National Clean Air Programme

Why in news?

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The Centre recently launched the National Clean Air Programme (NCAP).

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What are the features of the programme?

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- **Objective** - The overall objective of the programme includes comprehensive mitigation actions for prevention, control and abatement of air pollution.
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- It also aims to augment the air quality monitoring network across the country and strengthen the awareness and capacity building activities.
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- Also, city-specific action plans are being formulated for 102 non-attainment cities that are considered to have air quality worse than the National Ambient Air Quality Standards.
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- The Smart Cities programme will be used to launch the NCAP in the 43 smart cities falling in the list of the 102 non-attainment cities.
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- **Target** - It proposes a tentative national target of 20%-30% reduction in PM2.5 and PM10 concentrations by 2024, with 2017 as the base year for comparison.
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- However, the government has stressed that NCAP is a scheme, not a legally binding document with any specified penal action against erring cities.
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- **Implementation** - NCAP talks of a collaborative, multi-scale and cross-sectoral coordination between central ministries, state governments and local bodies.
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- The CPCB will execute the nation-wide programme for the prevention, control, and abatement of air pollution within the framework of the NCAP.
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- NCAP will be “institutionalised” by respective ministries and will be organised through inter-sectoral groups that will also include the Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Health, NITI Aayog, and experts from various fields.
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- Other features of NCAP include –
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1. Increasing the number of monitoring stations in the country including rural monitoring stations
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2. Technology support
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3. Emphasis on awareness and capacity building initiatives
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4. Setting up of certification agencies for monitoring equipment
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5. Source apportionment studies
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6. Emphasis on enforcement
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7. Specific sectoral interventions.
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What are the proposed mitigation measures?

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- **Enforcement** - It calls for stringent enforcement through a web-based, three-tier mechanism that will review, monitor, assess and inspect to avoid any form of non-compliance.
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- The experience indicates lack of regular monitoring and inspection as the major reason for non-compliance.
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- Trained manpower and regular inspection drive will be ensured for stringent implementation purpose.
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- It also calls for an “extensive plantation drive” at pollution hotspots and

execution.
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- However, it is not made clear how much air pollution this will seek to reduce.
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- **Elaborating existing schemes**–While some of the strategies are not new to India, NCAP appears to be targeting effective implementation.
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- For example, it talks of “congestion management” at traffic junctions by the traffic police, solid waste management by municipal corporations, and stringent industrial standards put in place by concerned ministries.
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- For power sector emissions, it refers to emission standards set by the Ministry of Environment and Forests for Thermal Power Plants in December 2015 to be implemented within a two-year period.
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- It notes that this has since been extended to December 2022.
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- For agricultural stubble burning, it highlights the initiatives already in place by way of the central assistance of Rs 1,151 crore for in situ management of crop residue and provides for general action points to be explored.
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- **Focus** - NCAP calls for a city action plan that needs to be guided by a comprehensive science-based approach involving source apportionment studies.
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- It also advises that state capitals and cities with a million-plus population be taken up on priority.
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What are the concerns?

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- NCAP takes into account available international experiences and national studies.
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- It notes that internationally, actions have been “city-specific” rather than country-oriented, and cites examples such as Beijing and Seoul that saw 35%-40% PM2.5 reductions in five years.
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- However effective this might have been abroad, reductions by similar levels might leave Indian cities still heavily polluted.
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- Delhi’s very severe pollution levels are four times the permissible limits now, and a 30% reduction by 2024 would still leave it very dangerous for health.
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Source: The Indian Express

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