



Be Mains Ready

Rising air pollution in Delhi is a serious concern causing severe health hazards. Enumerate the reasons and measures taken by the government to combat this growing menace. (250 words)

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Approach / Explanation / Answer

Approach

- Write an introduction highlighting the relevant facts and status of air pollution in Delhi.
- Discuss the reasons for rising air pollution in Delhi citing facts about the costs in terms of health and threats caused by it.
- Explain the measures taken by the government highlighting the impending issues.
- Write a forward looking conclusion.

Introduction

- Air pollution is responsible for many health problems in the urban areas. Of late, the air pollution status in Delhi has undergone many changes in terms of the levels of pollutants and the control measures taken to reduce them. According to air quality data compiled by the World Health Organisation (WHO), Delhi is the world's most polluted city.
- Recent studies have found that all-natural-cause mortality and morbidity has increased with increased air pollution. Delhi has taken several steps to reduce the level of air pollution in the city during the last few years. However, more still needs to be done to further reduce the levels of air pollution.

Body

Reasons for high pollution in Delhi

- **Vehicular Emission:** Delhi has more than 9 million registered vehicles. Further, vehicles from the neighboring states entering in Delhi are also very high. The National Environmental Engineering Research Institute (NEERI) have found vehicular emission as a major contributor to Delhi's increasing air pollution.
- **Stubble Burning:** One of the main reasons for increasing air pollution during the month of October-November is crop burning by the farmers in Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh. It is estimated that approximately 35 million tonnes of crop are set afire by these states. The wind carries all the pollutants and dust particles, which get locked in the air.
- **Pollution during winter season:** During the winter season, dust particles and pollutants in the

air become stable due to stagnant winds, resulting in smog.

- **High Population:** Over-population adds up to the various types of pollution e.g. huge solid waste, water waste, construction activities emitting particulate pollution etc.
- **Construction Activities and Open waste burning:** Large-scale construction in Delhi-NCR leading to dust and pollution in the air.
- **Thermal Power Plant and Industries:** Industrial pollution and coal based power plants in Delhi and surrounding areas cause pollution in the air.
- **Firecrackers:** Firecrackers are used in Diwali celebrations as well as in weddings. It is the major reason for smog in Delhi after Diwali.
- **Geographical location:** This region is land-locked thus pollution cannot dissipate quickly as in coastal cities like Mumbai or Chennai.

Measures taken

- **Tackling Stubble burning:** The government is giving subsidy to farmers for buying Turbo Happy Seeder (THS) to control stubble burning from neighbouring states.
- **Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP):** The government has implemented GRAP which includes measures like shutting down Badarpur Thermal Power Plant, ban on construction activities and ban on burning of leaves/ biomass.
- **The National Clean Air Programme:** It is a pollution control initiative launched by the Ministry of Environment with the intention to cut the concentration of coarse (particulate matter of diameter 10 micrometer or less, or PM₁₀) and fine particles (particulate matter of diameter 2.5 micrometer or less, or PM_{2.5}) by at least 20% in 2024, with 2017 as the base year for comparison in 102 cities including Delhi.
 - The central government released the National Air Quality Index (AQI) for public information under the Central Pollution Control Board.
 - The April 2020 deadline for the country to implement BS-VI (Bharat Stage-VI is the Indian equivalent to Euro VI) grade fuels was advanced for Delhi to April 1, 2018, because of the extremely high levels of air pollution in the city.
 - Construction of Eastern and Western Expressways for by-passing non-destined traffic to Delhi. Prohibition on the entry of overloaded and non-destined trucks in Delhi and imposition of 'Green Tax'.

Impending Issues

- **Lack of Implementation:** Despite numerous steps taken by the government to deal with pollution in Delhi, the problem persists because of lack of implementation e.g. stubble burning has not stopped in neighboring states, ban on firecrackers failed miserably, clandestine burning of industrial waste continues etc.
- **Pollution from adjoining states:** Delhi's air pollution is a regional problem; study conducted by the National Environmental Engineering Research Institute (NEERI) showed that about 60% of the PM_{2.5} burden in Delhi is due to the neighboring states. No policy is likely to work unless it takes regional considerations into account.

Conclusion

Delhi air pollution is a severe health hazard for about 26 million people in NCR, its control should be a policy priority. It needs to be tackled through a multi pronged approach involving creation of right infrastructure like public transport, waste management support from neighboring states etc.