

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE

RAJYA SABHA
UN-STARRED QUESTION NO. 2127
TO BE ANSWERED ON 21.12.2023

Balancing environmental protection and economic activity in the NCR

2127. SHRI SANJEEV ARORA:

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

- (a) whether the National Capital Region (NCR) experiences severe air pollution during winter months, leading to a halt in various activities, including construction;
- (b) whether it is a fact that, while construction activities contribute to pollution, a complete shutdown can adversely affect daily wage labourers;
- (c) the estimated percentage of pollution caused by construction activities in the NCR; and
- (d) the manner in which construction-related pollution can be mitigated without resorting to a complete ban thereby ensuring the well-being of daily wage labourers?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE
(SHRI ASHWINI KUMAR CHOUBEY)

(a) &(b):

During, post-monsoon and winter months, various factors including lowertemperature, lower mixing heights, inversion conditions and calm winds lead totrapping of the pollutants in the atmosphere resulting in high pollution in theNCR. Therefore, deterioration of 'Air Quality Index' is observed in Delhi NCRregion, generally, during winter months.

To address the deterioration of Air quality, actions under 'Graded Response Action Plan' are also imposed based on AQI. The GRAP is an emergency measure and provides a specific set of actions depending on air pollution levels, which are to be implemented by identified agencies forcombating the adverse air quality, particularly during high air pollution days.Stricter regulations and restrictions imposed during the periods under GRAP help in averting further deterioration of Air Quality.

Amongst various other restrictions, construction and demolition activitiesare also restricted/prohibited, due to their high dust potential, only during stages III & IV of the GRAP (i.e. when air quality reaches to "Severe (AQI>400)" and "Severe+ (AQI>450)" category) in the entire NCR, including all dust generating/air pollution causing activities.

Such restrictions are imposed primarily to reduce integrated exposures and protect public health.

(c):

Multiple source apportionment and emissions inventory studies have been carried out in the period 2015-2018. These include pollution source apportionment and source inventory by the Indian Institute of Technology-Kanpur (IITK) for Delhi in 2015; by The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI) and the Automotive Research Association of India (ARAI) in 2018 for Delhi-NCR; and by System of Air Quality and Weather Forecasting and Research (SAFAR), Delhi, IITM, in 2018. These studies show that there is a considerable share of dust, including from construction sector, ranging between 6 to 34 % contribution to PM_{2.5} depending upon the season.

(d):

Construction project activities in NCR are generally located in densely populated urban agglomerates and such outdoor activities have a higher pollutant concentration (PM₁₀ & PM_{2.5}) during winters with higher AQI, despite measures taken to control the dust, thus posing a health risk to the populace in general.
