

## Turning up the Heat

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How many smokers are deterred by statutory warnings printed on cigarette packs? Maybe only a few; still, the practice keeps up the pressure. Global warming warnings bounce off most of us.

However, scientists and environmentalists continue to warn us regularly of the perils of unsustainable development practices and its alarming effects on the world's climate patterns.

We are compromising our future health by not heeding warnings on climate change, lament researchers working on the Climate Change Futures Project at Harvard Medical School's Center for Health and the Global Environment.

The three-year study results imply that we tend to view the effect of global warming on the environment as though we were ourselves not really part of it.

Dying habitats, extinction of species, rising sea levels and shifting ecosystems and ocean currents are, in fact, inextricably linked to the way we live, and so decide our collective future.

Health considerations in particular should motivate us to cut back on greenhouse gases that arise from large-scale consumption of fossil fuel, warns the study.

The Harvard report says that freak hurricanes, flooding and heat waves, aggravated by global warming, could encourage breeding of insects that transmit diseases like malaria even in areas hitherto unaffected by the disease.

Where malaria is present already, warming trends could increase the incidence with increasing mosquito populations. On the other hand, asthma cases are rising, particularly in metropolitan and industrial areas where pollution levels due to emissions are climbing steadily.

The worst affected are children, whose fragile systems succumb easily to the toxic air they breathe. Asthma is also being aggravated by rise in the growth of fungus, weeds and pollen that thrive in warm, humid conditions.

Earlier reports of disappearing permafrost in the Arctic region are worrying scientists who fear that our anthropomorphic zeal could well destroy forever some of the finest species of plants and animals on the planet.

In its World Energy Outlook, the International Energy Agency predicts that the world's energy demand and GHG emissions will soar by more than 50 per cent by 2030 if present consumption patterns continue unabated.

All fingers are pointing at China, second only to the US in its total emissions. Perhaps the US could become a role model for China and others, and demonstrate how to cut back emissions without compromising economic growth.