

## Press release

### **37 NCAP cities meet annual pollution targets but 118 new cities record hazardous pollution levels in 2023**

**New Delhi, 10, January 2024-** The National Clean Air Programme (NCAP) was launched in India in [2019](#) aimed to significantly enhance the air quality in India by 2024 by reducing PM concentration by 20-30 per cent which in 2022 has been extended to 2026 aiming to have 40% reduction in pollution levels compared to 2017.

An assessment of the progress of the NCAP on completion of five years since it was notified in 2019, by the Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air (CREA) highlights that the absence of a penalization mechanism under the programme has led to delays in completion of critical action points under the programme.

37 cities under NCAP recorded PM10 levels below the prescribed annual targets under NCAP for FY24 (April-December) but 118 new cities which are yet not part of NCAP have recorded PM10 levels beyond the National Ambient Air Quality Standard (NAAQS) in 2023.

After five years of NCAP being in force, only 44 cities out of 131 non-attainment cities have completed the source apportionment studies against the initial timeline of 2020 to complete such studies.

The annual report ‘Tracing the Hazy Air 2024’ is a continuation of the series of similar annual assessment reports prepared by the organisation to track NCAP progress.

While the report highlights exceptional progress of the CAAQMS network in the country, it sheds light on the sluggish progress of manual air quality monitoring network augmentation where only 931 stations have been installed as of December 2023 against the planned 1500 by 2024. The report highlights the lack of transparency in sharing information on the functioning of institutional framework at the state, district and city levels and recommends better integration of existing tools and frameworks such as PRANA, Air Quality Forecasting, CEMS etc, for enhancing effectiveness of the efforts and accountability of the responsible agencies.

*Sunil Dahiya, South Asia analyst at CREA said, “It's a worrying fact that even after five years some of the crucial studies mentioned under NCAP like source apportionment/carrying capacity studies, and regional/air-shed clean air action plans have not been completed. This is clearly reflected in the disproportionate nature of how funds are utilised for only a selected few actions vs tackling key*



*issues in the cities. There would have been scientific data to understand diverse pollution sources in a city, and funds could have been allotted to proportionate diverse actions. In the absence of it, we see 64% of the overall funds being spent only on dust mitigation and on false solutions like smog towers, making it an inefficient usage of public money. ”*

The report also analyzed the ambient air quality data for 2023 and ranked the cities based on ambient PM10 concentrations. While the national capital Delhi was still in the top 10 polluted cities list at 8th spot, it was Byrnihat on the Assam and Meghalaya border in the north-eastern part of the country which topped the list of most polluted cities in India followed by Begusarai (Bihar), Greater Noida (Uttar Pradesh), Sri Ganganagar (Rajasthan), Chhapra (Bihar), Patna (Bihar), Hanumangarh (Rajasthan), Delhi, Bhiwadi (Rajasthan), and Faridabad (Haryana).

Out of the 227 cities with over 75% data availability days in 2023, 85 cities were under NCAP. Additionally, 142 cities were not covered by NCAP. Within the NCAP cities, 78 exceeded PM10 levels above NAAQS. Conversely, among the non-NCAP cities, 118 surpassed NAAQS for PM10 levels.

*Dahiya further added, “The presence of a high number of non-NCAP cities recording hazardous pollution levels highlights widespread air quality concerns, emphasizing the need to reassess the list of non-attainment cities. Such reassessment is crucial to reverse the trend of increasing air pollution levels in cities with recent ambient air quality monitoring but recording pollution levels above the prescribed standards.”*

*He further stressed that “It is time that NCAP is reassessed to include new cities under NCAP based on recent monitoring data and all such cities under NCAP are provided with annual emission load reduction targets for polluting sectors within the city boundaries while sharing the responsibility of emission load reduction from regional sources in the airshed with state and regional governments.”*

## Contact

Sunil Dahiya - [Sunil@energyandcleanair.org](mailto:Sunil@energyandcleanair.org)

## Note(s) to editors

The CREA publication related to the press release can be found [here](#).

All CREA publications can be found [here](#).

## About CREA

The Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air (CREA) is an independent research organisation focused on revealing the trends, causes, and health impacts, as well as the solutions, to air pollution. CREA was founded in December 2019 in Helsinki and has staff in several Asian and European countries. The organisation's work is funded through philanthropic grants and revenue from commissioned research.

[www.energyandcleanair.org](http://www.energyandcleanair.org)

### Top 10 Polluted cities in India in 2023 by PM10



Source: CCR

Note: Cities with 75% data coverage is considered for analysis