



# ECOBUZZ

A BUZZ TO THE GREEN FUTURE!!

RIO SUMMIT 1992  
21 KEY AGENDAS

AUGUST'2025  
EDITION

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*Greetings from Faculty of Law, GLS University!*

After a successful series on Sustainable Development Goals, I am very happy to learn that for the next EcoBuzz series we explore the five basic elements of nature –the *panchamahabhutas* – which inhere the properties of earth (prithvi), water (jala), fire (tejas), wind (vayu) and space (akasha).

Reconnecting to the nature outside of us can help us reconnect to our true, inner nature. When we spend more time outside in the elements, we start to rebalance ourselves physically, mentally and energetically.

The current edition of EcoBuzz shall focus on the element “Prithvi” – the Earth. It’s surprising just how easily we can lose connection to the earth. Spending long periods indoors, driving cars and fixating on screens all creates a disconnection between ourselves and the earth. The longer we’re disconnected from the earth and the outside world, the more we forget our interconnected role within nature. Thus, the more we tend to focus on ‘I, me, my’ – the ego.

Our Mother Earth is currently dealing with a wide range of issues, despite efforts in recent decades to address environmental challenges. Due to the terrifying pace at which the Environment is being exploited the legal framework for addressing environmental issues at the global and domestic levels seems inadequate without the collective effort of the human-kind.

I feel happy that the students have decided the ‘MOTHER EARTH’ as the theme for this month's EcoBuzz and our constant efforts towards a green and clean Earth, will continue to raise awareness on the alarming issues that the mother Earth is facing.

Let’s come together for organised actions with the sole objective of saving mother earth while thriving to keep it alive, green, and clean.

Regards,

Dr. Mayuri H. Pandya

Dean, Faculty of Law, GLS University

## ECOBUZZ TEAM

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# National Updates

## Forest and Tree Cover Increases, But with Caveats :

According to the India State of Forest Report 2023, forest and tree cover now make up 25.17% of India's total geographical area—a net gain of 1,445 km<sup>2</sup> since 2021. This includes an increase of about 156 km<sup>2</sup> in forest cover and 1,289 km<sup>2</sup> in tree cover. However, experts have pointed out that the report includes plantations like bamboo, coconut groves, and orchards, which could overstate real forest health and hide degradation in natural forests.

## Continued Loss of Natural Forests:

Despite reported increases in total green cover, India lost 18,200 hectares of primary forests in 2024, according to Global Forest Watch. This brings the total loss since 2001 to over 2.3 million hectares. The ISFR 2023 also notes that 46,700 km<sup>2</sup> of dense and moderately dense forests have degraded, and 5,573 km<sup>2</sup> have turned into non-forest areas in the last decade.

## Afforestation Efforts and Large Scale Campaigns

From 2021 to 2025, 78,000 hectares of forest land were diverted for non-forest uses. In parallel, over 9.37 million hectares have been planted under schemes such as CAMPA and the Green India Mission. Campaigns like Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam have encouraged public participation, resulting in the planting of over 1.4 billion saplings across the country.

# State Updates

## Forest Cover & Greening Initiatives

Gujarat has achieved a significant increase in tree cover outside notified forest areas, adding 241.29 km<sup>2</sup>, raising its share of total geographic area from 10.41% in 2021 to 11.03% in 2023. Total recorded forest area remains at 11.14% (21,870 km<sup>2</sup>), including 15,017 km<sup>2</sup> forest cover and 6,632 km<sup>2</sup> tree cover. Gujarat ranks among the top states in India for green cover expansion.

## Afforestation Campaigns & Programs

Under the national Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam drive, Gujarat surpassed its goal of planting 12.2 crore saplings by September 2024, reaching 17.48 crore by March 2025—the second-highest in India. Farmer-led agroforestry efforts covered roughly 45,939 ha between 2023–24 and 2024–25. New schemes like Harit Van Path, Panchratna Gram Vatika, and Forest Shields (Van Kavach) stimulated planting near cultural sites and water bodies.

