



CALL FOR PAPERS

Two-Day National Conference on ‘From Environment Protection to Climate Justice: Articulating the Right to be Free From Adverse Impacts of Climate Change in India’

Organised by: The West Bengal National University of Juridical Sciences, Kolkata and sponsored by the National Human Rights Commission, India

Dates: 30th-31st October, 2025

Concept Note

In March 2024, the Supreme Court of India came out with a very important judgement. While adjudicating upon a matter related to the protection of the Great Indian Bustard, a critically endangered species of bird, the Supreme Court came to the finding that being free from the adverse impact of climate change is a facet of the right to equality and the right to life enshrined under the Indian Constitution¹. Climate change affects the poor and the vulnerable (in the court’s words, underserved) communities more than the rest and hence being unable to cope or adapt to its effects violates their right to life and equality.

This marks a critical juncture in India’s fundamental rights jurisprudence. In spite of the rich history of the Indian judiciary’s responsiveness to environmental rights-based actions, recognising the right to be free from the adverse impact of climate change as a distinct fundamental right has its own ramifications. This opens up the doors for more direct engagement with ‘climate change’ in environmental rights-based litigation, which has

¹ M.K Ranjitsinh vs. Union of India 2024 INSC 280

hitherto stopped short of engaging holistically with ‘climate change’². As Para 24 of the judgement states:

*“Despite a plethora of decisions on the right to a clean environment, some decisions which recognise climate change as a serious threat, and national policies which seek to combat climate change, it is yet to be articulated that the people have a right against the adverse effects of climate change. This is perhaps because this right and the right to a clean environment are two sides of the same coin. **As the havoc caused by climate change increases year by year, it becomes necessary to articulate this as a distinct right.** It is recognised by Articles 14 and 21.”*

As in *Ranjitsinh*, the ‘right to be free from adverse effects of climate change’ may often find itself pitted against other environmental concerns (like biodiversity conservation). And unlike the classical struggle between the need for economic development and environmental protection, which has often been the theme in environmental rights-based actions before the courts, the choice between environmental conservation and the right against the adverse impact of climate change is a “dynamic” one that rules out the foregrounding of one at the cost of the other³. Further, the court’s engagement of a ‘climate justice’ vocabulary to articulate this right provides it with a context which may guide its future applications.

India has been at the forefront of international climate negotiations, be it as a party to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Kyoto Protocol or the Paris Climate Agreement. Its revised Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) under the Paris Agreement commits to reduce its emissions per GDP by 45% from 2005 by 2030; to raise an additional 2.5-3 billion tonnes of CO₂ equivalent through carbon sinks; to attain 50% of installed capacity for electricity from non-fossil fuel sources, etc⁴. It has played a crucial role in the formation of the International Solar Alliance, the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure, in proposing the OSOWOG (One Sun, One World, One Grid) and through successfully adding the plus element in REDD+ through soft diplomacy⁵. India has been viewed by many as a strong advocate for climate justice, given its own situatedness in the North-South discourses and because of its colonial past. *Ranjitsinh* helps reinforce this visual.

² Parul Kumar, ‘Case Comment: Striving Towards ‘The Good Life’: What Environmental Litigation in India Can Tell Us About Climate Litigation in the Global South: *Vedanta Ltd v. State of Tamil Nadu and Others*, Supreme Court of India’, *Transnational Environmental Law* (2024) 13(3), 636–651

³ Para 60, *M.K. Ranjitsinh vs. Union of India*

⁴ Government of India, India’s Updated First Nationally Determined Contribution Under Paris Agreement (August, 2022) <<https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/NDC/2022-08/India%20Updated%20First%20Nationally%20Determined%20Contrib.pdf>>

⁵ Swati Negi & Lukas Giessen, ‘India in international climate governance: Through soft power from REDD to REDD+ policy in favor of relative gains’, *Forest and Society* (2018) 2(1), 47-64

Ranjitsinh adds to the impressive coterie of cases globally that talk about integrating climate change concerns into the human rights discourse and outline state obligation in safeguarding the same (like Urgenda⁶, Royal Dutch Shell⁷, Sacchi⁸ etc.)

