

# **Earth is healing during the COVID-19 Pandemic**

As humans socially distance from each other, forego extra driving, and manufacturing decreases, the Earth is healing. Several feel-good stories about the earth recovering have gone viral since the coronavirus pandemic forced the world indoors. Amid this, scientists have confirmed that the largest hole in the ozone layer over the Arctic region has closed in. The ozone layer shields the earth from most of the sun's ultraviolet radiation, which is a major cause of skin cancer. Netizens, however, claim that this healing of the ozone layer is one of the positive effects of the lockdown. On April 23, 2020, Copernicus Atmosphere Monitoring Service (CAMS), the European Union's earth monitoring programme, announced that the largest hole ever observed in the ozone layer over the Arctic has closed.

While COVID-19 the Earth and its elements, meanwhile, are finally stretching their legs in the absence of humans. The sad bad news is that Italy has been declared as the epicentre of coronavirus, but the good news is that dolphins, swans and fishes are witnessed swimming around in the clean canals of the city. The lockdown in Venice might have filled the air with gloom, but with nature's mystical creatures making its way to the waters of Venice, there is a lovely sprinkle of positivity in Europe. From Nilgais of Noida to Malabar Civets of Kozhikode, rare species of animals are valiantly walking into cities, revisiting old habitats. The lockdown has enabled many rare species of fauna to come out and surprise many around the world. Deer were seen walking around in a town in Poland. Wild turkeys dominated a playground in California, US. Fashion capital, Paris, saw some wild pigs on its streets. Olive Ridley turtles came ashore on a beach in Odisha.

The river Ganga was once said to have the purest water which could be consumed straight from the source. But with the increasing human settlements, the river saw a dip in its quality. However, now, amid the lockdown, Ganga Pollution Control Board affirmed that the water quality has improved over the past few weeks. The same goes for the Yamuna that has seen a reduction in the fecal coliform levels during the lockdown. It is also finally free of foam. And with factories shut and vehicles off the road, the skies have never looked so blue.

The reduction in air pollution in China caused by this economic disruption likely saved 20 times more lives in China than have currently been lost due to infection with the virus in that country," says Professor Marshall Bruke of Stanford University. China, being the place of origin of the COVID-19 infection, is now showing a considerable reduction in their pollution levels. The air quality has improved considerably, according to NASA's satellite images. Not just in China, the vehicular movement has come to a standstill across the world. Along with this, the shutdown of factories and commercial establishments has resulted in a drastic drop in the pollution levels in almost every country. Delhi was deemed the most polluted capital in the world as of last month with a PM2.5 concentration as high as 161. Thanks to the lockdown, the AQI has reduced to 82 as per the latest records, which

falls under the ‘satisfactory’ category. The cities around Delhi have also seen a drastic drop in the pollution levels. There has been a great reduction in the levels of carbon monoxide and carbon dioxide. So, while people are tackling the COVID-19 virus, the shutdown has given the Earth a breather to recover a bit from global warming.

The COVID-19 lockdown has claimed many lives globally, but has also made us watch the planet heal from behind our windows. While the lockdown does lower the toxicity levels in the environment, the question is – can we sustain these practices after the quarantine ends?

‘The earth is healing. We are the virus’.