

Business Standard

States asked to ensure distribution of farm implements to tackle stubble burning in 10 days

Press Trust of India | New Delhi September 27, 2018 Last Updated at 20:30 IST

The Environment Ministry Thursday asked Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh to complete distribution of agricultural implements among farmers within 10 days so as to tackle stubble burning, one of the key reasons for air pollution in Delhi in the winter.

Ahead of the critical months of November-December, when the air pollution peaks in the national capital, the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) under the ministry has deployed 41 teams in Delhi-NCR for ground-level inspection of activities that cause pollution from September 15 this year.

An official statement said the number of 'Good', 'Satisfactory' and 'Moderate' days increased from 144 in 2017 to 149 in 2018, while the number of 'Poor', 'Very Poor' and 'Severe' days decreased from 125 in 2017 to 120 in 2018 till date.

Air Quality Index (AQI) in the range of 0-50 is considered 'good', 51-100 'satisfactory', 101-200 'moderate', 201-300 'poor', 301-400 'very poor' and 401-500 'severe'.

Chairing a meeting of environment ministers and officers of Delhi and four neighbouring states -- Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Punjab and Rajasthan -- to ensure better preparedness towards improving air quality, Union Environment Minister Harsh Vardhan emphasised collective action by all the municipal and other agencies to ensure cleaner air in the coming months.

Harsh Vardhan said that the Centre has provided all possible assistance such as grant of Rs 1,150 crore from centrally-sponsored schemes (CSS) to tackle stubble burning to Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh.

The meeting comes after the national capital recorded its best air quality this year on Tuesday last week as incessant rains removed pollutants from the air and it was the third time this year that the quality of air was registered as good, authorities had said earlier.

Meanwhile, Harsh Vardhan said the Centre has also provided financial assistance under Urban Development Fund (UDF) to Delhi for procurement of mechanical road sweeping machines, water sprinklers and greening.

The minister also underlined that enhanced enforcement and prompt action by agencies concerned must be ensured to create a positive impact on air quality.

Various steps taken to address air pollution during the winter months and reviewed various steps taken to ensure better preparedness towards improving air quality in Delhi-NCR during the coming months, in comparison to previous years was also discussed.

"The Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) had deployed 41 teams in Delhi-NCR for ground-level inspection of activities that cause pollution from September 15 this year.

"CPCB has also issued directions to concerned State Pollution Control Boards (SPCBs), MCDs, construction agencies, transport and agricultural departments to prepare targeted action plans for air polluting sources and to implement these plans," the statement said.

To enhance public participation, CPCB has invited proposals through crowd-sourcing and any person with any practical idea has been invited to participate in the collective endeavour.

"It was also emphasised at the meeting that NCR states should ensure that farm implements that are being distributed to tackle stubble burning should be completed in the next 10 days to ensure that no stubble burning incident takes place in the States of Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh.

"Ambient air quality monitoring network is being expanded in NCR States and more data is expected to facilitate better air quality management decisions," the statement said.

The statement said three mitigation pilot projects have also been sanctioned for deployment in Delhi.

In addition, several steps including restriction on the use of petcoke and furnace oil in Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan, introduction of BS VI compliant petrol in Delhi since April 2018, conversion of brick kilns to zig-zag technology are likely to have a positive impact on pollution, it said.

Other steps which also are likely to have a positive impact on pollution are issuance of list of approved fuels permissible for use within the borders of NCT of Delhi, operationalisation of Eastern Peripheral Expressway to ease congestion and diversion of traffic from Delhi, financial incentive for in-situ crop residue management in Haryana and Punjab, the statement said.

Union Minister of State for Environment Mahesh Sharma, Environment Ministers of Delhi and Uttar Pradesh Imran Hussain and Dara Singh Chauhan, and senior officials were present in the meeting.