

'LIMITED CHANGE' IN CITIES UNDER CLEAN AIR SCHEME

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

An analysis by the environmental think tank, Centre for Science and Environment, reported “barely any difference” in trends in particulate matter pollution (PM2.5) between the group of cities under the National Clean Air Programme (NCAP) and those outside its ambit.

The NCAP covers 132 of India’s most polluted or so-called non-attainment cities. This is defined as a city whose air quality did not meet the national ambient air quality standards of 2011 to 2015. The NCAP launched in 2019 aims to bring a 20%-30% reduction in pollution levels from PM2.5 and PM10 particles by 2024, using 2017 pollution levels as a base.

Cities are required to quantify improvement starting 2020-21, which requires 15% and more reduction in the annual average PM10 concentration and a concurrent increase in “good air” days to at least 200. Anything fewer will be considered ‘low’ and the funding consequently reduced.

For disbursing funds, the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), which coordinates the programme, only considers levels of PM10, the relatively larger, coarser particles. However PM2.5, the smaller, more dangerous particles, aren’t monitored as robustly in all cities, mostly due to the lack of equipment.

The CSE in its national analysis of PM2.5 levels in cities for which data is available found that between 2019 and 2021, only 14 of 43 (NCAP) cities registered a 10% or more reduction in their PM2.5 level between 2019 and 2021. Only 43 cities, said the CSE, were considered as they had adequate data to scientifically establish a long-term trend.

“There is hardly any difference between the performance of NCAP and non-NCAP cities between 2019 and 2021,” said Avikal Somvanshi, programme manager of CSE’s Urban Lab.

Cities in Punjab, Rajasthan and Maharashtra dominated the list of cities which registered a significant increase in PM2.5 levels between 2019 and 2021. Chennai, Varanasi and Pune show the most improvement among NCAP cities. But unlike cities with increasing pollution level which have a very clear regional pattern, there was no regional pattern seen among cities reporting significant improvement in their air quality, the CSE analysis noted.

[Our code of editorial values](#)

END

Downloaded from crackIAS.com

© **Zuccess App** by crackIAS.com