

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE

RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 75
TO BE ANSWERED ON 29.01.2026

Regulating air quality

75. SHRI HARIS BEERAN:

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

- (a) the details of action taken by Government for regulating air quality and reducing pollution across the country;
- (b) whether Government has any proposal or policies for air pollution reduction, enforcement of laws and industrial emissions; and
- (c) if so, the details thereof?

ANSWER

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

(a) to (c): The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) regulate air quality by issuance of various notifications under Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981 and Environment (Protection) Act, 1986. Concerned State Pollution Control Boards (SPCBs) or Pollution Control Committees (PCCs) regulate air quality through Consent mechanism (Consent to Establish and Consent to Operate) under the provisions of the Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981. Additionally, specific categories of industries are regulated under the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Notification, 2006 through grant of Environmental Clearance (EC) and filing of half-yearly compliance reports by the industries.

Central Government has been conferred powers under Section 5 of The Environment (Protection) Act, 1986, to issue directions in writing to any person, officer or any authority for performing its functions, which includes closure, prohibition or regulation of any industry, operation or process; or stoppage or regulation of the supply of electricity or water or any other service.

Section 7 of the E(P) Act, 1986, mandates industries, operations and processes not to discharge or emit any environmental pollutants in excess of prescribed standards.

Under Section 10 of the E(P) Act, 1986, officers empowered by Central Government have the right to enter any premises for performing functions entrusted to them and determining whether any provisions of the Act/ Rules/ Directions have been complied with.

Section 14 (A), 14 (B), 15 and 15 (A) of the E(P) Act, 1986 provides for imposing a penalty of not less than ten lakh rupees and which may extend up to fifteen lakh rupees for contravention of provisions of Act, rules, orders and directions including contravention of Section 5, 7 and 10.

Under Section 15C of the E(P) Act, 1986, Central Government has appointed adjudicating officers in the Central Government and State Governments to hold an inquiry and impose penalty in case of such contraventions.

Section 18 of the Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981, empowers Central Government to issue directions to the Central Pollution Control Board for performing its functions and further, Central Pollution Control Board or the State Government to issue directions to State Pollution Control Board.

Section 22 of the Air Act, 1981 mandates industrial plants in air pollution control area not to discharge any emissions in excess of the standards.

Further, Section 31 A of the Air Act, 1981, provides powers to State Pollution Control Boards to issue directions to any person or authority for performing its functions, which include directions for closure, prohibition or regulation of any industry, operation or process, stoppage or regulation of supply of electricity, water and any other service.

Section 37 of the Air Act, 1981, provides power to impose penalty not less than ten lakh rupees and which may extend up to fifteen lakh rupees, in case of contravention or non-compliance with the provisions of Section 22 and 31 A.

Under Section 39 A of the Air Act, 1981, Central Government for the purposes of determining the penalties has appointed adjudicating officers in the Central Government and State Government to hold an inquiry and to impose the penalty in case of such contraventions.

Under the extant legal framework, MoEF&CC notified National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) for 12 air pollutants in industrial, residential, rural and ecologically sensitive areas for maintaining ambient air quality and protection of public health. To control industrial pollution, the Ministry of Environment Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) has notified "Standards for Emission or Discharge of Environmental Pollutants for various industries" under Schedule-I of the Environment Protection Rules, 1986.

To implement various programmes and schemes, and enforce the legal framework, the Central Pollution Control Board, State Environment Departments, State level Environment Impact Assessment Authorities, State Pollution Control Boards/Pollution Control Committees and Local bodies have been enabled with administrative and executive powers under the legal framework.

State Pollution Control Boards/Pollution Control Committees, through Consent mechanism under Water Act, 1974 and Air Act, 1981, monitor the establishment and operation of industries and polluting activities through prescription of pollution control measures and monitoring the compliance of environmental standards.

CPCB has directed SPCBs/PCCs to inspect red, orange, and green categories of industries at a minimum inspection frequency of 6 months, 1 year and 2 years for verification of compliance

of environmental norms. In addition, common waste management/treatment facilities such as STPs, CETPs, CBMWTFs etc., and 17 categories of high pollution potential industries are to be inspected on quarterly basis by SPCBs/PCCs.

In case of Projects/Activities covered under the Schedule to the EIA Notification, 2006, as amended, environmental impacts are appraised and environmental management plans are prepared incorporating pollution control, prevention and abatement measures while granting prior environmental clearance so as to put in place appropriate environmental safeguards.

