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What'S UP With The Ban?

Single-use plastic is still choking drains in cities. Banning it won't work until there are cheap alternatives

TOI Editorials

Good intentions can only take anybody so far. It's been over a year since the Union environment ministry notified rules to prohibit the manufacture, import, stocking, distribution, sale and use of several single-use plastic items. The list of items was sensible insofar as their "high littering potential" was concerned. But even among those who have heard of this ban, heeding it has been patchy. The state pollution control boards that hardly cover themselves in glory when it comes to enforcing other environmental standards, did not sweat over this one either. Some state governments do take the issue seriously. Karnataka banned SUPs in 2016 and Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike has been active with both awareness drives and punitive measures. Yet, progress remains unsatisfactory, SUPs still flourish in the metropolis. That's because SUPs are integral to too many small businesses, who find the alternatives too expensive. The alternatives need to compete on cost, convenience and mass availability. This needs to be a governmental priority. Increase support for the most promising recyclable/compostable innovations and help them reach scale.

Of course, the environmental dangers rise during the monsoon, as plastic waste is a significant risk-multiplier for flooding. In Delhi, kilometres long drains can be seen choked with garbage even in the dry seasons. Mumbai has the same problem, only it drains a lot of the plastic into the sea. The Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation has reported that plastic waste comprises as much as 70% of material desilted from water bodies and nalas. Remember that once cities properly collect all this waste, they would next face a massive landfill challenge. Reducing usage is the only sustainable solution. The SUP ban is right-minded to this extent. But commerce's massive dependency on these plastics cannot just be wished away.

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Message From The Thousand Suns

Oppenheimer's life & the movie celebrating it have lessons for all democracies: science & public policy must be tested by fact-based truth-telling

Sanjaya Baru, [The writer served as Media Advisor to PM Manmohan Singh]

Much of the media attention in India on the recently released movie, Oppenheimer, based on the life and times of the scientist often called the 'Father of the Atomic Bomb' – Julius Robert Oppenheimer – has focused on the association of the first test of the atomic bomb with the Bhagvad Gita.

The widely remembered stanza from the Gita captures the visual impact of the explosion of the atomic bomb: "If the radiance of a thousand suns were to burst at once in the sky, that would be the splendour of the mighty One. "

In an interview at the time Oppenheimer recalled: "We knew the world would not be the same. A few people laughed, a few people cried, most people were silent. I remembered the line from the Hindu scripture, the Bhagvad Gita. " However, the line that he often quoted was the more ominous one: "Now, I am Death, the destroyer of worlds. "

While feeling good about a great American scientist quoting the Bhagvad Gita at a historic moment, we must also reflect on the ominous warning of Lord Vishnu that the brightness of a thousand suns can be matched by the darkness of death and the destruction of human inheritance.

To be in awe of the bomb as being 'brighter than a thousand Suns' is very different from thinking of it as the messenger of Death, "the destroyer of worlds". Oppenheimer's thoughts capture the essence of his persona. That of a tragic hero. The film brings out very clearly both his 'heroism', as a scientist, and his regret about the tragic consequences of his work. It also shows the tragedy of his own life, that ended with his hounding by the very government that benefitted from his work.

The movie has many messages from Oppenheimer's life. About the importance of integrity in the pursuit of science. That truth must be based on facts as understood and explained. That reason must inform thought and action and thatpublic policy must weigh the consequences of both action and inaction.

Oppenheimer was acutely conscious of the tragic human consequences of his scientific heroism. Even as we credit him for his scientific achievement, we must not forget that he was not responsible for the death and destruction it caused because that was a political decision.

The decision to drop the bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki was not based on any credible threat perception. The American claim that it ended the war in the Pacific and saved millions of lives has since been shown to be an empty one.

The US chose to test the bomb using a Japan in retreat as a laboratory. The Japanese had to be taught a lesson even in defeat and the bomb was the message. It is, therefore, not at all surprising that Oppenheimer was not willing to defend the decision. What followed was harassment authorised by the

institutions of the state.
That is the other important message of the life that the film captures. Hailed a national hero, Oppenheimer was persecuted for his alleged left-wing sympathies by the sectarian and mindless anti-communism of the American political right, institutionally epitomised by the House Un-American Activities Committee and the Senate hearings chaired by Senator Joseph McCarthy. Under their influence Oppenheimer was declared a 'security risk' and removed from the advisory committee of the Atomic Energy Commission.

