

CLIMATE IMPACT

Jammu and Kashmir, a region renowned for its picturesque landscapes and diverse ecosystems, is experiencing significant impacts from climate change.

J&K's water resources are crucial for both drinking and irrigation purposes. The region relies heavily on its glaciers and snow-fed rivers, such as the Jhelum, Chenab, and Ravi, which serve as primary sources of freshwater.

Glacier retreat in the Himalayas is a significant concern. Studies indicate that glaciers in J&K have been receding at an alarming rate, which affects river flow patterns and water availability.

The frequency and intensity of extreme weather events in J&K are rising due to climate change. The region has witnessed an increase in incidents of flash floods, landslides, and heavy snowfall.

Preserving Our Planet for Future Generations

GOURAV SABHARWAL

World Nature Conservation Day, observed annually on July 28, serves as a crucial reminder of our responsibility to safeguard the environment and its precious resources.

Origins and Importance

The roots of World Nature Conservation Day lie in recognizing the impact of human activities on our natural world. Over the past century, rapid industrialization, population growth, and habitat destruction have taken a toll on ecosystems.

Organizations like the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) play a vital role in addressing these challenges. The IUCN focuses on understanding human impact on nature, promoting environmental impact assessments, and protecting species and habitats.

Our Role in Conservation

On this day, we must reflect on our role as stewards of the Earth. Here are some actionable steps we can take:

- Reduce Plastic Use: Plastic pollution harms marine life and ecosystems. Opt for reusable alternatives and minimize single-use plastics.
Combat E-Waste: Dispose of electronic waste responsibly. Recycle old gadgets and electronics to prevent toxic materials from contaminating the environment.
Conserve Water: Be mindful of water consumption. Fix leaks, collect rainwater, and use water-saving appliances.
Plant Trees: Trees absorb carbon dioxide, provide habitat for wildlife, and enhance air quality. Participate in tree-planting initiatives.
Support Biodiversity: Protect endangered species and their habitats. Learn about local flora and fauna and contribute to conservation efforts.

Certainly! India has made significant strides in recent years, positioning itself for a promising future. Here are some notable achievements and prospects: India is on track to become the world's third-largest economy by 2027, surpassing Japan and Germany.

In 2023, India assumed the presidency of the G20, showcasing its economic prowess and diplomatic finesse. India's tenure saw achievements like the inclusion of the African Union into the G20, launching critical partnerships (e.g., Global Biofuel Alliance, Global Initiative on Digital Health), progress on UN Sustainable Development Goals, and reforms in multilateral development banks.



MOHAMMAD HANIEF

Climate change is raising global temperatures and causing historic heat waves. More countries are facing hotter days more frequently, with more intensity and for longer periods.

In East Asia and the Pacific, around 243 million children are currently exposed to hotter and longer heatwaves than previous generations, putting their health and their education at risk.

Extreme heat waves can have serious impacts on health in several ways. These events often occur during the summer months and can vary in intensity & duration depending on various factors such as geographic location, climate patterns, & weather conditions.

Higher daily peak temperatures and longer, more intense heat waves are becoming increasingly frequent globally due to climate change. India too is feeling the impact of climate change in terms of increased instances of heat waves which are more intense in nature with each passing year.

Population exposure to heat is increasing due to climate change. Globally, extreme temperature events are observed to be increasing in their frequency, duration, and magnitude.

While the effects of heat may be exacerbated in cities, due to the urban heat island (UHI) effect, the livelihoods and well-being of non-urban communities can also be severely disrupted during and after periods of

Impact of heat waves on children



unusually hot weather.

Heatwaves can burden health and emergency services and also increase strain on water, energy and transportation resulting in power shortages or even blackouts.

Cases of heat-related illness are rising with average air temperatures, and experts say almost half of those getting sick are children. The reason is twofold: Children's bodies have more trouble regulating temperature than those of adults.

Parents, coaches, and other caretakers, who can experience the same heat very differently than kids do, may struggle to identify a dangerous situation or catch the early symptoms of heat-related illness in children.

Children are more at-risk during heatwaves as their body weight contains more percentage of water. Dehydration is quick to occur as the body loses more water than the intake. Since children's sweat glands are not fully developed, this will lead to some trouble in regulating body temperature as compared to adults.

Extreme heat poses unique risks at different stages of childhood. For example, babies and

young children under age 5 are the most at risk of increased heat-related mortality and morbidity, while adolescents are more likely to experience exertional heat-related injuries.

