



DAILY NEWS BULLETIN

LEADING HEALTH, POPULATION AND FAMILY WELFARE STORIES OF THE DAY

Friday

20190308

Women's safety

Women's safety still a distant dream (The Tribune: 20190308)

<https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/comment/women-s-safety-still-a-distant-dream/739609.html>

WE have miserably failed to provide the most basic right to women and girls — the right to live in a safe environment. Gangrapes are reported day in, day out. Physical mobility is the primary and first capability that enables an individual to avail opportunities, enhancing his/her chances of moving ahead in life. Studies have confirmed that in comparison to boys, our girls have extremely low access to these opportunities, be it in education, technology, employment or life skills.

Even if all the perpetrators of crimes against women are caught and imprisoned, how does that relieve the victim, who has suffered not merely physical and sexual violence, but much more importantly, the grave injuries on her psyche, mind and soul, which she has to learn to live with? I have come across a number of girls who after being sexually violated by their close relatives or strangers failed to lead a 'normal' life, both sexual and social. Such is the damage caused by these heinous acts that it is often irreparable, leaving the victim mentally paralysed for life. Not only the poor victim, but also her parents and siblings get labelled and stigmatised by the community at large for generations to come.

The prevalence of such incidents affirms that the deterrents against rape are not sufficiently frightening for those who, at the very sight of a girl, feel too tempted to resist lust and decide to 'enjoy' on the spur of the moment, along with friends, amidst the shrieks of the girl, whose pleadings for mercy go unheard. This story is repeated within homes as well as outside, while not every story is reported in the media or to the police, for obvious reasons. The moment a girl is sexually violated, the process of 'shaming' her and her family begins, making it often unbearable for them, too intimidating to fight the case. Ironically, the victims or their relatives commit suicide, while it is the rapists who should be killing themselves. Isn't it a mockery of the system? It indicates that masculinity continues to draw its meaning from holding power over the female body, either within the home or outside.

I find a parallel between these rapes and the terrorist killings of innocent people and our brave soldiers, mostly young and lone bread-winners, in which the most naked forms of heartlessness, brutality and violence are exhibited. We have had too many rounds of seminars and lectures on gender equality and empowerment, without any corresponding signs of improvement. The Criminal Amendment Act of 2013 has failed to make people realise that 'staring' and 'stalking' a girl amount to threatening her, which is a criminal offence. A rape trial happens to be more traumatic for the victim and her family than for the offender and his kin. How long shall we go on crying ourselves hoarse over the mindset and cultural norms? How can a country which makes claims of treating women as goddesses and deities afford to have such a life-threatening environment for its women? Stringent laws against gangrape seem to have had little effect; many of these incidents, in all probability, go unreported. We must admit that our legal deterrents have failed to scare away the rapists.

Immediately after such an incident, the public discourse often begins, frequently using the 'blame the victim' approach, finding fault with the girl — why she had gone out with a boy; why was she out in the dark; why was she wearing a short dress, and so on. This is sheer hypocrisy of a community that swears by human rights of prisoners and even murderers in the name of reformation. Then how can the same community forget about the human rights of women, and how can one justify violation of their bodies and souls, on any grounds whatsoever?

During extensive fieldwork conducted by our team for a UGC project on gender violence in rural Punjab and Haryana, we noticed a perpetual fear among parents of young daughters, who were pursuing higher studies. It is a nightmare for these girls to commute to a school outside the village because of the unruly and obscene behaviour of the boys.

Society has to show zero tolerance to such acts, the genesis of which lies in the small mundane incidents of eve-teasing and sexually coloured gestures owing to gender insensitivity, with the cumulative effect of emboldening prospective rapists to commit subsequent acts. These violators need to be hanged, without any loss of time, so that justice is shown to be done. There has been enough of the 'sensitisation' lectures. Let us now focus on boys and men, who continue to live with a feudal mindset, with the rotten ideas of masculinity and femininity, which have become obsolete. A society that tolerates persistent sexual violation of its daughters can certainly not be called developed, nor can it claim to be a great society with a rich cultural heritage. We have terribly failed in providing a safe environment to our girls and women, and that is a reality which negates all the tall claims of gender equality in education, employment and politics. Why would parents have daughters when they know they can be sexually assaulted or raped anytime, anywhere? Why would parents send their daughters to distantly located schools and colleges when they know how vulnerable they continue to be? These are some of the difficult questions which need to be answered — the sooner the better, since these involve half of our population.

