

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE

RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 1180
TO BE ANSWERED ON 01.08.2024

Pollution and smog in the National Capital Region

1180. SMT. SAGARIKA GHOSE:

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

- (a) Whether, with the winter months ahead, Government is prepared for the high levels of smog and pollution that affect New Delhi, the National Capital Region and the steps, including inter-State co-operation, Government intends to take to minimize the pollution and smog this year;
- (b) The various health complications that have arisen from these heightened pollution levels; and
- (c) The level of daily AQI in Delhi during the winter months of October to February, 2023?

ANSWER

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

(a) :

Air pollution in the National Capital Region (NCR) is a collective result of multiple factors including high levels 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 activities, Road and Open Areas Dust, Biomass Burning, Municipal Solid Waste burning, Fires in Landfills and air pollution from dispersed sources, etc. During post-monsoon and winter months, lower temperature, lower mixing heights, inversion conditions and stagnant winds lead to the trapping of the pollutants resulting in high pollution in the region. This is further aggravated due to the emissions from episodic events like stubble burning, firecrackers, etc.

With a view to abate and control air pollution in Delhi NCR, the Commission for Air Quality Management in NCR and Adjoining Areas, constituted in 2021, adopting an air-shed like approach has devised a comprehensive policy for abatement of pollution in NCR in July 2022, stipulating sector specific action points quantifying targets along with timelines and implementation plan by various agencies in NCR States including the State of Punjab with respect to abatement of air pollution owing to crop residue burning. The policy framework details sector-wise interventions, quantified targets and timelines for 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 and air pollution from dispersed

sources etc. Since inception, the Commission has issued 81 directions and 14 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.

Particularly towards abating air pollution from paddy stubble burnings the Commission through statutory Directions dated 10.06.2021 had provided for a framework for control/elimination of crop residue burning and directed to draw up the state-specific action plans based on the major contours of the Framework. The Governments of Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and Government of NCT of Delhi accordingly formulated state specific action plans for prevention and control of paddy stubble burning during the paddy harvest season in 2021, 2022 and 2023 respectively. Based on the framework and learnings from the year 2021, 2022 and 2023, the action plans for Punjab, Haryana and UP (NCR Districts) have been further revised and updated for the upcoming paddy harvest season during 2024 including various measures for in-situ and; ex-situ management of stubble and also focusing on IEC activities and enforcement mechanism. The Commission has issued revised statutory directions to the Chief Secretaries of Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and Delhi on 12.04.2024 for "Implementation and review of the updated/revised plan of action for prevention and control of stubble burning in 2024".

Further, the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) which is an emergency response measure, provides a specific set of actions depending on air pollution levels, which are to be implemented by identified agencies for combating the adverse air quality, particularly during the winter periods. Stricter regulations and restrictions imposed during the periods under GRAP help in averting further deterioration of Air Quality.

Other preparatory measures for control of air pollution during the forthcoming winter season are as following:

- The MoEF&CC in coordination with CAQM has taken a review meeting on 25.07.2024 under the chairmanship of Secretary, MoEF&CC to review the Air Quality Management in Delhi NCR and to discuss steps needed to be taken in the major sectors affecting air quality in winter months. The concerned Ministries along with officials of State Governments of National Capital Territory of Delhi (GNCTD), Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan have attended the meeting.
- An Inter-Ministerial Committee (IMC) has also been constituted in December 2023 under the Chairmanship of Additional Secretary, Department of Agriculture & Farmers' Welfare. Regular IMC meetings are being conducted on monthly basis wherein officials of concerned ministries and officials of State governments of NCR state and Punjab also present the status of preparedness for in-situ Management and Ex-situ management of Paddy straw for the forthcoming harvesting season.
- 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.
- Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) vide letter dated 13.06.2024 has directed Uttar Pradesh Pollution Control Board, Haryana State Pollution Control Board and Rajasthan State Pollution Control Board to get the clean air city action plans prepared for some cities in their state. SPCBs have been asked to make efforts to get the plans approved for implementation before the onset of winter season.
- 40 teams have been deputed by CPCB since December 2021, to assist Commission for Air Quality Management in National Capital Region and Adjoining Areas (CAQM), for

conducting incognito inspections of air polluting industries, Construction & Demolition (C&D) sites, DG sets in Delhi- NCR to check the implementation status of pollution control measures and compliance of other provisions of the Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981. A total of 19282 units/ entities/ projects have been inspected as on July 19, 2024. Based on these inspections, CAQM has issued Closure Directions in 1036 cases and out of these resumption orders have been issued in 792 cases while 152 cases are still under closure and cases of 92 balance units have been transferred to SPCBs / DPCC for final decision. The inspections are intensified during the winter season in view of deterioration of air quality.

- CPCB has framed guidelines for providing one-time financial assistance for setting up 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 have been earmarked for utilisation through the guidelines. Under the above said guidelines, 15 plants has been sanctioned out of which 09 plants (03 in Mansa, 01 in Patiala, 01 in Hoshiarpur, 01 in Amritsar, 01 in Bathinda, 01 in Rupnagar and 01 in Sirsa) with a potential of paddy straw utilization of 1.77 lakh MT/ annum are already operational.

(b):

Air pollution is one of the factors affecting respiratory ailments and associated diseases. Health is impacted by several factors which include food habits, occupational habits, socio-economic status, medical history, immunity, heredity, etc., of the individuals apart from the environment.

(c):

Daily level of Air Quality Index (AQI) in Delhi during the winter months of October to February 2023 are annexed at **Annexure-I**. AQI of Delhi for the months of October 2022 to February 2023 indicates that in all the 5 months the bad days were more than the good days. However, there were no (0) severe days in the months of October 2022 and February 2023, two (2) severe days in December 2022 and three (3) severe days each in the months of November 2022 and January 2023.

Annexure-I

Day	Oct-22	Nov-22	Dec-22	Jan-23	Feb-23
1	186	424	368	259	164
2	181	376	352	357	194
3	128	450	370	385	199
4	150	447	407	343	242
5	211	381	347	340	244
6	79	339	353	400	265
7	55	354	304	377	285
8	56	372	281	375	144
9	48	260	314	434	212
10	44	295	360	407	187
11	66	346	306	308	275
12	143	303	218	371	175
13	130	303	177	378	135
14	154	294	163	353	132
15	186	227	189	213	190
16	232	264	223	270	270
17	237	260	304	288	367
18	241	289	353	306	371
19	234	280	410	338	331
20	232	314	366	226	324
21	262	310	328	294	245
22	265	255	342	407	302
23	259	237	359	335	227
24	312	213	349	237	171
25	302	294	308	160	225
26	271	336	331	298	291
27	354	328	339	229	260
28	357	333	321	236	219
29	397	369	306	331	
30	352	365	399	207	
31	392		349	192	
Good	2				
Satisfactory	4				
Moderate	8		3	2	10
Poor	10	12	3	11	13
Very poor	7	15	23	15	5
Severe		3	2	3	