

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE

RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 526
TO BE ANSWERED ON 07.12.2023

Air quality in the National Capital Region

526. DR. AMEE YAJNIK:

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

- (a) whether Government is aware of the recent deterioration of air quality in the National Capital Region as a result of the impact of stubble burning, industrial emissions and vehicular pollution;
- (b) the measures Government is implementing to address the repeated deterioration in air quality, especially after Diwali, and the immediate relief plans for the coming days; and
- (c) the specific initiatives Government is taking to protect different age groups from adverse health affects due to poor air quality?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE
(SHRI ASHWINI KUMAR CHOUBEY)

(a):

Air pollution in Delhi - NCR is a collective result of multiple factors including high level of anthropogenic activities in the high-density populated areas in NCR, arising from various sectors viz. Vehicular Pollution, Industrial Pollution, Dust from Construction and Demolition Project activities, Road and Open Areas Dust, Biomass Burning, Agricultural Stubble Burning, Municipal Solid Waste burning, Fires in Sanitary Landfills, air pollution from dispersed sources, bursting of fire crackers etc. alongwith meteorological factors and geographical location of Delhi.

Incidences of paddy stubble burning in the northern states of Punjab, Haryana, NCR districts of UP and other areas in NCR also impact the air quality in the NCR, particularly during the period between October and November when the climatic and meteorological conditions are also generally unfavorable towards dispersion of air pollutants.

(b) and (c):

The Commission for Air Quality Management in NCR & Adjoining Areas, since its inception in 2021, undertakes action for the prevention and control of Air pollution in Delhi-NCR & Adjoining Areas which impacts the air quality of the NCT Delhi. The Commission has issued a comprehensive policy to curb Air pollution in NCR in July 2022 by constituting an expert group.

The policy has a sector-wise action plan for the prevention and control of air pollution in the region by various sectors contributing to air pollution. The Commission has also issued statutory directions and advisories for control of air pollution in NCR from time to time. Since inception, the Commission has so far issued 78 directions and 11 advisories, besides executive orders to various agencies concerned in the NCR including State Governments of Punjab, GNCTD, and various bodies of the Central and State Governments in the region. Due to these concerted efforts general improvements in the AQI level have been witnessed in the region.

During, post-monsoon and winter months, the lower temperature, lower mixing heights, inversion conditions and calm winds lead to trapping of the pollutants in the atmosphere resulting in high pollution in the region. Therefore, deterioration of 'Air Quality Index' is observed in Delhi NCR region, generally, during winter months. To address the deterioration of Air quality actions under 'Graded Response Action Plan' are also imposed based on AQI.

The Commission has taken up the issue of firecracker bursting with the concerned NCR State Governments and GNCTD and has directed them to take adequate measures to ensure strict compliance of restrictions/ ban orders passed by Hon'ble Supreme Court/ NGT and State/ UT Governments, as the case may be, in this regard.

Following steps have been taken to address problem of stubble burning:

1. MoA&FW in 2018 launched scheme for providing subsidy for purchase of crop residue management machinery and establishment of custom hiring centres (CHCs) in NCT of Delhi and the States of Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh. During 2018-2022, total fund released to Delhi and other States under the said Scheme is Rs. 2440.07 crores using which, over 2 lakh crop residue machineries have been delivered to individual farmers and CHCs, and over 39,000 CHCs have been established.
2. CPCB has framed guidelines for providing one time financial assistance for setting up of paddy straw based pelletization and torrefaction plants which may help in addressing the supply chain issues and the issue of open burning of paddy straw in agriculture fields in Northern Region. A corpus of Rs. 50 crores has been earmarked for utilisation through the guidelines.
3. An addendum to the above said CPCB Guidelines was also issued under which one-time financial assistance is provided to Municipal Corporations, Municipal Councils and ZillaParishads of the states of Punjab, Haryana, NCT of Delhi and NCR districts of Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan, for establishing paddy straw based briquetting plants for use of briquettes by crematoria in the aforesaid regions only.
4. Directions issued by CAQM to State governments of Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh to strictly and effectively implement framework and revised action plan to eliminate and control stubble burning.

All these measures undertaken for control of air pollution are expected to provide health benefits to the population of all age groups.
