

Press release

## As monsoons recede pollution levels in Indo-Gangetic Plain (IGP) states shift

**New Delhi, 4, October 2024** – The September Indian Monthly Ambient Air Quality Snapshot by the Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air (CREA) found that September was a positive month with regards to pollution in the country, with only four cities breaching National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS). However, **the number of cities exceeding daily WHO standards rose to 220 in September, up from 177 in August, coinciding with the end of the monsoon season.**

According to the analysis, **in September 2024, a total of 201 Indian cities were categorised as 'Good (0-30 µg/m<sup>3</sup>)' on the PM2.5 AQI scale**, while 59 cities were 'Satisfactory (31-60 µg/m<sup>3</sup>)' and 4 cities were 'Moderate (61-90 µg/m<sup>3</sup>)'.

Overall, **September experienced a shift from the 'Good' to the 'Satisfactory' category compared to August, largely due to changes observed in the states of Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, and Rajasthan within the Indo-Gangetic Plain (IGP).**

Delhi recorded an average PM2.5 concentration of 43 µg/m<sup>3</sup> in September, with 9 days categorized as "Good," 16 as 'Satisfactory', 4 as 'Moderate', and 1 day in the 'Very Poor' category (121-250 µg/m<sup>3</sup>). **This represents a deterioration from August's average of 27 µg/m<sup>3</sup>, which saw 24 days in the "Good" category.**

Byrnihat in Assam/Meghalaya ranked as the most polluted city in India, with a monthly average PM2.5 concentration of 73 µg/m<sup>3</sup>. **Byrnihat has consistently been among the top 10 most polluted cities throughout the year, marking the sixth instance in 2024 where it claimed the top spot for the highest pollution levels.**

Cities in the list of top 10 most polluted cities in India were: (1) Byrnihat, (2) Sri Ganganagar, (3) Jalna, (4) Siwan, (5) Mandi Gobindgarh, (6) Araria, (7) Ghaziabad, (8) Gummidipoondi, (9) Muzaffarnagar, and (10) Chittorgarh.

**Chittorgarh in Rajasthan debuted in the top 10 polluted cities list**, whilst Chikkamagaluru in Karnataka entered the top 10 cleanest cities list.

With the exception of Delhi, all other megacities such as Chennai, Mumbai, Kolkata, and Bangalore managed to maintain PM2.5 within the 'Good' and 'Satisfactory' categories throughout September.

Manoj Kumar, Analyst, Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air (CREA) said, *'as the monsoon recedes, pollution levels are rising in many cities, especially across the Indo-Gangetic Plain. Besides*

ongoing year-round sources, the upcoming months will see festival celebrations and stubble burning further deteriorating air quality. In September, the Commission for Air Quality Management released the Revised Graded Response Action Plan, which emphasises stricter regulations for diesel-operated vehicles and generators. However, concerns remain about vacant positions in pollution control boards and the preparedness of stakeholders to enforce these measures effectively. Additionally, the use of ineffective technologies like smog guns and cloud seeding in winter action plans suggests that we are likely to experience the usual high pollution levels this year, putting public health at risk.’

**Table - Comparing 2023 and 2024 Graded Response Action Plans (GRAPs)**

Stage	Delhi AQI	<a href="#">GRAP October 2023</a>	<a href="#">GRAP September 2024</a>	Notes
Stage -1 (Poor)	201-300	27 Actions	27 Actions	No Change
Stage -2 (very Poor)	301-400	11 Actions	11 Actions	1.October 2023: DG sets range: <19 kW, 19-125 kW, 125-800 kW, and > 800 kW 2.September 2024: DG sets range: <19 kW, 19-62 kW, 62-800 kW, and > 800 kW
Stage -3 (Severe)	401-450	8 Actions	11 Actions	1.Restrictions apply to Delhi-registered diesel-operated medium goods vehicles (MGVs) with BS III or below standards. 2.Non-Delhi registered diesel-operated light commercial vehicles (LCVs) with BS III or below are not permitted. 3.Interstate buses from the NCR, except for electric vehicles (EVs), CNG, and BSVI diesel vehicles, are also prohibited.  However, exemptions are in place for vehicles carrying essential commodities and services, as well as buses and tempo travellers operating under an all-India permit.
Stage -4 (Severe+)	>450	8 Actions	8 Actions	No Change

-End-

\* Cities with more than 80% of the days in September 2024 with recorded PM2.5 data



## Contact

Manoj Kumar

Analyst

Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air (CREA)

[manojkumar@energyandcleanair.org](mailto:manojkumar@energyandcleanair.org)

+91 9842350543

## Notes to editors

- Link to the September Monthly Air Quality Snapshot-  
<https://energyandcleanair.org/india-monthly-ambient-air-quality-snapshot-september-2024/>
- Link to the Ranking: [🇮🇳 India monthly ambient air quality snapshot: September 2024\\_C...](#)
- Other air pollution related news in India can be found here-  
<https://energyandcleanair.org/category/monthly-snapshot-india/>

## 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)