Good breakfast

Good breakfast, less TV exposure may boost your heart (The Tribune: 20190308)

<https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/health/good-breakfast-less-tv-exposure-may-boost-your-heart/739456.html>

Want a healthy heart? Turning off the TV, being active and eating an energy-rich breakfast of milk, cheese and cereals everyday could be the key, suggest researchers in a new study.

The findings of the study showed that people who watched more than 21 hours of TV per week were 68 per cent more likely to have high blood pressure and 50 per cent more likely to have diabetes.

Compared to those watching less than seven hours of TV per week, they were also twice as likely to have plaque buildup in the arteries, which is associated with an increased risk of stroke.

"Our results emphasise the importance of avoiding prolonged periods of sedentary behaviour," said lead researcher Sotirios Tsalamandris, cardiologist at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens in Greece.

"These findings suggest a clear message to hit the 'off' button on your TV and abandon your sofa. Even activities of low energy expenditure, such as socialising with friends or housekeeping activities, may have a substantial benefit to your health compared to time spent sitting and watching TV." Instead of being sedentary, performing recreational activities, weight lifting, stretching bands or treadmill exercise while watching TV may also be a healthy alternative, Tsalamandris suggested.

Moreover, the researchers found that those who ate a high-energy breakfast tended to have significantly healthier arteries than those who ate little or no breakfast.

Eating high-energy breakfast also reduced arterial stiffness with only 8.7 per cent participants experiencing the condition, as compared to 15 per cent of those skipping breakfast and 9.5 per cent of those consuming a low-energy breakfast.

Similarly, only 18 per cent consuming a high-energy breakfast showed high plaque levels in the carotid arteries, as compared to 28 per cent of people skipping breakfast and 26 per cent of those consuming a low-energy breakfast.

The study, involving 2,000 people, will be presented at the American College of Cardiology's 68th Annual Scientific Session in New Orleans, US. — IA

Prolonged hormone therapy

Prolonged hormone therapy linked to Alzheimer's risk: Study (The Tribune: 20190308)

<https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/health/prolonged-hormone-therapy-linked-to-alzheimer-s-risk-study/739454.html>

Long-term use of oral hormone therapy for relieving menopausal symptoms such as hot flashes and night sweats, could be associated with the risk of Alzheimer's disease, finds a new study.

Overall, the use of oral hormone therapy was associated with a nine to 17 per cent increased risk of Alzheimer's disease, whereas use of vaginal hormone therapy—transdermal treatments, such as patches, gels and creams—showed no such risk, said the study published by The BMJ.

This indicated nine to 18 additional cases of Alzheimer's disease per year will be detected in 10,000 women between 70 to 80 years of age, especially in those who had used hormone therapy for over 10 years.

Although the absolute risk is small, women should be informed of the potential risk associated with prolonged use, stressed Tomi S Mikkola, Associate Professor at the University of Helsinki in Finland.

Moreover, among women who were younger than 60 when they started on hormone therapy, the increased risk was associated with exposure for over 10 years.

"Long term use of systemic hormone therapy might be accompanied with an overall increased risk for Alzheimer's disease, which is not related to the type of progestogen or the age at initiation," the researchers said.

"By contrast, use of vaginal estradiol shows no such risk," they added.

However, the evidence does not suggest that younger women should be concerned about using hormone therapy in the short term.

For the study, the researchers included 84,739 postmenopausal women diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease (cases) with the same number of postmenopausal women without a diagnosis (controls) to compare use of hormone therapy.

This is an observational study, and as such cannot establish cause, the researchers said. — IANS

Oral health

Poor cognition raises bad oral health in elderly: Study (The Tribune: 20190308)

<https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/health/poor-cognition-raises-bad-oral-health-in-elderly-study/738983.html>

Older adults with poor cognitive function are found to have impaired oral health and higher risk of tooth loss later, says a study.

According to the study, there was a clear association between cognitive function and tooth loss when cognitive function score was categorised into quintiles.

The study, published in the Community Dentistry & Oral Epidemiology, showed people in the lowest quintile reflecting poorer cognitive function had 39 per cent higher odds of tooth loss than those in the highest quintile.

"Our study suggested a close link between cognitive function and oral health in older adults," said Jianhua Wu, Researcher at the University of Leeds in Britain.

