

SMOG TOWERS NOT FINAL SOLUTION TO POLLUTION, SAYS CENTRAL POLLUTION CONTROL BOARD OFFICIAL

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

Delhi's second smog tower launched near the Anand Vihar metro station. File | Photo Credit: MOORTHY RV

Technologies such as smog towers are interventions that are still being tested and are not a final solution to the problem of pollution, Prashant Gargava, Member Secretary, Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), said at a webinar on Wednesday.

The ultimate solution to pollution would be controlling it at source. Technological interventions would at best give insight on how long these could be used to address pollution spikes, he stated.

To address Delhi's exorbitant winter level pollution, smog tower — that consists of a large fan, housed in a tower to suck in polluted air and then have it pass through multiple particulate matter filters, was proffered as a solution.

A pilot project worth 20 crore was commissioned in Delhi following a Supreme Court order and was inaugurated by Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on August 23, 2021. Initial reports by the Delhi government claimed a reduction of as much as 80% in pollution but several experts have since measured and reported that the pollution reductions are half that and that too only in the immediate proximity of the tower.

While the Delhi government has committed to monitoring its performance every month, no reports have so far been made public. Experts from the Indian Institute of Technology Mumbai are studying the tower's efficiency at different distances and are expected to report numbers to the Delhi government.

Mr. Gargava noted that only after certain technologies were proven to be demonstrably successful would decisions be made on scaling them or deploying in other cities.

The Central government has a National Clean Air Programme that covers 132 cities, which do not meet the prescribed national ambient air quality standards (NAAQS). These cities have been identified based on the ambient air quality data obtained during the 2011-2015 period under the National Air Monitoring Programme.

Delhi is expected to get over 18 crore from the Centre under the NCAP to cater to critical gaps in air pollution management.

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