

CHOKED BY SMOG: ON AIR POLLUTION

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

Air [pollution is choking several cities in the northern States](#) once again, as changes in temperature and slowing winds trap soot, dust and fine particulate matter. The National Capital Region is badly hit, as the burning of agricultural residue in Punjab and Haryana is releasing large volumes of smoke containing, among other pollutants, highly damaging fine particulates, or PM2.5. The problem is aggravated by the burning of urban waste, diesel soot, vehicular exhaust, road and construction dust, and power generation. Although India has nine of the 10 most polluted cities in the world, it has not taken consistent action on pollution. Tens of millions live with ambient air quality that is well short of even the relaxed parameters the country has set for fine particulates, compared with those of the World Health Organisation. India should at least now give high importance to the WHO warning about air pollution being the new tobacco. This year's 'severe' air quality rating for Delhi and poor conditions prevailing in other cities in the Indo-Gangetic Plain should compel a decisive shift in policy. The Centre and the State governments need to get into crisis mode to dramatically reduce emissions. They must address the burning of carbon, which is a direct source, and emissions with oxides of nitrogen and sulphur from vehicles that turn into fine particulates through atmospheric reactions. Failure to take sustainable and urgent measures will inflict long-term harm on public health, affecting children even more by putting them at higher risk for diseases.

India loses billions to air pollution: UN

The [UN Environment Programme's recent report](#) titled 'Air Pollution in Asia and the Pacific: Science-Based Solutions' has sounded a warning, pointing out that only 8% of the population in the countries of the region get to breathe air of acceptable quality. One study of degradation of Delhi's air over a 10-year period beginning 2000 estimated premature mortality to have risen by as much as 60%. With the steady growth in the population of the capital and other cities, the trauma is set to worsen. Farm stubble burning is a major contributor to the problem, and its footprint may be growing because of wider use of mechanical harvesters that is producing more waste. An innovative approach could be to use climate change funds to turn farm residues into a resource, using technological options such as converting them into biofuels and fertilizers. From an urban development perspective, large cities should reorient their investments to prioritise public transport, favouring electric mobility. The World Bank has said it is keen to enhance its lending portfolio to tackle air pollution, opening a new avenue for this. Governments should make the use of personal vehicles in cities less attractive through strict road pricing mechanisms. Sharply escalated, deterrent parking fees can be implemented. If governments delay action on the critical issue of pollution control, public pressure must force them to act.

Firm intervention is needed to end the unsavoury controversy in the CBI

Our existing notification subscribers need to choose this option to keep getting the alerts.

END

Downloaded from [crackIAS.com](#)

© **Zuccess App** by crackIAS.com