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Ministry of Finance

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Posted On: 29 JAN 2018 12:55PM by PIB Delhi

The Union Minister for Finance and Corporate Affairs, Shri Arun Jaitley tabled the Economic Survey 2017-18 in Parliament today.

The Survey expresses concern over air pollution in Delhi with the onset of winter due to various factor. It ascribes four main reasons for Delhi's worsening air quality – crop residue, biomass burning, vehicular emissions and redistributed road dust, industries, power plants and winter temperature inversion, humidity and absence of wind. It suggests that the solution is to address each source problem systematically, coordination between agencies and Central and State Governments and sustained civic engagement.

It says that among the steps being implemented at present are short-term emergency plan and medium and long-range actions. The short-term emergency plan is to be implemented when 24-hourly PM 2.5 exceeds 300-400µg/m³, including imposing heavy penalties on burning of agricultural waste, using satellite-based tools to detect fires, payment of incentives to farmers. The medium and long-range actions include implementing congestion pricing for vehicles, improving public transport system and expanding modernized bus fleets, phasing out old vehicles and accelerating BS-VI.

The Survey also notes the use of technology to convert agricultural waste into usable fodder or bio-fuels and provide incentives to shift to non-paddy crops and as a point in case quotes the straw management system for rice and wheat farming, as an example. It also mentions the Happy Seeder machine that sows seeds without removing paddy straw and suggests that such a technological solution must be combined with economics, by providing incentives to Centre and states and should be implemented through agricultural cooperatives and local bodies.

It mentions the adverse impact of indoor pollution on women and children, adding that access to modern energy sources can reduce the amount of time spent on collective of firewood, as well as lead to a positive impact on the education and employment of girls.

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