



Haryana's Crackdown on Stubble Burning

Why in News?

A Supreme Court bench expressed concern over the "**complete insensitivity**" of the state government in addressing air quality degradation due to stubble burning.

- The court directed the **Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM)** to take punitive measures against government officials for their failure to act against violators.

Key Points

- **Suspension of Officials:**
 - Haryana government suspended **24 agricultural department officials** for failing to prevent stubble burning in the state, a practice that contributes to severe **air pollution**.
 - The Haryana government has implemented stringent policies to curb stubble burning, which worsens air quality in the **NCR** and surrounding regions during winter.
- **Stubble Burning:**
 - Stubble burning is a process of setting on fire the **straw stubble**, left after the harvesting of grains, like paddy, wheat, etc. It is usually required in areas that use the combined harvesting method which leaves crop residue behind.
 - It is a common practice in October and November across North West India, but primarily in Punjab, Haryana, and Uttar Pradesh.
- **Effects of Stubble Burning:**
 - **Pollution:**
 - Emits large amounts of toxic pollutants in the atmosphere which contain harmful gases like **methane (CH₄)**, **Carbon Monoxide (CO)**, **Volatile Organic compounds (VOC)** and carcinogenic polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons.
 - These pollutants disperse in the surroundings, may undergo a **physical and chemical transformation** and eventually adversely affect human health by causing a thick blanket of **smog**.
 - **Soil Fertility:**
 - Burning husk on the ground destroys the nutrients in the soil, making it less fertile.
 - **Heat Penetration:**
 - The heat generated by stubble burning penetrates into the soil, leading to the loss of moisture and useful microbes.
- **Alternatives to Stubble Burning:**
 - Use of Technology- For example **Turbo Happy Seeder (THS)** machine, which can uproot the stubble and also sow seeds in the area cleared. The stubble can then be used as mulch for the field.

Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM)

- **About:**
 - CAQM is a statutory body formed under the **Commission for Air Quality Management in National Capital Region and Adjoining Areas, Act 2021**.
 - Earlier, the commission was formed through the promulgation of the **Commission for Air Quality Management in National Capital Region and Adjoining**

Areas Ordinance, 2021.

- The Commission for Air Quality Management in National Capital Region and Adjoining Areas, Act 2021 also dissolved the **Environment Pollution Prevention and Control Authority (EPCA)** established in the NCR in 1998.

▪ **Objectives:**

- To ensure better coordination, research, identification and resolution of problems surrounding the air quality index and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.

▪ **Scope:**

- 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 an adverse impact on air quality in the NCR.

▪ **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.**