

NCAP CAN'T DRIVE CHANGE UNLESS DATA, REPORTING ISSUES ARE FIXED - EDITORIALS - HINDUSTAN TIMES

Relevant for: Environment | Topic: Environmental Pollution - Air, Water, Soil & E-waste

Feb 28, 2020-Friday

-°C

Humidity

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Wind

-

Metro cities - [Delhi](#), [Mumbai](#), [Chennai](#), [Kolkata](#)

Other cities - [Noida](#), [Gurgaon](#), [Bengaluru](#), [Hyderabad](#), [Bhopal](#), [Chandigarh](#), [Dehradun](#), [Indore](#), [Jaipur](#), [Lucknow](#), [Patna](#), [Ranchi](#)

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Two-thirds of the world's most polluted cities are in India, and Delhi has the worst air among all capitals, the 2019 World Air Quality Report by IQAir AirVisual, which takes readings from 98 countries, said on Tuesday. The study was based on average yearly levels of PM2.5 concentration. (PM2.5 particles measure up to 2.5 microns in size and can enter the bloodstream via the respiratory system to travel through the body, causing problems such as asthma, lung cancer, and heart disease.)

The road map for cleaning Delhi's air has been clear for some time. While the closure of power plants and big industry, natural gas transition across sectors, phase-out of old vehicles, reduction in truck numbers, BS-VI fuels and BS-IV standards, and more, has bent the curve, more disruptive action is needed for clean energy and technology transition, mobility transition and waste management to get the next big cut. There also needs to be a stronger awareness about the nature and direction of action to drive change more strategically and for effective impact.

While the media focus on the non-flattering IQAir AirVisual report, which comes a year after the Centre rolled out the National Clean Air Programme (NCAP), has been on the Delhi-National Capital Region area, this is also an opportune moment to look at how other cities faring on the NCAP, the ambitious five-year action plan with a tentative target of 20-30% reduction in concentrations of PM10 and PM2.5 in 102 non-attainment cities, by 2024, with 2017 as the base year. This is important because the IQAir AirVisual says India has 14 of the 20 most polluted cities in the world.

While air quality monitoring has begun to expand under the NCAP to address the data deficit, without a methodical system for reporting, the data will remain unusable and cannot drive change in cities. For example, the CSE's Breathing Space, How to Track and Report Air Pollution under the National Clean Air Programme, says manual monitors require at least 104 days of monitoring, which is 28.5% of the days in a year. But the organisation's assessment of the latest available manual data for all cities shows that as much as 73% of monitoring stations

do not meet this requirement. The cities are also expected to immediately begin reporting on their annual progress; but for that, they must know the methods and standard operating procedures for such reporting. No official method for compliance reporting by cities/states has been released. Along with tackling sources of air pollution, these issues need to be redressed without further delay to ensure that cities are on the correct path for clean air.

END

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