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Modi launches air quality index, wants change in lifestyle to save environment

Launching the first national air quality index in New Delhi on Monday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said India's contribution to the pollution level in the world was one of the lowest and urged the countrymen to change their lifestyle in order to help protect the environment.

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HT Correspondent
Hindustan Times



PM-Narendra-Modi-speaks-at-the-inauguration-of-a-two-day-conference-of-state-environment-and-forest-ministers-ANI-Photo

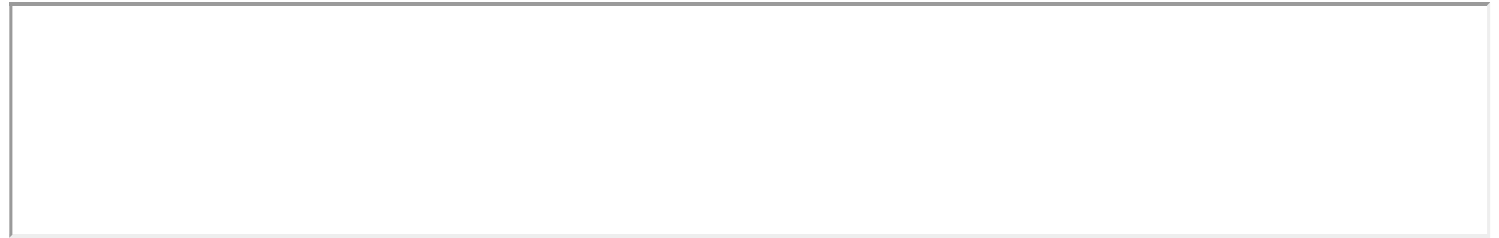
Launching the first national air quality index in New Delhi on Monday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said India's contribution to the pollution level in the world was one of the lowest and urged the countrymen to change their lifestyle in order to help protect the environment.

Speaking at the inauguration of a two-day conference of state environment and forest ministers, PM Modi expressed hope that the conference will prove to be a platform to hold detailed discussions which might be formulated in policies in future.

"We are trying to think of ways of reducing carbon emissions, but we are not thinking of changing our lifestyle. Unless we bring a change in our lifestyle, we will not be able to save the environment," said Modi.

Watch:

PM Modi on how India spoilt its case on environment globally



The PM's comments came a day after a forecast by System of Air Quality and Weather Forecasting and Research (SAFAR), a body under the ministry of earth science, predicted that air quality in the Capital will sharply deteriorate next week because of a dust storm due to hit the city and Mumbai on Monday.

A World Health Organization (WHO) study of 1,600 cities released in May found New Delhi had the world's dirtiest air with an annual average of 153 micrograms of small particulates, known as PM2.5, per cubic metre.

Thirteen of the dirtiest 20 cities worldwide were in India, the WHO said. India rejected the report.





627,000 Indians are among millions of people dying every year due to pollution, according to the World Health Organization



A WHO study of 1,600 cities released in 2014 showed Delhi had the world's highest annual average concentration of small airborne particles known as PM2.5 - higher even than the Chinese capital Beijing.



These extremely fine particles of less than 2.5 micrometres in diameter are linked with increased rates of chronic bronchitis, lung cancer and heart disease as they penetrate deep into the lungs and can pass into the bloodstream.



India disputed the WHO's assertion, but has conceded that air pollution in Delhi is comparable with that of Beijing.

THE NEW INDEX



Will cover 10 cities - Delhi, Agra, Kanpur, Lucknow, Varanasi, Faridabad, Ahmedabad, Chennai, Bangalore and Hyderabad - each of which would have monitoring stations with Air Quality Index display boards.



The aim is to eventually cover 66 cities.

Also read: Delhi govt takes stock of air quality, seeks report on vehicle ban

(<https://www.hindustantimes.com/newdelhi/govt-takes-stock-of-air-quality-seeks-report-on-vehicle-ban/article1-1334025.aspx>)

Speaking at the event, Modi claimed that India's contribution to the pollution level in the world is one of the lowest and urged Indians to change the world's attitude that the country doesn't care about environment.

"We have been brought up in a nation where environment protection is connected with human sentiments and nature is considered next to god," said Modi.

He said Indians must be sensitive towards the nature and environment so that the world has a lesser chance of raising questions about India's contribution in tackling global warming.

"Until we actually bring a change in our lifestyles, all the other efforts will go in vain."

The PM said recycling and reusing have long been practised in India and have not been borrowed from outside.

"We must think of traditional methods to tackle environmental issues. There can be green solutions in our age-old traditions."

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Attacking the opposition over its stance on the controversial land acquisition bill, the PM said that there have been efforts to mislead people on tribal and forest land.

"There is not a word about tribals and forest dwellers in the land bill. Such campaign must end," said Modi.

Without naming the Congress, Modi hit out saying, "I think misleading the society is a small matter to you and it is a part of your political ideals but it harms the nation."

"This practice of misleading people of nation must end. There can be debate based on facts and there can be difference of opinion."

"Some people think development and environment are opposite. This thought is wrong. Both environment protection and development can go hand in hand."

The PM said that India was moving in the direction of solar and wind energy but there is a need to stress upon solid waste management as well.

Also read:Now, reverse harmful effects of air pollution with exercise

(<https://www.hindustantimes.com/wellness/now-reverse-harmful-effects-of-air-pollution-with-exercise/article1-1332397.aspx>)

"Urban bodies need to focus on solid waste management with programmes to generate wealth from waste. To create wealth out of waste is a big venture these days, we need to focus on waste management," he said.

Modi said India wants to protect the environment by using nuclear energy but there are countries which have denied it access to it.

"But the people who lecture us on environment don't give us nuclear fuel. These are double standards, said Modi.

Talking about his campaign to clean the Ganges, Modi said issue of Clean Ganga is as much about those living on the banks of the Ganga in the various states.

"If we take a pledge that towns situated on banks of Ganga will not pollute the river, you yourself will witness the change."

The new index, launched as part of Modi's 'Clean India Mission', will provide one consolidated number after tracking eight pollutants and will use colour coding to describe associated health impacts.

Currently, India's air quality status is reported through "voluminous data", the government said. This makes it difficult for people to understand particle names such as PM2.5 or PM10.

Air pollution killed about seven million people in 2012, making it the world's single biggest environmental health risk, the WHO, a United Nations agency, said in March.

(With PTI and Reuters inputs)

Also read: Air pollution: Time to take corrective action, impose congestion tax

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