Tribal Studies	Indigenous Knowledge, Tribals In Preservation/ Conservation, Their Culture.
Waste Management	Solid, Landuse/Landfill, Recycling, Chemical Hazardous Waste.
Water Management	Water Management/Monitoring, River Linking, Water Harvesting
Wildlife Trade	Legal Trade/ Poaching, Penalties/Regulation.

*For the first time, we are involved in the collective management of global ecological crisis... the 'culprit' may be nothing less than a model of development encompassing whole continents, and 'victims' may be in other continents with different lifestyles. We are here in a 'controversial universe', involving debates about national models and international justice.... In fact, we are witnessing the birth of a social objective: the political economy of global environment.*

- **French green economist, Alain Lipietz**

## Alternative Technologies



[www.arc.ab.ca/whatsnew/SuccessEnergy.asp](http://www.arc.ab.ca/whatsnew/SuccessEnergy.asp)

Naomi Oreskes, an associate history professor and science-studies program director at the University of California, San Diego says- “We need a serious commitment to the engineering aspects of making renewable sources of energies cost-effective and it is no good asking folks not to do something if you don’t give them an alternative.”

An issue to ponder over, raised by a concerned citizen in a tabloid, is that why our full-fledged ministry of water resources, as well as our numerous hydro-electric engineers-who built the world famous Nangal Dam- known for their competence around the world-have failed to add modifications to the age-old watermill even 57 years after independence.

One of the news that flooded almost all the newspapers was of the Kyoto Protocol which will, as marked, have an explicit economic advantage to India, leaving aside the penalties it will have to pay, as it should leverage good environmental citizenship to gain concrete technological help. In exchange for reducing emissions, we might be able to get cheaper access to desirable technologies. Though the Petroleum Conservation Research Association (PCRA) continues with fuel conservation initiatives

and recommends measures for improving energy efficiency, the responsibility ultimately rests with the users. Already, globally, it is feared that India’s coal mining activities, vital to energy production, will release more greenhouse gases than are targeted to be reduced. We need clean energy, but it should be planned to be as green as it gets. General Motors has unveiled a new car, which runs on hydrogen fuels and is being billed as the new future vehicle. It is regarded as a car unlike any other since the only thing its exhaust emits is water vapors.

In a statement issued in newspapers, the MoEF asked the “environmental nightmare sector” of the Indian pulp and paper industry to become more eco-friendly. Minister for Environment & Forest A Raja told the Indian paper manufacturers that well-established bio-technologies, including bio-bleaching, use of fungi and a mixture of enzymes, could be adopted for fulfilling environmental quality norms and global challenges.

As the use of firewood by villagers and drying up of several perennial water sources were posing conservation problems, the forest department came up with the idea of forming *Namma Sangha* (Our Society) for a cluster of 150 villages on the periphery of the Bandipur National Park an Mysore and provide the



[www.vigyanprasar.com/comcom/develop67.htm](http://www.vigyanprasar.com/comcom/develop67.htm)

villagers with the alternative fuel, Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) connections, at nominal rates.

In a move to promote bio-diesel in big way across the country, Hyderabad-based Nandan Biometrix is scouting for about 5000 acres of land in Karnataka to cultivate the *Jatropha* tree which is a source of bio-diesel, under the contract farming system.

John Latham, an atmospheric physicist based at the National Centre for Atmospheric Research in Colorado came up with an idea, 15 years ago, to arrest the Earth's warming. Using nothing more than salt and wind power, a device is designed that will, he says, increase the reflectivity of some of the Earth's clouds, bouncing more incoming sunlight back into space. Use of non-conventional sources of energy will help textile units to cut costs of production and help them face global competition in the post-quota regime under the WTO pact, said TN Energy Development Agency (TEDA) Chairman K Allaudin.

## Animal Rights



[bear.cba.ufl.edu/](http://bear.cba.ufl.edu/)

Although it is written in the bible (Genesis 1:26) that man has dominion over all creatures it certainly does not imply or justify the inhumane and unethical treatment given to animals especially those living in the woods. Animal rights are the rights to humane treatment claimed on behalf of animals,

especially the right not to be exploited for human purposes.

Following news were the highlights of January. Hundreds of birds get injured in 'Uttarayan'- the annual kite flying festival, which is held every year in large parts of Gujarat. Our very own Maharashtrian crusader- Anand Bharti, Deputy Chief Conservator of Maharashtra Forest Department said that, "It is not the big cats or the elephants who are encroaching but it is the builders who have encroached into their territory". This is the reason why there are no reports of 'adivasis' being attacked by wild animals as they live in harmony with the forests.



[www.veganism.in](http://www.veganism.in)

The Pygmy Hog, world's tiniest wild pig, was on the brink of extinction until 1996 when 6 of them were taken to Manas National Park, Guwahati as a part of a "captive breeding programme" funded by Durrel Wildlife Conservation Trust (DWCT) and the European Union (EU). This conservation programme undertaken under the international conservation management and research agreement (ICMRA) has been signed

by the Union Ministry of Forest and Environment as well as the Assam Forest Department. Citing example of another endangered species- the Pandas, also rebounding from the brink of extinction, now have their own blood bank which is established by the China Giant Panda Protection and Research Centre, currently sheltering 81 Pandas.

Moreover, some manufactures of cosmetics and household products still conduct painful and useless tests on live animals, even though no law requires them to do so.

In the month of February, Animal rights groups People for Action (PFA) and Wildlife Protection Society of India (WPSI) alleged that the forest department is torturing elephants in order to train them for the centenary celebrations of Kaziranga National Park. Animals have a right to a dignified existence, and their life, well-being and liberty must be respected. Another important piece of news was regarding the incident wherein the Russian State Circus Company Rosgoscirk (RSCC) with a team of endangered winter animals (arctic (Eskimo) dogs, sea lions, cats and dogs) came to perform 'on ice' in Andheri, Mumbai. Animals and exotic birds are stuffed into narrow cages and made to learn tricks under fear of stick or starvation, not to mention the miserable climate of Mumbai. However the High Court gave nod to the performance afterwards. Use of any kind of animals in circuses can be challenged under the Prevention of cruelty to animal Act, 1960.

It was mentioned that India should aim at being pioneer in establishing a torture-free circus that thrives on graceful and skillful human presentations. To have animals performing for human entertainment is barbaric and takes us back to an age of uncivilized and primitive living.

Negotiations are still going on over the issue of releasing water from the Pancham dam on Gambhiri River to the water-starved Keoladeo Ghana National Park in Bharatpur which is already on its death bed and is being driven towards extinction.

The winter 2005 issue of People for Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) India's 'Animal Times' discusses its case against abusive, unhygienic and dangerous conditions for cattle, goats and sheep in abattoirs throughout India. Thanks to PETA's

persistence, monkeys who were kept in zoo hospital cages for months have been relocated to a rescue centre.

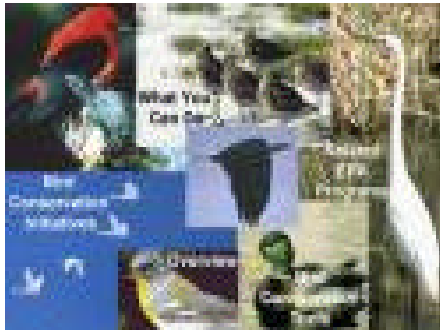


[www.buffaloworks.u](http://www.buffaloworks.u)

Month of March provided news mostly related to the impacts of man-animal conflicts. A study conducted by the Assam chapter of the WWF India said that large scale destruction of forests due to increasing human pressure was the main reason behind the growing man-elephant conflict in the state whose government is now planning to create five special elephant reserves. There is a growing panic over India's dwindling stock of tigers and that every tiger reserve in India suffers from habitat pressure and poaching. 'Sariska' is an incredible wake up call for the authorities as WWF India says that there maybe no tigers left in it now. On a different note, Actor Shahrukh Khan who is the producer of 'Kaal' was sued by an organization for making use of tigers during the shoot of the film in a reserved and wildlife protected area.

