



drishti

New Commission for Air Quality Management

 drishtias.com/printpdf/new-commission-for-air-quality-management-1

Why in News

The **Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MoEFCC)** is set to table the **Commission for Air Quality Management in the National Capital Region and Adjoining Areas Bill, 2021** in Parliament during the **Monsoon Session**.

Key Points

- **Background and New Changes:**
 - Initially, the **Commission for Air Quality Management ordinance** was promulgated by the **President** in October, 2020 but the bill to replace the ordinance was not passed in the **budget session of Parliament**, as a result of which the commission ceased to operate in March, 2021.
 - Subsequently, the **MoEFCC brought a second ordinance in April 2021**, with modifications due to the **farmers' protest**.
 - Farmers had raised concerns of **stiff penalties and possible jail terms for stubble burning** (as stated in the first ordinance).
 - The **government has decriminalised the act of stubble burning** and withdrawn the clause for possible jail time.
 - However, **environmental compensation fees** are levied on those who are found to be engaged in stubble burning, including farmers.
- **About the Bill:**
 - It provides for the constitution of a Commission for better coordination, research, identification, and resolution of problems related to air quality in the **National Capital Region (NCR) and adjoining areas**.

Adjoining areas have been defined as areas in the **states of Haryana, Punjab, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh adjoining the NCR** where any source of pollution may cause **adverse impact on air quality in the NCR**.
 - It also dissolves the **Environment Pollution Prevention and Control Authority** established in the **NCR in 1998**.

- **Composition:**
 - The Commission will be headed by a **full-time chairperson** who has been a **Secretary to the Government of India, or a Chief Secretary to a State government**.
The chairperson will hold the **post for three years or until s/he attains the age of 70 years**.
 - It will have members from several Ministries as well as representatives from the stakeholder States.
 - It will have experts from the **Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)** and **Civil Society**.
- **Functions:**
 - **Coordinating actions** taken by concerned state governments (Delhi, Haryana, Punjab, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh).
 - **Planning and executing plans** to prevent and control air pollution in the NCR.
 - **Providing a framework** for identification of air pollutants.
 - **Conducting research and development** through networking with technical institutions.
 - **Training and creating a special workforce** to deal with issues related to air pollution.
 - **Preparing various action plans** such as increasing plantation and addressing stubble burning.
- **Powers:**
 - The new body will have the **power to issue directions and entertain complaints** as it deems necessary for the **purpose of protecting and improving the quality of the air** in the NCR and adjoining areas.
 - It will also **lay down parameters for control of air pollution (such as permissible levels of emissions and discharge of pollutants)**.
 - It will also be in **charge of identifying violators, monitoring factories and industries** and any other polluting unit in the region, and will have the **powers to shut down such units**.
 - It will also have the **powers to overrule directives issued by the state governments in the region**, that may be in violation of pollution norms.

Way Forward

- **Legal and regulatory changes** to tackle public issues like air pollution, need a **democratic conceptualisation**.
- There is a need for the **massive augmentation of intra-city public transport**, and to move industries, power plants and other users away from polluting fuels like coal to natural gas, electricity and renewable energy to ensure clean combustion.

- The government should undertake a **thorough review of the various laws and institutions** in order to look at their **efficacy and utility**; it must have detailed consultation with all relevant stakeholders, especially those outside Delhi, which includes farmers' groups and small scale industries and the public at large.

Source: IE