GRAP

Why in news?

Starting October 15, some stricter measures to fight air pollution will come into force in Delhi and its neighbouring National Capital Region (NCR) towns.

What are the stricter measures?

- These measures are part of the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP).
- **Diesel generator** sets can no longer be used in Delhi and the NCR towns of Noida, Ghaziabad, Greater Noida, Faridabad, and Gurgaon.
- The only exception is DG sets used for emergency and essential services.
- Pollution control authorities will begin **night patrolling** to check for dust and industrial emissions, as well as the burning of waste.
- **Mechanised sweeping** and frequent **sprinkling of water on roads** (to make the dust settle) have been directed.
- These steps will be incremental.
- When levels of pollution rise, more measures will come into force, depending on the air quality.

What is GRAP?

- The plan was formulated after several meetings that the Environment Pollution (Prevention and Control) Authority (EPCA) held with state government representatives and experts.
- The result was a plan that institutionalised measures to be taken when air quality deteriorates.
- The plan was approved by the Supreme Court in 2016.
- GRAP was notified in 2017 by the Centre and draws its authority from this notification.
- The action plan has been in effect for three years in Delhi and NCR.
- Experts have credited the actions under the GRAP for the improvement in Delhi's air over the past few years.

How will the GRAP be used?

- GRAP works only as an **emergency measure**.
- As such, the plan does not include action by various state governments to be taken throughout the year to tackle industrial, vehicular and combustion

emissions.
- When the air quality moves from '**Poor'** to '**Very Poor**', the measures listed under both sections have to be followed.
- If air quality reaches the '**Severe+**' stage, the response includes extreme measures such as shutting down schools and implementing the odd-even road-space rationing scheme.

What are the achievements?

- GRAP has been successful in doing two things, they are
    1. Creating a step-by-step plan for the entire Delhi-NCR region, and
    2. Getting on board several agencies.
- These agencies include all pollution control boards, industrial area authorities, municipal corporations, regional officials of the India Meteorological Department, and others.
- The plan requires action and coordination among 13 different agencies in Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana and Rajasthan (NCR areas).
- At the head of the table is the EPCA, mandated by the Supreme Court.
- Before the imposition of any measures, EPCA holds a meeting with representatives from all NCR states.
- A call would be taken on which actions have to be made applicable in which town.

Has GRAP helped?

- The biggest success of GRAP has been in fixing accountability and deadlines.
- For each action to be taken under a particular air quality category, executing agencies are clearly marked.
- Also, coordination among as many as 13 agencies from four states is simplified because of the clear demarcation of responsibilities.
- Three major policy decisions that can be credited to EPCA and GRAP are
    1. Closure of the thermal power plant at Badarpur,
    2. Bringing BS-VI fuel to Delhi before the deadline set initially, and
    3. Ban on Pet coke as a fuel in Delhi-NCR.

What measures have been taken in other states?

- One criticism of the EPCA as well as GRAP has been the focus on Delhi.
- While other states have managed to delay several measures, citing **lack of resources**, Delhi has always been the first to have stringent measures enforced.
- In 2014, a study by the World Health Organisation found that Delhi was the most polluted city in the world.

- This made panic spread in the Centre and the state government.
- The release of a study on sources of air pollution the following year also gave experts, NGOs, and scientists, an idea on why Delhi was so polluted.
- All of these things, state government officials say, have made Delhi the obvious pilot project.
- For GRAP as well as EPCA, the next challenge is to extend the measures to other states effectively.

Source: The Indian Express

Quick Fact

EPCA

- The EPCA was constituted in 1998 by the Supreme Court.
- It is headed by retired IAS officer Bhure Lal and includes members from the Centre for Science and Environment.
- The initial mandate of the body was to ensure that Delhi's bus and auto fleet moves entirely to CNG.
- The body continues to monitor pollution.
- It assists the Supreme Court in several pollution-related matters.

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