*Mahatma Gandhi's philosophy was based on the assumption that human beings were not the masters of other forms of life. He believed that humans were 'trustees' of the lower animal kingdom.*

## Conservation



[www.epa.gov/owow/birds](http://www.epa.gov/owow/birds)

Almost all ecosystems are undergoing change due to pollution, invasive species, over exploitation by humans, and climate change. As a result biodiversity is being destroyed at all the levels. Besides, economic arguments put to justify the protection of biodiversity,

there are also ethical argument for the same. We should not deprive the future generations from the economic and aesthetic benefits that they can derive from the biodiversity.

Conservation of biodiversity means '*the management of human use of the biosphere so that it may give maximum benefit to the present generation while maintaining its potential to meet the needs and aspirations of the future generations.*'

Kofi Annan asked international bodies, NGOs, private sector organizations and individuals to help save ecosystem which he said were "being damaged at never before seen rates".

Things get worse when state governments and forest authorities lack the very basic support structures and willingness to curb the problem of rapidly dwindling forest cover, large scale encroachment, rampant deforestation, growing man-animal

conflict etc. for example, the Punjab government doesn't even have rough estimations of population of animals in the State, although under the amended Wildlife Protection Act, it is mandatory for all state governments to set up boards under the chairmanship of the respective Chief Ministers. Likewise, in the State of Assam, each & every year turns out to be no different from the preceding ones, as far as State's environment is concerned.

Experts say that economic or industrial development should not be at the cost of ecology which is necessary to sustain life and livelihood of millions. For instance, the deliberate destruction of mangroves in coastal areas for facilitating the growth of industrial aquaculture is



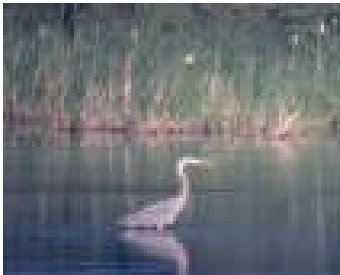
[www.nevadaconservationleague.org/score03/cars](http://www.nevadaconservationleague.org/score03/cars)

one of the prime reasons for failing to mitigate the tsunami disaster. "Trees kept killer waves at bay." This was a rare caption in one of the newspapers which provided a silver lining across the dark clouds of the catastrophe. The importance of protecting the environment could not have been brought home in a more telling manner. The government is, now, mooting heavy incentives to institutions that adopt a shoreline and give it a protective belt. The government is initiating a Rs35 crore project aimed at insulating Kerala's coasts against tidal surges with mangroves and *castanea*.

Population of vultures, sparrows, gadwalls and other migrants have declined possibly due to pollution and lethal signals from towers setup for mobile phones. Mike Pandey, environmentalist said that, "The Horseshoe crab, first organism on earth after bacteria, has survived 16 ice ages. It has the potential to be used to predict tsunamis and could even provide a cure for aids. However it has gone extinct in China and Japan."

Also, the conservation of energy has become a necessity as it is limited in nature and is perishable & rare.

India and 16 other countries like China, Brazil and Indonesia, belonging to the Like-Minded Megadiverse Countries (LMMC) have decided to cooperate with each other to develop strategies for conservation of biodiversity. The situation is improving although at a slow pace.



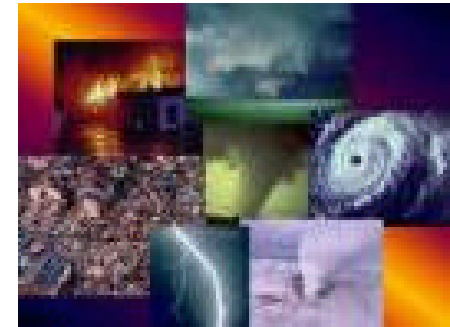
[www.adk.org/conservation/index.asp](http://www.adk.org/conservation/index.asp)

More than 700 birds have been spotted in the Wazirabad Biodiversity Park, New Delhi. These birds need wetlands to survive and the Biodiversity Park has one that is shallow and the other which has lots of grasslands surrounding it. In Assam, the project of establishing 3 new sanctuaries- Amchang, Dihing Patkai and Barail is a welcome step towards quick conservation. Plantation of some tree species, in various States, which will help protect soil giving their planters a chance to make an income. Apart from this, both conservationists and environmentalists hail steps like adoption of

amended forest policies and encouraging plantation drives as well as campaigns.

## Disaster

Disaster management is essentially a dynamic process encompassing the classical management functions of planning, organizing, staffing, leading and controlling. Disasters cause diversion of precious national resources and retard the planned and critical process of a developing country like ours.



[www.kidskonnnect.com](http://www.kidskonnnect.com)

A successful disaster management program would require the active and dedicated participation of a number of government departments, NGOs and the effected population.

The management of disasters has become an ongoing national imperative. Ways and means have to be found to visualize the occurrence, location and magnitude of disasters as can be anticipated and manage theses emergencies so as to avoid or reduce damage, assure that normal social, economic and developmental activities can be carried out unhampered.



[www.webwombat.com.au](http://www.webwombat.com.au)

As Director-General of Good Governance India Foundation V. Suresh wrote- Why do we always wake up on the day after disaster strikes? A month after the massive Bhuj earthquake of early 2001, Seattle in the US had an even stronger quake. It resulted in just one life lost, that too of a heart

attack; no buildings collapsed, against over eight lakh houses damaged and 13,000 dead in Gujarat. To be forewarned is to be forearmed. It is well known that the Andaman & Nicobar Islands come under Seismic Zone V and are also liable to volcanic eruptions, both of which have the potential to trigger tsunamis. But we were still caught napping. It's a painful reminder that it was just a failure in the communication cascade on December 26<sup>th</sup> that led to the appalling loss of life; although the Pacific Tsunami Warning Centre in Hawaii did pick up the earthquake, Asia didn't have an emergency response system in place to react. While earthquakes cannot be predicted, tsunamis can be and hence there is a need to install Warning Systems in order to tackle the challenges posed by such natural catastrophe.

The Central government cleared the proposal of the Anthropological Survey of India (ASI) to study how tribal people have their own indigenous early warning systems for natural calamities. They depend on nature to provide early warning by observing movement of clouds and changes in flora. Also, it's possible that these people depend on animals' sensory physiology- supersensitive to sound, temperature, vibration, electrostatic and magnetic fields-to give them a head start in the days and hours before calamities. This is borne out by reports of

elephants trumpeting well before the tsunami struck or flamingos leaving for safer forests.

A report, brought out early this year, identified eco-sensitive areas and important geomorphic features for 'effective' management of coasts, decided set back limits based on coastal vulnerability and disaster management. We are finally paying the price for our rapacious destruction of the land and the sea. Now, all of us have to take the warnings of environmentalists seriously and not dismiss them as cranks.

It sounds insignificant alongside the Indian Ocean tsunami, yet an almost imperceptible annual rise in the world's oceans may pose a huge threat to ports, coasts and islands by 2100. Many of the world's biggest cities are near coasts-including Kolkata, Dhaka, Lagos, London, New York, Shanghai and Tokyo-flooding in which would cause billions of dollars of damage.



[news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/sci/tech/1606874.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/sci/tech/1606874.stm)

A disaster prone country like ours with a history and frequency of natural calamities bringing untold sufferings to our people should be, after more than half a century of independence, without a Disaster Management Policy is in itself a major disaster until the

tsunami battered the country's eastern coastline hard.