## CAMPA-Funded Restoration Efforts

In Tapi district, Gujarat's forest department implemented afforestation over 855 ha under CAMPA, spending ₹9.91 crore over two years. In 2023–24, 1.74 lakh saplings achieved a survival rate of 89%, while 2024–25 saw 5.77 lakh saplings with a higher survival rate of 96.4%, generating over 98,000 man-days of employment.

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In times of plenty or distress, one must live moderately, balancing desires and consumption in accordance with the natural laws.

# GREEN JUSTICE

## ◆ T.N. Godavarman Thirumulpad v. Union of India, (1997) 2 SCC 267

This seminal case widened the definition of "forest" to include all areas that conform to the dictionary meaning of the term, irrespective of ownership. The Supreme Court imposed a pan India freeze on forest land diversion without central approval under the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980. It also initiated continuous monitoring through the Forest Bench, institutionalizing judicial oversight of forest conservation. This judgment laid the legal foundation for afforestation and forest preservation across India.

## ◆ M.C. Mehta v. Union of India (Delhi Ridge Case), (1996) 4 SCC 351

The Supreme Court intervened to protect the ecologically critical Delhi Ridge Forest from illegal encroachment and degradation. It directed the removal of unauthorized structures and restoration of forest cover, recognizing the Ridge as the "lungs of Delhi." The case reaffirmed the State's duty under Article 48A of the Constitution to protect forests and safeguard the urban ecological balance.

## ◆ Hinch Lal Tiwari v. Kamala Devi, (2001) 6 SCC 496

Here, the Court struck down the allotment of a village pond (a community resource) for private construction. It held that natural resources like forests and wetlands are held by the State in trust for the public and must not be alienated for private gain. The judgment reinforced the public trust doctrine, which courts have applied to forests and afforestation efforts as well.

## ◆ Citizens for Green Doon v. Union of India, 2021 SCC OnLine SC 1243

This recent case addressed large-scale tree felling in Uttarakhand for the Char Dham highway project. While the Court acknowledged the project's strategic importance, it mandated stringent forest clearances, compensatory afforestation, and expert oversight. The judgment reflects the judiciary's evolving approach to reconciling infrastructure development with environmental sustainability.

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युक्तस्वप्नावबोधस्य योगो भवति दुःखहा ||

One who practices moderation in diet, rest, actions, and sleep, whose activities are balanced, experiences less suffering and lives a life aligned with sustainability and well-being.

# GREEN LAWS

## 1. Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980

This Act is a cornerstone legislation to regulate deforestation in India. It restricts the de-reservation of forests or use of forest land for non-forest purposes without prior approval from the Central Government. Section 2 of the Act mandates that no forest land shall be used for any purpose other than reforestation or wildlife protection unless permitted. It empowers the central authority to oversee the conservation of forests and avoid indiscriminate deforestation by state governments or private entities. The Act aims to prevent ecological imbalance and preserve biodiversity, water resources, and soil health.

## 2. Indian Forest Act, 1927 (Sections 26 & 33)

Section 26 penalizes unauthorized felling of trees, clearing of forests, and setting fire to forest lands. Section 33 empowers forest officers to protect forests from encroachment, damage, or destruction. These provisions support the regulation of tree cutting and illegal land use, making them crucial tools to combat deforestation. The Act classifies forests as Reserved, Protected, and Village Forests, and provides a legal framework for their governance, protection, and afforestation efforts. It helps prevent illegal timber operations, encroachments, and promotes structured forest administration.

## 3. Compensatory Afforestation Fund Act, 2016

This law provides a legal structure for utilizing funds collected from industries when forest land is diverted for non-forest use. The Act mandates that the equivalent area of forest land must be afforested, funded by the project developers. It establishes the Compensatory Afforestation Fund (CAF), managed by the National and State Authorities. The fund is utilized for tree plantation, wildlife protection, and forest conservation measures. The law ensures that afforestation compensates for deforestation, maintaining ecological balance and supporting India's commitment to increasing forest cover under national and international goals.