Oppenheimer's security clearance was revoked in 1954 and that decision rescinded only in December 2022, months before the movie was completed and 55 years after his death. In making that announcement, the US Secretary of Energy, JenniferGranholm, said, "As time has passed, more evidence has come to light of the bias and unfairness of the process that Dr Oppenheimer was subjected to while the evidence of his loyalty and love of country have only been further affirmed. "

The charge against Oppenheimer was that he publicly campaigned against the dangers of atomic warfare, calling the bomb "an evil thing". He campaigned against the development of ever more destructive bombs. He spoke of the US and the Soviet Union as "two scorpions in a bottle, each capable of killing the other, but only at the risk of his own life".

It is a testimony to the liberalism of American academia and Hollywood that many have over the years condemned the treatment to Oppenheimer even when they did not favour the development of the atomic bomb. The movie celebrates Oppenheimer's scientific contribution as much as it expresses solidarity with him for his political persecution.

For all its faults from time to time, the US has had a proud history of defending freedom of speech and thought and protecting the institutions of the state from their takeover by authoritarian and sectarian forces.

Oppenheimer created a 'destroyer of the world', but the 'brightness of a thousand suns' shines on his lifelong pursuit of truth and science and his practice and defence of free speech. The Oppenheimer saga is a message to all free societies, including ours, that eternal vigilance is indeed the price of democracy.

THE HINDU

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Still incomplete

India's ties with Sri Lanka are bound by the Tamil question

Editorial

With a joint statement on economic cooperation, India and Sri Lanka outlined a forward-looking vision for their relations. The statement, entitled "Promoting Connectivity, Catalysing Prosperity: India-Sri Lanka Economic Partnership Vision", released after talks between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Sri Lankan President Ranil Wickremesinghe in Delhi last week, lays out the vision in five areas: maritime, air, energy, trade and people-to-people initiatives. New investments in maritime and air connectivity will involve developing ports and airports in Sri Lanka, resuming ferry services and expanding flight networks to connect Tamil Nadu and Sri Lanka's Northern and Eastern Provinces. A major surge in energy connectivity will include developing renewable energy wind and solar plants in Sri Lanka. Both hope to increase trade, and continue Indian support for Sri Lanka's economy that crashed last year and is slowly working out its debt restructuring process. A memorandum of understanding was signed to operationalise UPI digital payments in Sri Lanka and to designate the Indian Rupee as currency for trade. They also agreed to explore ways of enhancing tourism and cultural and religious travel, and educational collaboration.

While the vision statement revealed a comprehensive plan for the future, what it lacked was conspicuous: none of the written documents released during Mr. Wickremesinghe's visit acknowledged previous commitments by Sri Lanka on honouring the 13th Amendment for devolution of powers to the North and Eastern provinces, and for resolving the long-pending issues over arrest of Indian fishers. It was left to Mr. Modi to make a sharp appeal in his speech for devolution and the conduct of Provincial Council elections, and he emphasised the need to ensure a "life of respect and dignity" for the Sri Lankan Tamil community. In Colombo, the ruling SLPP that provides support for President Wickremesinghe made it clear that his government lacks the "electoral mandate" to discuss these issues, for long the cause of tensions between India and Sri Lanka. The fact that neither Mr. Wickremesinghe's comments in Delhi, nor the joint statement referred to such crucial issues may be the bigger message from the meeting: that despite Sri Lanka's other dependencies on New Delhi, the Indian government is no longer welcome to bring its historical concerns over the Tamil issue into bilateral negotiations. Regardless of the strong familial bonds between India and Sri Lanka, history has tripped up ties in the past, and any vision for the future that does not include an amicable resolution of these issues will be considered incomplete.

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A big step in reducing the risk of disasters

The G20 must build on what India has started to prevent disasters

Kamal Kishore is Member Secretary, National Disaster Management Authority, India & Mami Mizutori is Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Disaster Risk Reduction and Head of the UN office for Disaster Risk Reduction

Disasters around the world are claiming more and more lives. The consequences of climate change are already on our doorstep. Ten days ago, three continents were gripped by heat waves. Massive forest fires have ravaged parts of Greece and Canada. Two weeks ago, the river Yamuna breached the highest flood level, recorded 45 years ago, and inundated parts of Delhi.