In order to avert disasters such as the tsunami, earthquake, cyclone or fire, there should be a paradigm shift both at the government and individual level to intervene suitably and avoid major tragedies. India is vulnerable due to increasing developmental growth (like construction activities), mounting

hazardous waste like chemicals, high risk and high rise buildings, settlements, quality of raw materials, etc.

Nearly 57% of the country is prone to earthquake, 16% to floods, 8% to storms/cyclones and 3% to fire, says Santosh Kumar, professor, National Institute of Disaster Management (NIDM), Union Ministry of Home Affairs. The XIIth Finance Commission also widened the scope of a natural calamity requiring assistance from the Centre to increase pest attacks, landslides, avalanches, earthquakes, fires, floods and hailstorm. Provision for disaster preparedness and mitigation is needed to be built into the States Plans.

The year 2004 was the forth hottest on record, with nine out of the top ten occurring in the past decade. Record numbers of hurricanes (in North and South America), typhoons (ten hitting Japan), heat waves (in Europe), water level rising (in Bangladesh and Fiji) and other weather driven natural hazards like melting of glaciers also made the year 2004 the costliest even for the insurance industry, with losses totaling \$35 billion.

Although, technologies and techniques that can actually reduce the extent of the disaster exist within the country itself, the only requirement is to spread awareness, appreciation and application modes.

## Environment Impact Assessment



*www.atkinsglobal.*

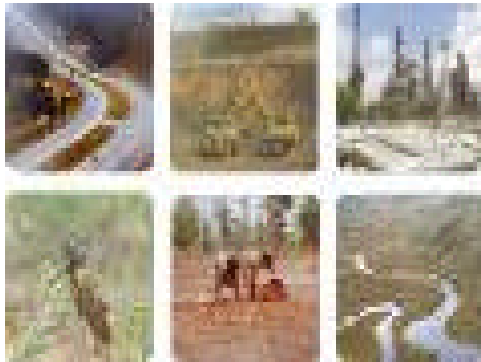
EIA can be defined as the process of identifying, predicting, evaluating and mitigating the biosphere, social and other relevant proposals of development proposals prior to major decisions being taken and commitments made (IAIA). For all development projects, Government or Private, the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) requires an impact assessment done by a competent organization. The

EIA must look into physical, biological and social parameters. EIAs are expected to indicate what the likely impacts could be if a project is passed. After the Environment Protection Act of 1986 was passed, an EIA to get an environmental clearance for a project became mandatory.

Various newspapers reported severe damage to the ecologically-sensitive coastal areas due to Tsunami. Islands submerged by saline water unveiled an ecological disaster. T.Balasubramaniam, Professor at the Centre for Marine Biology said, "The long term impact to the ecology will be very high. The sea water has wrecked havoc with the flora and fauna. Already, trees are shedding leaves due to intolerance to salinity. While some might recover by next season after rains wash away the salt, most will perish." MoEF studied the impact of saline water ingress on dry

land and assessed a severe damage to one of the richest rainforests which are at stake.

In a startling revelation by one of the newspapers, failure of the Tehri dam project came into light. With water not collecting in the reservoir, no power could be generated, no water could be diverted for irrigation and none could be sent for the city slickers of the Capital. Lakhs of people had been needlessly uprooted. Most of the waters had obviously flowed under into deep aquifers, with the river seeking solace in the lap of Mother Earth! Danger bells are also ringing in the world's biggest mangrove forest and largest tiger reserve-the Sundarbans. The legendary world heritage site is constantly washed by sweet water and saline sea water alternatively. This helps all species of mangroves in the region to thrive. But now, due to manmade and natural reasons, the flow of sweet water into the Sundarbans has drastically receded.



[www.wii.gov.in/eia/bg2.htm](http://www.wii.gov.in/eia/bg2.htm)

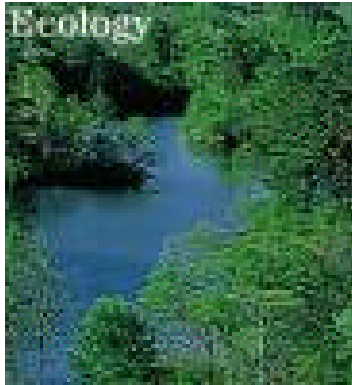
The EIA must define what impact it would have on water, soil and air. The Bhakro hydro-electric project, along with taming the Satluj did check floods and provided irrigation water, yet when the harvested dam water is excessively carried away, it leads to a fall in the water table resulting in scarcity

of water in the basin area. Also, since coal mining is site-specific and involves diversion of forest land, vast areas of non-forest land is required for compensatory afforestation.

Experience shows that a large number of EIAs are inadequately researched and frequently biased as the proposer of the project funds them. An expert committee was constituted to conduct Environment Impact Assessment of new construction projects and industrial estates. Environment Minister A.Raja also announced that, from 2005, those undertaking new projects would have to incorporate the cost of reparation to environmental damage that they cause in their initial project outlay.

An EIA is not intended to stop all types of development. The siting of an industry can be selected carefully and if it is likely to damage a fragile area an alternative less sensitive area must be selected. Demand to shift Shimla, acknowledged as the Queen of the Hills, as the Capital of Himachal Pradesh resonated in the hills again with politicians playing the ecological imbalance card to drive home point. India might require a whopping Rs 8000 crore during the 10<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan to undertake river and lake conservation programs, Union Environment and Forest Minister has said. This would be in addition to the 1637 crore sanctioned for the Plan period for these projects. The Ministry is in the process of reengineering the EIA with a view to remove bottlenecks.

## Ecology (Land & Water)



[web.canon.jp/supply/produce/index-j.html](http://web.canon.jp/supply/produce/index-j.html)

Ecology can be defined as a branch of science concerned with the interrelationship of organisms and their environments or the totality or pattern of relations between organisms and their environment.

The ecological crisis is doing what no other crisis in history has ever done - challenging us to

a realization of a new humanity. "A nation that destroys its soils destroys itself. Forests are the lungs of our land, purifying the air and giving fresh strength to our people"-*Franklin Delano Roosevelt* (1882-1945) 32nd President of the United States.

A conference on biodiversity held in Paris concluded on the note that Asia's tsunami disaster was a brutal warning for humanity to tackle the world's worsening environmental crises as well as a reminder of exacerbating ecology. As with so many problems involving the environment, resolving the biodiversity crises will not be simple, for it raises questions that are tangled not separate. Over fishing, poor management of coastal areas and sedimentation due to creeping urbanization are often cited as the main threats to reef ecosystems.

An assessment carried out by newspaper on Bharatpur's Keoladeo Sanctuary inferred that its problem stems from a vision that seeks to separate man from nature. It suffers from a human-centric view constructing an ecology which places man at the centre of the ecosystem and assumes that other beings-flora as well as fauna-will adopt to his needs. Such a vision is flawed and will destroy the ecosystem which includes human beings as well.

The ecological damage caused by cities in Northern India is enormous. This destruction of resources need to be stopped immediately and reversed to the extent possible. In another review, Bangalore's Ulsoor Lake woke up to a cruel reality on Republic Day morning. Tones of dead fish floating like a sheet on the lake which was, as revealed by examinations, caused by an adjoining swimming pool due to flushing of chemicals and acids ,used to clean the pool, into the lake. This unquestionably classifies itself into the category of damage to the ecosystem by sheer human disregard.



[www.cultural-ecology.com/ice.html](http://www.cultural-ecology.com/ice.html)

What's more, it's not just the Bharatpur Bird Sanctuary dying a slow death; a study found that 38 per cent of India's inland wetlands have dried up in the last 10 years. Dr. V S Vijayan, Director of SACON said that sanctuaries need water but villagers need water for irrigation. This is a conflict. There should be a National vision policy to address this. Another reason for decline

of wetlands is that there is no policy or act governing wetland in the country.

