

Need to find solution to stubble burning: Mohindra

TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

PATIALA, MAY 18

State Health and Family Welfare Minister Brahm Mohindra on Friday said to save the air quality, a permanent solution to the problem of stubble burning should be found at the earliest.

Mohindra was speaking at a function held here on Friday.

On the occasion, Reckitt Benckiser (RB), consumer health and hygiene company, in association with the Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India (ASSOCHAM) and state government launched a behaviour change communication programme to check stubble burning in the state.

Under the initiative, the campaign — 'Ab Hogi Har Saans Swachh' — is aimed at reducing air pollution caused due to stubble burning by educating farming and allied groups to adopt alternative options. Its objective is to provide solutions to recycling stubble.

Brahm Mohindra, while launching the programme, congratulated the RB for taking the lead in addressing the issue.

He said, "Pollution is a huge problem across the globe and in Punjab, stubble burning is the biggest contributor to poor air



Health Minister Brahm Mohindra and officials during a conference in Patiala on Friday.

TRIBUNE PHOTO: RAJESH SACHAR

Officials late, but minister on time

■ The Health Minister reached the venue on time, but he found that the organisers had not reached. Unhappy over it, the minister reprimanded the officials from the stage.

quality. Considering the urgency of the situation, it is critical to build a robust response and momentum to create a mass movement through a behaviour change. The state government will continue to provide all possible support

for such initiatives that positively impacts the beneficiaries."

Speaking the occasion, DS Rawat, secretary general, ASSOCHAM, said "The ever rising air pollution levels are taking a toll on the country's urban economy and the worst-affected sectors are tourism, hospitality and outdoor recreation."

"It may not just hurt the country's ability to attract highly-skilled expatriates but might also severely impact inflow of investments. It is the need of the hour to spread awareness about crop residue burn-

ing's health hazards and promote alternate solutions through cooperation and networking with peer groups, different agencies, organisations and individuals to improve the air quality", he added.

The programme will be executed in five phases over a period of 24 months and it will end in 2020. The objective of the programme is to expand the outreach to six leading agriculture-intensive districts in the state.

Over a series of 220 outreach camps, RB plans to educate and sensitise 44,000 farmers.



Health minister Brahm Mohindra (3L) launching a state-level awareness programme about air pollution levels in Punjab here on Friday.

BHARAT BHUSHAN/HT

Taking strict steps to check stubble fires: Mohindra

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PATIALA: The Punjab government, in association with the Associated Chambers of Commerce of India and Reckitt Benckiser (RB), has launched an awareness programme to control air pollution.

The programme, 'Ab Hogi Har Saans Swachh,' was launched across the state on Friday.

State health and family welfare minister Brahm Mohindra said that considering the importance of trying to decrease air pollution levels, it is critical to build a robust response system to create a mass movement through behaviour change.

"The Punjab government will continue to provide all possible support for such initiatives that positively impacts the beneficiaries," he said. Mohindra added that chief minister Captain Amarinder Singh has raised demands with Prime Minister Narendra Modi to grant ₹685 crore compensation to the farmers to motivate

them to stop stubble burning. He added that to combat the problem of stubble burning, Punjab government has made installation of super straw management system (SMS) to every self-propelled combined harvester mandatory.

"The super SMS will chop paddy straw into small pieces, before spreading it evenly across the fields, thus enabling the farmers to sow wheat without burning the straw residue," the minister said. He added that the Punjab cabinet has approved the creation of directorate of environment to check air pollution, which is a positive development.

ASSOCHAM secretary general DS Rawat said that rising air pollution levels are taking a toll on India's urban economy and tourism, hospitality, outdoor recreation and other sectors are worst affected. "Besides, it is also leading to rise in health care costs," Rawat said.

He added that it is the need of the hour to spread awareness about the health hazards of stub-

ble burning and to promote alternate solutions through co-operation and networking with peer groups, agencies, organisations and individuals, to improve ambient air quality.

