

EDITORIAL



Dr KK Aggarwal
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HCFI DR KK AGGARWAL RESEARCH FUND

HCFI Round Table Environment Expert Zoom Meeting on "The Lancet Planetary Health Report 2022 on Pollution & Health"

May 29, 2022 (Sunday, 12 noon – 1 pm)

- The Lancet Planetary Report on Pollution & Health was released on 17th of May 2022. According to this report pollution remains responsible for ~9 million deaths per year corresponding to 1 in 6 deaths worldwide. These data have been collected from Global Burden of Diseases, Injuries and Risk Factors Study, etc. These deaths are attributed to ambient air pollution and toxic chemical pollution. Deaths from these pollution risk factors are unintended consequences of industrialization and urbanization.
- In many developing countries and low- and middle-income countries, the emissions and effluent discharges do not meet the standards. They are untreated or partially treated.
- Despite ongoing efforts by various state governments, UN agencies, NGOs, committed individuals and groups, there is little real progress against pollution. Pollution is more severe in the low- and middle-income group countries, especially in Southeast Asia.
- This report says that urgent attention is needed to control pollution and prevent pollution-related diseases with emphasis on air pollution and lead poisoning because pollution, climate change and biodiversity losses are very closely linked with each other.
- The Report says that pollution has typically been viewed as local issue to be addressed through some national regulations or sometimes, using regional policy in higher-income countries.
- But pollution is a planetary problem; for instance, dust from other countries is also a source of air pollution in Delhi-NCR. Hence, it requires a global response similar to the global fight against the pandemic.
- Global efforts can synergize with other global environmental policy programs and large-scale, rapid transition away from all fossil fuels to clean, renewable energy is an effective strategy. India is doing a lot on renewable energy.
- Massive tree plantation program is also required.
- International organizations and national governments need to continue expanding the focus on pollution as one of the most important global environmental issue along with climate change and biodiversity.
- Environmental management is generally taken as pollution control, but this is not true. This is a reform, i.e., to consider that environmental management is more important than pollution control, is overdue. Because pollution control does not take care of

prevention and abatement. Pollution control is inefficient because of poor monitoring. The focus is on control rather than prevention and abatement.

- Allocation of responsibility in an ambient sample is extremely difficult. Quite often there are variants in reports, which make it difficult to decide on the result that should be adopted.
- There are several institutions in business managements but there are hardly any comparable institutions for environmental benefits. We have to focus on institutional aspects and aspects other than control such as the legal aspect of management of environment.
- It is a very complicated study and report and needs very in-depth analysis. But certain clear facts emerge that pollution, especially air pollution and water pollution, is directly related to health particularly for the lowest economic strata or working class population.
- It is a very worrisome situation and needs a lot of attention. The debate should not be on lines of whether we are going to increase the temperature 1.5 degree by 2030 or by 2 degrees by 2050. The issue is that there is a problem and it needs to be addressed. Burden of adaptation and cost of mitigation should not be on the developing world.
- India has pioneered the international solar alliance with more than 143 countries as partners. India has also championed the production, subsidizing the rate as well as cost of production of solar energy without any international funding.
- All identified actions, whichever possible, need to be prioritized and have to be spearheaded without any delay.
- Why is pollution created? The answer to this question is most important as knowledge about this is still inadequate.
- Everybody knows about the pollution measures but they are not being followed or adhered to. People do not comprehend the depth and severity of the problem.
- Global warming and pollution resulting in health issues is a serious issue and is affecting all of us. We are more disease-prone today than we were in the past. Life expectancy has increased but

people are suffering and people are living more with disease than they did in the past. We have to respect nature and learn to live with nature.

- Industries, businesses and consumers, all have a vital role to play if we have to control pollution.
- Lifestyle and health are directly linked and may affect other parts of the world too. In 2019, there were a cluster of pneumonia cases in Wuhan, from where COVID-19 spread to almost every country in the world. These cases were directly related to lifestyle and were traced to Huanan sea food market. Although not proven to be the origin of COVID-19, the pandemic prompted demands for immediate and comprehensive restrictions on consumption of wild animals.
- A large proportion of emerging infectious diseases are zoonotic in origin and spread to humans during zoonotic spillover.
- Wildfires emit many carcinogenic pollutants that contaminate air, water, terrestrial and indoor environments. Long-term exposure to wildfires has been associated with the risk of lung cancer and brain tumors.
- Pollution control measures are generally regarded as burden by many industries. They need to be motivated.
- A three pronged strategy is required; first is transition from fossil fuel to renewable energy, second is proper waste management or zero waste and the third is massive tree plantation.
- There is need for a lifecycle approach in industries to find out the step at which maximum pollution occur, which can be specifically targeted and that sector can be focused on.
- Enforcement of rules and regulations is poor. Lack of awareness among authorities is a major issue. If the authorities are not aware then public will not be able to understand the difference.
- Some subsidy or tax rebate can be given as incentive or penalties can be made more stringent. This may facilitate implementation.

Participants: Dr Anil Kumar, Mr Vivek Kumar, Mr Paritosh Tyagi, Dr M Dwarakanath, Mr Neeraj Tyagi, Mr Pradeep Khandelwal, Mr Ankit Sethi, Mr Varun Singh, Mr Vikas Singhal, Ms Ira Gupta, Dr S Sharma



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