Ecologists rejoiced as the new report 'Biodiversity Assessment in the North Bank Landscape (NBL)' confirmed that the forests of the North-East are 'second richest in the world'.

Every human settlement has an impact on its surroundings. Large cities tend to have an impact on the ecology of the hinterland, mainly due to use of polluting technologies, poor or incomplete planning practices and insufficient initiatives by urban managers. The most visible changes in North India due to human population and human insensitivity towards nature has been the loss of forested areas in the Himalayas and on the Gangetic plains.

Despite ban, illegal mining and quarrying has resulted in large-scale deforestation, landslides and flash floods in the past 2 years and has now posed a serious threat to the existence of over three dozen irrigation and drinking water supply schemes. "At present, we practically have no policies related to adaptation and mitigation, despite millions of people at risk. This is because very few concerned officials understood the grim reality," says Subodh Sharma, national project Director, National Communications Project, MoEF. Even though there is enough evidence of global warming and climate change tampering with ecosystems around the world, the political will to rectify the situation is waning.

"We shan't save all we should like to, but we shall save a great deal more than if we had never tried". *Sir Peter Scott (1909-89) Founder, WWF - World Wide Fund*

## Environmental Law



<http://wings.buffalo.edu/ta/w/belj/log>

Environmental legislation is evolved to protect our environment as a whole, our health, and the Earth's resources. The presence of a legislation to protect air, water, soil, etc., does not necessarily mean that the problem is addressed. Once legislation is made at the global, national or state level, it has to be implemented. For environment legislation to be successfully implemented there has to be an effective agency to collect relevant data, process it and pass it on to a law enforcing agency.

The authorities should try to create an ambience which aids policymakers in determining coherent courses of action. Heads of States at SAARC Summit at Dhaka, early this year, endorsed the proposal to observe 2006 as the Year of Green South Asia.

The Kyoto Protocol which came into force in mid February 2005 represents perhaps the most complex international treaty ever negotiated. The draft National Environmental Policy (NEP) released by the Union MoEF identifies major environmental problems, outlines their causes and puts forward a set of principles to address the problems. Though this new policy promises to be less erroneous and more comprehensive, glaring loopholes remain with the most obvious ones pertain to the draft's contradictions with current government policies and

programs. NEP talks of extending Joint Forest Management (JFM) when there are ample evidence that this program often results in socially and environmentally perverse outcomes. We should aspire to create a plan for a sustainable urban future by means of cultivating and implementing appropriate Legislations and Acts and foster voluntary compliance with environmental regulations.

“Poachers are the biggest threat to the survival of the tiger in its natural habitat in Madhya Pradesh,”-CREW, a NGO warned the State government 5 years ago. There are strong grounds to believe that poaching, biotic conflict and destruction of habitat have threatened the tiger population in a big way. The Wildlife Protection Act undeniably needs to be more stringent, they added. A national ban on tiger hunting was imposed in 1970. Project Tiger was launched when the tiger count shrunk from 40,000 at the time of independence to an abysmal 1,827 in 1972 and consequently the Wildlife Protection Act came into force in 1972.

Kerala High Court admitted a writ petition in Kochi, seeking that the Centre and the State governments should restrain construction activity in ‘no-development zones’ in violation of Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) notification under the guise of rehabilitation of the tsunami victims. In 1986, Rajiv Gandhi piloted the Environment Protection Act through the Parliament. Only in 1991 under this Act did all the coastal stretches (7,000-km long) become part of the CRZ. The dilution of the coastal regulations is ticking time-bombs waiting to welcome the next natural disaster. If politicians and bureaucrats in the last government were able to twist and change the laws, the same is happening in the present government, irrespective of the party in

power, such is the power of vested interests. Even the Forests Conservation Act is plagued with violations, undealt with

No environment Policy will ever succeed without control on population growth, economic decentralization and haphazard urbanization. By not protecting the mangroves, says the petition filed by Bombay Environment Action Group (BEAG), the authorities are violating constitutional right to live because mangroves protect the city by acting as a buffer between sea and land, maintaining stability of the latter and reducing floods in the long run.

According to Minister for Environment and Forests A. Raja, the government was thinking of constituting a multi-disciplinary bureau for controlling crimes relating to wildlife on lines of the Narcotics Control Bureau. Furthermore, the Supreme Court had directed educational institutions, in 2004, to make environment studied a compulsory subject. It is indeed good to learn that the government of Assam has off late formulated a Forest Policy developing a common approach to management of both environment and biodiversity.

Governments of all hues are in the habit of formulating and reformulating policies on burning issues like protecting and promoting environment with a cacophony of drumbeating only to leave them to cold storage with passage of time. In the end, the success of a policy depends on how various agencies formed would act in tandem with one another.

## NGOs/Others



<http://billie.lib.duke.edu/pubdocs/image>

The first quarter of the year 2005 witnessed a large proportion of news on NGOs and their contribution to environment protection.

**Greenpeace International's** executive director Dr Gerd Liepold has decided to imbibe the experiences of *Chipko* leader Sunderlal Bahugana for an efficient conservation strategy. Toxic weed threat to Kaziranga National Park (KNP) biodiversity was one of the important news. **The Wildlife Trust of India (WTI)**, a New Delhi based non-profit organization, mentioned about mimosa weed, a fast growing tropical American variety, which is enveloping a vast area of the Park. The WTI is the only conservation body in India that has launched a campaign to destroy the mimosa weed in Kaziranga.

In the field of Waste Management, an environmental NGO, **Toxics Link**, criticised Delhi's Urban Development Minister Dr A.K. Walia's plan to introduce incineration of waste, after segregation of garbage, to improve waste management of the city. Biosafety related issues also dominated the newspapers. **Greenpeace** and **Sarvodaya Youth Organization** alleged that the Andhra Pradesh Government had "tampered" with its annual report to reduce Monsanto's compensation burden by nearly Rs 2 crores.

Releasing two versions of the report purportedly prepared by the Joint Director (Agriculture) of Warangal district, **Greenpeace** and **Sarvodaya Youth Organization**, working in the district, said that while the original presented a comprehensive failure of Bt cotton crop in the State, the "visibly tampered" second report exaggerated the yields, thereby reducing Monsanto's compensation burden by nearly Rs 2 crores.

Another initiative taken by the International NGO, **Greenpeace**, was to ask authorities 'to stop the illegal import of the toxic behemoth 'Clemenceau', and to ensure that the import of this ship will not contravene the Supreme Court order on ship recycling or the basal convention on trans boundary movement of hazardous waste'.

Role of NGOs on Wildlife Conservation has always been significant. The Mumbai based **Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS)** has taken up the cause of Bustards, which had caught the focus of the World Conservation Congress held in Bangkok from November 17-25, 2004. Renowned biologist Robert B Grubh of the **Institute of Restoration of Natural Environment (IRNE)**, an NGO, which strives to restore and save the threatened ecosystem in Kanyakumari district mentioned about the constant threat to wildlife including birds especially from poachers. A study by **World Wide Fund for Nature-India** concluded that if any tigers remain in Sariska, their numbers are likely to be small.

A recent study conducted by the Assam chapter of the (WWF) said large-scale destruction of forests due to increasing human pressure was the main reason behind the growing man-elephant conflict. **Wild Orissa**, a non-governmental organization, believes

deforestation due to shifting cultivation, construction of large dams and reservoirs and encroachments have played a major role in the depleting tiger population. The soaring petrol and diesel prices and shortage of kerosene for supply through the public distribution system underscore the need to conserve fuel and adopt measures to enhance energy efficiency. According to P. Mukundan, Chief Executive of Servals Automation, the company is in talks with **Development Alternatives**, a non-government organization (NGO) in New Delhi to undertake contract research on plant oil as a substitute for kerosene. It also organized the 'Eight Clean-India Annual Meet', in collaboration with government agencies and European Commission, where children from across the country gathered in the Capital to showcase the work they have done in the area of environment protection as a part of the campaign. Global warming is one of the key agendas of discussion worldwide.

