GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE

RAJYA SABHA
UN-STARRED QUESTION N0. 2930
TO BE ANSWERED ON 22.03.2021

Air quality during pandemic

2930. SMT. VANDANA CHAVAN:

Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government has identified any new emerging patterns for air qualityimprovement/deterioration in India, and if so, details thereof and if not, reasons therefor;
(b) whether most cities in India experienced an improvement in air quality during the initial months of lockdown, and if so, details thereof;
(c) whether Government has made any efforts to ensure the maintenance of thoseimprovements, and if so, details thereof, and if not, reasons therefor; and
(d) whether air quality levels have now returned to their previous levels, and lockdown gainshave been lost and if so, the details thereof?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE
(SHRI BABUL SUPRIYO)

(a) Ambient air quality in the country is monitored under National Ambient Air Quality monitoring (NAMP) programme through a network of manual and continuous ambient air quality monitoring stations. The Ambient air quality trend of cities for 5 years (2015-2019) is as follows:

SO_2
- All cities except one comply with the National Ambient Air Quality Standards of SO_2. Except in Dehradun, as more stringent norms are applicable for Eco Sensitive Zones.
- All the cities exhibited decreasing trend.

NO_2
- 39 cities exhibited decreasing trend, 24 cities showed increasing trend and 231 cities have steady or fluctuating trend.
- Most of the cities comply with the National Ambient Air Quality Standards of NO_2.

PM_{10}
- 23 cities show decreasing trend; 239 cities show a fluctuating trend & 38 cities showed an increasing trend.

$PM_{2.5}$
- 11 cities showed decreasing trend; 79 cities show a fluctuating trend & 9 cities showed an increasing trend.

(b) to (d) It has been reported that COVID-19 pandemic related lockdown has resulted in temporary improvement of air quality in many cities due to closure of industries, reduction in number of vehicles plying, lack of construction activities and absence of human activities. The number of days in Good-Satisfactory AQI during 25th March to 3rd May in the year 2020 had increased considerably from the previous year. The details of the air quality for major cities in India is at Annexure-I.

However, the improvement in air quality during lockdown due to widespread restrictions on operation of major activities was an extraordinary situation and, once normalcy is attained, pollution levels trend, is observed in business as usual scenario.

Government of India launched National Clean Air Programme (NCAP), which is a comprehensive plan to tackle air pollution problem across the country in a focussed manner to achieve 20 % to 30 % reduction in PM_{10} and $PM_{2.5}$ levels by 2024 from 2017 levels. The concerned ministries, State Governments, Research Institutes, Industries, etc. are partner in this effort. Under NCAP, a National Knowledge Network (NKN) has been constituted with a group of experts from IITs and Institutes of Repute as an advisory board for providing capacity building, State of art technologies, suggestions, advisories regarding air pollution mitigation and abatement to CPCB, SPCB and ULBS.

Further, on 15th August 2020, the Hon'ble Prime Minister also announced to improve air quality in more than 100 cities. Hon'ble Prime Minister has also launched Air Quality Index (AQI) in 2015, which provides air pollution information and health effect in simple form, which can be understood even by common persons. National Air Quality Standards are also based on health consideration.

Government has taken several steps for mitigation of air pollution such as introduction of BS-VI, expansion of Metro, operationalization of Eastern and Western peripheral expressways, shifting of industries to PNG, waste processing plants, online round the clock monitoring of red category industries, etc. The detail of initiatives taken by government to combat air pollution is at Annexure –II.

