

## **Delhi Air Pollution - Need for Administrative Alterations**

### **What is the issue?**

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- Air pollution in Delhi is being recognised as one of the biggest public policy challenges that India is facing.

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- However, the shortfalls in the existing mechanism and approach call for course corrections.

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### **What is the present mechanism?**

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- The present institutional framework includes the government at three levels, the Centre, the Delhi government and local municipal corporations.

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- It also involves three entities on the judicial side, the Supreme Court, the Delhi High Court and the National Green Tribunal.

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- Then there are the three regulatory/enforcement bodies -

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- i. the Central Pollution Control Board

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- ii. the Delhi Pollution Control Committee

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- iii. the SC-mandated Environment Pollution (Prevention and Control) Authority for the NCR Region (EPCA)

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### **What are the shortfalls?**

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- **Administrative** - The primary reason for the inability to respond in a coordinated manner is the multiplicity of actors involved.
- Evidently, there are a number of entities working, but with little coordination.
- There is also lack of clarity on who should be held accountable, as dissipated authority leads to dissipated accountability.
- **Approach** - There are few signs of intervention for pollution control in the ground level.
- Most of the interventions at present lack any evidence-based approach.
- There is lack of proper evaluation on the effectiveness of the efforts and measures carried out.
- There is little clarity even on what is causing pollution in the first place.
- The studies done so far lack the quality and depth to unequivocally establish the pollution sources and their respective contributions.

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## What is desired?

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- **Single Agency** - A single empowered agency under the Union government to deal with the issue on a war footing is required.
- Importantly, the leadership role of such an agency should be clear and unambiguous.
- **Centre** - The central government control is essential because pollution is a problem irrespective of geographical boundaries.
- Evidently, Delhi's problem has its genesis partly beyond the city's borders.
- Also, any solution will have components beyond the administrative and financial capabilities of regional/local governments.

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- **Executive control** - The agency has to be fully under the control of the executive.  
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- It should be appointed by it and be answerable to it.  
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- There is space for judicial intervention but it has to happen in a manner that does not force initiative from the executive.  
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- **Judiciary** - The SC has shown initiative and leadership in bringing the pollution issue to the forefront.  
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- But it should not take policy-making away from the executive which is assigned for that role.  
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- Court's nature of intervention has to change, and it should transform its role from that of a policy analyst or a problem solver.  
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- It should only be an institution that protects citizens' rights by holding the governments of the day accountable.  
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**Source: Indian Express**

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