

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE

RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 535
TO BE ANSWERED ON 02.12.2021

Impact of climate change on public health

535. Dr. AMAR PATNAIK:

Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE be pleased to state:

- (a) whether Government is aware of the effects of rising temperature and climate change on health in India;
- (b) if so, whether Government has conducted any study or commissioned research to assess the situation;
- (c) whether Government is aware of the Lancet Countdown Report 2019 on Health and Climate Change highlighting concerns to health due to climate change in India, if so, steps taken to address the concerns; and
- (d) whether Government is aware that dangerous levels of outdoor fine particulate air pollution continues to contribute to deaths and poor health in India, if so, steps taken by the Government thereto?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE
(SHRI ASHWINI KUMAR CHOUBEY)

(a) and (b) The Government is seized of the matter. The Government has initiated the National Programme on Climate Change and Human Health. The programme aims to reduce morbidity, mortality, injuries, and health vulnerability among the population in the country due to climate variability and extreme weather. The Indian Council for Medical Research has constituted a committee to identify priority areas of research and initiated the work under three Task Force Groups viz, (i) Vector Borne Diseases (ii) Eye Health & (iii) Respiratory Diseases.

Further, under the National Knowledge Network programme on “Climate Change and Human Health”, the Department of Science and Technology has published a report in thematic areas of vector-borne diseases and heat stress & health and same is available on website at the link : https://dst.gov.in/sites/default/files/Report_DST_CC_Health.pdf.

(c) Several reports on different aspects of climate change are published the world over by different agencies from time to time. One such report is ‘The Lancet Countdown on health and climate change’ an annual assessment published by The Lancet, an international medical journal. The Lancet Countdown Report 2019, presents an update of 41 indicators across five key domains: climate change impacts, exposures and vulnerability; adaptation, planning and resilience for health; mitigation actions and health co-benefits; economics and finance; and public and political engagement.

The report mentions that India saw an additional 45 million exposures due to heatwave events in age group of 65 years and older in 2018 compared with the historical 1986–2005 average number of events. The Indian Meteorological Department in collaboration with local health departments has been implementing Heat Action Plan since 2013 in many parts of the country to forewarn about the heat waves and also advising action to be taken during such occasions.

Further, the *Lancet* Countdown Report 2019 highlights that over the period of 2001-14 to 2015-18, India saw an increase of over 21 million annual daily exposures to wildfires. However, as per the India's third Biennial Update Report to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, in contrast to the huge emissions from forest fires globally, the emissions from forest fires in India contribute a mere 1.0-1.5 per cent. To address potential forest fires, the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change supports the efforts of the States/ Union Territories in prevention and control of forest fire by providing financial assistance for various forest fire prevention and management measures such as modern tools for fire extinguishing, use of communication and information technology, creation and maintenance of fire lines in forest areas, engagement of fire watchers, creation of water storage structures in forest areas, strengthening of forest infrastructure, procurement of firefighting equipment, soil and moisture conservation works in high risk areas, awareness creation, incentivizing villages/communities for protection against forest fire under the Centrally Sponsored Forest Fire Prevention and Management Scheme.

(d) There is no conclusive data available to establish a direct correlation of death/disease exclusively due to air pollution in India. Air pollution is one of the many factors affecting respiratory ailments and associated diseases.

The Government has launched National Clean Air Programme (NCAP) as a national level strategy to reduce air pollution levels across the country. City Specific Clean Air Action Plans have been prepared and rolled out for implementation in 132 non-attainment and million plus cities. These action plans focus on city specific short/ medium/ long term actions to control air pollution from sources such as vehicular emission, road dust, burning of biomass/ crop/ garbage/ municipal solid waste, landfills, construction activities, industrial emission, etc.

The Government has taken several steps for mitigation of air pollution which include introduction of BS-VI norms for fuel and vehicles since April 2020, promotion of E-vehicles, expansion of network of Metro rails for public transport, cleaner fuel such as piped natural gas (PNG), stringent emission norms for industries including coal based thermal power plants, zig-zag technology for brick kilns, Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) for plastic and e-waste management, real time monitoring of major industrial sectors, etc.
