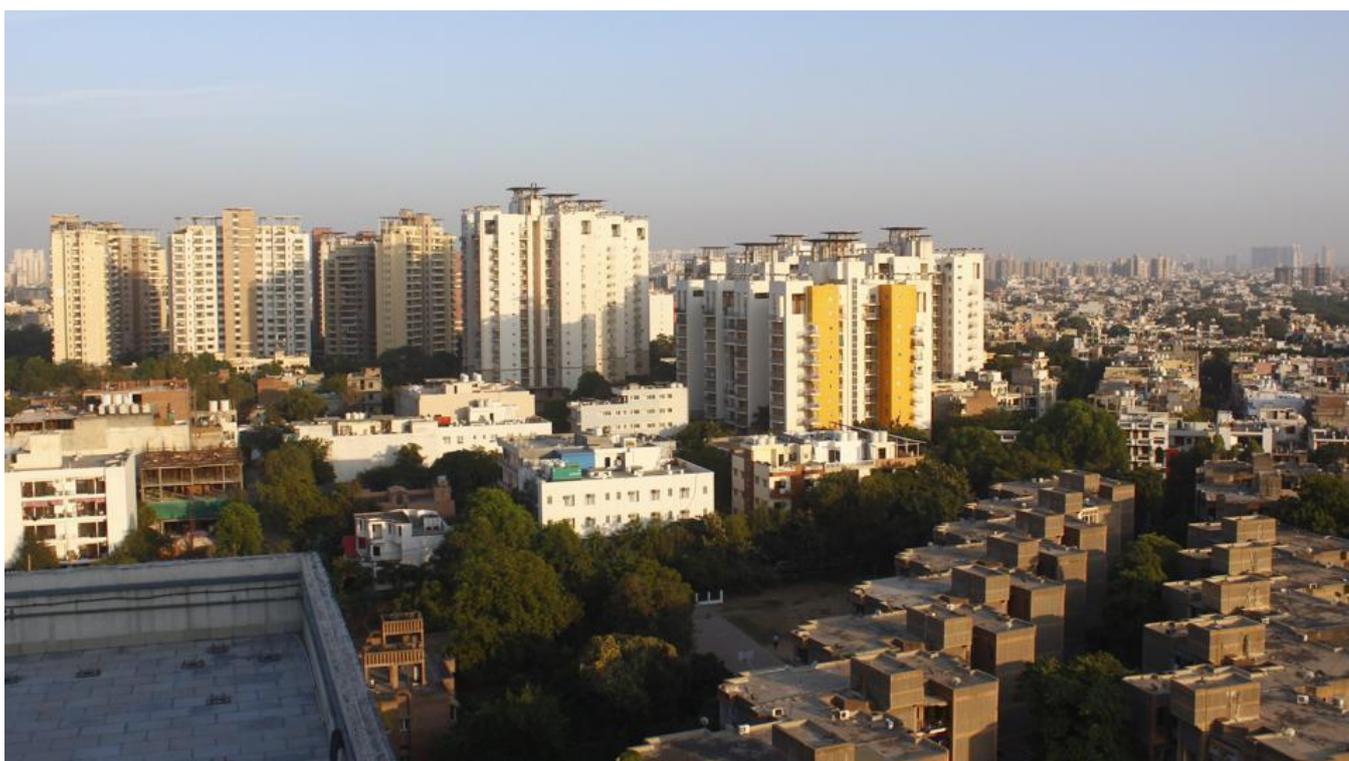


With Rs10 crore for each city, funds for clean air plan short: Experts

Central Pollution Control Board officials said in total Rs 172 crores were disbursed in September last year to 102 non-attainment cities that did not meet the annual PM 10 (coarse, pollution particles) national standard between 2011 and 2015.

Jan 12, 2020 [Jayashree Nandi](#), Hindustan Times, New Delhi



NCAP aims to reduce the concentration of PM2.5 (fine, respirable pollution particles) and PM10 by 20% to 30% by 2024 over the 2017 annual average levels.(Yogendra Kumar/HT PHOTO)

The response to a Right to Information (RTI) application has revealed that 28 priority cities with population of over a million people have been allocated only Rs 10 crore under the National Clean Air Programme (NCAP), in a year since its launch on January 10, 2019.

According to experts, the allocation falls short of the fiscal support required for managing toxic emissions from combustion sources in million plus cities and restricts the plan to dust management measures.

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Cities are considered as non-attainment cities if they consistently show poorer air quality than the National Ambient Air Quality Standards.

Of 102 non-attainment cities, 28 million plus cities recorded PM 10 concentration of more than 90 micrograms per cubic metres from 2011 to 2015. These cities were chosen as priority cities for NCAP, which each got only Rs 10 crore for the first year of implementation.

“While we appreciate that air quality monitoring is being extended to several cities, the fiscal support for mitigation of air pollution in million plus cities has been reduced to simple dust management measures and not for management of toxic emissions from combustion sources. We now need to bridge the gap between planning and implementation,” said Anumita Roychowdhury, executive director, Centre for Science and Environment.

NCAP aims to reduce the concentration of PM2.5 (fine, respirable pollution particles) and PM10 by 20% to 30% by 2024 over the 2017 annual average levels.

The funds under the plan have been allocated largely under six to seven heads depending on the action plans submitted by cities.

Vijaywada, for instance, received Rs 3.6 crore for installation of three continuous air quality monitoring systems; Rs 2 crore for mechanical street sweepers; Rs 1 crore for water sprinklers; Rs 80 lakh for source apportionment studies and ~30 lakh for a mobile enforcement unit.

The response to the RTI application, filed by Carbon Copy (a media portal that tracks developments in the climate and energy sector), reveals that cities like Kanpur received about Rs 10 lakh for developing green buffers and Agra received Rs 22.5 lakh for supply of gas based tandoors for restaurants. These were included in the total budget of Rs 10 crore per city allocated to them.

The national capital, however, has not been allocated any money. “Delhi receives funds from most ministries even without NCAP. It has got hundreds of crores for clean fuel, for the peripheral expressways and has a good monitoring network. Why should Delhi wait for Rs 5 or 10 crores?” asked a Central Pollution Control Board official.

Air pollution experts have criticized NCAP for not having the legal mandate for implementation as it depends on a collaborative and participatory approach, which, experts say, means it is not mandatory that cities meet the NCAP targets. NCAP also lacks a regional focus as it largely a city oriented plan.

“The modest funding has typically been allocated to measures like mechanical sweepers and water sprinklers, which are not nearly proportional to the scale and ambition of efforts needed with a crisis. Keeping efforts restricted to cities will ultimately be limited since pollution does not follow administrative boundaries. In particular, large point sources like industries and power plants have been a critical blind spot,” said Santosh Harish, fellow at Centre for Policy Research.