

Regarding need to address the severe macro-economic and public health crisis arising out of acute air pollution in the country- laid

DR. SHASHI THAROOR (THIRUVANANTHAPURAM): I wish to draw the attention of the Government to the grave macroeconomic and public health crisis posed by air pollution, which has led to widespread respiratory and cardiac illness and placed an unprecedented strain on Indias health systems and workforce. While the National Clean Air Programme has laid an initial framework, the magnitude of the crisis necessitates a more robust, mission-mode response. With nearly 60% of Indias 749 districts breaching the annual National Ambient Air Quality Standard (NAAQS), the public health challenge is acute. A new national mission is therefore essential, one that integrates urban, peri-urban, and rural pollution sources, and positions clean air as a central pillar of Indias development strategy. The resulting healthcare costs, productivity losses, and workforce impairment impose an economic burden of nearly 3% of national GDP, exceeding Indias entire public health expenditure. These challenges are further compounded by rising Disability-Adjusted Life Years, inter-generational health damage to children, and productivity shrinkage across working populations. A detailed proposal to this effect has already been submitted to the Ministry of Finance and the Prime Ministers Office. I urge the Government to consider adopting this national mission to safeguard Indias human capital and long-term development trajectory.