Extreme heat can have serious effects on children's health, mental well-being, education and even nutrition. Heat stress can lead to heat strokes and diarrhoea caused by dehydration. It can lead to an increased risk of chronic respiratory conditions, organ dysfunction like kidney failure, and chronic issues due to congenital defects.

Heat waves make droughts worse, adding to crop failure and threatening children's access to food and water. Food insecurity caused by heat waves has severe impacts on child nutrition.

Heat waves are linked to lower school attendance. High air temperatures and lower hydration are known to affect children's ability to concentrate. These can impact overall school achievements.

High temperatures are linked to increases in mental health problems in children and adolescents. Heat can lead to high stress and poor sleep. These in turn can make episodes of depression and post-traumatic stress disorder more likely to occur.

Our mental health is a fundamental part to our overall health and well-being. As a parent, you play a huge role in supporting your child's mental well-being. Nurturing and loving care

build a strong foundation, helping your child to develop the social and emotional skills they need to lead a happy, healthy and fulfilled life.

Heat Waves with longer duration pose more risks for children as they spend more time outdoors than adults for - sports and other activities - putting them at greater risk for heat injury.

Heat-related illnesses occur when exposure to high temperatures and humidity, which can be intensified by physical exertion, overwhelms the body's ability to cool itself. Cases range from mild, like benign heat rashes in infants, to more serious, when the body's core temperature increases. That can lead to life-threatening instances of heatstroke, diagnosed once the body temperature rises above 104 degrees, potentially causing organ failure.

Experts emphasize that drinking plenty of water, avoiding the outdoors during the hot midday and afternoon hours, and taking it slow when adjusting to exercise are the most effective ways to avoid getting sick.

Children's bodies take longer to increase sweat production and otherwise acclimatize in a warm environment than adults' do, research shows. Young kids are also more susceptible to dehydration because a larger percentage of their body weight is water.

Population ageing and the growing prevalence of non-communicable diseases (respiratory and cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, dementia, renal disease and musculoskeletal disease) means that populations are becoming more susceptible to negative heat impacts. Cities are not being designed to minimize the accumulation and generation of urban heat, with a loss of greenspace and inappropriate housing materials (for example, metal roofs) that amplify human exposure to excess heat.

Overall, heat waves pose significant risks to human health and well-being thereby highlighting the importance of taking preventive measures and staying informed during periods of extreme heat. By taking above mentioned preventive measures, you can reduce the risk of heat-related illnesses and stay safe during these times.

Kashmir's Fading Beauty: A Climate Crisis

SAFYIAN IQBAL KHAN

Kashmir, often hailed as "Paradise on Earth," has captivated the hearts of many with its breathtaking landscapes and vibrant culture. However, the very essence of its attraction is now under threat. In 2024, the impact of climate change on Kashmir is becoming alarmingly evident, casting a shadow over this once-untouched region.

The mercury has surged to levels not seen in decades, contributing to the rapid melting of glaciers that feed the region's rivers and lakes. This year, glaciers in the Himalayas have shrunk by another 5%-a stark reminder of the accelerating crisis. The once-crystal-clear lakes are now clouded with sediment, and the picturesque snow-covered peaks are losing their sparkle.

In June 2024, a severe



flood devastated several villages, illustrating the increased unpredictability of the climate. The ripple effects on agriculture and infrastructure are noticeable, with communities struggling to adapt with the new norm. The ripple effects of these climatic changes are deeply felt in Kashmir's agricultural sector. Farmers, who have long depended on predictable seasonal patterns, are now facing uncertainty. Crops that once flourished in the region's temperate climate are fading under the strain of irregular rainfall and higher temperatures.

The balance of the ecosystem is being disrupted, leading to a decline in the

populations of various species that are essential in maintaining ecological balance.

Kashmir's cultural heritage, deeply connected with its natural beauty, is also facing degradation. The changing landscape affects traditional practices and festivals that celebrate the region's unique environment. For instance, the traditional harvest festivals that mark the changing seasons are losing their significance as the seasons themselves become less predictable. Environment decline is making it challenging for local communities to maintain their cultural traditions. The situation in Kashmir, in 2024, highlights the urgent need for climate action. The region's natural beauty and cultural heritage are deeply linked to its environment, and both are at risk. To preserve Kashmir's legacy for future generations, it is essential to adopt sustainable practices, enhance climate resilience, and promote global awareness. By taking firm action now, there is hope that the unparalleled beauty and vibrant culture of Kashmir can be protected against the consequences of climate change. To policymakers and administrators, this is a call to prioritize climate in planning and development. Investing in sustainable practices can help safeguard Kashmir's future. By taking immediate and effective action, we can protect the region's natural beauty and cultural heritage for the generations to come. Let's act now to ensure that Kashmir remains a "Paradise on Earth" for years to come....!!

