

COMMITTEE CONSTITUTED TO OVERSEE CLEAN AIR PROGRAMME

Relevant for: Environment | Topic: Environmental Conservation, Sustainable Development, and EIA

The NCAP is to provide a framework to combat air pollution.

The Union Environment Ministry has constituted a committee to implement the National Clean Air Programme (NCAP), which aims to reduce particulate matter (PM) pollution by 20%-30% in at least 102 cities by 2024.

The committee will be chaired by the Secretary, Union Environment Ministry and has among its members the Joint Secretary (Thermal), Ministry of Power; Director-General, The Energy Resources Institute (TERI), the Delhi-based think-tank; and Professor Sachidananda Tripathi, Indian Institute of Technology-Kanpur (IIT-K).

The NCAP unveiled in January is envisaged as a scheme to provide the States and the Centre with a framework to combat air pollution.

The committee would be headquartered in New Delhi and its remit includes ensuring “inter-ministerial organisation and cooperation, sharing information and resolving issues that could arise between ministries... The committee would also give overall guidance and directions to effectively implement the programmes,” said a ministerial note.

The NCAP is envisioned as a five-year action plan with 2019 as the first year. There would be a review every five years.

States in which the cities are located are expected to produce plans that include increasing the number of monitoring stations, providing technology support, conducting source apportionment studies, and strengthening enforcement. For achieving the NCAP targets, the cities would be expected to calculate the reduction in pollution, keeping 2017's average annual PM levels as the base year.

The World Health Organisation's (WHO) database on air pollution over the years has listed Tier I and Tier II Indian cities as some of the most polluted places in the world. In 2018, 14 of the world's 15 most polluted cities were in India.

The NCAP requires cities to implement specific measures such as “ensuring roads are pothole-free to improve traffic flow and thereby reduce dust” (within 60 days) or “ensuring strict action against unauthorised brick kilns” (within 30 days). It doesn't specify an exact date for when these obligations kick in. Experts have criticised the lack of mandatory targets and the challenge of inadequate enforcement by cities.

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