The cost of these disasters is yet to be determined. However, it is clear that the world needs to do more to prevent the risk of losses from all disasters, whether they are weather-related, earthquakes, or biological like COVID-19. For too long, countries have spent billions responding to disasters rather than paying a little upfront to prevent or reduce their impact.

We are at the midpoint of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, which is the global road map for reducing disaster risks and losses. While progress has been made, we are not where we need to be. However, with a renewed sense of urgency and a people-centred approach, we can significantly reduce disaster losses by 2030.

India's initiative

One good news is that countries are finally coming around to the value of disaster risk reduction, which India has elevated as a priority for G20 through its presidency of the group. Specifically, India has established the first G20 Disaster Risk Reduction Working Group.

Countries that make up the G20 hold around 85% of the global GDP and about two-thirds of the world population. And as human vulnerability to disasters is strongly linked to economic decisions, the G20 is in a unique position to chart a new path of disaster risk-informed decision-making. This means not only considering the potential impact of economic decisions on disaster risks, but also leveraging economic tools to reduce existing risks and prevent new ones. This type of foresight is critical if countries wish to protect their people and grow their economies in the face of increasing and inter-connected risks.

That is why we welcome the priorities identified by the G20 Disaster Risk Reduction Working Group, which form the basis for the Communiqué being negotiated in Chennai. These are in direct support of the calls to action of the May 2023 Political Declaration of the UN General Assembly on the midterm review of the Sendai Framework. Of particular note are those around enhancing early warning systems, resilient infrastructure, and financing for disaster risk reduction.

Early warning systems

Expanding disaster early warning and early action systems is a top priority. Inclusive and multi-hazard early warning systems are among the most effective means of reducing disaster deaths and economic losses. During Cyclone Biparjoy, effective systems for end-to-end early warning and action helped achieve zero deaths from the event in India. Preparedness of the power sector helped reduce the disruption time in power supply in the aftermath of the cyclone.

The promise of disruptive technologies can help many countries leapfrog into a regime where they can use global capacity for forecasting to meet local needs. To that end, we are working to realise the goal of the UN Secretary General's Early Warnings for All Initiative, which seeks to create universal coverage for everyone by the end of 2027.

Enhancing the resilience of infrastructure to withstand climate and disaster risks is another global priority. From New Zealand, which saw the flooding of Auckland airport, to the U.S., where a pharmaceutical plant was destroyed by a tornado, every country can benefit from assessing and enhancing the resilience of its critical infrastructure.

Infrastructure has a long life cycle, and if built well, can lock-in resilience as opposed to risk. That same infrastructure also becomes the lifeline of recovery during a crisis. Hence, infrastructure, whether economic or social, is ultimately about people and it must lead to sustainable development outcomes for them.

That is why India launched with the UN in 2019 the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure, to spur policy development and capacity support for disaster resilient infrastructure, especially in developing countries. We are currently collaborating to create a global methodology for conducting infrastructure resilience reviews and stress testing, based on the Principles for Resilient Infrastructure.

Failure to adopt an integrated perspective to understand risks to infrastructure, and its impact on development, has the potential to multiply losses, which disproportionately impact the poor, who subsequently take the longest time to recover.

Finally, developing a new approach to financing disaster risk reduction is needed to transform risk reduction plans into concrete actions. This effort must be led by finance and economy ministries in collaboration with the private sector because the current funding deficit for disaster risk reduction is too large for governments to manage alone, and many of the risks generated are by the private sector.

G20 nations like Indonesia and India have used risk metrics to allocate resources at the sub-national and local levels for disaster risk reduction. These need to be studied and scaled.

Building on these areas of work, scaling up ecosystem-based approaches and enhancing national and local response capacities will be the responsibility of the next G20 presidents. To that end, we are delighted to hear that Brazil, which will assume the Presidency of the G20 in December, has committed to continuing the working group and building on what India has started.