"The findings indicate that an improvement in cognitive function could potentially improve oral health and reduce the risk of tooth loss in the ageing population," said Wu.

The study included 4,416 adults aged 50 years and above.

According to previous studies, older adults with just 10-19 teeth are at a higher risk of malnutrition in addition to higher rates of weight loss and lower appetite. They are also at increased risk for dementia and/or depression. IANS

Diabetes

New treatment offers hope for diabetes, MS patients (The Tribune: 20190308)

<https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/health/new-treatment-offers-hope-for-diabetes-ms-patients/738459.html>

Scientists say they have developed a novel and safe treatment for autoimmune diseases such as type-1 diabetes and multiple sclerosis (MS) that arise when the body's immune cells attack itself.

Current treatments eliminate these malfunctioning immune cells, but also destroy normal, protective immune cells, leaving patients susceptible to immune deficiency and opportunistic infections.

Now, researchers at the University of Utah in the US have developed an approach that targets the malfunctioning immune cells while leaving normal immune cells in place.

"We are really taking treatment for autoimmune disease in a new direction," said Mingnan Chen, an assistant professor at the University of Utah.

"This is the first time anyone has looked at the programmed cell death protein (PD-1) cells as a target to develop therapeutics for autoimmune disease," Chen said in a statement.

The study, published in the journal *Nature Biomedical Engineering*, tested the treatment in a mouse model that mimics Type 1 diabetes.

The researchers found the treatment delayed the onset of diabetes in mice to 29 weeks old compared to 19 weeks old for control-treated mice.

The treatment was also applied to a mouse multiple sclerosis model (experimental autoimmune encephalomyelitis).

Not only did the treatment halt the progression of paralysis in the six mice in this model, these mice regained the ability to walk.

The team monitored the mice for 25 days after treatment and found the paralysis did not return.

In a normal functioning immune system, the PD-1-expressing cells, including immune cells (B and T lymphocytes), contain a mechanism that acts like a checkpoint that prevents the cycle from attacking itself.

In people with autoimmune disease, these cells, somehow, escape the checkpoint and the immune system remains in a state of alert, attacking body cells.

"We wanted to target PD-1-expressing cells. Using this method, we may avoid long-term immune deficiency caused by common treatments for autoimmune disease," said Peng Zhao, a former graduate student in Chen's lab.

The researchers engineered a protein molecule to deplete the malfunctioning PD-1-expressing cells from the body.

The engineered molecule consists of three parts: an anti-PD-1 antibody fragment (PD-1), a toxin (*Pseudomonas* exotoxin) and a binder (albumin-binding domain).

The antibody fragment acts like a key that attaches and gaining access into the PD-1-expressing cells. The protein toxin kills the cell.

The binder allows the engineered molecule to circulate in the body for a longer time.

Chen and his team developed a treatment that knocks down unhealthy immune cells to turn off the overactive immune response.

They challenged the immune system of the mice in the study to determine whether the treatment had a negative effect on the healthy immune system.

The researchers found the mice in each model mounted a normal immune response.

The experimental therapeutics engineered by the researchers thus far is specific to mice. They are currently developing therapeutics applicable to humans.

"To make similar therapeutics for people, we would need to find the anti-human PD-1 antibody, like the anti-mouse PD-1 antibody," Chen said.

"If we can generate the human version of therapeutics, I think we could make a huge impact in treating autoimmune disease," he said. PTI

AIDS virus

Second man seems to be free of AIDS virus after transplant'(The Tribune: 20190308)

<https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/health/-second-man-seems-to-be-free-of-aids-virus-after-transplant/738410.html>

A second person is in sustained remission from HIV-1, the virus that causes AIDS, after ceasing treatment and is likely cured, researchers were set to announce at a medical conference on Tuesday.

Ten years after the first confirmed case of an HIV-infected person being rid of the deadly disease, a man known only as the "London patient" has shown no sign of the virus for nearly 19 months, they reported in the journal Nature.

Both patients had received bone marrow transplants to treat blood cancers, receiving stem cells from donors with a rare genetic mutation that prevents HIV from taking hold.

"By achieving remission in a second patient using a similar approach, we have shown that the Berlin patient was not an anomaly," said lead author Ravindra Gupta, a professor at the University of Cambridge, referring to the first known functional cure.

