

An illustration of an industrial factory complex with several tall smokestacks emitting plumes of smoke. In the foreground, there are stylized buildings and clouds. The scene is rendered in a dark, muted color palette.

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EDITORIAL

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The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has shocked the world. We express our solidarity and gratitude to everyone on the frontlines. Our hearts and minds go out to the millions of countrymen in the unorganised sector, facing extreme hardships amidst the lockdown.

Before the outbreak, the quarter saw the climate debate move forward, beginning with the launch of our 4th Airpocalypse report. In response, Jharkhand Pollution Control Board (JPCB) and Bharat Coking Coal Limited (BCCL) allocated 300 crores to Jharia, India's most polluted city. Another report estimated that India will lose around 5.4% of its annual GDP to air pollution.

I'm glad to announce that the Indian Medical Association and its chapters (Bihar, Tamil Nadu, Madhya Pradesh and Telangana) endorsed our demand to include all polluted cities under the National Clean Air Program (NCAP). Our team also organised several activities to raise awareness and demand take action from the government.

On the Sustainable Agriculture front, the Bihar Living Soils (BLS) team and Jeevit Mati Kisan Samiti, Kedia convinced the Bihar Government to convert 21,000 acres to organic farmland in 2020. Also, the BLS team together with the students, school and district authorities, began developing organic kitchen gardens and the project is now spreading across Bihar.

As this quarter ends, I am delighted to hand over the baton to Binu Jacob, who has taken charge as Executive Director of Greenpeace India from April 1st, 2020.

Last but not least, we are committed to flatten the pandemic curve to our best ability. We resolve to build a resilient community that can overcome such adversities.

WHO'S RESPONSIBLE FOR YOUR AIR?

Clean air is vital for a healthy life. Home to **21 of the world's 30 most polluted cities**, air pollution a national problem. The first quarter of 2020 saw our Clean Air Nation campaign focus on building pressure on the government to include every polluted city under the National Clean Air Programme (NCAP).

With the release of our 4th annual **Airpocalypse** report, came several shocking revelations. After studying the data of 699 air quality monitoring stations in 2018, we found that 231 cities have air quality levels over the World Health Organisation's prescribed PM10 safe limits (20µg/m³) but only 102 are included under NCAP. Jharia - the coal capital - claimed the title of India's most polluted city. Delhi, despite taking measures against pollution, reported extremely hazardous levels owing to vehicular emissions, construction dust and smoke-spewing power plants. Phasing out fossil fuels is non-negotiable as they are a key source of PM10.

We conducted several awareness initiatives across Delhi and Chennai. From lung-testing health camps that reported an alarming number of young individuals with either a 'Mild' or 'Severe' obstruction in their lungs, to a flash-mob of Greenpeace volunteers that followed a family facing toxic air pollution on a drive and, an awe-inspiring sand-art exhibit showcased citizens affected by industrial pollution. Each activity was stamped with a clear message to our government: 'Clean Air Now'.

The Indian Medical Association (IMA), wrote a **letter** to the Ministry of Environment, Forests & Climate Change (MoEF&CC) **endorsing our demand** to include all polluted cities under NCAP and to increase India's air quality monitoring stations.

In the 2020-21 Union Budget, the Finance Minister allocated **Rs 4400 crores** to the states working towards cleaner air. Out of this, only Rs 460 crore is for the 'control of pollution' under NCAP. We must scrutinise the utilisation of funds, as there's currently no clarity on how this. Under NCAP, non-attainment cities must reduce air pollution levels 20-30% by 2024, from 2017 levels. These cities have no clear reduction target for 2024 and interim targets, diesel and coal caps, and sectoral emission reduction targets are also missing.

The COVID-19 crisis has seen global air pollution levels drastically decline, but this is a temporary reduction, not a win. In fact, it's a clear indicator that destructive human activities are directly responsible for crippling public health. Exposure to air pollution can cause respiratory infections, reduced lung function, heart disease, stroke and lung cancer. This is a public health emergency that needs aggressive and immediate action.

231 CITIES ARE HEAVILY POLLUTED IN INDIA.

BUT ONLY 102 CITIES HAVE PLANS TO CLEAN UP THEIR ACT



A HARVEST OF VICTORIES

Bihar's organic farming community reaped a harvest of victories in the first quarter of 2020, as the state government made several beneficial announcements along with its annual budget release.

In February, the Government of Bihar (GoB) organised four consultations between farmer collectives and top state government officials, that focused on how to improve agriculture in Bihar. Rajkumar Yadav, Secretary of Kedia farmer collective, Jeevit Mati Kisan Samiti (JMKS), presented several recommendations which were appreciated by top agriculture decision-makers. These included:

- Forming an Organic Farming Mission to promote, implement and monitor organic farming in Bihar.
- Distinguish farmers based on acreage, with higher subsidies for small and marginal farmers.
- Develop organic farming by establishing education and research facilities.
- Incentivise ecological farmers monthly for their contribution to the environment.

