

## Graded Response Action Plan

### Why in news?

\n\n

The union Environment Ministry recently notified a 'Graded Response Action Plan' against air pollution for Delhi and the National Capital Region.

\n\n

### What does a 'graded response' mean?

\n\n

\n

- The plan was prepared by the Supreme Court-mandated Environment Pollution Control Authority (EPCA).

\n

- A graded response lays down stratified actions that are required to be taken as and when the concentration of pollutants i.e. particulate matter, reaches a certain level.

\n

- e.g. At the level of 100 microgrammes per cubic metre ( $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ ) of PM 2.5 mechanised sweeping and water-sprinkling along roads has to start.

\n

- Traffic police personnel have to ensure smooth flow of traffic, and all pollution control measures that are already in place — such as stopping landfill fires, and enforcing Pollution Under Control (PUC) norms and a ban on firecrackers — have to be imposed strictly.

\n

- The response will change as pollutant levels increase.

\n

- In January 2016, the average PM 2.5 concentration was  $211 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ , with concentrations crossing  $300 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$  on a few days. If this level persists for more than 48 hours, an emergency will be declared.

\n

- This will mean a return of the odd-even road rationing scheme, ban on construction activity, and no entry of trucks in Delhi unless they are carrying essential commodities.

\n

- The actions under the graded response plan are cumulative in nature i.e. the

actions under the previous level will be continued along with actions recommended in the current level.

\n

\n\n

### **What was the need for such a system?**

\n\n

\n

- According to EPCA, the idea is to put in place graded response actions in a way that the emergency level is never reached.

\n

- The plan focuses on taking progressively tougher actions as pollution crosses each level, without waiting to impose strict measures when the emergency situation has already been reached.

\n

- During the first week of November 2016 — post Diwali — pollution levels were so high that several actions were taken simultaneously, including stopping construction, restricting the entry of trucks into Delhi, and shutting the Badarpur power plant.

\n

- Such knee-jerk reactions will not be required if the graded plan is followed.

\n

- Beijing and Paris have implemented graded action plans over the past few years. Paris recently implemented the odd-even road rationing scheme when PM 2.5 levels crossed 95  $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ .

\n

- Several Chinese cities have a road rationing scheme when pollution reaches severe levels.

\n

\n\n

### **How will the system work?**

\n\n

\n

- The concentration of pollutants will be communicated to EPCA. This will be an average for the entire city.

\n

- The EPCA will be ensuring implementation of the action plan.

\n

- It will delegate the responsibility to the concerned departments like the municipal corporations of all NCR towns, the traffic police, police, transport

departments, Delhi Metro Rail Corporation etc.

\n

- Each body has been set a task that it will have to carry out when EPCA asks it to, based on the concentration of pollutants.

\n

\n\n

### **What are the challenges?**

\n\n

\n

- A large number of agencies, from different states, will have to work together.
- Some agencies have already pointed out problems in implementing the plan. e.g Odd-even has to be imposed during an air quality emergency. But the Delhi government has stated that it will be very difficult to implement the scheme without at least a week's notice.

\n

- The municipal corporations, which have to hike parking rates by 3-4 times if the air quality is very poor, have to hold an elaborate meeting each time they change these rates.

\n

- A system will have to be devised to smooth out these problems.

\n

\n\n

\n\n

**Category: Mains | GS-III | Environment**

\n\n

**Source: The Indian Express**

\n\n

\n