WWF, the global conservation organization has warned that Himalayan glaciers are among the fastest retreating in the world due to the effects of global warming, which will eventually result in water shortages for hundreds of millions of people who rely on glacier dependent rivers in China, India and Nepal. Many Arctic animals, including Polar Bears and some Seal specie, could be extinct within 20 years because of global warming. Traditional ways of life for many indigenous people in the Arctic would also become unsustainable unless the world 'takes drastic action to reduce climate change', said a WWF spokesperson.

Many NGOs are working towards cleaner environment. This was evident from the news wherein, an environmental NGO, **Toxics Link**, has called for adoption of "strong measures" including

phasing out of mercury thermometers from healthcare industry to reduce and/or eliminate mercury in wastes.

Member of Parliament and Animal Welfare Board member Maneka Gandhi (Founder trustee and Chairperson of **People For Animals, PFA**) dispatched a letter to more than 100 Indian companies asking them to resist using Australian wool until two abusive practices Australian sheep-'mulesing' (live flaying) and live exports are terminated. Her letters was in support of **PETA's, People for Ethical Treatment of Animals**-an international NGO, campaign against lamb mutilation and live shipments. Also, to drive home a point that using leather products is cruel to animals, the President of PETA tried auctioning her own skin on the website Bazee.com.

Seven key NGOs in the Capital, under the aegis of *Ridge Bachao Andolan*, held a demonstration at the sprawling Vasant Kunj Mall site near Hotel Grand to protest against the whittling away of the ridge by the Delhi Development Authority.

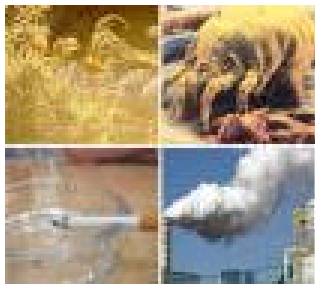
The **Bombay Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (BSPCA)** filed a case against the 'Russian Circus on Ice' asking for a stay on animal performances as, they argued, the animals would be miserable in Mumbai's weather. The use of any kind of animals in circuses can be challenged under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act of 1960. Although the circus ended on a heartrending and unpleasant note as the circus caught fire during its run. Another Mumbai-based NGO- Citizens for a Just Society (CJS) demanded an impartial probe into the damage caused to the nuclear facility at Kalpakkam by the tsunami.

The **East Arunachal Environment & Wildlife Protection Society (EAEWPS)** launched an environment awareness campaign at the *Parasuram Kund*-a holy site visited by pilgrims during *Maha Sankranti* in January every year. The effort was undertaken to maintain the sanctity of the holy site as well as to keep its surroundings safe, clean, hygienic and eco-friendly. The EAEWPS is envisaging launching simultaneous awareness campaign and clean-green campaign in all parts of East Arunachal in a phased manner, a communiqué quoted.

At a time when several local as well as global NGOs have come out to help the animals, the **Wildlife Areas Development & Welfare Trust (WADWT)** has taken the initiative with a different ideology-to work not only for the betterment of the wildlife but also care for those who show concern for the animals. Formed in 1996, WADWT works for upliftment of living conditions of forest officials of lower ranks. The organization receives funds from UNESCO, EIA and Others.

**Society for Clean Environment (SOCLEEN)** chalked out a plan to revive 12 lakes in the city of Ahmedabad which have either turned dry or become polluted. As a pilot project, the NGO adopted the *Gotri* and *Gorwa* lakes to develop them into models.

## Pollution



[www.point-air.com/](http://www.point-air.com/)

Our rivers, lakes and groundwater are irreversibly poisoned because of the authority's inability to control and monitor the rapacious chemical

industry that continues to release deadly chemical waste and effluents into our water, air and land. Entire ecosystem and the species dependent on them are under threat, so much so that traces of these toxic chemicals have shown up in breast milk and human blood too.

India is among the world's top polluters, according to Environmental Sustainability Index (ESI) presented to the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland early this year. In a list comprising of 146 countries, India occupies 101<sup>st</sup> position. But China (133) and Pakistan (131) are even worse environmental offenders.



*India/burning\_ghat.jpg*

According to a survey, whose results were made public by almost all newspapers, increased pollution in the Ganges river has left its waters unsafe for drinking and bathing in Bihar, as an estimated 190 million liters of garbage, mainly plastic, is released into the Ganges everyday in Patna alone. Experts say that pollution is to be blamed for a host of diseases like hepatitis, amoebic-dysentery, typhoid, cholera and cancer among the roughly 400 million people living in its basin. Those who consider Bihar a blot on the Indian landscape had something to talk about. Scientists studying satellite data have discovered an immense wintertime pool of pollution over the benighted state. Blanketing

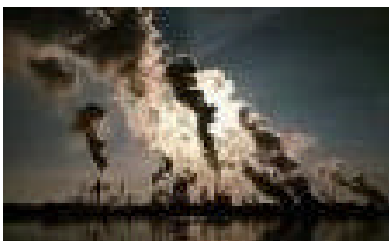


[www.treearth.com](http://www.treearth.com)

around 100 million, primarily in the Ganges valley, the pollution levels over Bihar are about five times larger than those typically found over Los Angeles, according to a study by the University of Illinois.

In yet another revelation, once considered a hub of business activities in Western Orissa, Jharsuguda district is steadily turning into a desert these days thanks to the State government which has allowed at least 28 steel and sponge iron industries to be set up in the district. There is a possibility of industrial wastes flowing into the Hirakud dam reservoir and consequently polluting it. Industrial wastes from the National Thermal Power Corporation project, Nalco, collieries and several other plants have already contaminated Orissa's Brahamni river and also completely eliminated the aquatic life of the river.

According to a Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) report, in Delhi, not only is the harmful nitrogen dioxide-a deadly pollutant-registering an increase, pollution levels are also on the rise in most residential and industrial areas. In another setback for



[www.lbl.gov/Education/ELSI/pollution-](http://www.lbl.gov/Education/ELSI/pollution-)

the Capital, a 2005 World Bank and Clean Air Initiative study declared Delhi to be Asia's most polluted city. Minister of Environment and Forests, A. Raja said that Certified Emission Reductions

(CERs), obtained during the period from year 2000 up to the beginning of the Kyoto Protocol's first commitment period (2008-2012), can be used to achieve compliance of the Kyoto

Protocol provisions as of now. Sudip Banerjee, Chairman of West Bengal Pollution Control Board said in an interview that pollution cannot be monitored effectively in the State unless educated people step forward and inform us about the polluting agencies since polluting plastic-manufacturing units operate usually in residential areas.

Another news that came into light was about the team of Indian and American researchers led by Chandra Venkataraman of the Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay the burning of wood, agricultural waste and animal manure for cooking is the largest source of black carbon in the air over the South Asia region. On a different note, use of non recommended oils by auto rickshaw drivers has negated the government's move to ensure a pollution-free environment in Chennai by supplying sulphur-free fuel which costs 11 paisa and 56 paisa more for petrol and diesel respectively in the city.

In a shocking incident, a collision early this year, between a 70,000 tonnes cargo ship and an iron-ore barge just five nautical miles off Panaji, Goa had caused a major oil slick that starting moving southwards in the Arabian Sea. Already, Asia's dwindling population of dolphins is under increasing threat from pollution and dam construction, globe nature conservation body WWF said. Jamie Pittock, Director of WWF's Global Freshwater Program said that, "River dolphins are the watchdogs of the water. The high levels of toxic pollutants accumulating in their bodies are a stark warning of poor water quality."

