Preventing the harmful effects of air pollution

Situation update

- On 21 April 2018, a garbage fire began in the Htein Bin landfill area, 40 km on the outskirts of Hlaingthayar township in Yangon Region. The main cause of fire was probably due to the build-up of methane gas from rubbish damp. The Yangon Region Government installed pipelines to allow trapped methane gas to escape outside. Myanmar Fire Services, members of Police Force and Armed Services came together to tackle the fire.

- To date, several mobile clinics have been set up by Yangon Region Health Directorate to provide health care to affected people. Approximately 60 ambulances are on standby. Reportedly, 19 persons were hospitalized. The majority of whom were fighting the fire. Some have already been discharged. The firefighters successfully controlled the situation and are in process of extinguishing any residual fire.

- While the situation is under control locally, the public health messages contained in this factsheet may be useful to help protect against harmful effects of air pollution. Furthermore, the national and regional authorities are in the process of improving monitoring and response capability.

Who should be cautious?

- People with pre-existing conditions such as asthma or cardiovascular diseases are at greater risk in the affected area.

- Construction workers, traffic police, road sweepers and those working outdoors in the affected area

- Children under-five, older people and pregnant women in the affected area

What can be the symptoms?

- Chest pain or chest tightness particularly while exercising

- Increased heart beat

- Breathlessness especially during physical activity

- Coughing

- Affected vision, eye irritation

- Reduced alertness and fatigue

Note: Consult health professional, or visit health facility, if you experience any of above symptoms.

Possible health concern

- Any health impact of air pollution depends on the level and duration of exposure. Individual sensitivity to any health impact of air pollution varies.

- Short-term exposure can cause acute health reactions, such as irritation in the eyes, nose, and throat, coughing, wheezing and acute respiratory infections.
Precautions for affected areas

- Reduce your exposure to air pollution to the extent possible.
- Close external doors and windows to reduce pollution from outside.
- Stay indoors as much as possible.
- Avoid heavy exertion outside.
- Avoid unnecessary motorized travel.
- Do not smoke tobacco products.
- Do not burn leaves, garbage, crop residues, plastic or other materials.
- Keep homes clean.
- Wet mopping is preferable to sweeping or vacuum cleaning, as it avoids stirring up dust particles.

- Eat balanced diet especially fresh fruits and vegetables — to help boost immunity.
- Drink plenty of fluids especially water — to prevent dehydration.
- If you have to be outside in the affected area for long periods of time, use special mask.

For more information please visit WHO website: http://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/ambient-(outdoor)-air-quality-and-health