

Press release

## **Ghaziabad most polluted India NCAP city in FY 2025–26; Gurgaon tops March 2026 pollution rankings**

**New Delhi, 7 April 2026** – India’s National Clean Air Programme (NCAP) evaluates PM10 reductions on a financial year basis, and the analysis for FY 2025–26 showed that only a few cities have met the NCAP targets after seven years of implementation. PM10 data from the remaining 96 cities with more than 80% of CAAQMS data available were analysed for the period 1 April, 2025 to 31 March, 2026.

Ghaziabad recorded the highest annual average PM10 concentration (FY 25-26) at 215  $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ , followed by Delhi (201  $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ ), and Noida (195  $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ ), all of the numbers being over three times higher than the National Ambient Air Quality Standard (NAAQS) of 60  $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ .

When benchmarked against the NCAP baseline year (2017–18), PM10 levels increased in 14 cities and remained unchanged in three. The remaining 79 cities showed improvements.

| <b>Change in PM10 level with respect to NCAP baseline (FY 17-18)</b> | <b>Number of NCAP cities</b> |
|--|------------------------------|
| Increase   | 14                           |
| No change  | 3                            |
| 1-10% reduction  | 12                           |
| 10-20% reduction   | 13                           |
| 20-30% reduction   | 15                           |
| 30-39% reduction   | 12                           |
| >40% reduction   | 27                           |

Among the cities showing improvement, nine cities in Uttar Pradesh recorded reductions of over 40% in PM10 levels compared to the NCAP baseline year (2017–18). Similar reductions were also reported in three cities in Maharashtra and two cities each in West Bengal, Uttarakhand, Punjab, and Rajasthan, and one city each in Tamil Nadu, Jharkhand, Nagaland, Jammu & Kashmir, Chhattisgarh, Bihar, and Assam.

States with the most cities showing an increase in PM10 levels included Odisha with five cities, followed by Madhya Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh with each two cities. Assam, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra, and Tamil Nadu each had one city with an increase in concentration with reference to the baseline year.



Dehradun (Uttarakhand) reported the largest reduction in PM10 levels at 75% compared to 2017–18, while Visakhapatnam (Andhra Pradesh) recorded the highest increase at 73%. Delhi saw a 17% reduction in PM10 levels over the same period.

Manoj Kumar, Analyst at CREA, said: *‘Many cities are still far from meeting the revised NCAP targets, and some have even seen rising pollution levels, which is a serious concern. As the programme moves into its next phase, there is an opportunity to base interventions on robust, science-based solutions, with funding directed towards the major pollution sources identified in each region. In recent years, more cities have slipped into non-attainment status, which means that revising NCAP to include emerging hotspots, adopting a regional approach, and enforcing stricter emission standards will all be essential.’*

### **March 2026 Monthly Snapshot:**

In March 2026, 220 out of 251 cities with >80% CAAQMS data reported PM<sub>2.5</sub> levels below India’s daily national standard of 60 µg/m<sup>3</sup>. However, only three cities met the World Health Organization’s (WHO) stricter daily safe limit of 15 µg/m<sup>3</sup>.

Among NCAP cities, seven of the 96 cities with sufficient data exceeded India’s daily PM<sub>2.5</sub> standards, and 94 of 96 cities breached the WHO guidelines. Among 155 non-NCAP cities, 154 exceeded the WHO’s daily limit, and 25 crossed the national standard.

Gurgaon ranked as India’s most polluted city in March, with a monthly average PM<sub>2.5</sub> of 116 µg/m<sup>3</sup>. Other cities in the top 10 polluted list for March include Bahadurgarh, Faridabad, Singrauli, Mandideep, Ghaziabad, Manesar, Bhiwadi, Noida, and Nandesari. Haryana accounted for four of India’s top 10 most polluted cities, followed by two cities each from Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh, and one each from Rajasthan and Gujarat.

Haryana had the highest number of cities exceeding NAAQS, with nine out of 24 recording PM<sub>2.5</sub> higher than NAAQS. Followed by Uttar Pradesh with eight out of 21 cities exceeding NAAQS.

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## Notes to editors

- The NCAP FY 2025-2026 progress and March Ambient Air Quality Snapshot can be found [here](#).
- Previous India monthly air quality snapshots can be found [here](#).
- Daily Winter Air Quality Dashboard: <https://ncap.energyandcleanair.org/>
- New analysis of NCAP cities' AQ data discrepancies 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. We use scientific data, research and evidence to support the efforts of governments, companies and campaigning organisations worldwide in their efforts to move towards clean energy and clean air. [www.energyandcleanair.org](http://www.energyandcleanair.org).