

A Comprehensive Approach to Air Pollution

What is the issue?

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- The dreadful air quality during winters in north India has been worrying.

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- Tackling air pollution needs re-imagining the use of our urban space.

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What can be done to reduce vehicular pollution?

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- Air quality levels do depend on meteorological factors like air circulation, but it is primarily based on emission levels.

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- Governments alone can do little to solve this issue and requires co-ordinated action by business, the media, and the larger public.

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- While the number of polluters will rise with population and economic growth, the challenge is to reduce the 'emissions intensity' or 'emission per activity'.

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- Emissions intensity reduction can be divided into technological and non-technological elements both of which needs to be taken up.

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- Completely switching over to electric cars or improving engine technologies or and using better quality fuel could enhance overall pollution cut efficiency.

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- But it will take at least three decades for the current fleet to turn over sufficiently towards significant emission cuts.

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- Considering that the cars are ever increasing and that people are driving a lot more, this might not be sufficient.

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- Hence, focusing on non-technological aspects such as urban planning, increasing cycling, walking, and use of public transport are needed.

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What is needed?

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- It is not ethically appropriate to delay the resolution of deadly air pollution in cities as an entire generation would suffer greatly in the interim.

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- Redesigning our urban space with expanded walking, non-motorised cycling, waterways, and footpaths is needed for reducing vehicular pollution.

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- Many cities in Southeast Asia, Europe and the Americas have shown how this can be done, and it is currently being studied by many cities in India.

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- There are also opportunities to reduce polluting activities in other sectors such as power generation and industrial production through technical upgrades.

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- Policymakers are currently skewed towards technology based solution to the pollution challenge and therefore need to embrace more comprehensive views.

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Source: The Hindu

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