दैनिक भास्कर

Date:25-07-23

मौसम की मार का फसलों पर सीधा असर दिख रहा है

संपादकीय

राष्ट्रीय औसत निकालकर स्थिति को समझने से अक्सर गलत निष्कर्ष मिलते हैं। अर्थशास्त्र में प्रति व्यक्ति आय हो या कृषि के लिए औसत बारिश का आंकड़ा, ये सत्य नहीं बताते। राष्ट्रीय औसत से देशभर में सामान्य बारिश हुई है, लेकिन सच यह है कि दक्षिण भारत में यह कम और उत्तर भारत में ज्यादा हुई। लिहाजा दोनों क्षेत्रों में खरीफ खासकर धान की बुवाई पिछले साल के इसी समय के मुकाबले छह फीसदी कम रही। देश के धान वाले प्रदेश तेलंगाना, आंध्र, छत्तीसगढ़, ओडिशा, झारखंड, बिहार और पश्चिम बंगाल में बुवाई पिछले साल के अभी तक के काल के मुकाबले क्रमशः 24.2,

16.1, 21, 23.1, 41.4, 323 और 37.2 प्रतिशत कम रही। इसकी वजह से नरेगा में काम करने वालों की संख्या काफी बढ़ी और इस योजना के लिए तय धन राशि (60 हजार करोड़ रुपए) का दो-तिहाई अभी तक खर्च हो चुका है। पिछले साल के मुकाबले 10% ज्यादा लोगों ने इस योजना में काम किया यानी खेती का काम घटा है। पिछले तीन वर्षों में भी यह संख्या सबसे ज्यादा है। सीधा मतलब हुआ कि शहरों की बेरोजगारी से भागकर गांव पहुंचे युवाओं को वहां भी मौसम की मार ने तबाह किया। ऐसे में नरेगा एक सहारा हो सकता है, लेकिन सरकार ने उसकी राशि भी पिछले वर्षों के मुकाबले 40% घटा दी है। उम्मीद है कि जुलाई में कृषि कार्य तेजी पकड़ेगा जिससे रोजगार की स्थिति बेहतर होगी। बहरहाल, अलनीनो ने भारत के साथ हाल के दौर में कई बार धोखा किया है और इस बार भी खरीफ तो छोड़िए, रबी की फसल पर भी इसकी मार पड़ सकती है। अगर दोनों फसलें अपेक्षा के अनुरूप नहीं रहीं तो गरीबी का नया घाव चंद किलो फ्री राशन या 17 रुपए रोज की सम्मान राशि से नहीं भर पाएगा ।

बिज़नेस स्टैंडर्ड

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शहर, जलवायु परिवर्तन और शहरी बाढ़ पर सवाल

अमित कपूर और विवेक देवरॉय, (कपूर इंस्टीट्यूट फॉर कॉम्पिटिटिवनेस, इंडिया के अध्यक्ष और यूएसएटीएमसी, स्टैनफर्ड यूनिवर्सिटी के व्याख्याता हैं। देवरॉय भारत के प्रधानमंत्री की आर्थिक सलाहकार परिषद के अध्यक्ष हैं)

दुनियाभर में शहरीकरण न केवल एक वांछित लक्ष्य है बल्कि यह अब एक अपरिहार्य परिणाम में बदलता जा रहा है। हालांकि, यह प्रक्रिया एकतरफा नहीं है बल्कि इसके तार आंतरिक स्तर पर लगातार बदलते हुए, वैश्विक संदर्भों जैसे कि युद्ध, जलवायु परिवर्तन और महामारी से जुड़े हुए हैं। जैसे-जैसे शहरी क्षेत्रों का आकार और विस्तार क्षेत्र बढ़ता है, इन कारकों की विशेष रूप से जलवायु परिवर्तन के साथ कड़ी जुड़ने से स्थिति और अधिक जटिल और तीव्र हो जाती है। ऐसे में जो परिस्थितियां बनती हैं उसमें नगरपालिका प्रशासन की आजमाइश शुरू हो जाती है।

