Press Release

Delhi chokes under deadly smog

The days after Diwali have been filled with thick smog blanketing the city. Delhi has recorded its worst ever pollution record with harmful gaseous cocktail reaching up to 42 times the safe limit.

This warrants urgent attention and the concerned authorities need to take prompt measures, otherwise the health of 10 million city residents hangs in balance.

New Delhi, 02nd Nov, 2016: Air pollution in the capital increased to dangerously high levels post-Diwali. Pollution in the national capital reached extremely unhealthy levels as a dangerous cocktail of noxious gases and respirable pollutants were coupled to low temperature and negligible wind movement, which caused the pollutants to remain close to the surface and be easily breathable.

Ultra fine PM (Particulate Matter) 2.5 considered to be the most dangerous particulate matter pollutant rose to "hazardous" levels – and reached up to about 999 micrograms in various areas of the city, which is several times higher than the safe limit of 60 micrograms per cubic meter, standardized by the WHO Central Pollution Control Board. To offer a comparative perspective, Air quality index levels in London on Monday morning was 139 and that in China hovered from 380-400.

Padma Shri Awardee Dr KK Aggarwal – President Heart Care Foundation of India (HCFI) & National President Elect IMA, added, “The hazardous levels definitely are a reason to panic. Respiratory problems and heart conditions will only worsen in the coming days. PM2.5 is absorbed in lung and enters circulation. It increases free radicals, cholesterol deposition and precipitate heart attack, stroke, and hypertension. Short-term exposure to PM2.5 pollutants is associated with acute coronary ischemic (insufficient blood flow in the coronary arteries of the heart) events and the chances of irregular heart rhythm jumps by 26% for each 6 mcg/cu mm increase in PM 2.5 levels. Such high levels are potent and can trigger endothelial dysfunction, blood thickening and atrial fibrillation (within 2 hours of exposure).”

Noise pollution also breached the safe barrier in the city. Decibel level readings show that the noise pollution ranged from 66.1 decibel (A) and 75.8 dB(A) while the safe levels are around 55dB.

Speaking further about the city’s debilitating air condition, Dr. K.K Aggarwal said, “Delhi’s air remains in the “unhealthy” category with respect to air quality index levels throughout the year, Diwali just added to this burden. Moreover, recent crop stuble burning in neighboring states of Punjab and Haryana has also exacerbated the issue. The timing also seems to be crucial, this changing weather has moisture hanging in the air that traps pollutants and acts as a sustained reservoir, and low speed winds are unable to sweep away this particulate matter. There is an
urgent need to take prompt and stringent actions, there needs to be a blanket ban on firecrackers, especially those illegally imported that fail to meet pollution standards.”

Other measures that can prove fruitful to city’s air quality include imposing a strict ban on garbage burning, and increasing the tax on tobacco. Vehicular emissions need to be controlled further as clearly, current measures are insufficient. Crop burning in agriculture oriented neighboring states needs to be controlled and vigilantly monitored.

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About Heart Care Foundation of India
Initiated in 1986, the Heart Care Foundation of India is a leading National NGO working in the field of creating mass health awareness among people from all walks of life and providing solutions for India's everyday healthcare needs. The NGO uses consumer-based entertainment modules to impart health education and increase awareness amongst people. A leading example of this is the Perfect Health Mela; an annual event started in 1993 that is attended by over 2-3 lakh people each year. The Mela showcases activities across categories such as health education seminars and check-ups, entertainment programs, lifestyle exhibitions, lectures, workshops, and competitions. In addition to this, the NGO conducts programs and camps to train people on the technique of hands only CPR through its CPR 10 mantra for revival after a sudden cardiac arrest. They currently hold three Limca book of world records for the maximum number of people trained in hands-only CPR in one go. Keeping article 21 of the Indian Constitution in mind, which guarantees a person Right to Life, Heart Care Foundation of India has also recently initiated a project called the Sameer Malik Heart Care Foundation Fund to ensure that no one dies of a heart disease just because they cannot afford treatment.

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