

Govt must wake up to pollution

Tuesday, November 21, 2006 We celebrated Diwali last week with the usual pomp and grandeur. As is the usual practice, people competed with each other in the display of lights and bursting of crackers. As a result, there was smoke everywhere. Promises are made every year, routine advisories are issued by the Government and appeals made out to eschew the use of crackers to reduce both noise and air pollution. But who cares about such appeals or even directives in our country?

New Delhi today ranks as Asia's most polluted city with Kolkata as the second. This is despite the vehicle emission controls initiated at the behest of the Supreme Court. Lucknow and Kanpur have the dubious distinction of being in the top ten polluted cities of Asia, along with some other cities of China. Today pollution is the growing scourge in our country. Most of our rivers rank amongst the world's most polluted. Whether it's the Ganges or the Brahmaputra, even million-dollar clean-up plans have not worked. Air particulates levels in various cities stand dangerously high and clean water has become a thing of the past. While consciousness over growing pollution is increasing across the country and social action groups are taking up these issues, especially in the Metros, it is the medium sized cities which are gasping for fresh air. They have become the graveyard of urban eco system where, bad planning backed by the pathetic functioning of the civic agencies, have left these cities on the verge of ruin. The quality of air and water is extremely poor and only going to worsen in future. One can see heaps of garbage lying around and empty plastic bags blanketing virtually huge swathes of land. Look at Kanpur - a thriving industrial city once, suffering the effects of bad planning and neglect by the civic agencies. The air pollutants forming a protective haze over the city is what the future holds for this city. Is there any hope? Yes, if the Government makes up its mind. Take Tokyo for example. Once a polluted city, it is now one of the cleanest in the world. Other Japanese cities have followed suit under pressure from environmental groups, housewives and politicians. Unfortunately environment is not on the electioneering agenda of the politicians as the basic needs for the people are yet to be met. However, with the tourist boom and events like the Commonwealth Games coming in future, it is high time the Central Government laid down a roadmap for cleaning Delhi before it is too late. http://www.dailypioneer.com/columnist1.asp?main_variable=Columnist&file_name=cherian%2Fcherian152.txt&writer=cherian