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ANNEXURE – I

ANNEXURE REFERRED TO IN REPLY TO PART (b) TO (d) OF RAJYA SABHA UNSTARRED QUESTION N0. 2930 DUE FOR REPLY ON 22/03/2021 REGARDING 'AIR QUALITY DURING PANDEMIC' RAISED BY SMT. VANDANA CHAVAN, HON'BLE MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT

Comparative AQI during 25th March to 3rd May 2019 and 2020 (first two phases of lockdown during 2020) for major cities in India

City name	No. Of days in Good- Satisfactory AQI during 25th March to 3rd May	
	2019	2020
Delhi	1	22
Faridabad	0	13
Ghaziabad	0	16
Gurugram	2	19
Noida	2	25
Mumbai	34	40
Kolkata	30	31
Bengaluru	5	40
Patna	5	17
Chennai	35	40

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CENTRAL GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES TO COMBAT AIR POLLUTION

i. Vehicular Pollution Control

- Leapfrogging from BS-IV to BS-VI norms for fuel and vehicles since April, 2020.
- Network of Metro rails for public transport are enhanced and more cities are covered.
- Development of Expressway and Highways are also reducing the fuel consumption and pollution.
- Introduction of cleaner/alternate fuels like CNG, LPG, ethanol blending in petrol.
- Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of Electric Vehicles (FAME) -2 scheme has been rolled out
- Permit requirement for electric vehicles has been exempted.
- Promotion of public transport and improvements in roads and building of more bridges to ease congestion on roads.

ii. Industrial Pollution Control

- Stringent emission norms for Coal based Thermal Power Plants (TPPs).
- Pet coke and furnace oil have been banned as fuel in Delhi and NCR States.
- Industrial units shifting to PNG.
- Installation of on-line continuous monitoring devices in highly polluting industries.
- Shifting of Brick kilns to zig-zag technology for reduction of pollution

iii. Waste Management

- Notifications of 6 waste management rules covering solid waste, plastic waste, e-waste, bio-medical waste, C&D waste and hazardous waste.
- Setting up infrastructure such ass waste processing plants.
- Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) for plastic and e-waste management.
- Ban on burning of biomass/garbage.

iv. Crop Residue Management

- Under Central Sector Scheme on 'Promotion of Agricultural Mechanization for in-situ management of Crop Residue in the States of Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and NCT of Delhi', agricultural machines and equipment for in-situ crop residue management are promoted with 50% subsidy to the individual farmers and 80% subsidy for establishment of Custom Hiring Centres.

v. Monitoring of Air Quality

- Expansion of air quality monitoring network under National Air Quality Monitoring Programme (NAMP)
- Implementation of Air Quality Early Warning System for Delhi. The system provides alerts for taking timely actions.

vi. Allocation of funds

- ₹ 336.8 crores have been sanctioned to non-attainment cities under NCAP for initiating actions such as expansion of monitoring network, construction and demolition waste management facilities, non-motorised transport infrastructure, green buffers, mechanical street sweepers, composting units etc.
- ₹2200 crores have been released in the Budget of FY 2020-21 to tackle the burgeoning problem of air pollution. Further, an amount of 2,217 crores has been allocated for 42 urban centres with a million-plus population in this budget for improvement of air quality.
- Rs. 7365.82 Crores was allocated for Solid Waste Management under Urban Swachh Bharat Mission from 2014-2019.
- Under Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT) scheme Rs. 1436 Crore have been allocated for non-motorised urban transport and Rs. 1768 Crores for green spaces and parks for five years from FY2015-16 to FY2019-20.
- A provision of 1,41,678 crores over a period of 5 years from 2021-2026 has been made for Urban Swachh Bharat Mission 2.0 with a focus on air pollution reduction by effectively managing waste from construction-and-demolition activities and bio-remediation of all legacy dump sites.
- ₹ 1726.67 crores have been released for crop residue management in the States of Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and NCT of Delhi, during the year 2018-21.

vii. Public Participation

- This Ministry has an ongoing Environment Education, Awareness and among all sections of the society, especially school and college level students and to mobilize people's participation for conservation of environment.

The Green Good Deeds (GGDs), a social movement, is one of the components of the scheme aimed to inculcate green good habits and behaviour among all sections of the society to take green social responsibility such as minimizing the use of single-use plastic, celebrating Green Diwali, use of public transport, avoid personal car and promoting car pool, regular check-ups to get Pollution Control Certificate (PUC), save electricity, save water, avoid congested lanes etc. The detailed suggestive list of good deeds is available at http://164.100.160.232/sbhb/GoodDeeds.aspx

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