## Sustainable Development



[www.earthvoice.o](http://www.earthvoice.o)

The first UN conference on earth's environment was organized in Stockholm in 1972 following increasing realization among the developed and developing nations that they had been amiss, and gravely so, on ecological security. After years of head-banging, by 1983, the World Commission on Environment & Development had prepared its sales proposition- 'Our Common Future', which held that economic growth had had to take into account the Earth's capacity to sustain humanity, which was ,unambiguously, not limitless. That was the time the expression 'sustainable development' was invented. The concept of Sustainable Development (SD) essentially defines it as that form of development which helps to meet the needs of current generation without compromising on the ability of future generations, to meet their own needs. Reduction of living species and overuse of the world's natural resources is clearly not a sustainable strategy for humanity and, of course, for all species that live on this Earth.

As reported by various dailies, The Energy and Resource Institute (TERI) launched a '*Sustainable Development Forum*' whose purpose is to mobilize the society across the world to meet the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and create momentum for accelerating efforts towards comprehensive achievements of SD. Countries on a high growth rate & development path should

pursue efforts to balance economic growth with environmental care.



[www.cra-arc.gc.ca/strategies-](http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca/strategies-)

Also, the much media-hyped, *Delhi Sustainable Development Summit* (DSDS) was launched in 2001 to provide a platform for debating issues of SD by world leaders drawn from every walk of life and representing every major organization including multilateral bodies, governments, corporate sector, civil society and research & academic institutions. Each successive DSDS has been able to draw greater attention worldwide and higher level participation, which is testimony to the importance that SD receives from leading thinkers and decision makers worldwide.

Two aggregate measures have been compiled in the Living Planet Report, brought out by the WWF International in association with UNEP, the first known as the Living Planet Index (LPI) which measures the overall trends in the population of wild species around the world, as an indicator of the state of world's natural environment. The second, known as Humanity's Ecological Footprint (HEF) measures environmental sustainability and assesses humanity's demand on the earth's renewable natural resources.

As stated in an editorial of a periodical, the issue of environmental crises has assured a crucial importance in the international landscape, especially in the context of tsunami. Despite several warnings about the fragile ecosystem, policymakers and planners have not given adequate attention to

the erosion of natural buffers like mangrove forests, coral reefs, and fossilized fuels in the process of development. Environmentalists in developing nations are up in arms. They believe that the developed ones drive multilateral agreements such as the Kyoto Protocol and are exercising a new brand of dominance-“eco-imperialism”.

India’s disappointing rank of 101<sup>st</sup>, out of 146 countries analyzed in the Environmental Sustainability Index (ESI), appeared in every newsprint. Using 21 indicators and 76 measurements, including natural resource endowments, past and present pollution levels, and policy efforts, the report creates a “sustainability score” for each country, with higher scores indicating better environmental sustainability. ESI makes the point that sustainable economic growth actually requires the adoption of policies that aid the environment rather than destroy it.

In an interview with a correspondent of a leading newspaper, F Sherwood Rowland-also called the Ozone man- and Nobel laureate for his work in atmospheric chemistry, said that, “For the rest of my lifetime and for most of yours, coal, gas, and oil are going to continue to be the major sources. In the next 20 years there will be a lot of nuclear power in the entire world.”



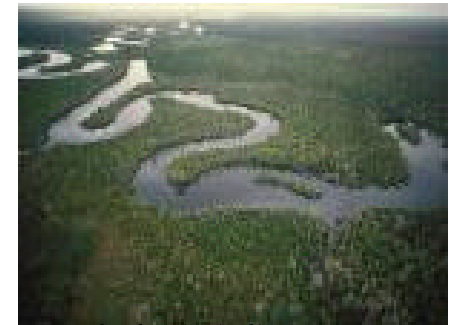
[europa.eu.int/comm/sustainable/index\\_en](http://europa.eu.int/comm/sustainable/index_en).

Organic Farming is the need of the hour to overcome the crises of nature to achieve food and health security under SD. A major action plan is considered necessary to put

into operation to make development socially, economically and environmentally sustainable. The erosion of the stable and traditional environment has been artfully aided by the modern man’s severance from nature. Bending towards SD can aptly be believed as a tribute to the imagination and pragmatic mind of Mahatma Gandhi who often articulated the need for living in harmony with the nature and thus prolonging growth. A crisis is also an opportunity provided we are able to mobilize our inner and outer resources for the re-making of man and the society.

## Water Management

Despite the diverse conditions found in urban India, continuous supply is feasible and practical, as well as cost-effective and sustainable. But the strategies for transition to a 24/7 supply are tough, thanks to our system’s technological inertia, heterogeneity of settlements



[www.sfwmd.gov/org/wsd/](http://www.sfwmd.gov/org/wsd/)

and problems arising out of synchronizing different stages of infrastructure. India has pledged to achieve the Millennium Development Goal of providing total drinking water & sanitation coverage by 2015 as proposed by the UN but by 2010. If this is to be fulfilled, a whole new direction is required.

The role of the State, Private sector and Communities in the management of water resources was discussed in a symposium on the subject organized in New Delhi in early January. The participants deliberated on the ways to evolve a balance among the three players in the water sector. Role that had to be assigned to each player in the water sector was the key issue in the dialogue during the event.

Another incident which came into light was the Naotana-Baghapari Water Distribution Project implemented by the soil conservation department's South Bank Division, Guwahati, generated tremendous popular support. The project has been implemented under the No.6 Micro Watershed Development Project (IWDP) of the soil conservation department's division. The project, based on the concept of watershed management, has saved the people of four villages and helped them practice cultivation of both summer and winter varieties of paddy on about 1,500 *bighas* of land.

In a controversial river-interlinking program during a meeting of the January, 2005 constituted Committee of Experts, Alwar's 'waterman' Rajinder Singh told senior water resources and other government officers that the interlinking program was not one for management of floods or droughts but was a "conspiracy to privatize the water sector".

Sustainability of India's success in achieving food security and increasing agricultural production is being questioned on the grounds of growing scarcity of water and its inefficient use.

If cities want to avoid falling into the 'not-a-drop-to-drink' trap some years down the line, then Rain-Water Harvesting (RWH)

must be made a reality, which will not only help in raising the ground water level, but also mitigate the effects of drought. RWH, a concept which was particularly highlighted in newspapers throughout the first quarter of 2005, is simply the process of collecting and storing water for later productive use. Four of Delhi's RWH Plants are running successfully: Panchsheel Park Colony, Jamia Hamdard School, Janaki Devi Mahavidyalaya and the Rashtrapati Bhawan.



The reality, as stated in an article of a reputed magazine, is that the use of water, across the globe, has increased six-fold over the last century, more than twice the rate of the population growth. With over one-seventh of the world's population, India needs to address the issue of RWH on a war-footing.

Dr. Shailesh Kumar Sharma, Divisional Commissioner said, in a training program on 'Water management and Rain Water Harvesting' held in Nagpur, that from the past 3-4 years the State government has started taking serious cognizance of over-exploitation of water in both rural areas as well as in cities and that it is speculating to create legislations under which permissions for a new building will be given only when the structure has a provision of RWH.

Rain Water Harvesting becoming mandatory in Bangalore from 6<sup>th</sup> June, 2005 was a welcome step in the State and was appreciated by the entire media.



*phys4.harvard.edu/~wilson/arsenic/remediation..)*

Getting pure drinking water from municipal taps has become a luxury. Contaminated water continues to bring down millions with diseases like diarrhea, dysentery, typhoid, jaundice and gastroenteritis. The biggest problem facing

public water systems is ageing and leaking pipelines. Additionally, old or poorly maintained pipes may harbor bacteria and other pathogens. In most water systems, a large percentage of water-20-30 percent of the production-is lost in transit from treatment plants to consumers.