PAU V-C SLAMS ORGANISERS

Punjab Agricultural University (PAU) vice-chancellor (V-C) Baldev Singh Dhillon, who was one of the attendees of the ASSOCHAM event, snubbed the organisers for defaming farmers over stubble burning issue. He said that the farmers are not solely responsible for increase in pollution.

Dhillon asked them to change the topic of discussions from stubble burning to stubble management. "Pollution caused by industries, vehicles, and others sources cannot be ignored. Coal burning is a cause of pollution in the state. A study should be conducted over the contribution of stubble burning and industry in polluting the environment," he said.

'Don't defame farmers of Pb over farm fires'

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Patiala: Punjab Agriculture University (PAU) vice-chancellor Baldev Singh Dhillon on Friday snubbed organisers and invited guests at a prominent event attended by health minister Brahm Mohindra for apparently defaming farmers over stubble-burning. According to him, farmers alone could not be held responsible for pollution in the state.

Speaking at the event organized by ASSOCHAM-Reckitt Benckiser, Mohindra explained in detail how stubble burning was affecting everyone. The minister left the event after his speech.



PAU VC Baldev Singh Dhillon makes a point at a Patiala event

When his turn came to address the gathering, Dhillon suggested that the participants should discuss stubble management instead of stubble burning.

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How can industrial pollution be ignored: VC

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Pollution from industry, vehicles and other sources can't be ignored," he said. A study conducted in Lahore revealed that 700 furnaces around the city were making it polluted. "Burning coal is also responsible for pollution in the state besides many other sources," he said. "How can industrial pollution be ignored? Farmers burn stubble twice a year, but pollution continues to rise."

Mohindra, in his speech, had focused on farmers causing pollution. "I visited a village and found farmers and children coughing. I asked them why they burn stubble to invite pulmonary diseases," he had said. "Punjab CM Captain Amarinder Singh has sought Rs 685 crore compensation from the PM to help farmers give up stubble-burning. Farmers have paid a huge price for feeding the nation." The minister said the state government should come up with the method of attaching the super straw management system (SMS) to every self-propelled combined harvester. "This would replant leftover straw into the soil, which also has the additional benefit of improving soil quality," he said.

ASSOCHAM secretary general D S Rawat said stubble burning was a prime reason for growing air pollution in the region. The need of the hour was to spread awareness about its health hazards and promote alternate solutions, he said.

Centre approves ₹685 cr to curb air pollution

DP CORRESPONDENT

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Health and Family Welfare Minister Brahm Mohindra on Friday termed Chief Minister Captain Amarinder Singh a saviour of farmers in state and also said that the Chief Minister has raised demands of state farmers with the Prime Minister seeking Rs 685 cr compensation for the farmers to pull them out of the problem of setting paddy stubble on fire. With the Rs 685 cr package sought, lot of problems of the farming sector are expected to get redressed, claimed Brahm Mohindra at an ASSOCHAM-Reckitt Benckiser joint event held here. The farmers have sacrificed themselves for the betterment of nation and have paid a huge price for feeding nation, he said.

'Considering the gravity of this issue, Chief Minister took it up with Government of India and also discussed with the Prime Minister about ill effects of air pollution caused by straw burning in the state which has highest contribution in nation's food bowl,' said Mohindra while launching an ASSOCHAM-Reckitt Benckiser awareness programme on air pollution in state. Recalling once how when he went to a local village in his constituency in the evening, the minister said he saw just smog and pollution all around with people from all age groups coughing and



“ Captain has discussed the issue of ill effects of air pollution caused by straw burning in the state with the Prime Minister.”

BRAHM MOHINDRA
Health Minister

suffering from chest infections. 'I interacted with a group of village elders sitting under a tree and told them that this is why I used to request you for stop burning crop residue and now you can see everyone is coughing around and suffering from chest ailments, thus it is we who are responsible for this problem and it is only we who have to find a solution to improve the situation,' he said.

Earlier, in his address at the ASSOCHAM conference, the Health Minister said that to combat the problem of paddy burning, the state of Punjab came up with the method of attaching the super straw management system (SMS) to every self-propelled combined harvester