Millions of people infected with HIV around the world keep the disease in check with so-called antiretroviral therapy (ARV), but the treatment does not rid patients of the virus.

"At the moment, the only way to treat HIV is with medications that suppress the virus, which people need to take for their entire lives," said Gupta.

"This poses a particular challenge in developing countries," where millions are still not receiving adequate treatment, he added.

Close to 37 million people are living with HIV worldwide, but only 59 percent are receiving ARV.

Nearly one million people die every year from HIV-related causes.

A new drug-resistant form of HIV is also a growing concern.

Gupta and his team emphasised that bone marrow transplant -- a dangerous and painful procedure -- is not a viable option for HIV treatment.

But a second case of remission and likely cure following such a transplant will help scientists narrow the range of treatment strategies, he and others said.

Both the London and Berlin patients received stem cell transplants from donors carrying a genetic mutation that prevents expression of an HIV receptor, known as CCR5.

"Finding a way to eliminate the virus entirely is an urgent global priority, but is particularly difficult because the virus integrates into the white blood cells of its host," Gupta explained.

The study describes an anonymous male patient in Britain who was diagnosed with HIV infection in 2003 and has been on antiretroviral therapy since 2012.

Later that year, he was diagnosed with advanced Hodgkin's Lymphoma, a deadly cancer.

He underwent a so-called haematopoietic stem cell transplant in 2016 from a donor with two copies of a CCR5 gene variant, a combination carried by about one percent of the world population.

CCR5 is the most commonly used receptor by HIV-1. People who have two mutated copies of CCR5 are resistant to most HIV-1 virus strains, frustrating the virus' attempts to enter host cells.

As with cancer, chemotherapy can be effective against HIV as it kills cells that are dividing.

But replacing immune cells with those that do not have the CCR5 receptor appears to be key in preventing HIV from rebounding after the treatment.

After the bone marrow transplant, the London patient remained on ARV for 16 months, at which point ARV treatment was stopped.

Regular testing has confirmed that the patient's viral load remained undetectable since then.

The Berlin patient -- treated for leukaemia -- was given two transplants, and underwent total body irradiation, while the British patient received just one transplant and less intensive chemotherapy.

The research team is presenting the findings at the annual Conference on Retroviruses and Opportunistic Infections (CROI) in Seattle, Washington.

"The second case strengthens the idea that a cure is feasible," Sharon R Lewin, director of the Peter Doherty Institute for Infection and Immunity and the University of Melbourne, told AFP.

"A bone-marrow transplantation as a cure is not viable. But we can try to tease out which part of the transplant might have made a difference here, and allowed this man to stop his anti-viral drugs." AFP

Skin infections

Floods linked to increased skin infections in humans (The Tribune: 20190308)

<https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/health/floods-linked-to-increased-skin-infections-in-humans/738005.html>

Poor cognition raises bad oral health in elderly: Study

Floods are associated with an increased risk of skin infections among humans, a skin expert has warned.

Skin and soft tissue infections can develop when injured skin is exposed to floodwaters containing sewage, chemicals and other pollutants, HealthDay reported.

In particular, natural disasters like tsunamis and hurricanes can cause major soil disruption that leads to the release of unusual infectious organisms.

"The health implications for people exposed to floodwaters are staggering and include a wide variety of dermatologic (skin) issues, such as wound infections, contact dermatitis and even electrical injuries from downed power lines," said Justin Bandino, Assistant Professor at the San Antonio Military Medical Centre in the US.

"In cases when malnourished patients have not had access to food and clean water, even a small, superficial cut that has been exposed to these infectious organisms can result in a potentially dangerous infection," he said.

Animals and insects also pose risks to flood victims. Bites from domesticated and non-domesticated animals increase as flooding forces them to compete with people for space in dry areas, said Bandino.

In addition, stagnant floodwaters provide breeding areas for mosquitoes, which can lead to outbreaks of mosquito-borne diseases like Zika or malaria.

One will need a basic first-aid kit that includes supplies for cleaning, covering and treating minor wounds, as well as insect repellent, Bandino suggested.

Further, keeping on hand a basic survival kit that includes non-perishable food and water supplies is essential to help reduce the chance of malnourishment and dehydration, which both increase the risk of infection.

