

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE

LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 3572
TO BE ANSWERED ON 11.08.2025

Air Quality Index in Winter Season

3572. SHRI TARIQ ANWAR:

Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE be pleased to state:

- (a) the concrete steps taken to handle air pollution in cities like Delhi, Mumbai and Kolkata especially during winters when the Air Quality Index (AQI) reaches at the dangerous levels;
- (b) the status of forest cover in the country as per the recent Indian State of Forest Report (ISFR) along with the measures being taken to prevent deforestation, reduce human-wildlife conflict and achieve the national target of 33 per cent forest cover; and
- (c) the details of policy intervention plans being made to strengthen climate resilience and biodiversity conservation especially in ecologically sensitive areas?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE
(SHRI KIRTI VARDHAN SINGH)

(a)

National Clean Air Programme (NCAP) was launched by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) in January 2019 with an aim to improve air quality in 130 cities of the country including Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai and Kolkata through implementation of National, State and City level clean air action plans.

City Specific Clean Air Action Plans have been prepared by all cities to implement air quality improvement measures in respective cities. These plans target air pollution sources like soil & road dust, vehicular emissions, waste burning, Construction & Demolition activities, and industrial pollution.

The city specific clean air action plans target city specific air polluting sources like soil & road dust, vehicles, domestic fuel, Municipal Solid Waste (MSW) burning, construction material and industries with short-term priority action as well as those to be implemented in a medium to longer time frame along with the responsible agencies such as Urban Local Bodies, Traffic department, Police department, State Pollution Control Board (SPCB)/Pollution Control Committee (PCC) etc. as stakeholders.

Further, to tackle air pollution in emergencies particularly during the winter season when pollution levels typically surge due to adverse meteorological conditions, Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP)/Emergency Response System (ERS) has been developed in all the cities under NCAP including Delhi, Mumbai and Kolkata.

Key measures taken by the Government for air quality management in the country are placed at **Annexure I**. Specific measures taken in National Capital Region (NCR) in respect of air quality improvement are placed at **Annexure II**.

(b)

The National Forest Policy (1988) sets a vision of having a minimum of one-third (33%) of the total land area of the country under forest or tree cover. Forest Survey of India (FSI) is an organization under MoEFCC which assesses the Forest Cover of the country every two years and publishes the findings in the India State of Forest Report (ISFR). As per ISFR 2023, the total forest and tree cover of the country is 8,27,356.95 square kilometres which is 25.17% of the geographical area of the Country.

Protection and management of forests, tree resources and wildlife including the management of Human- Wildlife conflict is primarily the responsibility of the concerned States/ Union Territories (UTs). There are legal frameworks for the protection and management of forest and tree resources which include, the Indian Forest Act 1927, Van (Sanrakshan Evam Samvardhan) Adhiniyam 1980, and the State Forest Acts and Rules. The State Governments/UTs administrations take appropriate actions to protect forests and trees as per the provisions made under these Acts/Rules. An advisory to deal with the human wildlife conflict has been issued by MoEFCC on 06.02.2021. The MoEFCC issued guidelines to States/UTs on 03.06.2022 to manage human wildlife conflict. The MoEFCC has also issued species specific guidelines on 21.03.2023 for mitigation of human wildlife conflict involving elephant, gaur, leopard, snake, crocodile, rhesus macaque, wild pig, bear, blue bull and black buck.

(c)

The Government of India stands committed to combating climate change through its several programmes and schemes including the National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC) which comprises nine missions in specific areas of solar energy, energy efficiency, water, sustainable agriculture, Himalayan ecosystem, sustainable habitat, health, green India, and strategic knowledge for climate change. The NAPCC provides an overarching framework for all climate actions. All these Missions focus on strategies to combat the adverse impacts of climate change in the Country, and are institutionalized and implemented by the respective Nodal Ministries/Departments.

Further, thirty-four States and Union Territories (UTs) have prepared their respective State Action Plans on Climate Change (SAPCCs). The SAPCCs are designed to be context specific, and inter-alia, provide adaptation strategies considering each State's different ecological, social, and economic conditions.

In order to support adaptation actions in the country, the Government has established the National Adaptation Fund for Climate Change (NAFCC). NAFCC support adaptation projects that are State driven and are based on needs and priorities identified under the SAPCCs and the relevant Missions under the NAPCC.

The Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986, the Biological Diversity Act, 2002 and specific guidelines for Eco-Sensitive Zones (ESZs) issued by the MoEFCC stipulate specific conditions for conservation of biodiversity especially in ecologically sensitive areas.

