

Strategies for CAQM to Tackle Delhi's Pollution Crisis | Supreme Court Criticism

November 24, 2024 • vajiramandravi.com



What's in today's article?

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- What is Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM)?
- Why did the SC criticize the CAQM?
- Assessing CAQM's Role in Delhi's Pollution Crisis

Why in News?

- Over the past 10 days, Delhi's air quality has remained predominantly in the **'severe'** and **'severe plus'** categories, highlighting a worsening pollution crisis.
- The Supreme Court has criticized the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) for its insufficient measures to address the issue, urging the agency to adopt a more robust and effective pollution control strategy.

What is Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM)?

• Formation and Mandate of CAQM

- The CAQM in the National Capital Region (NCR) and adjoining areas was established through an ordinance in 2020, which became an Act of Parliament in 2021.
 - CAQM is a statutory body formed under the **Commission for Air Quality Management in National Capital Region and Adjoining Areas, Act 2021**.
- It was created to improve coordination, conduct research, and address air quality and related issues effectively.
- Initially comprising 15 members, the CAQM now has 27 members and is chaired by Rajesh Verma.

• Transition from EPCA to CAQM

- The CAQM replaced the Environmental Pollution (Prevention and Control) Authority (EPCA), which was set up in 1998 by the Supreme Court.
- Unlike the CAQM, the EPCA lacked statutory backing, limiting its authority to enforce compliance.
- However, it introduced key measures like the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP), which the CAQM continues to implement.

• Powers of CAQM

- CAQM can take necessary measures, issue directives, and address complaints to ensure the protection and improvement of air quality.
- Under **Section 14 of the Act**, the CAQM can initiate stringent actions against officers who fail to comply with its orders, reinforcing its mandate to tackle air pollution effectively.

Why did the SC criticize the CAQM?

- SC has consistently criticized various governments and agencies, including the CAQM, for their ineffective response to Delhi's air pollution crisis.
- On September 27, SC remarked that CAQM's directions were largely ignored, pointing to non-compliance with the 2021 Act and a lack of effective enforcement.
- The court urged the CAQM to adopt more proactive measures and ensure its orders result in tangible pollution reduction.
- On November 18, the Supreme Court reprimanded the CAQM for delayed action, particularly regarding Stage IV of the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP).
 - GRAP a set of emergency measures implemented to combat air pollution in a region, particularly in Delhi-NCR, where different levels of restrictions are triggered based on the severity of air quality.
- Instead of implementing stringent curbs preemptively, the CAQM waited for air quality to improve, despite AQI levels breaching the 'severe plus' category.
- The court emphasized the need for prompt and decisive action to address the escalating air quality crisis.

Assessing CAQM's Role in Delhi's Pollution Crisis

• Implementation Challenges and Focus Areas of CAQM

- While the CAQM formulates plans and coordinates with agencies, the responsibility for ground-level implementation lies with these agencies.
- There is need for improved coordination and planning efforts, such as engaging with state officials early in the year to address stubble burning and updating action plans annually for Punjab and Haryana.

- **Expanding Focus Beyond Stubble Burning**

- The commission acknowledges that its primary focus has been on stubble burning.
- Moving forward, it plans to target multiple pollution sources, including dust and vehicular emissions, allocating more resources and time to these areas.

- **Expert Recommendations and Proactive Measures**

- Experts emphasized the need for the CAQM to impose the GRAP proactively and improve pollution forecasting methods.
 - They suggested that the CAQM should collaborate with state governments to establish time-bound targets, identify gaps, and ensure strategies and resources are in place before enforcing compliance.
 - This approach would strengthen ground-level actions rather than solely focusing on penalizing non-compliance.
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Q.1. What is the role of CAQM in tackling Delhi's pollution crisis?

CAQM formulates plans, coordinates efforts, and implements measures to control pollution in Delhi-NCR. However, ground-level implementation relies on other agencies. It focuses on stubble burning, vehicular emissions, and dust but needs more proactive action to address pollution effectively.

Q.2. Why did the Supreme Court criticize the CAQM?

The Supreme Court criticized the CAQM for delayed actions and lack of enforcement, particularly regarding Stage IV of the GRAP. The Court emphasized the need for proactive, timely measures to curb Delhi's severe air pollution rather than waiting for air quality to improve.

Source: [What can Commission for Air Quality Management do to improve Delhi air?](#)

Source: <https://vajiramandravi.com/current-affairs/strategies-for-caqm-to-tackle-delhis-pollution-crisis-supreme-court-criticism/>

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