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Round Table Environment Expert Zoom Meeting on "Summer Action Plan to Control Air Pollution in Cities"

- Air pollution issues are very critical in cities throughout the year; the situation worsens during winters.
- According to the last report released by CREA (Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air) in March 2025, Delhi was the most polluted city in last winter.
- Delhi is in a geographically disadvantageous location in Indo-Gangetic plain. Other factors such as population density, unplanned city also contribute to the year-round air pollution.
- This year, the Air Quality Index (AQI) was poor even in summer. On 16th May, the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) imposed Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) 1 restrictions to control air pollution in Delhi-NCR. This has happened for the first time in summer months.
- The main reason for the current situation is the long range transport of dust caused by substantial wind speed, from Rajasthan and also from Pakistan.
- The biggest problem in summer, particularly in the northern region, is that of dust. It is connected with wind speed, which is high during the summers.
- Other reasons are local air pollution sources, which include construction dust, resuspended road dust, and open waste burning. Another important cause these days is the dust from desilting material, which is left on the road and not picked up.
- Road dust contributes to particulate matter (PM2.5 and PM10).
- The major sources of road dust are construction sites, vehicle movement, and collected debris. Seasonal impact is also one of the sources, when it becomes very hot in the pre-monsoon months; dust storms are common and the high wind speeds generate lot of road dust.
- Urban factors for road dust include poorly maintained roads, heavy traffic, poorly cleaned roads; major portion of the roads are encroached by vehicles (parking) and vendors, which precludes mechanical sweeping. Also, mechanical sweeping is not possible in small lanes.
- Ongoing construction activity, transport (Delhi has the highest vehicle density) all play a major role because of which PM is 30%-50% higher in Delhi due to road dust. This leads to respiratory problems, eye irritation, asthma, cardiovascular diseases.
- The Central Road Research Institute (CRRI) has advised authorities to do continuous water sprinkling. Pavements should be made green wherever possible. Construction activities should be regulated.
- The Delhi government has become strict on emission policy. Green hydrogen is the latest; it's much better than e-vehicles. The concept of segregated waste in public spaces needs to be propagated to increase awareness among the masses.

- Working hours, including school time, should be changed during summers.
- Because of traffic congestion, we are exposed to heat and dust for a longer period of time.
- An action plan to reduce vehicle congestion on the roads is needed.
- Waste sites should be covered. Plantation islands or mini forests can be planned. Develop fountains near colonies, which can be turned on for freshness and dust suppression.
- Air pollution has three definite sources: point sources, line sources, and atmospheric (geography). Delhi lies in the arid zone.
- While many efforts have been made for diverting traffic under urban extension ring roads, outer roads, there has not been any focus on developing the buffer zone with forests, green cover.
- Government has not focused on acquiring land for developing green belt to curb the dust or air pollution coming from outer areas to the national capital.
- Point sources in Delhi are clearly defined and include large polluted river beds, large polluted dumping grounds, incinerators, boilers, crushers, brick kilns. All waste to energy plants and such point sources should be shifted out of Delhi.
- Segregation of waste at source should be incentivized.
- The large dumping grounds should be converted to green islands.
- Line sources are the river beds. Drains should be covered with green cover using the Miyawaki afforestation method.
- All road medians should be owned by RWAs (Residents' Welfare Associations) for the purpose of tree plantation.
- Action plans mainly address dust control, waste management and encourage use of public transport. There is however delay in implementation of recommendations.
- Instead of a proactive approach, we have a reactionary approach.
- We are not able to focus on the root causes of pollution.
- Pollution Under Control (PUC) for vehicles should not be a formality; it should be checked with precision.
- Drones can be used to identify the sources of pollution.
- Waste recycling and construction activity and its waste management need high technology.
- Pollution in Delhi-NCR should be tackled as one project on a war footing. We have to think big, instead of adopting short-term measures such as mechanical road sweeping.

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