

Indoor Air Pollution Spotlighted on World Environmental Health Day

Event Context

On the occasion of World Environmental Health Day (26 September 2025), health experts and environmental organizations highlighted the growing burden of indoor air pollution in Indian households.

Key Highlights

- Indoor air pollution has emerged as a major public health concern in India, contributing significantly to respiratory, cardiovascular, and chronic diseases.
- Sources of indoor pollutants include:
 - Biomass fuels (firewood, cow dung, crop residue) used for cooking in rural households.
 - Kerosene lamps and incense sticks.
 - Household cleaning products and construction materials releasing volatile organic compounds (VOCs).
 - Poor ventilation in densely populated urban homes.
- Vulnerable groups such as children, women, and the elderly are most at risk, with prolonged exposure leading to chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), asthma, lung cancer, and heart ailments.

Health Impact in India

- WHO estimates suggest that over 600,000 premature deaths annually in India are linked to household air pollution.

- Children exposed to smoky indoor environments have higher rates of pneumonia and impaired lung development.
- Women in rural areas who spend long hours near traditional stoves face three times higher risk of respiratory illness compared to those using clean cooking fuels.

Expert Insights

- Doctors emphasized that indoor pollution often receives less attention than outdoor air quality, despite having equal or greater health consequences.
- Environmental health experts called for urgent measures, including the promotion of clean cooking fuels, better ventilation, and stricter regulation of indoor toxins.

Way Forward

- Expansion of government schemes such as Ujjwala Yojana to provide LPG connections to rural households.
- Encouraging adoption of smokeless stoves and renewable energy solutions.
- Public awareness campaigns focusing on simple preventive steps, like improving cross-ventilation, reducing use of chemical-based cleaners, and monitoring indoor air quality.

Conclusion

This year's World Environmental Health Day highlighted that indoor air pollution is an invisible but deadly threat that requires urgent attention through policy action, technology adoption, and public awareness to safeguard India's health future.