Understanding Air Quality Index

Why in news?

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- National capital region smog pollution reaches hazardous levels.
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- It is time to know about mechanism of air quality index
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What the Air Quality Index (AQI)?

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- AQI is a number used to communicate to the public how polluted the air currently is or how polluted it is forecasted to become.
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- As AQI increases, an increasingly large percentage of the population is likely to experience increasingly adverse health effects.
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- Different countries have their own air quality indexes, corresponding to different national air quality standards.
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- The AQI is most commonly used to describe ground-level ozone levels.
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- However, the AQI can be used to represent five pollutants that pose a threat to human health.
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- These pollutants are:
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1. Ground-level Ozone or O3
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2. Particulate Matter (soot and dust) or PM
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3. Carbon Monoxide or CO

4. Sulphur Dioxide or SO2 and
5. Nitrogen Dioxide or NO2

How it is calculated?

- The pollutants in the affected air are given a weight based on a formula.

- That weight depends on the kind of impact it has on human health, each of the pollutants is given a weight.
- The worst of these weights is given as a composite air quality.
- So instead of giving six different numbers, six different colours, it throws up one single colour, one single number.
- The index will throw up one number which will be given to the public.
- People will know the health of their air quality based on this number and one associated colour code.

Colour	Level of Health Concern	AQI Values
Green	Good	0 to 50
Yellow	Moderate	51 to 100
Orange	Unhealthy for sensitive groups	101 to 150

Red	Unhealthy	151 to 200
Purple	Very Unhealthy	201 to 300
Maroon	Hazardous	301 to 500

Source: Indian Express