"Tsunamis, hurricanes, floods and other emergency situations can aggravate existing dermatologic conditions, such as eczema or psoriasis. When possible, take any medications for current skin conditions with you during an evacuation, along with other basic first-aid supplies; this can greatly reduce the opportunity for a flare," said Bandino.

Also, visiting a board-certified dermatologist for skin-related problems is advisable, the expert added.

Women Empowerment

Making the world a meaningful place (The Indian Express: 20190308)

<https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/womens-day-2019-making-the-world-a-meaningful-place-girl-child-education-jobs-5616432/>

For girls and women to enjoy the fruits of good education and satisfying careers, government must reach out to their families, ensure they are on board while formulating state policies.

Written by Meeran Chadha Borwankar | Updated: March 8, 2019 3:55:22 am

The writer is DG, legal and technical, Maharashtra and principal researcher of the CPR study mentioned in the article.

If we want girls and women to achieve their full potential, we have to double our efforts to reach out to the families. Gram panchayats, police patils and beat police officers must coordinate with villagers so that girls can move around safely for their education and careers. (Illustration: CR Sasikumar)

I met a young girl recently. She is a nurse — the first from her village in Hoshiarpur district of Punjab to go for a professional degree. Having worked in a private hospital at Nawanshahr, where she was paid the paltry sum of less than Rs 10,000 a month, she applied for a vacancy in the Post Graduate Institute of Medical Education and Research (PGIMER) in Chandigarh and got selected. She is with PGIMER for about five years now and is earning above Rs 60,000 per month. Most of the girls from her village could not study beyond primary school as the middle level school was in the next village, about 3 km away. And a college was further away, in the town.

She was travelling from Chandigarh to Vijayawada in Andhra Pradesh to attend the wedding of a senior resident doctor. It was her first air travel and she admitted the same very confidently, with an excited smile. She was not at all hesitant or apologetic. Chirpily, she confided that she is currently appearing for the Punjab and Haryana State Public Service Commission exams, and would later appear for the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) exam too. She had already joined coaching classes for the same and negotiated good rates for herself, though she was finding it difficult to juggle between her nursing duties and coaching classes. She has to request the senior nurses and colleagues to “adjust” her shifts but is persisting in her endeavour nevertheless. The young girl has no pretence and is proud of her achievements. At the same time, she comes across as curious and adventurous, determined to go ever further.

This is the story that we need in India today and we need an abundance of such stories. Where girls not from privileged urban backgrounds, but from rural average households dare to dream and achieve. This needs an enabling environment: Schools in villages, colleges nearby, access to libraries, and, parents who are willing to send their daughters out to study, in case schools and colleges are not within the proximate area. Some time back I had visited “Women Help Line” in Lucknow and was told that a large number of distress calls were about harassment — in buses, on roads, in streets, practically everywhere. The police department that is running the helpline was encouraging girls to report such incidents, however, and had adopted various means to trace the errant boys: They are warned, initially, followed by criminal cases if they do not pay heed. This issue is rampant in most of India. No wonder parents have apprehensions about sending their daughters out to study, though enrolment and retention of girls in schools and colleges has improved considerably in the last decade. Providing safe travel and a secure atmosphere to girls for pursuing their education and career is the missing link that the community and government have to work on together. Or, families would continue to deny that very vital permission to their girls.

In the meanwhile, the Accredited Social Health Activist (ASHA) has been successful in bridging the gap between the rural community and the health system in India. They have reduced infant mortality, child malnutrition and provided pre-school education. A similar

bridge specifically for safe girls' education needs to be built. The gram panchayat, especially the village police patil, known by different names and titles across the country, should be made responsible for coordinating the safety of girls' movements. The beat officer of each police station and police outpost can supervise it — his uniform carries tremendous weight and can deter roadside romeos and molesters. Though the police don't always have enough resources, they seem, at least, willing to chip in.

Recently, during a gender sensitisation training programme of the Goa police, I visited the women's helpline, where the counselors received about 2,500 distress calls in the last six months. Most of them are about domestic violence, though some cases of harassment too are reported. It was a pleasant surprise to see that all the call takers are post graduates in counselling. Goa 181 is managed by GVK EMRI (Emergency Management and Research Institute), a not-for-profit professional organisation operating in the public-private partnership (PPP) mode. Such helplines definitely create an enabling environment and so do the gender sensitisation programmes being undertaken by each state police.

