

## PANEL ON AIR QUALITY DISSOLVED

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

Members who were part of the Commission for Air Quality Management said they were taken aback by the sudden dissolution of the body — constituted last October and via an ordinance — on Friday. The dissolution happened despite, *The Hindu* has learnt, the nodal Union Environment Ministry submitting the paper work to the Union Cabinet Secretariat, required to give legal backing to the commission.

The body came into being in October on the back of an ordinance — a temporary measure — and the law requires that a formal Bill be presented to Parliament within six weeks of it reconvening — in this case — January 29 when the Budget Session began. Before a Bill is tabled in Parliament it needs to be approved by the Union Cabinet.

However in spite of several Cabinet meetings since January, it wasn't taken up for discussion due to which, the tenure of the body expired, without ever making it to Parliament. It is still technically possible to revive the body during the ongoing Parliament session.

*The Hindu* spoke to members of the commission who said “they were surprised” that they learnt of the dissolution of a functional body via newspaper reports. “We were discharging the duties we were supposed to. There is office space that some of us work out of in Delhi and another office was being readied. Staff has been hired and we were coordinating with States — as our mandate — in addressing pollution. That the body may be dissolved was nowhere near even the back of our minds,” a commission member said.

Another person, aware of matters, said that the Bill — whose drafting was a “routine affair” — was even approved by Union Environment Minister Prakash Javadekar before perusal by the Union Cabinet.

The commission was headed by M.M. Kuttu, a former secretary in the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas.

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