



Improved Air Quality of Indian Cities

Why in News

Recently, the Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, while speaking at the [International Day of Clean Air For Blue Skies](#), informed that the number of cities with **improved air quality** had increased.

- On the occasion, he also inaugurated the **first functional Smog Tower at Anand Vihar** in Delhi and launched **Portal for Regulation of Air-pollution or 'Prana'**.
- Earlier, a [Smog Tower was installed](#) in Delhi's Connaught Place and India's [Tallest Air Purifier](#) was also inaugurated in Chandigarh.

Key Points

▪ Air Quality Status:

◦ In 2020:

- Cities with **improved air quality had increased to 104 in 2020 from 86 in 2018.**

◦ From 2015-2019:

- [Particulate Matter \(PM\) 10 levels](#): 23 cities marking a "decreasing trend", 239 cities a "fluctuating trend" & 38 cities an "increasing trend".
- **PM 2.5 levels**: 11 cities showed a decreasing trend, 79 cities a fluctuating trend and 9 cities an increasing trend.

▪ Reason for Improvement:

- [Covid-19](#) related lockdown had resulted in a "temporary improvement" of air quality in many cities **due to closure of industries, fewer vehicles plying, drop in construction activities and absence of human activities.**
- Government **initiatives to tackle air pollution** also helped in improving air quality in recent years.

▪ Prana Portal:

- It was launched under the [National Clean Air Programme \(NCAP\)](#) in Non-Attainment Cities (NAC), cities which didn't meet [Ambient Air Quality Standards](#) under NCAP.
 - It is targeted to **achieve 20-30% reduction in particulate matter** (PM10 and PM2.5) concentrations across the country by 2024.
- It will support tracking of physical as well as financial status of **city air action plan implementation, and disseminate information** on air quality to the public.

▪ Related Initiatives:

◦ System of Air Quality and Weather Forecasting and Research:

- Known as "SAFAR", for greater metropolitan cities of India to provide location

specific information on air quality in near real time.

- **Air Quality Index:**

- **AQI** is a tool for effective communication of air quality status to people in terms, which are easy to understand.

- **Graded Response Action Plan for Delhi and NCR** has been prepared for implementation under different AQI categories.

- AQI has been developed for **eight pollutants** viz. PM2.5, PM10, Ammonia, Lead, nitrogen oxides, sulfur dioxide, ozone, and carbon monoxide.

- **For Reducing Vehicular Pollution:**

- The introduction of **BS-VI vehicles**, push for **Electric Vehicles** (EVs), **Odd-Even** as an emergency measure and construction of the Eastern and Western Peripheral Expressways to reduce vehicular pollution.

- **New Commission for Air Quality Management:**

- It is made for better coordination, research, identification, and resolution of problems related to air quality in the National Capital Region (NCR) and adjoining areas.

- Subsidy to farmers for buying **Turbo Happy Seeder (THS)** which is a machine mounted on a tractor that cuts and uproots the stubble, in order to reduce stubble burning.

Particulate Matter

- **About:**

- Also called **particle pollution**, a term for **a mixture of solid particles and liquid droplets found in the air**. It **causes respiratory problems and also reduces visibility**.

- **It includes:**

- **PM10:** inhalable particles, with diameters that are generally 10 micrometers and smaller; and
- **PM2.5:** fine inhalable particles, with diameters that are generally 2.5 micrometers and smaller.

- **Sources of PM:**

- Some are emitted directly from a source, such as **construction sites, unpaved roads, fields, smokestacks or fires**.

Source: IE