If we want girls and women to achieve their full potential, we have to double our efforts to reach out to the families. Efforts of the government alone, and even those of NGOs, will not be enough. Gram panchayats, police patils and beat police officers must coordinate with villagers so that girls can move around safely for their education and careers. Schools and libraries in rural areas, encouraging girls to cycle and move freely for their education and the sharing of success stories of educated young girls can be game-changers. Most states have already made girls' education free, but the "permission to travel" out of the village is most often denied by the parents. Girls from Bihar cycling to school had made headlines some years back. We need to replicate the same all over the country through wide publicity in print and electronic media.

Arunima Sinha: World's First Female Amputee to Climb Mount Everest

I met a young, freshly recruited (woman) police constable in the police lines of Pune city recently. I asked her what prompted her to join the police. She said it was her father, and then added proudly that two of her female cousins too had joined the police force thereafter. These fathers and families have to be on board with us if we want girls to enjoy the fruits of a good education and meaningful careers. Is it expecting too much, this Women's Day?

Making the world a meaningful place

Download the Indian Express apps for iPhone, iPad or Android

Mental health and behavioural

Mental health and behavioural (Hindustan Times: 20190308)

<http://paper.hindustantimes.com/epaper/viewer.aspx>

Body shaming common behaviour, women are mostly targets: Survey

Body shaming is a widespread behaviour in urban India and is directed more often at women than men, said 90% women surveyed to understand the attitudes and perceptions of women towards body image, as well as its psychological effect.

The survey conducted by the department of mental health and behavioural sciences, Fortis Healthcare, among 1,244 women aged between 15 to 45 years across eight Indian cities, including Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru.

Body shaming is a form of bullying in which an individual's physical appearance is subjected to negative remarks or criticism, says Dr Samir Parikh, director of the department, who led the survey. "It wrecks havoc on a person's self esteem as I see in my patients, who are not even aware of the cause of their problem. Without realising the reason they also seem to cut down on their social engagements because it affects them when people comment on their looks," he said.

Schools and workplaces are where mostly people tend to experience body shaming, and more often than not it is friends who tend to make negative comments on their weight, body shape and skin tone and hair quality among others.

"It's especially true for young people for whom appearance plays a major role in developing one's own self image. In a large number of depression and anxiety cases, negative body image is being seen as an underlying cause," says Dr Rajesh Sagar, professor, psychiatry department, All India Institute of Medical Sciences, Delhi.

The data showed 47.5% women reported having experienced body shaming at their school or workplace, and in 32.5% of the cases it was their close friend who made negative remarks.

Experts say that apart from encouraging women to believe in their own selves so that they are comfortable with their own body image, schools and parents should take responsibility to sensitise children about appropriate and inappropriate behaviour

"We need to become more sensitive as a society and there should be self-censorship by recognising how words can create an impact on others in our society. Else, this kind of behaviour can really affect the psychology of our coming generations," says Dr Parikh.

Air pollution

Breathing clean (The Hindu: 20190308)

<https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/breathing-clean/article26460219.ece>

Political will is integral to the tackling of India's hazardous air pollution

An assessment of the quality of air across countries and in cities has come as a fresh warning to India on the levels of deadly pollutants its citizens are breathing. The IQ AirVisual 2018 World Air Quality Report published in collaboration with Greenpeace underscores that Delhi remains an extremely hazardous city to live in. The national capital exposes people to air containing annual average fine particulate matter (PM2.5) of 113.5 micrograms per cubic metre, when it should be no more than 10 micrograms as per WHO guidelines. In fact,

Gurugram, which borders Delhi, fares even worse with a PM2.5 level of 135.8 micrograms, while 15 of the 20 cities worldwide ranked the worst on air pollution metrics are in India. Delhi's air quality has been making headlines for years now. Yet, measures to mitigate emissions have not moved into crisis mode: the launch this year of the National Clean Air Programme for 102 cities and towns, including the capital, talks only of long-term benefits of mitigation programmes beyond 2024, and not a dramatic reduction in near-term pollution. This has to change, and an annual target for reduction be set to make governments accountable. Achieving a reduction within a short window is not impossible if there is the political will to reform key sectors: transport, biomass and construction.

