

RECENT

HAPPENINGS

Swapnosampan Mitra

## FCAA 2023 amidst controversies

The recent Forest (Conservation) Amendment Act, 2023 which became operational on December 1, 2023 faced backlash around the country on the account of lack of transparency, failure to follow democratic process in its implementation. The petitioners against the act worry that Section 1A of the act restricted the broad 'forest' definition from the Godavarman Thirumalpad v. Union of India judgement of 1996, to cover specific forest lands and exclude certain forest lands omitting around 1.99 lakh km<sup>2</sup> forest land from protection.



Source: The South First.com



Source: The Hindu (9<sup>th</sup> April, 2024)

## Ocean heating, mass coral bleaching

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) in a recent report declared about an ongoing "4th global coral bleaching event" due to extreme ocean heat across the globe. The bleaching event have been noticed and documented for last 14 months in major great ocean basin including Florida (US), Australia's Great Barrier Reef and the South Pacific. Experts say that climate change and events like El Niño, have played major role for this bleaching event.

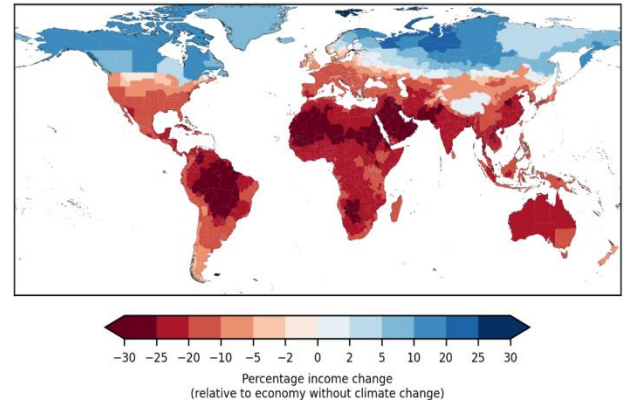


Source: Reuters



## Climate Change disrupts economy

A recent study published by scientists at Germany's Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research warns that the global economy would lose up to 19% income by the year 2050 due to climate change. The report pointed out that South Asian and the African regions would be strongly affected and regions closer to Equator which have less contributions to global emissions would be the worst affected clearly highlighting the inequity of climate change impacts.



Source: Kotz et al., Nature

## Growing infrastructure, sinking China

Several cities in China are sinking according to a study done recently in several big Chinese cities. Almost 45% of its urban areas having roughly 406 million population are sinking at 3 mm/year and a major concern is about another 16% of its urban areas having 67 million inhabitants where the sinking rate is alarming 10mm/year. Researchers point out that the rapid infrastructure and groundwater pumping are the main reasons of these events and they also predict that a quarter of China's coastal areas would be under sea-level within a century.



Source: Reuters

## Flood in desert: A rare sight

The UAE recorded a strange meteorological event on 15<sup>th</sup> April, 2024 where the country witnessed its heaviest rain since 1949. The city of Dubai was said to have received rainfall of a year and a half in a single day causing flash flood. Many experts say that climate change is the leading cause of these sudden extreme weather events while many opine that the rainfall in Dubai was increased due to its cloud seeding program.



Source: Reuters



## India losing its humid forest

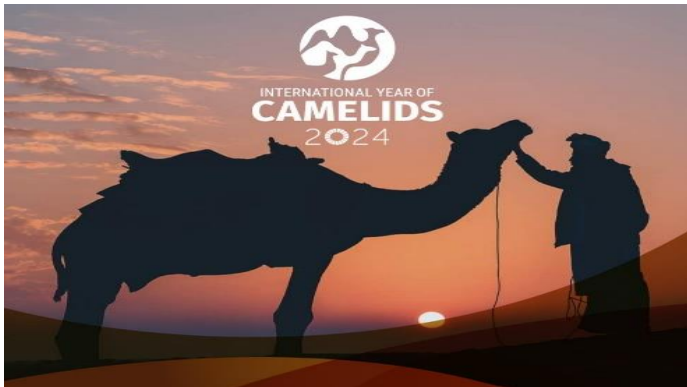
India has lost 4,14,000 hectares of humid primary forest from 2002-2023 which is about 18% of its total forest cover loss in the same period according to a latest monitoring report by the Global Forest Watch. Five states were accounted for 60% of all tree cover loss with Assam having the maximum loss of 324,000 hectares. Mizoram (312,000 hectares), Arunachal Pradesh (262,000 hectares), Nagaland (259,000 hectares) and Manipur (240,000 hectares) are the states having the most forest cover loss after Assam during this period.