As a step towards pollution mitigation from industrial areas, CPCB formulated Comprehensive Environmental Pollution Index (CEPI), ranging from 0 to 100 to characterize environmental quality at a given industrial area and accordingly SPCBs/PCCs have been directed to conduct the CEPI monitoring in all polluted industrial areas. Industrial areas have been categorised as Critically, Severely and Other Polluted Areas (CPA/SPA/OPAs) based on Comprehensive Environmental Pollution Index (CEPI). Concerned State Pollution Control Board/Pollution Control Committee have prepared Action Plans to address environmental pollution including air pollution in the Critically polluted areas.

To address industrial pollution in the Critically and Severely Polluted Industrial Areas, SPCBs/PCCs have prepared the action plans to bring down the levels of CEPI score and these action plans are monitored periodically by SPCB/PCCs as well as CPCB.

CPCB has directed all 17 categories of high pollution potential industries and common waste treatment facilities to install Online Continuous Effluent/ Emission Monitoring Systems (OCEMS) for strengthening monitoring mechanism and effective compliance through self-regulatory mechanism and constant vigil on pollution levels. Real-time values of environmental pollutants of trade effluent and emissions generated through OCEMS are transmitted online to CPCB and concerned SPCB/PCC on 24x7 basis. Central software processes the data and in case of value of pollutant parameter exceeds prescribed environmental norms, an automatic SMS alert is generated and sent to industrial unit, SPCB and CPCB, so that corrective measures can be taken by the industry immediately and appropriate action can be taken by concerned SPCB/PCC/CPCB.

During last three years i.e. 2023-25, a total of 412 units were inspected under OCEMS-based inspections. Out of these 412 units, 252 units were found non-complying with environmental norms, against which actions as deemed fit based on the gravity of violation and provisions of the environmental laws has been taken.

Government has launched National Clean Air Programme (NCAP) in 2019 as a national level strategy to reduce air pollution in 130 cities in 24 States and Union Territories. The programme emphasizes preparation and implementation of national, state, and city-level action plans.

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.

Under NCAP, performance-based incentive grants are provided to cities to bridge critical gaps. It also leverages the benefit from Central Government, State Government, ULB schemes that contribute for mitigation and prevention of air pollution such as Swachh Bharat Mission (Urban), AMRUT, Smart City Mission, SATAT, PM e-Bus Sewa, PM E-DRIVE, and Nagar Van Yojana through convergence.

The Government has taken various initiatives to mitigate air pollution, including measures to control vehicular emissions, industrial emissions, Construction and Demolition (C&D) waste, Municipal Solid Waste (MSW), as well as measures to control road dust, construction dust, and open burning. For waste management, CPCB has issued guidelines on C&D waste and solid waste.

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.

Other key measures taken by the Central Government for air quality management are as follows:

- i. To address air pollution in Delhi-NCR, Government has established the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) under the Commission for Air Quality Management in NCR and Adjoining Areas Act, 2021 for better coordination, research,

identification and resolution of problems of air pollution in Delhi- NCR and adjoining areas. Commission has been provided powers under the Act to take measures and issue directions to the various agencies in the National Capital Region for protecting and improving air quality.

- ii. The Commission has addressed the issue of air pollution in Delhi-NCR in a collective, collaborative and participative mode involving all the major stakeholders. The Commission has so far issued 95 Statutory Directions to specifically guide and direct various actions towards abatement of air pollution in the region. A monitoring mechanism to oversee the implementation of these directions has been put in place.
- iii. Leapfrogging to Bharat Stage-VI (BS-VI) vehicle norms for fuel and emissions from 1st April, 2020;
- iv. Vehicle Scrapping Policy, Rules for Registered Vehicle Scrapping Facilities and Automated Testing Stations by MoRTH;
- v. Waste management rules for solid waste, plastic waste, hazardous waste, e-waste, battery waste, biomedical waste, 100% ash utilisation by Thermal Power Plants;
- vi. Market-based Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) regulations introduced for waste categories, viz. plastic packaging, e-waste, battery waste, waste tyres & used oil;
- vii. Mandate for utilisation of minimum 5% of crop residue along with coal (pellets/briquettes) in thermal power plants in Delhi-NCR and adjoining areas.