Death in the air: on tackling air pollution

The monitoring of air quality in real time across cities and towns in India is far from adequate or uniform. The evidence from Delhi, which is relatively more robust, has clear pointers to what needs to be done. The Ministry of Heavy Industries and Public Enterprises learnt from a commissioned study last year that dusty sources such as roads, construction sites and bare soil added about 42% of the coarse particulate matter (PM10) in summer, while in winter it was a significant 31%. Similarly, PM10 from transport varied between 15% and 18% across seasons. Yet, it is the even more unhealthy PM2.5 penetrating the lungs that causes greater worry. Vehicles contributed 18-23% of these particulates, while biomass burning was estimated to make up 15-22%, and dusty sources 34% during summer. These insights provide a road map for action. The Delhi government, which has done well to decide on inducting 1,000 electric buses, should speed up the plan and turn its entire fleet green. A transition to electric vehicles for all commercial applications, with funding from the Centre's programme for adoption of EVs, should be a priority in cities. Cutting nitrogen and sulphur emissions from industrial processes needs a time-bound programme supervised by the Environment Ministry. These are priority measures to get urban India out of the red zone.

Women and the workplace

Women and the workplace (The Hindu: 20190308)

<https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/women-and-the-workplace/article26460229.ece>



Do UN strategies to deal with sexual harassment and ensure gender parity offer examples to follow?

For more than a century, March 8 has marked International Women's Day — a global day celebrating the achievements of women and promoting gender equality worldwide. But as we pause to celebrate our many advances, we must also acknowledge how much remains to be done.

Interlinked issues

Two interconnected issues have emerged as priorities over the past two years: sexual harassment at the workplace and obstacles to women's participation at all levels of the workforce, including political representation. The 2017-18 explosion of the #MeToo movement across social media uncovered countless cases of unreported sexual harassment and assault, first in the U.S. and then in India. In both countries, it led to the resignations or firing of dozens of prominent men, mostly politicians, actors and journalists.

It also prompted a range of public and private organisations to examine the internal institutional cultures surrounding sexual harassment, gender parity, and gender equity. Amongst them, the United Nations.

UN Secretary-General António Guterres has been a staunch supporter of women's rights since his election in 2016, stating the need for "benchmarks and time frames to achieve [gender] parity across the system, well before the target year of 2030". In September 2017, the UN released a System-wide Strategy on Gender Parity to transform the UN's representation of women at senior levels. Today the UN's Senior Management Group, which has 44 top UN employees, comprises 23 women and 21 men.

A mirror within

In response to the MeToo movement, the UN recently conducted a system-wide survey to gauge the prevalence of sexual harassment among its more than 200,000 global staff. Though only 17% of UN staff responded, what the survey uncovered was sobering. One in three UN women workers reported being sexually harassed in the past two years, predominantly by men.

Clearly, the UN gender strategy has much to improve, but then the UN, like most other international and national organisations, has a decades-old cultural backlog to tackle.

When misogyny reared its ugly head at a press meet

The inter-governmental UN is as affected by prevalent national cultures as are individual countries. Some might argue more, since the UN Secretary-General has to find a way through contending blocs of countries that support or oppose women's rights' goals. This is where UN research plays a significant role. As findings on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) indicate, many countries, including India, were able to substantially increase their performance on issues such as sex ratios and maternal mortality once their leaders had signed on to the MDGs. Tracking performance on the Sustainable Development Goals, a more comprehensive iteration of the MDGs, will again provide useful pointers for policymakers and advocates going forward.

Efficacy of single window

At the same time, Mr. Guterres is to be commended for holding a mirror to organisational practices when it comes to sexual harassment or gender parity. Bringing the issue of gender inside the organisation, to reform its practices, will enable the UN to stand as an example of the rights it advocates.

Model institutions

How can organisations as large as the UN improve their internal cultures surrounding sexual harassment, gender parity, and gender equity? This issue has generated considerable debate in India, where political parties have begun to ask how they are to apply the rules of the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 which lays down that every office in the country must have an internal complaints committee to investigate allegations of sexual harassment. With thousands of offices across the country, and barely any employee trained to handle sexual harassment, Indian political parties ask whether broader structures, such as district or regional complaints committees, could play the role of office ones. In this context, does the UN Secretariat's single window structure for such complaints provide a better practice? One caveat is that it does not apply across the organisation, so UN agencies, including the multi-institute UN University that aims to achieve gender parity at the director level by end 2019, still have to identify their organisation-specific mechanisms.