Source: Getty images

## Let's celebrate Camelids globally

The United Nations declared the year 2024 is celebrated as 'International Year of Camelids' to signify the importance of camelids in people's life globally. This celebration is also in alignment with the Environment Day theme of 2024 which is 'Land restoration, desertification and drought resilience' as the camelids group which includes alpacas, Bactrian camels, dromedaries, guanacos, llamas, vicuñas influence the lives of people in more than 90 countries by ensuring food security and economic growth for indigenous people.



Source: Food and Agriculture Organization, UN

## MoEFCC launches SPAI Program

Union Minister of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change, Shri Bhubender Yadav, released a significant report on the status of Snow leopards in India. This groundbreaking study, part of the Snow Leopard Population Assessment in India (SPAI) Program, marks the first-ever scientific exercise to assess the population of this elusive species in the country. The assessment period was from 2019-2023 using two-step framework, including evaluating snow leopard spatial distribution and estimating snow leopard abundance using camera traps.



Source: naturepl.com / Valeriy Maleev / WWF



## Oil spill in Trinidad and Tobago

The Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago has officially declared a state of “National Emergency” following a significant oil spill in the eastern Caribbean. The spill, occurred on February 7, originating from an overturned vessel near Tobago, has led to widespread environmental damage along the coastline, prompting concerns about the impact on the nation’s economy, particularly its tourism sector.



Source: Tobago House of Assembly



Source: Mongabay

## Tamil Nadu tops Indian Ramsar sites list

Tamil Nadu added 2 more names in its the list of Ramsar sites viz. The Longwood Shola Reserve Forest in The Nilgiris and Karaivetti Bird Sanctuary in Ariyalur, thus achieving the highest number of such designated areas in the country on 31<sup>st</sup> January, 2024. Tamil Nadu now boasts 16 Ramsar sites, a testament to its rich biodiversity and has set a new benchmark in environmental conservation and biodiversity protection. Three more wetlands of Karnataka have been designated as Ramsar site on 31<sup>st</sup> January viz. Magadi Kere Conservation Reserve, Ankasamudra Bird Conservation Reserve and Aghanashini Estuary taking the tally of total wetlands in India to 80.

## NITI Aayog launches GROW

The NITI Aayog launched the Greening and Restoration of Wasteland with Agroforestry (GROW) report and portal aiming to transform India's underutilized wastelands into productive agroforestry zones using remote sensing and Geographic Information Systems (GIS) technologies. This significant step towards environmental conservation and sustainable land management will help to achieve the nation's commitment to restore 26 million hectares of degraded land by 2030 and would create an additional sink of 2.5 to 3 billion tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent.



Source: CITES.org

## Satellite to locate methane polluters

MethaneSAT, a satellite developed by the Environmental Defense Fund (EDF), a US-based nonprofit environmental advocacy group was launched aboard a SpaceX Falcon9 rocket from California on March 4. MethaneSAT plays a critical role in combating climate change and safeguarding public health by providing detailed data on methane emissions in order to identify sources, assess trends, and take action to mitigate emissions for decisive policy making by stakeholders.



Source: APAC News Network

## Register exotic pets or lose them

The Union Environment ministry of Government of India issued The Living Animal Species (Reporting and Registration) Rules, 2024 that aims to regulate the possession and trade of exotic pets enforcing the provisions of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) of which India is a signatory. This new rule makes it compulsory for people with exotic pets such as macaws, cockatoos or a variety of soft-shell turtles to register them with the state wildlife department.



