



Critical Assessment of Heat Action Plans

For Prelims: Centre for Policy Research, Heat Action Plans, Climate Change, Heat Waves.

For Mains: Critical Assessment of Heat Action Plans.

Why in News?

Recently, the **Centre for Policy Research (CPR)**, one of India's leading public policy think tanks, has released the first critical assessment, stating that most of the **Heat Action Plans (HAPs)** may not be suited to the **risks faced by local populations**.

- CPR analyzed all the **37 HAPs** across 18 States, to evaluate how policy action is keeping up with the warming weather in India and found that most HAPs are not built for local contexts.

What are Heat Action Plans?

- HAPs are the primary policy response to **economically damaging and life-threatening heat waves**. They prescribe a number of activities, disaster responses and post-heatwave **response measures to reduce the impact of heat waves**.
- HAPs are documents prepared at the **state, district and city levels for taking short-term actions to limit the number of human deaths** and other adverse impacts of heat waves and further long-term actions to prepare for future heat waves based on the data and analysis of previous heat waves.
 - Short term actions can include alerting people to heat waves and coordinating various departments such as healthcare and agriculture.
 - Long-term actions can **include infrastructural changes such as cool roofs**, increase in green cover and water harvesting structures.

What are the Key Findings?

- **Unprecedented Challenge:**
 - Extreme heat poses an unprecedented challenge to health and productivity, **heat waves** have increased in frequency in recent decades due to **Climate Change**.
 - Landmark heatwaves (1998, 2002, 2010, 2015, 2022) have each led to large death tolls and extensive economic damage by reducing labour productivity and affecting water availability, agriculture, and energy systems.
 - Human-induced actions made the chances of extreme heat events 30 times higher in the region.
- **Increase in Average Heat:**
 - By 2050, as many as 24 urban centers are projected to breach average summertime highs of at least 35 degrees Celsius, disproportionately impacting economically weaker sections.
- **Not Fit for Local Contexts:**
 - Most HAPs are not built for local contexts. They generally focus on extreme dry heat and ignore the threats posed by humid heat and warm nights.

- Most HAPs adopt national heatwave thresholds that may not be suited to the risks faced by local populations.
 - Only 10 out of 37 HAPs seem to have **locally specified temperature thresholds**.
- **HAPs are Underfunded:**
 - Only three of 37 HAPs identify funding sources. Eight HAPs ask implementing departments to **self-allocate resources**, indicating a serious funding constraint.
- **Weak Legal Foundations:**
 - HAPs have weak legal foundations. None of the HAPs reviewed indicates the legal sources of their authority. This reduces bureaucratic incentives to prioritize and comply with HAPs instructions.
- **Insufficiently Transparent:**
 - Further, the HAPs are insufficiently transparent. There is no national repository of HAPs, and very few HAPs are listed online. It also needs to be clarified whether these HAPs are being updated periodically and whether this is based on evaluation data.
- **India Most Vulnerable:**
 - India is one of the **most exposed and vulnerable countries** to heat.
 - Between 1951 and 2016, three-day concurrent hot day and hot night events have increased significantly and are projected to increase between two and four-fold by 2050 under the intermediate and high emission pathways of RCP 4.5 and RCP 8.5.

What are the Recommendations?

- There is a **need for the world to reduce emissions** in the next two decades to prevent warm temperatures from reaching 1.5° C.
- There is a need that **HAPs to identify sources of financing, either from new funds or by combining actions** with existing national and state policies and set up rigorous independent evaluations as a basis for constant improvement.
- Without implementation-oriented HAPs, **India's poorest will continue to suffer from extreme heat**, paying with both their health and incomes.

Source: ET

PDF Reference URL: <https://www.drishtias.com/printpdf/critical-assessment-of-heat-action-plans>