

Standing Committee Report Summary

Air Pollution in Delhi and National Capital Region

- The Standing Committee on Science and Technology, Environment and Forests (Chair: Mr. Anand Sharma) submitted its report on 'Air Pollution in Delhi and National Capital Region' on August 7, 2018. Key findings and recommendations of the Committee include:
- **Measures taken for mitigating air pollution:** The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change has taken a number of measures during the last three years to bring down the level of PM_{2.5} and PM₁₀ (air pollutants). These include: (i) implementing BS-VI fuel standards from April 1, 2018 in Delhi; (ii) launching the National Clean Air Programme for controlling air pollution; (iii) revising standards of SO₂ and NO₂ for five industrial sectors; and (iv) issuing directions to six regions regarding agriculture crop residue burning in National Capital Region (NCR) states and Punjab. The government of Delhi has undertaken several measures, including a massive plantation drive in the city to address the problem.
- The Committee acknowledged the efforts of the Ministry and government of Delhi and recommended that in addition to the ongoing efforts, a robust monitoring system should be evolved to ensure that the National Ambient Air Quality Standards are met in the region. This would also minimise the negative impact of air pollution on the health of the residents.
- **Crop residue burning:** The Committee noted that weak enforcement by the state governments of Haryana, Punjab and Uttar Pradesh in implementing the statutory ban on crop residue burning has worsened air pollution in the region. It recommended that the Ministry of Environment should work with the Ministry of Agriculture and ensure that the governments of Haryana, Punjab, and Uttar Pradesh implement the laid down guidelines and statutory provisions with regard to crop residue burning.
- It also suggested that farmers in these states should be provided with practical solutions to replace crop residue burning. Technological and scientific solutions along with financial assistance should be made available to them to deter them from burning crop residue.
- **Road dust:** Road dust is one of the major sources of air pollution in Delhi and NCR. The Committee noted that the actions taken by the concerned state governments of the region have been insufficient in addressing the issue of road dust. It recommended that the Ministry must ensure that state governments take action on all the action points for control of road dust/re-suspension of dust and other fugitive emissions. Further, it noted that unpaved roads/ streets add to the problem of road dust and should be paved at the earliest. In this regards, civic agencies should be held responsible for their maintenance.
- **Construction activities:** Pollution from construction activities is also a major contributor to air pollution in the region. The Committee observed that banning construction activities will affect the poor and weaker sections of the society, as many of them get their daily earnings from taking part in such activities. It recommended that instead of banning, efforts should be made for stringent enforcement of construction guidelines specified by the Central Pollution Control Board and adoption of international best practices. It also suggested that usage of Construction and Demolition Waste Rules should be enforced in the region.
- **Landfill sites:** The Committee noted that the existing capacity of the government of Delhi to treat municipal solid waste is 46% less than the required capacity. The unprocessed municipal waste is a threat to the environment and ecology of the region. It suggested that there was an urgent need for augmenting the capacity to treat municipal solid waste. The plans of government of Delhi to set up new waste-to-energy plants and enhance the processing capacity of existing plants should also be materialised expeditiously.
- **Impact of air pollution on health:** Air pollution is a significant risk factor for a number of pollution-related diseases and health conditions, such as respiratory infections, heart disease, lung cancer, difficulty in breathing, and asthma. The Committee recommended that immediate corrective and preventive steps should be taken in this regard, jointly by the Ministries of Environment and Health and Family Welfare.

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