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# THIRD CONCEPT

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- ❖ **US, Afghanistan & India**
- ❖ **Gandhian Concept of Swaraj**
- ❖ **Teacher Education**
- ❖ **Higher Education in India**
- ❖ **Witch-Hunting in Assam**
- ❖ **Women's Political Empowerment**



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**Third Concept** aims at providing a platform where a meaningful exchange of ideas can take place among the people of the Third World. The attempt will be to communicate, debate and disseminate information, ideas and alternatives for the resolution of the common problems facing humankind. We welcome contributions from academics, journalists and even from those who may never have published anything before. The only requirement is a concern for and desire to understand and take the issue of our time. Contributions may be descriptive, analytical or theoretical. They may be in the form of original articles, reactions to previous contributions, or even a comment on a prevailing situation. All contributions, neatly typed in double space, may be addressed to:

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# Menace of Air Pollution

**A**ir pollution has been described by WHO as the world's biggest environmental risk, which is killing nearly one million people annually in the South East Asian Region with India alone accounting for over 75 per cent of the casualties caused by cardiovascular diseases and lung cancer. Findings from a recent WHO study that adverse effects of air pollution may linger on in Delhi for generations to come have unsettled pollution experts and doctors.

The country's national capital also happens to be the 11th most polluted city in the world (based on data collected between 2008-13), according to the latest rankings released by WHO, while four other Indian cities — Gwalior (2), Allahabad (3), Patna (6) and Raipur (7) — figure in the top seven. Nevertheless, in its latest periodic findings on air pollution released in mid-October this year, the U.S. embassy in India has said the air quality index (AQI) fared the worst at its embassy compound in Kolkata at 175, followed closely by Delhi at 173. The US embassy compound in Mumbai was next at 166, followed by Hyderabad at 157 and Chennai at 155. All these fall in the “unhealthy” category which refers to AQI from 151 to 200.

Broadly speaking, AQI is a number used by government agencies to communicate to the public how polluted the air currently is or how polluted it is forecast to become. An “unhealthy” AQI indicates increased chances of heart or lung disease and premature death of people with cardiopulmonary issues and the elderly, along with increased respiratory problems in general population. The “cautionary” statement indicates that “people with heart or lung disease, older adults and children should avoid prolonged or heavy exertion”. The findings show that the particulate matter in the air was highest at the US embassy compound in Kolkata at 102 followed by Delhi at 97.3. Particulate matter (or PM2.5) is the sum of all solid and liquid particles suspended in air, many of which are hazardous. The US embassy website, however, has said “data from a single monitoring station cannot be applied to an entire city. “Therefore, air quality data collected at the US Embassy and Consulates may differ from other monitors located in the same cities.”

The US embassy website further reveals: “The air quality data collected by the US Mission in India is translated into actionable information by the US Environmental Protection Agency's NowCast algorithm. This algorithm converts raw PM2.5 readings into an air quality index value that can help inform health-related decisions. The index is calculated based on data over a 3-12 hour period depending on the variability of particulate concentration.” Accordingly, many foreign embassies in India have installed air purifiers at their compounds in New Delhi, so have their staff, to protect against air pollution-related health problems. About 1.6 million cases of stroke are reported every year in India and according to health experts at least one third of these cases are caused by mere modifiable lifestyle factors and deteriorating air quality. Health experts also opine that pollution in the air thickens the blood and hardens arteries, known as atherosclerosis. Once this process starts, the plaque is built up in the arteries, narrowing them down and causing strokes and this also raises the blood pressure, boosting the risk of clot formation in the brain.

Ill-effects of air pollution on health, *inter alia*, include: weakening of the lungs, irritation of eyes, nose, throat and mouth; probability of asthma attack, causing of respiratory symptoms such as coughing and wheezing, increase in the chances of respiratory diseases such as bronchitis, headaches, dizziness, disruption of endocrine, reproductive and immune systems, and possible creation of neuro-behavioral disorders and cardiovascular problems. Many suggestions have been mooted to combat Delhi's runaway pollution problem, ranging from incentivizing solar to asking people to just to avoid crowded places. The latest solution is an app called ‘*Hawa Badlo*,’ which aims to tackle Delhi's pollution on an even more individualized level by encouraging citizens to report sightings of pollution so that authorities can take action.

Combating the menace of air pollution is not the responsibility of the government alone, rather it calls for collective efforts of the citizenry and cooperation of the corporate sector in a synergy mode with added emphasis on green technology and infrastructure.

— BK