उदाहरण के तौर पर भारी बारिश, जलभराव की स्थिति में बदल जाती है और शहरों में बाढ़ आने से सभी प्रशासनिक और आवश्यक सेवाएं ठप पड़ जाती हैं। भारत का शहरी क्षेत्र वास्तव में लगातार बन रही जलभराव की स्थिति से त्रस्त है जिससे शहरी बाढ़ जैसे हालात बन जाते हैं। वहीं मूसलाधार और अप्रत्याशित बारिश लगभग हमेशा ही शहरी नगरपालिकाओं की कम तैयारी की पोल खोल देती है।

जलवायु परिवर्तन के प्रभावों के कारण प्राकृतिक आपदाओं की तीव्रता भी बढ़ी है और ऐसी घटनाएं अब बार-बार हो रही हैं। इसके चलते ही अप्रत्याशित तरीके से वर्षा, गर्मी की तीव्र लहर, बाढ़, तूफान, सूखा और चक्रवात जैसी घटनाओं की तीव्र पुनरावृत्ति देखी जा रही है। इसका परिणाम शहरों में भोजन, पानी और ऊर्जा सुरक्षा के लिए एक गंभीर खतरे के रूप में नजर आ रहा है। यह एशिया के लिए भी विशेष रूप से सच है, जहां तटीय शहर ऐसी आपदाओं की चपेट में सबसे अधिक आते हैं। इसके चलते ही तटीय तथा समुद्री पर्यावरण, कृषि और पशुधन से जुड़े क्षेत्र के साथ-साथ सार्वजनिक स्वास्थ्य गंभीर रूप से प्रभावित हो रहा है।

अप्रत्याशित और अचानक दिखने वाली जलवायु घटनाएं, विकसित और विकासशील दोनों ही देशों को प्रभावित करती हैं लेकिन विकासशील देशों में इसको लेकर काफी संवेदनशीलता और गंभीरता है। कई शहरों ने अतीत में भी प्राकृतिक और मानव निर्मित आपदाओं का अनुभव किया है, जिसके चलते हजारों निवासी या तो मलबे के नीचे दब गए हैं या बह गए हैं। अगर महानगरीय आपदाओं की बात करें तो इसके कारण होने वाले वित्तीय तनाव भी कई परेशानियां खड़ी करते हैं।

महानगरीय क्षेत्रों में औद्योगिक और वाणिज्यिक गतिविधि काफी बढ़ने से ही शहर आज समाज को सशक्त बनाने के लिए महत्त्वपूर्ण भूमिका निभाने लायक हुए हैं। जब भी किसी शहरी क्षेत्र में कोई आपदा देखी जाती है तब हर बार आसपास के क्षेत्र में व्यापक तरीके से लोगों के हताहत होने की घटनाओं के साथ-साथ अन्य नकारात्मक प्रभावों का अनुभव किया जाता है। इससे शहर का बजट, विकास और वृद्धि की दिशा में खर्च होने के बजाय प्रारंभिक राहत कार्यों और आपातकालीन प्रतिक्रिया में खर्च हो जाता है।

किसी भी क्षेत्र के लिए परिवहन तथा गतिशीलता विशेष रूप से सबसे बुनियादी कार्य में शामिल होती है लेकिन जब आर्थिक गतिविधियों की बात आती है तब यही सबसे महत्त्वपूर्ण बन जाते हैं। इसमें व्यवधान आने से किसी भी सामाजिक-आर्थिक तंत्र के ध्वस्त होने का कारण बनने की क्षमता भी बन जाती है। साल-दर-साल, हमारे शहर बदलते मौसम की परिस्थितियों के सामने नतमस्तक दिखते हैं जो हमारे समय, धन, संसाधन और अक्सर जीवन के लिए काफी महंगी साबित होती है।

इसके अलावा हम अगर शहरी जल निकासी प्रणाली की बात करें तो अक्सर बड़ी मात्रा में शहरी क्षेत्रों से निकलने वाले दूषित कचरे के प्रवाह की वजह से यह प्रणाली विफलता का शिकार हो जाती है। ऐसे हालात में बेहद मध्यम स्तर की बारिश भी शहरी जल निकासी प्रणालियों को प्रभावित करने और निचले इलाकों में अचानक बाढ़ लाने की क्षमता रखती है। विकास के इंजन के रूप में देखे जाने वाले शहर भी सीधे तौर पर प्राकृतिक तंत्र को भारी नुकसान पहुंचाते हैं और पूरी प्राकृतिक व्यवस्था को बाधित करते हैं।

