

‘BURNING OF FOSSIL FUELS KILLED OVER 3 LAKH INDIANS IN 2020’

Relevant for: Environment | Topic: Environmental Degradation - GHGs, Ozone Depletion and Climate Change

An estimated over 3,30,000 people died in India due to exposure to particulate matter from fossil fuel combustion in 2020, says the 2022 report of *The Lancet countdown on health and climate change: health at the mercy of fossil fuels*, released on Tuesday. The report adds that from 2000-2004 to 2017-2021, heat-related deaths increased by 55% in India.

The new findings presented in the seventh annual global report of the *Lancet Countdown on Health and Climate Change* also pointed to the fact that governments and companies continue to follow strategies that increasingly threaten the health and survival of people, and future generations.

Among other findings in the report, 45% of urban centres in India are classified as moderately green or above. Giving an indication of the economic loss, the report states that in 2021, Indians lost 16,720 crore potential labour hours due to heat exposure with income losses equivalent to about 5.4% of the national GDP.

Stating that climate change is amplifying the health impacts of multiple crises, the report further found that from 2012 to 2021, infants aged under one experienced a higher number of heatwave days.

Additionally, it added that the duration of the growth season for maize has decreased by 2%, compared with a 1981-2010 baseline, while rice and winter wheat have each decreased by 1%.

Warning that governments are not focusing on the issue as much as required, it said that in 2019, India had a net negative carbon price, indicating that the government was effectively subsidising fossil fuels.

“India allocated a net 34 billion USD [around Rs. 2,80,000 crore] to this in 2019 alone, equivalent to 37.5% of the country’s national health spending that year. Biomass accounted for 61% of household energy in 2019, while fossil fuels accounted for another 20%. With this high reliance on these fuels, average household concentrations of particulate matter exceeded the WHO recommendation by 27-fold nationally and 35-fold in rural homes,” the report said.

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