Annexure I

Measures taken by the Central Government for air quality management in the country:

- i. Emission standards for more than 80 industries have been notified under Environment (Protection) Rules, 1986
- ii. Leapfrogging to Bharat Stage-VI (BS-VI) emissions norms from 1st April 2020
- iii. Vehicle Scrapping Policy, Rules for Registered Vehicle Scrapping Facilities and Automated Testing Stations by MoRTH
- iv. Waste management rules for solid waste, plastic waste, hazardous waste, e-waste, battery waste, biomedical waste, 100% ash utilisation by Thermal Power Plants
- v. Mandate for utilisation of minimum 5% of crop residue along with coal (pellets/briquettes) in thermal power plants in NCR and adjoining areas
- vi. Categorization of industrial areas as Critically and Severely Polluted Areas (CPAs/SPAs) based on Comprehensive Environmental Pollution Index (CEPI).
- vii. To address vehicular emissions, the Government has taken several proactive measures such as introduction of BS-VI fuel norms for vehicles from 1st April 2018 in NCT of Delhi and from 1st April 2020 for the rest of the country, introduction of vehicle scrapping policy and promotion of Electric Vehicles and charging infrastructure through various Central Schemes.
- viii. Further, under PM E-bus Sewa scheme of MoHUA, an allocation of ₹13,778 crore out of the total ₹57,613 crore scheme outlay has been provided for enhancing urban transport through deployment of electric buses and charging stations.
- ix. Further, Ministry of Road, Transport & Highways (MoRTH) has directed the State Govt./UT administrations to establish Registered Vehicle Scrapping Facilities (RVSF) and Automated Testing Stations (ATS).
- x. MoEFCC notified the Environment Protection (End-of-Life Vehicles) Rules, 2025 on 06.01.2025 for environmentally sound management of end-of-life vehicles.
- xi. Under Swachh Bharat Mission-Urban 2.0 (SBM 2.0) Scheme of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA), solid waste processing facilities in 130 cities have been undertaken.
- xii. To address open burning of waste, Public Grievance Redressal System (PGRS) App has been developed and floated in all 130 Cities for online registration of complaints by the citizens and quick redressal by local bodies. Further, local bodies under NCAP have been directed to clear garbage vulnerable points, which are prone to open burning.
- xiii. Industrial pollution is monitored by concerned SPCBs/PCCs through Consent Mechanism under the Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981 and Environmental Clearance issued under EIA Notification, 2006, as applicable, by MoEFCC and its regional offices. 17 categories of highly polluting industries have been directed to install Online Emission and Effluent Monitoring System (OCEMS).

Specific measures taken in National Capital Region (NCR) in respect of air quality improvement:

- i. Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) in National Capital Region (NCR) and Adjoining Areas has been constituted for coordination, research, identification and resolution of problems surrounding the air quality index in NCR in co-ordination with the Govt. of National Capital Territory of Delhi and the States of Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh.
- ii. Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) has been formulated for Delhi NCR to tackle the issue of sudden rise in air pollution and necessary directions were issued by CAQM for its implementation. Actions listed for different Air Quality Index (AQI) levels under GRAP are invoked from time to time.
- iii. Directions prescribing measures for control of pollution from various sources such as implementation of RECD system/ dual fuel kits in DG sets, use of cleaner fuels in industries, shift to EV/ CNG/ BS VI diesel fuel in transport sector, implementation of dust control measures at C&D sites etc., have been issued by CAQM.
- iv. Directions issued by CAQM to Government of NCT of Delhi and State Governments of Haryana, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh for migration of public transport services, especially buses in NCR to cleaner modes. All state govt. bus services between Delhi and any city/town in the states of Haryana, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh to be operated only through EV /CNG/BS-VI diesel w.e.f. 01.11.2023.
- v. CAQM has issued directions for co-firing of 5-10% biomass with coal in thermal power plants located within 300 kms of Delhi, and, in captive power plants of industrial units located in NCR.
- vi. Online Continuous Emission Monitoring System (OCEMS) in red category air polluting industries in Delhi-NCR have been installed.
- vii. Industrial units in Delhi have shifted to PNG/cleaner fuels and, operational units in NCR have shifted to PNG/Biomass.
- viii. Directions have been issued for conversion of brick kilns to zig-zag technology in Delhi and NCR.
- ix. Ban on use of pet coke and furnace oil as fuel in NCR States was issued since October 24, 2017.
- x. An approved fuel list is in force in Delhi-NCR w.e.f. 01.01.2023. Industries operating on only PNG or biomass are permitted in NCR, except for specific requirement of other fuels by specific industries owing to technical, technological and process requirements.
- xi. Stringent PM emission norms for biomass based boilers have been prescribed for compliance in NCR.
- xii. Directions issued to DPCC and SPCBs in NCR to enforce installation of anti-smog guns and other dust control measures at C&D sites.
- xiii. Directions issued for setting up of a “Dust Control and Management Cell” by road owning/ maintaining/ construction agencies for monitoring and effective implementation of dust control measures in the NCR.
- xiv. Online monitoring mechanism (through web portal) has been introduced for monitoring compliance of dust mitigation measures for construction sites.

- xv. 40 teams have been deputed by CPCB since December 2021, to assist CAQM, for conducting incognito inspections of air polluting industries, C&D sites, DG sets in Delhi-NCR to check implementation status of pollution control measures and compliance of other provisions of the Air (P&CP) Act, 1981.