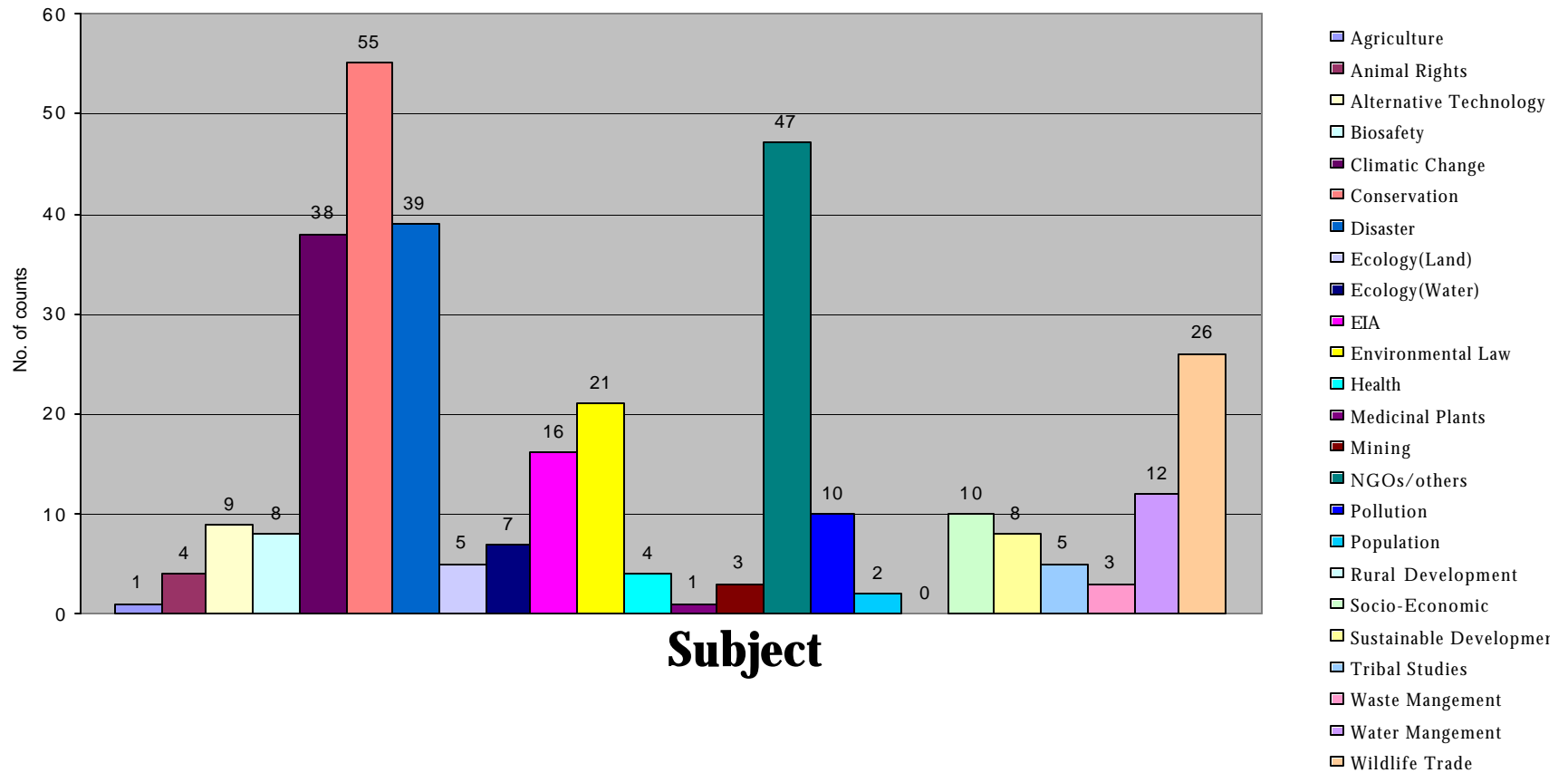
It is due to the failure of supply of enough quality water that the market for bottled water and purifiers is flourishing. In several housing societies, the economies of scale act as externalities leading to an optimum investment in the decentralized treatment technology such as Reverse-Osmosis or Ion-Exchange Plant. Actions to improve groundwater management through artificial exchange, improved irrigation schedule and cropping patterns are the needs of the day.

There effort may be a drop in the ocean, but students from over 26 schools in Mumbai, as reported by a local newspaper, took up

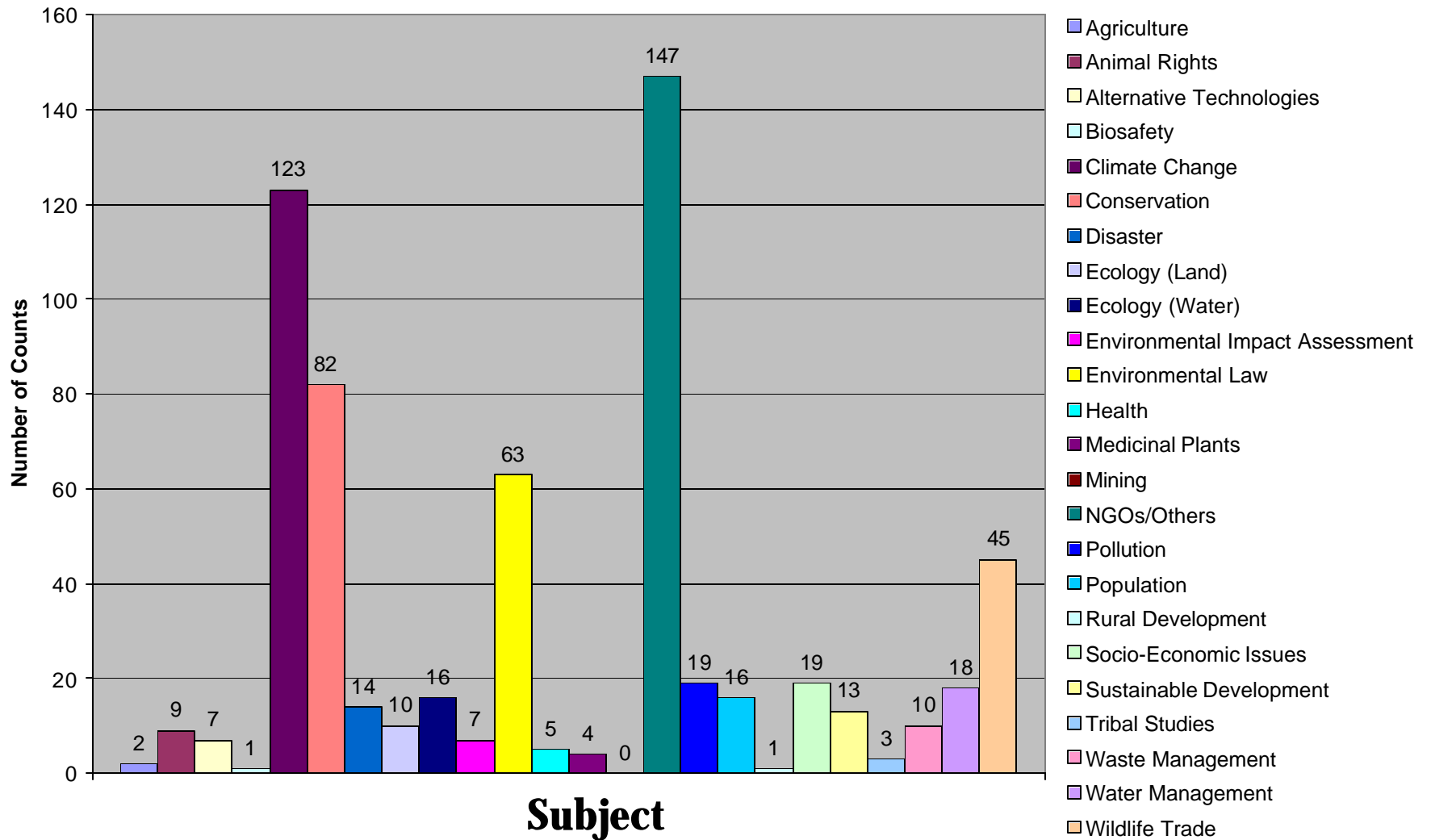
the task of educating citizens on how to conserve and manage water. Some of the messages that the children spread were turning off the tap while brushing your teeth, filling the glass with only the amount of water required and getting leaky taps fixed soon.

