

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE

RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 1329
TO BE ANSWERED ON 11.12.2025

Continuing air pollution in NCR

1329. SHRI KAPIL SIBAL:

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

- (a) the current status of air quality in the National Capital Region (NCR), as of October 2025, including the average AQI levels in Delhi and its satellite cities;
- (b) the steps Government has initiated under the National Clean Air Programme (NCAP) to reduce stubble burning incidents in the States of Punjab and Haryana during the 2025 Kharif harvesting season; and
- (c) the details of funds allocated and utilized under NCAP for NCR States during the year 2024-25 and 2025-26?

ANSWER

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

(a) to (c): The average AQI levels of key cities in NCR including Delhi and satellite cities are enclosed at **Annexure I**.

National Clean Air Programme (NCAP) launched by the Government is a long-term, time-bound, national-level strategy to address air pollution in 130 non-attainment and million plus cities/urban agglomeration in 24 States/UTs.

Funds provided under NCAP are utilised by the cities/urban local bodies to implement City specific Clean Air Action Plans to address air pollution sources like soil & road dust, vehicular emissions, waste burning, Construction & Demolition activities and industrial pollution for air quality improvement.

The funds made available under NCAP are spent in accordance with the city action plan for air quality management and control comprising mandatory fulfilment of laid down criteria, implementing reform measures and action plan related to improvement of air quality.

Out of the NCAP cities in Delhi-NCR, 10 cities of Punjab and Haryana (Faridabad from Haryana and 9 cities of Punjab: Ludhiana, Amritsar, Pathankot/Dera Baba Nanak, Naya

Nangal, Jalandhar, Khanna, Mandi Gobindgarh, Patiala & Dera Bassi) face the issue of stubble burning, and are surrounded by agriculture area, and a lot of agriculture waste is generated during post harvesting paddy and wheat season. During wheat season, stubble burning is lesser than paddy season as the farmers use the wheat crop residue as cattle fodder.

The action plans of the aforementioned 10 cities include actions related to addressing the stubble burning, namely engaging Punjab Remote Sensing Centre for real time monitoring and reporting of stubble burning incidents, constitution of District level committees to verify the reported sites and issue challans to the violators, use super SMS with the combine harvesters, ensuring electricity for farmers for in-situ management, promotion of mechanical reincorporation of paddy straw (mulching of paddy straw into the field after cutting into small pieces) to prevent burning and promoting awareness among farmers regarding health effects of residue burning.

An amount of Rs. 829.61 crore has been released to NCR States (Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, and Rajasthan & Delhi) and Rs. 779.59 crore has been utilized during FY 2024-25 & 2025-26 under NCAP.

In addition to the inclusion of action plan related to stubble/biomass/waste burning in the City Action Plan of NCAP cities, stubble burning is monitored intensively by the Commission for Air Quality Management in NCR and Adjoining Areas (CAQM), separately through number of statutory directions besides the regulations issued by the Ministry from time to time. The following steps have been taken to control stubble burning in the States of Punjab and Haryana:

- (i) MoEFCC through notification dated 11.07.2023, as amended, notified Environment (Utilisation of Crop Residue by Thermal Power Plants) Rules, 2023 mandating minimum five per cent blend of pellets or briquettes made of agriculture crop residue along with coal by the Thermal Power Plants in the NCR and Adjoining Areas.
- (ii) Minister level Inter-Ministerial meeting was held on 07.10.2025 under the Co-chairmanship of Hon'ble Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change and Hon'ble Minister for Agriculture & Farmers' Welfare on the issues of management of Crop Residue Burning;
- (iii) Regular review meetings have been held on 08.08.2025, 16.09.2025, 10.10.2025 and 11.11.2025 under the chairmanship of the Hon'ble Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change, on the issues relating to air pollution control in Delhi-NCR, to deliberate upon the undertaking of air pollution abatement measures and strategies for further strengthening air quality management across the region;
- (iv) Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) provides one-time financial support for establishment of pelletization and Torrefaction plants to promote utilisation of paddy straw.
- (v) CAQM developed a framework for effective prevention and control of Stubble Burning in consultation with the State Governments of Punjab, Haryana, UP, Rajasthan, Government of NCT of Delhi, State Pollution Control Boards of NCR

States and Delhi Pollution Control Committee (DPCC) and various other stakeholders viz. Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO), Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), Indian Agricultural Research Institute (IARI), etc.