It is in this context that an inner and outer reading of the judgement becomes pertinent. A close deconstruction of the judgement can throw light on its situatedness in the global discourses on climate change and climate justice, its promises, the challenges that may arise to its implementation in the country and the necessary alignments, especially in law and policy, that may complement its implementation. India does not have any dedicated climate change law. Climate change concerns are sought to be addressed through a catena of sectoral legislations, some of which have seen critical amendments off late to address climate concerns. To add to these, India has adopted a host of policies and schemes aimed at climate change adaptation and mitigation, but existing scholarship has raised some doubts as to how they sit within the country's federal structure.

This is where this conference seeks to contribute. It intends to serve as a forum to generate and transmit understanding on this new fundamental right amongst the various stakeholders who are key to the realisation of this right. The organisers hope that the forum serves as an opportunity to learn, share knowledge, brainstorm and generate ideas that help towards the effective realisation of this right.

Brief Organisational Profile:

The West Bengal National University of Juridical Sciences was established under the WBNUJS Act, 1999 (West Bengal Act IX of 1999) adopted by the West Bengal Legislature in July, 1999. The University was notified under Clause (f) of Section 2 of the UGC Act, 1956 in August 2004 and has been granted permanent affiliation by the Bar Council of India in July 2005. WBNUJS has been accredited with A+ grade by the NAAC (National Assessment and Accreditation Council). It was ranked fourth in the list of Law Colleges by NIRF in 2024.

The NUJS, Kolkata, along with the GNLU and NLSIU, Bengaluru, remain the only three national law schools which have the honourable Chief Justice of India as the Chancellor. This set-up provides an aura of exclusivity and rare stature to these National Law Schools in India.

⁶ [2015] HAZA C/09/00456689

⁷ District Court of The Hague, Case No. C/09/571932 / HA ZA 19-379, Judgment of 26 May 2021.

⁸ UN Doc. CRC/C/88/D/104/2019.

It may be noted that all other National Law Schools have the Chief Justice of the respective state High Courts as their Chancellors.

NUJS is considered one of the best amongst the elite national law schools in India built on the five-year law degree model proposed and implemented by the Bar Council of India. The university offers a five-year integrated B.A./BSc. LLB (Hons.) degree programme at the undergraduate level and a Master of Laws (LLM) programme at the postgraduate level. Admission to the former programme is through the Common Law Admission Test, a highly competitive, nationwide common entrance examination, held jointly by fourteen of the seventeen national law schools. NUJS also offers MPhil, PhD and diploma in business laws and other programs. It also offers a number of online courses that attract students from 17 countries across the world so far.

The Chief Justice of India is the Chancellor of NUJS and is also the Chairman of the General Council, the supreme policy-making body of the University. Prof. (Dr.) Nirmal Kanti Chakrabarti is the Vice Chancellor of the University.

1. Objectives of the Programme:

- 1) To serve as a forum for explication upon the ‘right to be free from adverse effects of climate change’ and its various facets
- 2) To understand the situatedness of this right within the framework of ‘climate justice’
- 3) To generate a consensus amongst key stakeholders about the contours and contents of this right.
- 4) To provide a forum where strategies and key considerations in its implementation can be deliberated.
- 5) To transmit the ideas generated through the deliberations in the forum amongst key stakeholders.

2. Outcomes of the Programme:

- 1) The participants shall be able to amplify their understanding of the right to be free from adverse effects of climate change through the exchange of views of the participants and deliberations by subject experts.
- 2) The conference aims to underscore the key concerns and considerations with regard to recognition of ‘right to be free from adverse impacts of climate change’ as a fundamental right.

- 3) The conference shall aid in charting out strategies for the implementation of the right
- 4) The participants shall be able to arrive at a shared understanding on the right and the strategies to its implementation.

3. Target audience:

The conference aims to target key stakeholders like academics, lawyers, representatives of non-profit organisations, rights-advocacy groups, scholars, bureaucrats and students.

4. Programme Schedule:

Dates: 30th & 31st October, 2025

5. Call for Papers and Paper Presentation Themes:

We invite paper submissions from academics, lawyers, professionals, policy makers, researchers, students and non-governmental organisations on any of the themes mentioned herein and beyond. The papers **can be presented physically/online**. The presentations must align with the overall theme of the conference and must seek to illuminate the subject from diverse vantage points.