# Graphical Representations

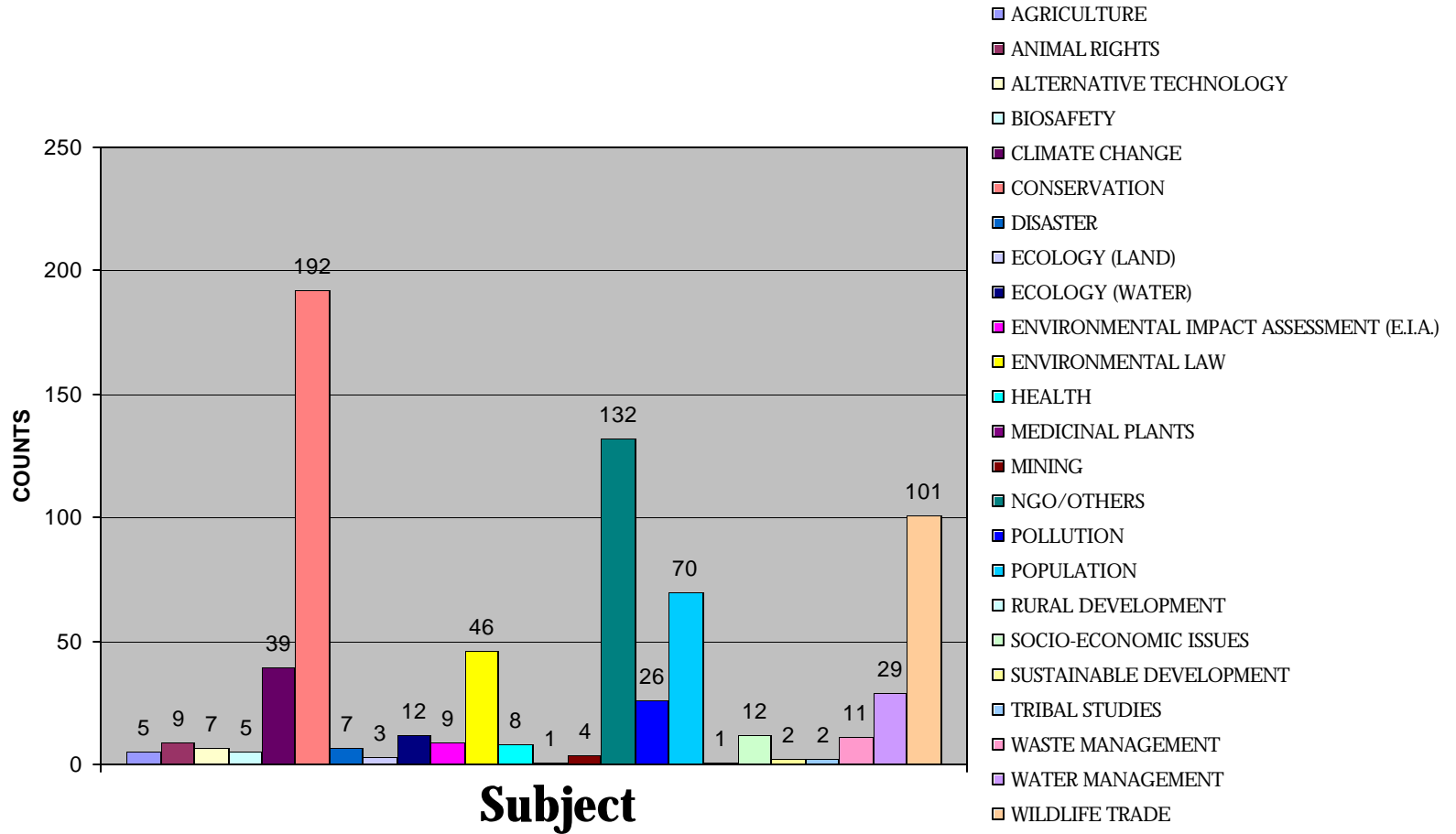
## Subject wise counts in January 2005



## Subject wise counts in February 2005



## Subject wise counts in March 2005



## Summary

From the present analysis, it was inferred that environmental consciousness has been on a rise. We have to strive to achieve the formulated long-term goal, as specified in the report entitled 'India Vision 2020' (Planning Commission, 2004) which recognizes the changing environment and the wide range of new possibilities open before the nation. One of the salient features of the Indian economy as visualized in the report over the next two decades is the establishment of links among the major rivers which could channel surplus water from flood-prone areas to drought-prone and thereby help increase the irrigation potential. Also, achievement of one of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) up to 2015-ensuring environmental sustainability, particularly, reducing by 50 per cent, the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation-is a long due imperative.

Going by the present trends, most of the news concentrated on conservation related issues. Wildlife trade and climate change dominated the headlines. Pollution and its disastrous impact on ecology were among the frequently featuring news. We must not follow a model in which environment issues are addressed by increasing the money supply and adjusting interest rates, as economists argue. We must realize that developmental growth is achievable by catering to the needs of the environment and facilitating environmental sustainability. We have to be sanguine

in our efforts to explore the myriad ways to clear the currently muzzy picture of our environment.

The following bar diagrams represent the total number of counts observed in the news for the months of January, February and March 2005:

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## ENVIS Centre Profile

The ENVIS Centre at World Wide Fund for Nature-India was established on October 27, 1984 under the Environmental Information System (ENVIS) of the Ministry of Environment and Forests, Government of India. The Centre was assigned the responsibility for being the focal point for information on:

- NGO's and the Environment
- Parliament and the Environment
- Media and the Environment

Over the past few years, the Centre has been recognized by users (NGO, administrators, specialized agencies, researchers, school and college students, media professionals, and others) both within the country and overseas as a reliable and responsive source of environment related information.

The ENVIS Centre regularly responds several queries and requests for information on various subjects and topics concerning environment in India. In addition the Centre also responded to numerous queries on telephone, email, as well as personal visits by users. In the past the Centre has responded by updating or compiling information in new areas such as directories on Environmental NGO's in India, Audiovisuals on the Environment, expertise in the Environmental Sciences, Pollution Monitoring Facilities and Campaign Support Services available with NGO's, environment in the Indian parliament etc. With the establishment of the Indira Gandhi Conservation Monitoring Centre at WWF-India the directories are now stored

in computerized databases to facilitate easy access to data, as well as retrieval and updating of information.

As part of the Environmental Management Capacity Building Technical Assistance Project (EMCBTAP) of the Ministry of Environment and Forests Government of India supported by the World Bank the ENVIS centre has established a website which disseminates information on environmental NGOs, environment related matters in the Indian Parliament and media apart from publishing a newsletter, and answering queries from interested users. The data and information can be accessed through the main website ([www.wwfenvis.org](http://www.wwfenvis.org)) and is updated periodically.