- (vi) Based on the framework advised by the Commission, through direction dated 10.06.2021 and on learnings from the years 2021, 2022, 2023 and 2024, State Governments of Punjab, Haryana and UP prepared State specific action plans for the year 2025.
- (vii) Statutory Direction was issued by the Commission to the respective States for strict implementation of the framework and action plan for prevention and control of paddy stubble burning during the year 2025, targeting to eliminate the practice through strict enforcement.
- (viii) State Action Plan aims to promote sustainable agriculture practices to reduce generation of paddy straw. Key measures of the plan include the purchase of CRM machines for its optimal utilization; crop diversification; promoting Basmati variety as this is conveniently used as cattle fodder; promoting low-straw and early-maturing paddy varieties; IEC Activities – to enhance time window between harvesting of paddy and sowing of rabi crop such as, wheat, potato, mustard etc.; and promoting the direct seeding of rice method against transplant to shorten the overall crop cycle etc.
- (ix) Guided by the Commission, ISRO developed a standard protocol, in consultation with major stakeholders including IARI, for recording and monitoring of crop residue burning events and paddy burnt area estimation, to avoid a diverse assessment of fire events/counts.
- (x) The Commission has issued directives & advisories to various stakeholders including the 11 thermal power plants located within 300 km of Delhi, State Governments of Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh on “Ex-Situ Stubble Management” and to establish an ecosystem and robust supply chain mechanism to boost ex-situ utilisation of straw for tackling the problem of stubble burning mandating co-firing of biomass pellets (up to 5 to 10%). Similar direction has also been issued to coal based Captive Thermal Power Plants in the NCR.
- (xi) Commission directed the State Governments of Punjab and Haryana to mandate use of paddy straw-based bio-mass pellets / briquettes in all brick kilns located in the districts beyond NCR, as one of the means towards elimination of the practice of open paddy stubble burning.
- (xii) Commission directed to Plan for rent-free availability of CRM machines for small / marginal farmers.
- (xiii) Commission has issued directions to authorize the Deputy Commissioners / District Collectors / District Magistrates in the States of Punjab, Haryana, NCR areas of Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh and in the NCT of Delhi to file a complaint before jurisdictional judicial magistrate, in case of inaction in respect of officials, including

nodal officers and supervisory officers at various levels and Station House Officers, responsible for effective enforcement.

- (xiv) A team of Flying Squads from CPCB has been deputed from 01-10-2025 to 30-11-2025 in identified hotspot districts in Punjab and Haryana to closely monitor the actions and coordinate with the concerned authorities / officers at the district level, officers of the Pollution Control Boards/CAQM cell.
- (xv) A monitoring cell for the prevention and control of paddy stubble was set up during the paddy harvest season.

With the coordinated efforts, the States of Punjab and Haryana have collectively recorded about 90% reduction in fire incidences during paddy harvesting season in the year 2025 in comparison to the same period in the year 2022.

Annexure I

Average Air Quality Index (AQI) of Delhi and satellite cities in October, 2025

S. No.	State / UT	City	Average AQI for the month of Oct 2025
1	Delhi	Delhi	223
2	Haryana	Bahadurgarh	220
3		Ballabgarh	241
4		Bhiwani	151
5		Charkhi Dadri	163
6		Dharuhera	235
7		Faridabad	145
8		Gurugram	190
9		Jind	159
10		Karnal	156
11		Mandikhera	89
12		Manesar	184
13		Narnaul	151
14		Palwal	95
15		Panipat	182
16		Rohtak	209
17		Sonipat	253
18	Rajasthan	Alwar	95
19		Bharatpur	138
20		Bhiwadi	205
21	Uttar Pradesh	Baghpat	198
22		Bulandshahr	180
23		Ghaziabad	227
24		Greater Noida	223
25		Hapur	194
26		Khurja	129
27		Meerut	202
28		Muzaffarnagar	180
29		Noida	236
