



New Target to Reduce Air Pollution

For Prelims: National Clean Air Programme, Central Pollution Control Board

For Mains: Environmental Pollution & Degradation

Why in News?

Recently, the Centre has set a **new target of a 40% reduction in particulate matter concentration** in cities covered under the [National Clean Air Programme \(NCAP\)](#) by 2026, updating the earlier goal of 20 to 30% reduction by 2024.

What is the National Clean Air Programme?

▪ About:

- It was launched by the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MoEFCC) in **January 2019**.
- It is the **first-ever effort in the country to frame a national framework** for air quality management with a time-bound reduction target.
- It **seeks 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 PM2.5) by at least 20% in the next five years, with 2017 as the base year for comparison.
- It covers 132 non-attainment cities which were identified by the [Central Pollution Control Board \(CPCB\)](#).
 - **Non-attainment cities** are those that have fallen short of the **National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS)** for over five years.
 - NAAQS are the standards for ambient air quality with reference to various identified pollutant notified by the CPCB under **the Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981**. List of pollutants under NAAQS: PM10, PM2.5, SO₂, NO₂, CO, NH₃, Ozone, Lead, Benzene, Benzo-Pyrene, Arsenic and Nickel.

▪ Objective:

- To augment and evolve effective and proficient ambient air quality monitoring networks across the country.
- To have **efficient data dissemination and public outreach mechanisms** for timely measures for prevention and mitigation of air pollution.
- To have a **feasible management plan for prevention**, control and abatement of air pollution.

What are Initiatives taken by India for Controlling Air Pollution?

- [System of Air Quality and Weather Forecasting and Research \(SAFAR\) Portal](#)
- [Air Quality Index](#): AQI has been developed for eight pollutants viz. PM2.5, PM10, Ammonia, Lead, nitrogen oxides, sulphur dioxide, ozone, and carbon monoxide.

- [Graded Response Action Plan \(for Delhi\)](#)
- For Reducing Vehicular Pollution:
 - [BS-VI Vehicles](#),
 - [Push for Electric Vehicles \(EVs\)](#),
 - [Odd-Even Policy](#) as an emergency measure (for Delhi)
- [New Commission for Air Quality Management](#)
- Subsidy to farmers for buying [Turbo Happy Seeder \(THS\) Machine](#) for reducing stubble burning.
- [National Air Quality Monitoring Programme \(NAMP\)](#):
 - Under NAMP, four air pollutants viz. SO₂, NO₂, PM₁₀, and PM_{2.5} have been identified for regular monitoring at all locations.

UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Prelims

Q. In the cities of our country, which among the following atmospheric gases are normally considered in calculating the value of Air Quality Index? (2016)

1. Carbon dioxide
2. Carbon monoxide
3. Nitrogen dioxide
4. Sulfur dioxide
5. Methane

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- (a) 1, 2 and 3 only
 (b) 2, 3 and 4 only
 (c) 1, 4 and 5 only
 (d) 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5

Ans: (b)

Exp:

- **National Air Quality Index (AQI)** is a tool for effective communication of air quality status to people in terms which are easy to understand. It transforms complex air quality data of various pollutants into a single number (index value), nomenclature and colour.
- There are six AQI categories, namely Good, Satisfactory, Moderately Polluted, Poor, Very Poor, and Severe.
- It considers eight pollutants namely:
 - Carbon Monoxide (CO), hence, 2 is correct.
 - Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂), hence, 3 is correct.
 - Sulphur Dioxide (SO₂), hence, 4 is correct.
 - Ozone (O₃),
 - PM 2.5,
 - PM 10,
 - Ammonia (NH₃),
 - Lead (Pb).
- **Therefore, option (b) is the correct answer.**

Mains

Q. Describe the key points of the revised Global Air Quality Guidelines (AQGs) recently released by the World Health Organisation (WHO). How are these different from its last update in 2005? What changes in India's National Clean Air Programme are required to achieve revised standards? (2021)

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