

139 POLLUTED CITIES NOT ON CLEAN AIR PLAN: REPORT

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

There are 139 Indian cities that breach air pollution standards but are not included in the Centre's National Clean Air Programme (NCAP), says a report by Greenpeace and made public on Tuesday.

The NCAP was launched by the government earlier this month and is a Rs. 300 crore initiative to reduce particulate matter (PM) pollution by 20-30% in at least 102 cities by 2024. Airpocalypse III, as the Greenpeace report is titled, analyses air pollution data of 313 cities and towns for the year 2017.

Beyond limits

Of these 313 cities, 241 (77%) had PM10 levels beyond the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS). These specify upper limits to a range of airborne chemicals and compounds.

While 102 of these cities were included in the NCAP, the remaining 139 cities were left out.

That's because, say the authors of the report, the government's list of 102 cities relied on average pollution data until 2015, whereas Airpocalypse III used data updated up to 2017.

Even if the NCAP were to be able to reduce pollution by 30% by 2024, 153 cities would still be left with pollution levels exceeding the NAAQS, the report added.

Of the 139 cities that have not been included in the non-attainment list under the NCAP, there are several cities that have a population of more than 1 million, and PM levels (recorded in 2017) above NAAQS.

These include: Ranchi, Dhanbad (Jharkhand); Jabalpur (Madhya Pradesh); Chennai, Madurai (Tamil Nadu); Meerut (Uttar Pradesh); Pimpri-Chindwar, Thane, (Maharashtra); Surat, Rajkot, Vadodara (Gujarat); and Howrah (West Bengal).

"Since the data for 2017 was available when NCAP was finalised, it would have made more sense to update the non-attainment list to include all such cities in the final NCAP," said Sunil Dahiya of Greenpeace and one of the authors of the report.

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.

END