

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE

RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 56
TO BE ANSWERED ON 29.01.2026

Air Quality Index (AQI)

56. DR. SYED NASEER HUSSAIN:

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

the number of cities where the Air Quality Index (AQI) remained in the "poor", "very poor" or "severe" category during the last three years and the corrective measures taken under the National Clean Air Programme (NCAP) to address the same?

ANSWER

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

Air Quality Index (AQI) having 201-300 is categorized as 'Poor', 301-400 is categorized as 'very poor', and 401-500 is categorized as 'Severe' air quality. Details of cities where Air Quality Index (AQI) remained in poor, very poor and severe during last 3 years, are provided below:

Year	2023			2024			2025		
Category of AQI	Poor	Very Poor	Severe	Poor	Very Poor	Severe	Poor	Very Poor	Severe
No. of Cities	235	157	46	225	143	25	224	109	18

National Clean Air Programme (NCAP) launched by Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) in January 2019 aims to improve air quality in 130 cities (non-attainment cities and Million Plus Cities) in 24 States/UTs. NCAP is multi-sectoral initiative involving the coordinated efforts of the Central and State Governments, Urban Local Bodies (ULBs), and other stakeholders. It emphasizes source-specific mitigation measures through city, state, and national-level clean air action plans.

Out of 130 cities, 48 Million-Plus Cities/ Urban Agglomerations are funded under XVth Finance Commission Million-Plus City Challenge Fund as an air quality performance grant, and remaining 82 cities are funded under Control of Pollution Scheme of MoEFCC.

Performance linked grant of ₹ 13,852.20 crore has been released to 130 cities as a critical gap funding to implement air pollution mitigation measures, since 2019-20 till date for which action plans have been prepared by the cities. To strengthen the implementation of Air Pollution

mitigation measures more effectively, the Air Quality Challenge Method guidelines has been issued.

The saturation based action plan are implemented under NCAP by convergence of resources from various Central Government schemes such as Swachh Bharat Mission (Urban), AMRUT, Smart City Mission, SATAT, PM e-Bus Sewa, PM e-Drive and Nagar Van Yojana including resources from State Governments, UT Administrations, Municipal Corporations, and Urban Development Authorities to implement City Action Plans (CAPs). Performance based incentive grant is provided under NCAP to cities for funding the critical gap.

Under NCAP, all 24 States/UTs have prepared State level Action Plans on air quality management to implement policies and programmes connected with air quality improvement. Further, City Specific Clean Air Action Plans have been prepared and rolled out for implementation in all 130 non-attainment/million plus cities through urban local bodies to improve the air quality. These city specific clean air action plans target specific air polluting sources like Soil & road dust, vehicles, domestic fuel, Waste and biomass burning, construction material and industries with short-term priority actions as well as medium to long term actions along with the responsible agencies.

To tackle air pollution in emergencies, Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) for Delhi-NCR has been prepared, which provides set of emergency response actions, depending on severity of air pollution levels, and implemented by identified agencies for minimizing air pollution, a situation that generally persists in the Delhi-NCR during the peak winter months.

Emergency Response System (ERS) in line with Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) of Delhi-NCR, has been developed in identified non-attainment/ million plus cities under NCAP. The higher emission zones/hotspots within the city have been identified and detailed action plan for the identified sources in these hotspots have been prepared. Public Grievance Redressal System also been developed in non-attainment/ million plus cities wherein air pollution issues are addressed.

Air Quality Forecast and Early Warning System (AQEWS) in 47 cities operated by IMD and IITM provides information to public as well as authorities on air quality 3-4 days in advance enabling them for timely implementation of air pollution control measures under the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP)/Emergency Response Plan (ERP).

A centralised air quality portal and mobile app-SAMEER are functional for tracking and dissemination of near real time air quality data and hourly Air Quality Index to the public. CPCB issues a daily bulletin at 04:00 PM comprising AQI of various cities in the country including Delhi-NCR. SAMEER app also serves as a grievance redressal mechanism which allows the citizens to report pollution related complaints for quick resolution by the concerned agencies.

The focused actions by 130 cities under NCAP have shown positive results with 103 cities showing reduction in PM₁₀ concentration in 2024-25 with respect to 2017-18, 64 cities have shown reduction in PM₁₀ levels by more than 20% with respect to base year 2017-18 and 25 of these cities have achieved a reduction of more than 40%. A total of 22 Cities have met NAAQS and have PM₁₀ Concentrations less than 60 µg/m³.
