

No pollution-reduction targets in Central plan

A man walks through smog near New Delhi on November 13, 2017. | Photo Credit: [REUTERS](#)

In a strange move that is unlikely to impress anyone concerned over the worsening air quality in our cities, the government has refrained from specifying pollution-reduction targets in its draft National Clean Air Programme (NCAP).

This is despite the fact that Environment Minister Harsh Vardhan had earlier said the programme would aim to reduce pollution in specific cities by “50% in five years.”

The NCAP was conceived as a detailed strategy to ensure that cities across the country meet specified air quality norms.

The draft NCAP will be open to public comments until May 17.

It envisions setting up 1,000 manual air-quality-monitoring stations (a 45% increase from the present number) and 268 automatic stations (triple the current 84). It also, for the first time, plans to set up pollution-monitoring stations in rural areas.

The NCAP follows from the Environment Ministry's submissions to the Supreme Court on March 8, 2018.

The Ministry submitted in the court that it was taking steps to address air pollution not only in Delhi but in around 100 cities.

“We will strengthen the National Clean Air Programme in around 100 non-attainment cities where parameters (of air quality) are not right and require attention. In the coming three years, we hope that through this, we will bring down pollution in these cities by 35 per cent and in the next five years by 50 per cent,” Mr. Vardhan had said in February.

Environment activists said the omission of targets was surprising given that they were deliberated upon in ministerial discussions last year when the NCAP was being gestated.

“A September 2017 meeting involving the Minister and senior officials clearly mentioned targets, as we discovered through a Right To Information (RTI) request,” said Sunil Dahiya, senior campaigner, Greenpeace India. *The Hindu* has reviewed these RTI notes.

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