WHO approves the first self-test kit for Hepatitis C

SURJIT SINGH FLORA

In an attempt to speed up the process of eliminating the illness, which affects fifty million people throughout the world, the World Health Organization (WHO) has pre-qualified the first self-test for the hepatitis C virus. It is believed that there are between 6 and 12 million persons in India who are infected with hepatitis C, according to certain research conducted at the regional level.

Chronic HBV infection is responsible for 40-50% of instances of hepatocellular carcinoma (HCC) and 20-30% of cases of cirrhosis in the nation. Chronic HCV infection is responsible for 12-32% of HCC and 12-20% of cirrhosis in the country.

The Hepatitis C Virus (HCV) is the causative agent of hepatitis C, which encompasses inflammation of the liver. It may lead to permanent ailments such as liver cirrhosis and cancer, depending on how mild or serious it is the condition. As a result of coming into touch with contaminated blood, hepatitis C may infect others.

People who have hepatitis C often do not exhibit any symptoms that are evident until the liver has been destroyed. This indicates that individuals harbour the virus without being aware of it. It is possible to confuse symptoms with those of other conditions, such as the flu, muscular pain and fever, feeling fatigued all the time, suffering from lack of appetite, experiencing stomach discomfort, or feeling ill. It is only via testing that you will be able to determine whether or not you have Hepatitis C.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), this may occur as a result of sharing needles or syringes, as well as from hazardous medical procedures such as blood transfusions administered with unscreened blood products and sexual behaviors that result in exposure to blood. It is possible to have symptoms such as fever, exhaustion, lack of

appetite, nausea, vomiting, stomach discomfort, dark urine, and jaundice, which is characterized by a yellowing of the skin or eyes. The pre-qualification comes three years after the World Health Organization (WHO) suggested HCV self-testing in 2021 to assist with testing programs that were already in place.

Now that the self-test kit is available, people will have the ability to choose the manner of testing, which will provide them with autonomy and access to self-care services that are free of stigma. It is anticipated that the new kit, which has been created by OraSure Technologies and is known as the OraQuick HCV self test, would be of great assistance in broadening access to testing and diagnosis. A test strip that works by identifying antibodies in the blood of persons who have signs and symptoms of hepatitis and those who are at risk for infection with hepatitis C makes up the kit, which is also an expansion of a quick antibody test that has previously been pre-qualified.

Antibody testing, on the other hand, is reserved exclusively for use by trained specialists. Every single day, the hepatitis virus claims the lives of 3,500 people. Only 36 percent of the 50 million individuals who were living with hepatitis C had been identified by the end of 2022, and only 20 percent had gotten treatment that was curative, according to Dr. Meg Doherty, who is the head of the Department of Global HIV, Hepatitis, and STI Programmes at the World Health Organization.

According to Dr. Meg, "the inclusion of this product to the WHO prequalification list offers a safe and effective means to extend HCV testing and treatment services." This will ensure that a greater number of individuals obtain the diagnosis and treatment they need, which will eventually contribute to the worldwide objective of eliminating HCV. According to Dr. Roogero Gaspar, who is the

director of the Department of Regulation and Prequalification at the World Health Organization (WHO), the availability of the pre-qualified self-test will make it possible for countries with low and middle incomes to have access to self-testing options that are both safe and affordable. Additionally, this will ensure that ninety percent of people who have the disease make a diagnosis.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), the diagnosis is essential because it leads the path for therapy, which ultimately results in treating around 95% of the cases. A significant number of nations continue to have limited access to both diagnosis and treatment. World Health Organization (WHO) reports around one million new illnesses per year. Furthermore, it posits that around 242,000 individuals passed away as a result of Hepatitis C in the year 2022.

It is not something that should cause concern since it is now curable and there is a treatment for it in the majority of instances. Yet, it is something that has to be addressed. The disease became chronic in around 85 percent of individuals who were infected, and it was fatal in twenty percent of cases during the first five years, with more cases to come. This was before we activists shook enough cages to finance research for a cure. The manifestation of symptoms may not occur for decades, and by that time, it may be too late. This is no longer the case if you believe you may have been exposed to the virus and seek treatment for it, regardless of whether or not you have symptoms. Therefore, if you are worried, you should see a doctor.

The Hepatitis C vaccination is not available at this time. Obtaining one that protects against Hepatitis A and B is a good idea since it lowers the likelihood of contracting Hepatitis C and other diseases.

And as someone who dealt with a great

(The writer is a veteran journalist and freelance writer based in Brampton)