- Minimum Support Prices (MSPs) of organic produce should be 30% higher than conventional produce.
- Provide local breed cattle to organic farmers for top-quality biomass.



In an encouraging move, the GoB will promote organic farming in Bihar's 38 districts to make agriculture self-sufficient. Also, '**Organic Corridors**' will be developed along in 13 districts along the Ganga and an impressive **21,000 acres** has been designated as organic farmland this year.



Deepening the Roots of Change

For change to be lasting, it must happen at the ground level. Thus, the BLS team began developing organic kitchen gardens in Jamui district's government schools.



The project's initial success in Tari Dabil Village, where the first Living Soils Organic Kitchen Garden was developed, encouraged the district Mid Day Meal Programme Officer to request the development of 20 model organic kitchen gardens. The Bihar CM has instructed all districts in the state to develop organic kitchen gardens, thanks to the project's resounding success!



CLIMATE IN THE TIME OF CORONAVIRUS

The COVID-19 or Coronavirus pandemic has left the world shaken and struggling in its clutches. While it is not a result of climate change, it has certainly had an immediate, though temporary, impact on the climate.

As destructive polluting industries came to a standstill in the wake of the COVID-19 crisis, carbon dioxide **emissions declined** drastically across the world. Clear blue skies, sparkling freshwater in our rivers and thriving wildlife are just a few of the changes we've seen in a short span of time. Unfortunately, these positives are not a win, as a return to business as usual at the end of the COVID-19 outbreak will take us right back to square one of the climate crisis.

Society as a whole must transition to a sustainable lifestyle through systematic and behavioural changes if we are to permanently tackle the climate crisis. One crisis cannot be solved at the cost of another. Phasing out fossil fuels is the need of the hour because without it, we will soon be facing a far worse crisis due to extreme impacts of climate change.

We stand in solidarity with all those working tirelessly on the frontlines of the COVID-19 crisis. Greenpeace India's donors, supporters, volunteers and staff will support the fight against Coronavirus to the very best of our abilities. Together with allied organisations, we are working to ensure that the vulnerable farmer, migrant and daily-wager communities are supported during this time of crisis. Through community cooperation, we can slow the spread of this virus and overcome it together.

**together
we are
stronger**



GLOBAL & NATIONAL NEWS

A GLOBAL CRY TO #CleanAirNow



Air pollution from burning fossil fuels namely coal, gas and oil is responsible for the deaths of approximately 4.5 million people globally each year. In addition to this irreparable damage, it also takes a massive toll on the global GDP, **3.3%** or **US\$2.9 trillion** in economic losses to be exact. The findings were revealed in a shocking report called **'Toxic Air: The Price of Fossil Fuels'**, released by Greenpeace Southeast Asia and the Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air (CREA).

The report also showcased how exposure to PM2.5 pollution from fossil fuels in low-income countries leads to the deaths of almost 40,000 children under the age of five, yearly. NO2 released from the combustion of fossil fuels in factories, vehicles, and power plants, is linked to around 4 million new cases of asthma in children each year. To date, an estimated 16 million children live with asthma caused by NO2 pollution globally.

Individuals across the world came together on the streets to campaign against air pollution and voice their one common demand; #CleanAirNow! From India to Indonesia, Turkey, South Africa, Moscow, Thailand and Romania, citizens called for action primarily in the areas of phasing-out coal and switching to renewable energy systems like solar power.

WILDFIRES vs CLIMATE CHANGE

Climate change is fuelling horrific extreme weather events like droughts, heatwaves and the Australian bushfires that recently destroyed an area the size of Scotland. Over five months, the fires claimed at least **29 human lives**, over **a billion** animals and precious habitats. While climate change does not spark wildfires, it certainly spurs them on. Destructive activities like deforestation for logging and cattle rearing, mining and the burning of fossil fuels, severely aggravate climate change. These, in turn, increase the frequency of the devastating events marking the ongoing climate emergency.

RALLYING VOTES FOR CLEAN AIR

Before the Delhi Legislative Assembly of February 2020, Greenpeace India volunteers participated in the **'Dilli Dhadakne Do'** campaign, organised by our allies. The movement aimed to raise awareness about the urgent need to tackle Delhi's air pollution. The Clean Air Collective launched an election manifesto with clear actions to be taken against air



pollution, at an event which was attended by spokespersons from all contesting political parties. Together the collective took to the streets to raise awareness and gather 'votes for clean air'. They encouraged people to show their support for the manifesto and vote in favour of clean air.

Impact Box

CPCB: Show-Cause or Face Penalties and Closure

This February, the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) pulled up 14 thermal power plants (TPPs) and issued show-cause notices for not complying with a December 31, 2019 deadline to limit sulphur dioxide (SO₂) emissions. The CPCB asked why the plants should not face closure and environmental penalties for not complying with the directions, despite an extended deadline. The advised norms can help reduce PM (35%), NO_x (70%), and SO₂ emissions (85%) by 2026-27 compared to the levels if no pollution control action is taken.

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