Clearly, we need further research before we can arrive at a judgment: perhaps a follow-up to the UN's sexual harassment survey that looks at complaints received and action taken. In India, going by past figures — since the current government has not released data for the last two years — the impact of the 2013 Act, one of the most comprehensive in the world, has been poor. Despite a large jump in complaints recorded, convictions have not shown a proportionate rise, largely due to poor police work. That is an obstacle which the UN, with its internal mechanisms, may not suffer from as far as first responses are concerned, but will certainly face as and when cases come to law.

Both the UN's early successes and the Indian experience offer lessons to UN member-states, few of which have gender parity or serious action against sexual harassment in the workplace. In the U.S., companies such as General Electric, Accenture, Pinterest, Twitter, General Mills

and Unilever are setting and achieving targets to increase female representation at all levels of their workforce. This March 8, let us hope that companies worldwide pledge to follow the examples in the U.S. And that other institutions, whether universities or political parties, follow the UN example. Gender reforms begin at home, not only in the family but also in the workplace.

Radha Kumar is Chair of the Council of the UN University, Tokyo

Microplastic Pollution 20190308)

<http://onlinepaper.asianage.com/article/detailpage.aspx?id=12579738>

PRESENT | DANGER 400 types of bacteria found on 275 pieces of microplastic

Microplastic pollution 'ubiquitous'

ALL ROUND CONTAMINATION

ALL 10 LAKES, rivers and reservoirs sampled found polluted with microplastics

1,000 SMALL small pieces of plastic per litre in the River Tame, near Manchester

MICROPLASTICS found to have bugs that cause gastroenteritis

Microplastic pollution 'ubiquitous'

New studies have shown the extent of microplastic contamination in the UK's lake and rivers, in groundwater in the US and along the Yangtze river in China and the coast of Spain. Tiny plastic particles are believed to enter the human body through food and water. However, the likely health effects on people and ecosystems are yet to be determined. A Singapore study has found that microplastics can harbour harmful microbes.

The new analysis in the UK found microplastic pollution in all 10 lakes, rivers and reservoirs sampled. Over 1,000 small pieces of plastic per litre were found in the River Tame, near Manchester, which was revealed last year as the most contaminated place yet tested worldwide. Even in relatively remote places like the Falls of Dochart and Loch Lomond in Scotland, two or three pieces per litre were found. "Microplastics are being found absolutely everywhere [but] we do not know the dangers they could be posing. It's no use looking back in 20 years time and saying: 'If only we'd realised just how bad it was.' We need to be monitoring our waters now and we need to think, as a country and a world, how we can be reducing our reliance on plastic," said Christian Dunn at Bangor University, Wales, who led the work. Microplastics have been shown to harm marine life. — Agencies.



अल्जाइमर

अल्जाइमर से निजात दिला सकती है ग्रीन टी (Dainik Jagarn: 20190308)

https://epaper.jagran.com/epaper/article-08-Mar-2019-edition-delhi-city-page_28-7376-8698-4.html

ग्रीन टी का एक नया फायदा सामने आया है। इसके सेवन से भूलने की बीमारी अल्जाइमर से निजात मिल सकती है। एक अध्ययन में पाया गया है कि ग्रीन टी, गाजर और चावल में पाए जाने वाले कंपाउंड से अल्जाइमर जैसे लक्षणों को पलटने में मदद मिल सकती है। इससे तंत्रिका तंत्र संबंधी इस बीमारी के लिए नया इलाज विकसित किया जा सकता है।

शोधकर्ताओं के अनुसार, यह निष्कर्ष चूहों पर किए गए एक परीक्षण के आधार पर निकाला गया है। इससे जाहिर होता है कि वनस्पतियों से निर्मित सप्लीमेंट इंसानों में डिमेंशिया के खिलाफ बचाव कर सकते हैं। अमेरिका की सदरन कैलिफोर्निया यूनिवर्सिटी के प्रोफेसर टेरेंस टाउन ने कहा, 'बाजार में ऐसी दवाओं के आने के लिए आपको 10 से 12 साल तक इंतजार करने की जरूरत नहीं है। आप आहार संबंधी बदलाव कर अभी से इस पर अमल कर सकते हैं। अध्ययन का नतीजा बहुत उत्साहजनक पाया गया है।'

अल्जाइमर से निजात दिला सकती है ग्रीन टी