Air pollution - Emergency measures from across the world

Why in news?

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The National Green Tribunal (NGT) on Thursday announced emergency measures to tackle pollution which will come into place when air quality touches the ‘severe’ limit.

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What are the measures?

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- These measures include\n\n
  1. Sprinkling water using helicopters,
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  2. Stopping construction activity,
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  3. Cleaning of dust from roads by mechanical. Manual cleaning only helps in regeneration of pollution,
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  4. Stopping stone crushing and
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  5. Stopping thermal power plants & diesel generator sets that cause more pollution than is permitted.
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- These measures are somewhat different from those put in place on bad air days in major cities elsewhere in the world.
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- But it should be noted that all these measures are temporary measures to handle extreme air pollution and not long term measures.
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- Apart from this Delhi lacks effective monitoring mechanism and long-term plan to check industrial pollution.
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Beijing

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- Once among the most polluted cities in the world, Beijing has had stringent emergency measures to combat chronic air pollution in place since 2011. These were formalized in 2013.
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- The Chinese capital enforces an odd-even road-rationing scheme for private cars whenever a ‘Red’ alert is sounded, immediately pulling some 1.8 million cars off the roads for every day that the scheme is in force.
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- An alarm will be sounded and messages will be played in buses and trains asking people to be cautious.
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- All schools are closed so that children are not exposed to toxic air, factories are shut down, and fireworks — which are a major draw during the Chinese New Year celebrations — are banned.
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- Even outdoor barbecues, which are very popular in local markets, are stopped.
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- All government departments have to ensure that only 70% of their vehicles are on the roads.
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- An alert is sounded on the day before a heavy smog day based on forecasts.
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Paris

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- When smog enveloped the iconic Eiffel Tower in March 2015, the French capital took half its cars off the roads, much like Delhi’s odd-even scheme.
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- Only “clean” cars, those with uneven number plates or vehicles carrying more than three people have been permitted to enter Paris and 22 surrounding areas
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- Heavy fines were imposed for flouting the ban, and the speed limit was set at a low 20 km per hour.

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- An estimated 750 police officers were dispatched from 5.30am onwards to about 100 busy roads and junctions to hand out fines to those who ignored the measures.
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- Public transport and parking in residential areas were made free to encourage people to use public transport.
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- According to the government, the steps were successful and helped cut pollution significantly.
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- 2015 was only the third time since 1997 that the city had to implement emergency measures.
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Mexico City

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- When it declares an air emergency, Mexico City **bans a fifth of private cars from roads on every day of the week**.
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- The temporary measure included ordering all cars to remain idle one day a week in response to the notoriously smoggy capital’s worst air-quality crisis
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- It also offers free rides on buses and trains.
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- The city started its battle with air pollution in the late 1980s and was the **first to implement the odd-even scheme**.
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