

## Delhi's Pollution Crisis

### What is the issue?

\n\n

The rising proportion of smog over Delhi is yet another reminder of the government's failure to act before an emergency.

\n\n

### What is the recent concern?

\n\n

\n

- The Delhi-NCR faces with difficult situation each winter when air pollution levels goes up out of control.

\n

- Last year, the day after Diwali, air pollution levels were recorded at eight times the safe limit, in Delhi.

\n

- In response, the Supreme Court-appointed EPCA, a body empowered to enforce the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP).

\n

- The GRAP aims to roll out progressively tougher actions as pollution levels rise, without waiting for an emergency to impose strict measures.

\n

- The main objective of EPCA and GRAP is to institutionalize measures to tackle air pollution emergencies.

\n

- Besides these, there was recently a ban against firecrackers in the National Capital Region.

\n

- Despite these measures, pollution levels did surge after the festivities, though lower compared to the past two years.

\n

- Notably post-Diwali smog never receded and very recently the city registered “severe” on the Air Quality Index (AQI).

\n

- This comes along with a warning for serious health effects.

\n

\n\n

## What are the administrative shortfalls?

\n\n

- \n
  - **Response** - EPCA is the nodal authority for tackling pollution in the national capital.
  - \n
    - With the recent serious pollution crisis, the EPCA has recommended a series of measures to be undertaken by various government authorities.
    - \n
      - It suggested that parking fees be quadrupled, and asked Delhi Metro to lower fares during non-peak hours for at least 10 days and introduce more coaches.
      - \n
        - But, the EPCA should not have waited for pollution to rise to the level of being a public health emergency.
        - \n
          - It failed to respond earlier when air quality was deteriorating due to long persistence of haze.
          - \n
            - **Coordination** - An even more serious problem pertains to the passive attitude of the authorities.
            - \n
              - The EPCA's proposals require at least 16 authorities to work together.
              - \n
                - However, there is a lack of coordination among the implementing authorities leading to delayed response.
                - \n
                  - E.g. The EPCA wants to re-enforce the odd-even policy but the Delhi government is delaying to submit time-bound plan on it as directed by the Delhi High Court.

\n\n

## What should be done?

\n\n

- \n
  - The EPCA and the Delhi government should devise a coordination mechanism between various governmental bodies.
  - \n
    - This is essential to ensure the timely implementation of various policy

initiatives.

\n

- More importantly, the crop stubble burning practice in neighbouring states is a major reason for the present worsening of air quality in Delhi.

\n

- Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan should stop crop stubble burning, in keeping with the National Green Tribunal (NGT) ban on the practice.

\n

- There should be a system in place to facilitate subsidies for stubble-removing machinery.

\n

- An alternative is the Bathinda (Punjab) district administration's use of MGNREGA to drive construction of compost pits in farm land.

\n

- This aims at encouraging farmers to use the crop stubble as raw material for composting.

\n

- Such inclusive, innovative and feasible practices could be implemented in other states as well, to address the multi-rooted air quality problem of Delhi.

\n

\n\n

\n\n

**Source: Indian Express, Financial Express**

\n

