

**RESEARCH NOTES :**

**COVID-19 AND THE LONG-TERM ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH IMPLICATIONS FOR INDIA**

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Corona virus popularly known as Covid-19 has taught several lessons to mankind. One of the important positive impacts of Covid-19 is considered to be the positive contribution to the environmental parameters like GHG, Air Pollution, and reduction in BOD in water courses particularly the much-polluted Ganga etc. Therefore, it is necessary to link the Covid-19 responses from economic activities and their impact on health and environment of people. The OECD has published a policy response to Covid-19 in May 2021 and projected its impact on the structure of the economy beyond 2025. It has conducted a study to project the impact on various sectors. The following Figure from the Report indicates that service sector particularly construction and accommodation will be different in the future compared to its pre-covid levels. What is important for environment and health of the people is that it is going to affect adversely more in India than in the OECD countries. Though India has done reasonably well in the propagation of vaccines as we have an advantage of two patents registered by Indian innovators, the death toll seems to be not reckoned with the spread of vaccines. According to some experts the spread of COVID-19 is more; because of the time lag it took for the government to supply the vaccines. It is reported that 43,420,608 people are affected by it by June 2022 and resulted in 525,047 deaths. But, WHO has disputed it and reported that there were 4.7 million deaths in India and the figure is ten times higher than the government of India as per the Hindu (May 5, 2022). Apart from the controversy on the number of deaths due to Covid-19, our health system appears to be precarious during the pandemic. Even otherwise India comes under number three as per the WHO data on deaths in 2021. The data is given in the below Table.

It is noted that during Covid-19 the health of the people are affected adversely and millions died. But no one has realized that it has taught us lessons as to how to regulate our environment to reduce pollution that would in turn improve our health. Corona virus is a sudden outbreak of a condition that resulted in the pandemic as it has affected all the countries of the World. But its impact seems to be not uniform. We may look at the

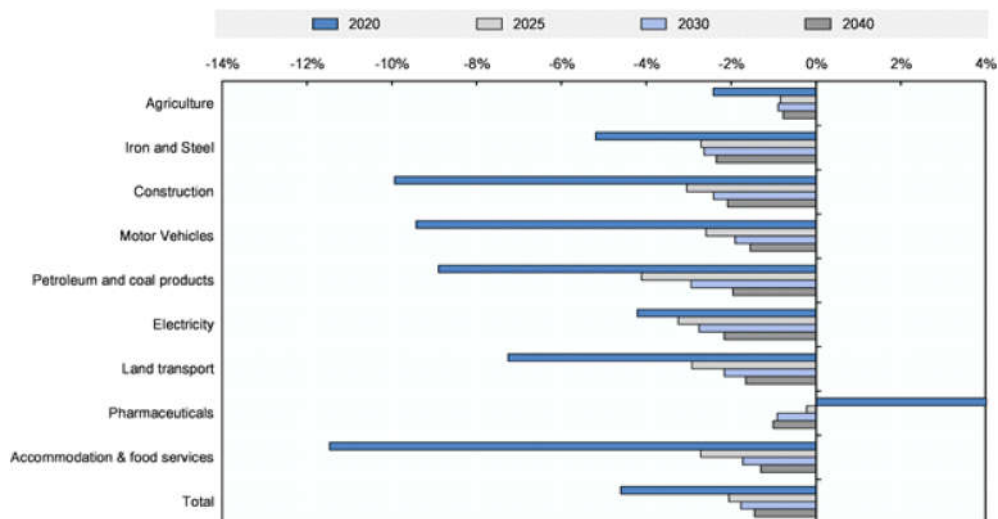
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positive impact of the forced lockdowns, social distancing and reduced movement of vehicles that emit CO. The CPCB has noted that the quality of air, water during the period 31 March 2019 and 31 March 2020

### The pandemic and response measures change the structure of the global economy

Deviations from the pre-COVID baseline projection



has improved. The concentration of PM 2.5, PM10, NO, NO<sub>2</sub>, SO<sub>2</sub>, CO has decreased in different parts of the country. The lockdowns lowered nitrous oxide emissions by 20-30% in China, Italy, France, and Spain, as well as by 77.3% in Sao Paulo, Brazil. Similar Particulate Matter levels have decreased from 5 to 15% in Western Europe to 200% in New Delhi, India, air quality has recently improved in a way that hasn't been seen before. However, the biomedical waste has created terrible problems in the country. It is reported that Maharashtra alone has contributed 17 per cent of the total country's waste. It means we have not developed scientific methods of Solid Waste Management techniques and citizens have not learnt lessons of environmental care. The OECD study has noted the impact of Covid-19 on our economy and the future of our activities in a long run perspective beyond 25 years from now. It is a warning signal that if we neglect the environmental implications of resource use, it would spell havoc on human health.

**Spread of COVID-19 in various countries (since December 2019 till April 24, 2021).**

Country	Number of infected persons	Number of recorded deaths
USA	31,530,214	564,091
India	16,263,695	186,920
Brazil	14,122,795	381,475
France	5,325,495	101,513
Russian Federation	4,744,961	107,501
Spain	3,456,886	77,496
Italy	3,920,945	118,357
Turkey	4,501,382	37,329
Germany	3,245,253	81,158
Colombia	2,701,313	69,596
Argentina	2,769,552	60,083
Mexico	2,315,811	213,597
Poland	2,742,122	64,707
Iran	2,335,905	68,366
South Africa	1,571,348	53,995
Ukraine	2,004,630	41,700
Indonesia	1,626,812	44,172
Peru	1,726,806	58,261
Czechia	1,615,461	28,863
Netherland	1,435,772	17,002
Canada	1,147,463	23,763
Chile	1,148,320	25,532

Source: WHO 2021

The brief Notes indicate that we have data to learn from the adverse and positive aspects of coronavirus or Covid-19. It has brought out by scholars that the positive impact of Covid-19 is that we have been excessively exploiting our natural resources that impacted our greenhouse gases. It is proved that if we can reduce the use of fossil fuels and emission of CO<sub>2</sub> and plan our economic activities in an eco-friendly manner, improve our wastewater treatment, use scientific methods in Solid waste treatment, it is possible to sustain our health and environment.