

Standing Committee Report Summary

Air Pollution in Delhi NCR and steps taken by various agencies for its mitigation

- The Standing Committee on Science and Technology, Environment, Forests and Climate Change (Chair: Mr Bhubaneswar Kalita) presented its report on ‘Air Pollution in Delhi NCR and steps taken by various agencies for its mitigation’ on December 12, 2025. Key observations and recommendations of the Committee include:
- **Weak air quality standards and monitoring gaps:** The Committee noted that the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) were last revised in 2009 and are significantly weaker than WHO guidelines, particularly for PM_{2.5}. It recommended expediting revision of NAAQS and progressively aligning them with WHO targets. The Committee also observed gaps in air quality monitoring, including continuation of manual stations and geographical bias in distribution of stations. The Committee noted that Delhi-NCR region had 84 Continuous Ambient Air Quality Monitoring Stations (CAAQMS) and 59 manual ambient air quality monitoring stations. It recommended upgrading all manual stations to CAAQMS and rationalising their location to ensure adequate coverage of densely populated areas across the region.
- **Source apportionment:** The Committee observed that existing source apportionment studies for Delhi are dated and may not reflect current pollution patterns following changes in economic activities. It recommended commissioning fresh source apportionment studies and establishing a mechanism for updating them periodically based on expert assessment.
- **Fragmented response:** The Committee emphasised that air pollution in Delhi-NCR is a regional problem requiring coordinated action across Delhi, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, and Rajasthan. It recommended that planning and enforcement be undertaken at the airshed level instead at the state level. It recommended: (i) strict enforcement of directions issued under the Graded Response Action Plan, (ii) clear identification of implementing agencies, and (iii) improving compliance through inspections and penalties.
- **Vehicular emissions:** The Committee observed that vehicular emissions remain one of the largest contributors to air pollution in Delhi-NCR. To reduce emissions, it recommended: (i) accelerating transition to cleaner vehicles, including phasing out end-of-life and diesel vehicles, (ii) expanding electric and CNG-based public transport, and (iii) strengthening last-mile connectivity. The Committee also stressed strict enforcement of pollution control norms and action against visibly polluting vehicles. Noting that high costs remain a key hurdle in EV uptake, it recommended financial incentives such as production-linked incentives, purchase subsidies, and tax benefits. It also noted that while ethanol blending may lead to a potential reduction in certain pollutants, it may also lead to a rise in Nox and evaporative emissions.
- **Pollution from dust, waste, and stubble burning:** The Committee highlighted the significant contribution of road dust, construction and demolition activities, waste burning, and crop residue burning to air pollution. It recommended stricter enforcement of dust control measures, mechanised road cleaning, scientific management of construction and demolition waste, and zero tolerance for open waste burning. It emphasised increasing financial and logistical support for methods such as in-situ management, pelletisation, and biomass utilisation. It noted that there is a shortage of crop residue management machines during peak demand. It also recommended incentivising crop diversification and disincentivising long-duration paddy varieties.
- **Industries:** The Committee noted that some thermal plants close to NCR require compliance with SO₂ norms and lack emission control systems like flue-gas desulfurization. To address industrial emissions, it recommended non-compliant units in the region to be made to switch to cleaner fuels or be systematically closed.
- **Public health:** The Committee noted that air pollution disproportionately affects certain population segments such as children, elderly, and delivery riders. It recommended strengthening health surveillance systems, integrating air quality and health data, and issuing timely public health advisories. It also recommended: (i) installing air purifiers in public schools, hospitals, and government offices, (ii) launching targeted protection programmes for vulnerable workers, and (iii) reducing or abolishing GST on air purifiers and HEPA filters.

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