एशिया के कई तटीय शहर अमूमन शहरी और तटीय स्तर की बाढ़, दोनों के लिहाज से बेहद अतिसंवेदनशील हैं जबकि सुदूर इलाके के शहरों में अचानक बाढ़ आने का, नदी की बाढ़ या शहरी बाढ़, से खतरा होता है। शहरी बाढ़ की स्थिति ज्यादातर मनुष्यों द्वारा किए जाने वाले अतिक्रमण, अपर्याप्त बाढ़ प्रबंधन, बाढ़ की प्रारंभिक चेतावनी प्रणालियों की कमी और विकासशील देशों में जल निकासी प्रणालियों में ठोस कचरे के प्रवाह के चलते बनती है।

इसके अलावा, बहुमूल्य प्राकृतिक संसाधनों के बावजूद वास्तव में अनियोजित शहरी विकास ही विकासशील देशों के शहरों की विशेषता बन गई है। गरीबों को जोखिम भरे क्षेत्रों में गैरकानूनी तरीके से खतरे वाली जमीन पर आवास बनाने के लिए मजबूर किया जाता है। व्यावहारिक रूप से हर बड़े शहरों में अक्सर ऐसा होता है जब वहां के निवासी बार-बार बाढ़

वाले क्षेत्रों का अतिक्रमण करते हैं। इन जगहों पर नहरें संकीर्ण हो जाती हैं जिससे इनकी प्रवाह की क्षमता भी कम हो जाती है। ये महानगरीय क्षेत्रों में गंभीर बाढ़ की स्थिति से नुकसान पहुंचने के कुछ मुख्य कारण हैं।

इस स्थिति का समाधान निकालना एक बहु-आयामी दृष्टिकोण पर निर्भर करता है जो नगरपालिका के तंत्र को अधिक कुशल बनाने और जलवायु परिवर्तन की समस्या की दिशा में पूरी सक्षमता से कार्रवाई करने के साथ ही पर्याप्त पूंजी से लैस हो। उदाहरण के तौर पर शहरी नियोजन और वास्तुकला अगर ऊर्जा की बचत के लिहाज से तैयार की गई है तब इससे ग्रीनहाउस गैस उत्सर्जन को कम करने में मदद मिल सकती है। इसके परिणामस्वरूप, वैश्विक जलवायु परिवर्तन का खतरा भी कम हो सकता है और तूफान तथा बाढ़ के प्रभाव को कम किया जा सकता है।

कई शहरों ने लचीलापन बढ़ाने और '100 रिजिलिएंट सिटीज और 'ग्लोबल कोवेनैंट ऑफ मेयर्स' जैसी बहुपक्षीय एकजुटता के माध्यम से जलवायु परिवर्तन के बढ़ते खतरों के हिसाब से कदम उठाने की कोशिश की है। हालांकि इसके साथ-साथ नागरिक-नेतृत्व वाली कार्ययोजनाओं का होना भी उतना ही महत्त्वपूर्ण है जो किसी शहर की नगरपालिका के लिए मददगार साबित हो सकते हैं।

सफलता केवल वैश्विक, क्षेत्रीय, राष्ट्रीय और स्थानीय स्तरों पर एक समन्वय वाली रणनीति और प्रयास से हासिल की जा सकती है। ऐसे में शहरों को जलवायु परिवर्तन का मुकाबला करने के लिए एक महत्त्वपूर्ण घटक बनाना अनिवार्य है। औद्योगिक उत्सर्जन को कम करने के लिए उत्पादन के स्वच्छ तरीकों, अक्षय ऊर्जा के स्रोतों के साथ-साथ कानून या प्रोत्साहन तरीकों का उपयोग करते हुए कई समुदाय पहले से ही इस दिशा में महत्त्वपूर्ण प्रगति कर रहे हैं। उत्सर्जन को कम करने से स्थानीय औद्योगिक और परिवहन प्रदूषण भी कम हो सकता है और शहरों में हवा की गुणवत्ता के साथ वहां रहने वालों के स्वास्थ्य में भी सुधार हो सकता है।