

PREVENT DISASTER, PROTECT COMMUNITY

Today much of the atmosphere is unpleasantly and obnoxiously polluted. There is a desperate urgency to meet the great challenge and gigantic task by a concerted effort by biologists, physicians, engineers, scientists and legislators and contain the growing menace of air, water and food pollution. But nothing will be effective without public support. Although, there has been a significant reduction in mortality and the life span of an average Indian has doubled since attaining independence, there is hardly much change in terms of morbidity. Every new activity requiring energy propagates the need for emitting more pollution. That we humans, - just because we are the latest products of nature's evolution - does not entitle us to think of the world as ours, to be done with as we will. We are but one element in the continual birth and death of species. If we upset the ecological and atmospheric balance, we shall find ourselves in a danger of our own making danger of extinction.

Air pollution in urban areas is from both viable and nonviable sources and is mostly man-made. Air pollution in addition to producing harmful effects on human body would also ruin, damage metals, furniture and reduce visibility.

Noise is pollutant to some, hardly at all to some. To some others it is a direct stress factor. Air odours, pollutant or not, present a problem of aesthetics. While slums in urban areas are a source of pollution in their own way, the want of basic amenities like toilets at building construction sites is to be lamented as this is one of the largest industries involving thousands of people. Untreated and indiscriminate drainage of industrial

Address: The National Occupational Health Day under the auspices of Indian Association of Occupational Health, Karnataka Branch, 9th July 1987.

pollutants to the sea, lakes and rivers have not only made aquatic plants and animals nonviable but also the humans who consume them. There is more life in the sea than on the land, more energy from the sun used in the ocean to create protection than on the land. Ocean is the main reservoir of biological activity.

Insecticides and fungicides are different forms of pollution and a dangerous form of pollution. It is equally important to have an unpolluted atmosphere to an industrial worker. Safety and warning signals of many a pollutant disaster are overlooked and relegated to a position of secondary importance, resulting in enormous loss of life and chronic suffering. The case in point is that of Bhopal gas-Methyl Isocyanate (MIC) - tragedy of December 1984, which resulted in the loss of life of thousands of helpless citizens, animals, plants and made many more chronically ill. Had the warning signals of the disaster been heeded and safety and precautionary measures implemented, the disaster might have been averted.

However, the biggest tragedy that is perhaps in store for the whole of mankind, animal kingdom and plant life is the pollution by nuclear arms engagement, either accidental or intentional.

