

CENTRE AIMS FOR 20% CUT IN AIR POLLUTION BY 2024

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

Last year, 14 of the world's 15 most polluted cities were in India. A photo of smog on New Year day in Delhi this year.

The Centre has launched a programme to reduce particulate matter (PM) pollution by 20-30% in at least 102 cities by 2024.

The National Clean Air Programme (NCAP), which was formally unveiled on Thursday, is envisaged as a scheme to provide the States and the Centre with a framework to combat air pollution. "This is our war against pollution across the length and breadth of the country," said A.K. Jain, a senior official in the Union Environment Ministry.

Long-term process

Pointing out that curbing PM pollution would be a long-term process, officials said the Rs. 300-crore programme will bring pollution concerns to the heart of a State's development plans. "The NCAP will be a mid-term, five-year action plan with 2019 as the first year. This is not a pan-India, but a city-specific programme," said C.K. Mishra, Secretary, Union Environment Ministry, at a press conference. After five years, there will be a review of the progress.

In the past year, the 102 cities, identified as hotspots of pollution, were asked to submit a plan for how they would address the problem. Broadly, the plans include increasing the number of monitoring stations, providing technology support, conducting source apportionment studies, and strengthening enforcement. For achieving the NCAP targets, the cities will have to calculate the reduction in pollution keeping 2017's average annual PM levels as the base year.

The World Health Organisation's 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. A study in the journal *Lancet* ranked India as No.1 on premature mortality and deaths from air pollution.

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