- Interrelationships Between Climate Change and Human Rights
- Epistemic Challenges to the Integration of Climate Change within the Human Rights Discourse (non-anthropocentric approaches, holism, biocentrism, ecocentrism, rights of nature, wild laws etc.)
- Sustainability as the Bridge Between Climate Change and Human Rights
- Climate Change, Human Rights and Climate Justice
- Law, Culture and Environmental Protection in India
- International Relations, International Law and Climate Change
- India's Role in International Climate Change Negotiations
- India's domestic framework for climate change adaptation and mitigation
- India's Climate Action and Indian Federalism
- Indian Judiciary and Environmental Protection
- Principles of public trust, intergenerational equity, interspecies justice, non-regression etc.
- Fundamental Rights and Climate Change
- The right to be free from adverse impacts of climate change
- Climate Change and Climate Justice

- Any sectoral analysis of climate change, climate justice or human rights. Such sectors can be forestry, disaster, water governance, energy sector etc.
- Role of Urban Local Bodies and Panchayati Raj Institutions in Climate Action
- Role of NGOs and the civil society in Climate Action

6. Word Limit: Abstracts should be of a maximum of 500 words. Full Papers should be between 5000 and 8000 words.

7. Formatting Guidelines:

- The body of the submission should be in Times New Roman, with Font Size 12 and Line Spacing of 1.5. The footnotes should be in Times New Roman, Font Size 10 with Single Line Spacing.
- The Heading and subheading of the paper should be in following format:

TITLE

[Times New Roman, 16 Points, Bold, All Caps, Centre Align]

Name of Author(s)

[Times New Roman, 14 Points, Italics, Centre Align, separated by &]

Abstract Text

[Times New Roman, 11 Points, Italics, Justify]

I. INTRODUCTION (HEADING LEVEL 1)

[Times New Roman, 13 Points, All Caps, Centre Align]

A. HEADING LEVEL 2

[Times New Roman, 12 Points, All Caps, Italics, Left Align]

1. Heading level 3

[Times New Roman, 12 Points, Left Align]

Text

[Times New Roman, 12 Points, Justify, 1.5” Spacing, 1” indent on the first line of every paragraph]

Quotes

[Times New Roman, 12 Points, Justify, 1” Spacing, 0.5” indents on both sides]

Footnotes

[Times New Roman, 10 Points, Justify, 1” Spacing]

- The submission should contain a disclaimer to the effect that the piece is original and has not been published or is under consideration for publication elsewhere.

- All submissions are subject to Plagiarism check.
- Authors are encouraged to follow official APA version 7 guidelines on formatting the paper, citations and references.
- The list of references should only include works that are cited in the text and that have been published or accepted for publication. Personal communications and unpublished works should only be mentioned in the text.
- Reference list entries should be alphabetized by the last names of the first author of each work.
- Journal names and book titles should be *italicized*.
- If available, please always include DOIs as full DOI links in your reference list (e.g. “<https://doi.org/abc>”).

8. Co-authorship Details: A maximum of three co-authors shall be allowed for the full paper. Each coauthor has to register separately for the conference.

9. List of Important Dates:

- Commencement of Online Registration: 28th September, 2025. For Registration, use the following link: <https://forms.gle/969SDAfkQoA5cC7Y6>
- Submission of Abstract: 15th October, 2025 (extended). The Google Form link for submission of the abstract is as follows: <https://forms.gle/969SDAfkQoA5cC7Y6>
- Communication of Acceptance of Abstracts: 17th October, 2025 (extended)
- Payment of Registration Fees Starts: Payment details to be shared with the individual participant/paper presenter, after filling up the registration/abstract submission form as provided above
- Last Date for Registration along with payment of Registration Fees: 22nd October, 2025
- Submission of Full Paper along with the PPT to be used for presentation: 28th October, 2025
- Date of Conference: 30th -31st October, 2025

10. Registration Fees Details:

- i) Participation +Paper Presentation (per co-author)= 1770 INR (including GST)
- ii) Participation Only=1180 INR (including GST)
- iii) Each Coauthor has to register separately by making separate payments on the link provided below, amounting to 1770 INR.

- iv) All charges include the charge incurred for conference lunch and snacks for two days.
- v) Payment can be made using the following link: PAYMENT LINK TO BE SHARED AFTER YOU HAVE REGISTERED USING THE GOOGLE FORM LINK PROVIDED ABOVE.

For more details, please contact:

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