Source: MethaneSAT

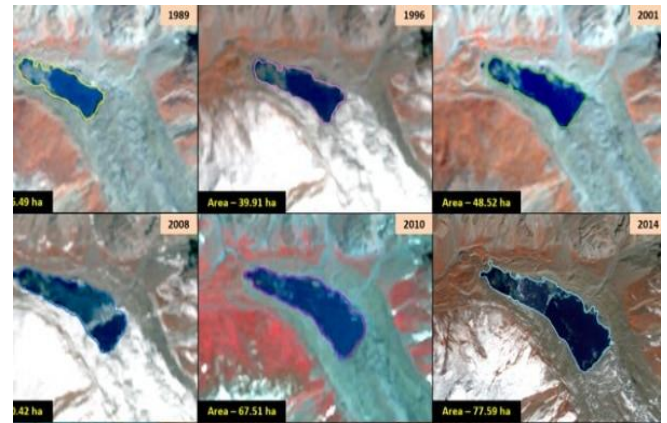


## Climate Change: ISRO reports that 89% of glacial lakes in the Indian Himalayas are expanding at an unprecedented rate. What are the associated risks?

ISRO's analysis of satellite imagery from 1984 to 2023 reveals that 89% of glacial lakes in the Indian Himalayas are expanding due to unprecedented glacier melt. This expansion is creating new lakes and enlarging existing ones, posing risks such as Glacial Lake Outburst Floods (GLOFs), which can cause severe downstream flooding. The study identified 2,431 glacial lakes larger than 10 hectares, with 676 expanding since 1984. The majority are moraine-dammed lakes. This rapid expansion underscores the broader global trend of accelerating glacier retreat since the Industrial Revolution.



Source: Hindustan Times



Source: ISRO

## Centre Updates Wildlife Trade Rules After 40 Years

New Delhi: India has revised its wildlife trade rules after 40 years, raising concerns among conservationists due to the exclusion of some species from licensing restrictions. Previously, the 1983 rules required central government consultation before trading in species listed in Schedule I or Part II of Schedule II of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972. The new guidelines, issued on January 18, 2024, maintain the restriction for Schedule I species but not for Schedule II species. This change is due to the 2022 amendment that reorganized the original six schedules into four. Schedule I now covers species with the highest protection, while Schedule II includes those with lower protection. Environmental lawyers are concerned about the exclusion of Schedule II species, which still includes many important and endangered animals. The amendment also led to the introduction of a one-time amnesty program to address wildlife trafficking, highlighting the global nature of wildlife crime.



## The Green Nobel Prize comes home

Renowned environment activist and convenor of Chhattisgarh Bachao Andolan, Alok Shukla is one of the recipients of the prestigious Goldman Environmental Prize 2024 along with six other recipients. Popularly known as the 'Green Nobel Prize', this award is given annually to grassroots environmental champions worldwide and has been awarded to Alok Shukla for his work to protect Hasdeo Arand forest.



ALOK SHUKLA  
ASIA / INDIA

2024 GOLDMAN ENVIRONMENTAL PRIZE

Source: goldmanprize.org

## India's thirsty Silicon Valley

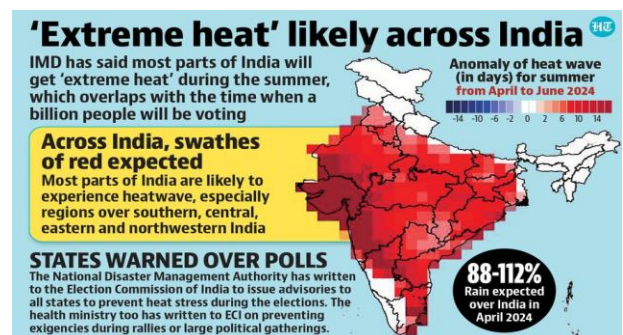
The Silicon Valley of India, Bangalore and the adjoining areas in the state of Karnataka, Telangana and parts of Maharashtra are facing acute drinking water crisis since early 2024. The city was facing a deficit of 500 million litres of water every day in March which is roughly a fifth of its total daily demand. The state is said to have 18% low rainfall than normal in the last year has resulted in this water stress. Experts also point out that the rocky nature of the underground aquifer system has hindered it to hold lot of water to sustain a long dry spell.



Source: NDTV

## Heatwave: New normal of Indian summers

Several parts of the country had received a scorching heatwave recording the most number of heatwave days in West Bengal in the month of April with hottest April in entire Eastern India (mean 28.12°C) since 1901. According to Indian Meteorological Department, 2024 being an El-Nino year is bound to have more heating than other years and the forecast for May is to experience higher than normal temperature and heatwave events.



Source: Hindustan Times