## 4. Environment Protection Act, 1986 (Section 3 & 5)

Section 3 gives the central government authority to take all necessary measures to protect and improve the environment, including regulating deforestation. Section 5 allows the government to issue direct orders to close, prohibit or regulate industries or processes causing forest degradation. The Act acts as an umbrella legislation for environmental governance, enabling the government to formulate rules for afforestation, forest regeneration, and biodiversity conservation. It also empowers authorities to take preventive actions against activities that harm forest ecosystems, making it a powerful legal tool against deforestation.

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## India's Green Battle: Fighting Deforestation, Promoting Afforestation

India's Green Battle: Fighting Deforestation, Promoting Afforestation Forests are India's natural wealth. They purify air, regulate climate, conserve water, and provide livelihoods to millions. Yet, rapid urbanization, agriculture, and industrial expansion continue to put immense pressure on forest land. Protecting and restoring this green heritage has therefore become one of India's most urgent challenges. Fighting and Preventing Deforestation India has a proud legacy of people's movements against deforestation.

The Chipko Movement of the 1970s, where villagers hugged trees to stop them from being cut, remains a global symbol of grassroots environmentalism. Even today, local communities and tribal groups remain guardians of forest resources. The government has also stepped up. The Forest Conservation Act, 1980 regulates diversion of forest land, while modern tools like satellite mapping and drones track illegal logging. Protected areas—national parks, wildlife sanctuaries, and reserves—now cover nearly 5% of India's land, acting as green shields against destruction. Equally important is prevention. Expanding access to clean energy alternatives such as LPG, solar cookers, and biogas reduces dependence on firewood. Eco-tourism and non-timber products like honey or medicinal herbs provide sustainable livelihoods, showing that development and conservation can go hand in hand. Promoting Afforestation

Alongside prevention, afforestation is key. Annual campaigns like Van Mahotsav encourage citizens to plant trees, while cities are experimenting with the Miyawaki technique to create mini-forests in limited spaces. National missions like the Green India Mission and CAMPA funds ensure large-scale plantation and restoration of degraded land.

India's forests are under threat, but solutions exist. Fighting and preventing deforestation needs laws, awareness, and alternatives; afforestation requires long-term planning and people's participation. Together, these efforts can secure a greener, healthier tomorrow.

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## UPCOMING EVENTS

### NATIONAL EVENTS

#### 1. National-Level Workshop at Pilibhit Tiger Reserve

- **Dates:** 15–19 September 2025
- **Organizers:** MoEFCC & WWF-India
- **Theme:** Community-led wildlife conservation.

#### 2. Two-Day National Conference (Hybrid)

- **Dates:**
  - **Online:** 6 September 2025
  - **Offline:** 7 September 2025
- **Abstract Deadline:** 15 August 2025
- **Details:** General national academic/legal conference.

#### 3. M.S. Swaminathan International Conference 2025 (New Delhi)

- **Theme:** Sustainable agriculture, rural livelihoods, climate adaptation.
- **Venue:** NASC, New Delhi.

### INTERNATIONAL EVENTS

#### 1. 2nd International Conference: The Crossroad of International Environmental Law

- **Dates:** 3–4 September 2025
- **Location:** Barcelona, Spain

#### 2. 12th EELF European Environmental Law Forum Conference

- **Dates:** 10–12 September 2025
- **Location:** Ghent, Belgium
- **Organizer:** Ghent University

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## CREATIVE CORNER



**A GROUP OF COMMITTED ENVIRONMENTALISTS CARRY PLACARDS THAT SAY “GO GREEN” AND “SAVE TREES” AS THEY STAND IN A LUSH GREEN FOREST. THEY SPEAK OUT AGAINST DEFORESTATION AND URGE PEOPLE EVERYWHERE TO PLANT MORE TREES IN ORDER TO SAVE THE ENVIRONMENT FOR COMING GENERATIONS. THEY ARE UNITED BY A COMMON GOAL.**

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