

## TIMES CITY

# UN report: Experts sceptical

## Say Brown Clouds Not Limited To Delhi, Mercury Not Rising

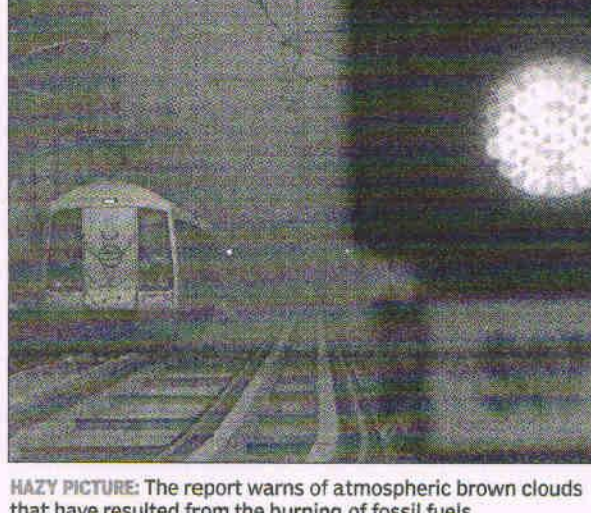
TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**New Delhi:** The government has been claiming that Delhi's pollution levels have fallen drastically over the past few years but a report by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) paints a hazy picture for the Capital.

The report warns of atmospheric brown clouds that have resulted from the burning of fossil fuels and biomass, and include particles like black carbon and soot, and stretch from the Arabian Peninsula to China and all the way to the western Pacific Ocean. Delhi has been identified as one of the 13 megacities where the threat is maximum.

Indian environmentalists however, seem to have a different point of view. While accepting that such a cloud cover probably does exist, they said this was a regional phenomenon, and was not limited to Delhi. To combat it, steps had to be taken at a regional level, they said.

Nobel prize winner Dr R K Pachauri had said at the onset that work was still being carried out on the Asian



**HAZY PICTURE:** The report warns of atmospheric brown clouds that have resulted from the burning of fossil fuels

cloud cover and it was too early to comment on it. "Knowing the scientific details behind this, I can say that since the study has not been completed, anyone passing a judgment on it right now is jumping the gun," he said.

The Central Pollution Control Board said that Delhi's pollution load had come down substantially, and Vivek

Chattopadhyaya, senior scientist, Centre for Science and Environment, said that there were several other cities smaller than Delhi where pollution levels were much higher. "Delhi does have a problem with high levels of NO2 and RSPM but data shows that levels of other pollutants have come down. The brown cloud phenomenon over Asia in general is not surprising

as it is a developing area. For this we require regional policy making and implementation to deal with the problem as a whole," he said.

The UN report stated that there was documented evidence of retreat of Hindu Kush-Tibetan glaciers that feed several Asian rivers. Several meteorological changes had also been seen like changes in rainfall, temperature etc. However, officials in the meteorological department too expressed serious reservations with the report.

A senior official said that while the observation of the brown cloud in general was true, the conclusions derived from it were much too sweeping in nature. "The report says that the minimum temperature is rising but that is not true for all regions. Delhi for instance is not seeing a rise in its minimum temperature. Similarly, we don't think that the amount of rainfall has changed, as the report alleges. To study the problem, more local observations are required," said the official.

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# High risk of asthma, cardiac trouble

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**New Delhi:** The United Nations report about the increasing air pollution in Asia has put the spotlight on the immediate effect of the haze on health of people. In fact, experts say Delhiites should take all necessary precautions.

It is a known fact that asthma cases increase drastically during winter due to the presence of smog. But experts say that in the last five years there has been a cumulative increase of 20% in asthma cases. Not just asthma, even cardiovascular events shoot up due to smog.

"Asthma cases definitely shoot up. Chronic bronchitis

tion of airways, thereby, blocking it. Children and elderly, people stand a high chance of suffering an asthma attack or a serious episode of bronchitis," said Dr GC Khilnani, professor

**Experts say that in the last five years there has been a cumulative increase of 20% in asthma cases, and even cardiovascular events shoot up due to smog**

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and can trigger an allergic reaction. Along with these micro-particles there are various gases like nitrogen oxide, carbon dioxide, carbon monoxide etc. A cocktail of all these can have a devastating effect on health. Due to smog, a lot of people complain about burning sensation in eyes or bad throat, sneezing etc," said Dr Sanjeev Bagai, director and head of the paediatrics department, Rockland hospital.

For asthma patients, driving in the city becomes even more difficult, especially at traffic signals. In fact, newborns too stand a chance of developing breathing diffi-

culty. We see a lot of newborns who are re-admitted at the hospital with such serious conditions," said Dr Bagai.

Doctors say the pollution levels have gone up so drastically that one inhales all poisonous substances while breathing. The pollutants enter our body through the respiratory tract and mixes with the blood, thereby, making it more viscous, which in turn puts a person at risk of having a serious cardiovascular event. "As blood becomes viscous due to these suspended particles, it increases the blood pressure. It also exerts pressure on fat deposits in