

Modi govt to hold review meeting on air pollution measures, stubble burning on 1 October

The meeting, to be held virtually, will also be attended by chiefs of the Municipal Corporations of Delhi and the New Delhi Municipal Council.

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A file photo of stubble burning in Tarn Taran Sahib town. | Photo: ANI

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New Delhi: Environment secretaries of Delhi, Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan, along with officials from the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFF & CC) and representatives of the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) will hold a meeting on 1 October to review progress of air pollution control measures and the problem of stubble burning, Union Minister Prakash Javadekar said Tuesday.

“All the agencies were asked to make short-, medium-, and long-term plans in 2016 to fight pollution. The meeting will focus on reviewing the progress of these plans,” Javadekar said during a press briefing at the National Media Centre.

Farm fires, which were **spotted** in Punjab last week, coupled with resumption of economic activities after the Covid-19 lockdown has already led to a deterioration of air quality in Delhi. The capital city's AQI was 177 Tuesday, which falls in the moderate category.

According to the System of Air Quality and Weather Forecasting And Research (SAFAR), which is run by the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology, the air quality in Delhi is set to worsen over the next three days.

“The problem of air pollution is not restricted to Delhi and NCR. It is a common problem of all the areas falling under the same airshed, which includes Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan,” Javadekar said.

The meeting, to be held virtually, will also be attended by chiefs of the Municipal Corporations of Delhi and the New Delhi Municipal Council.

Javadekar also said 50 teams of CPCB officials will be deployed from 15 October to monitor sources of pollution in Delhi, and recommend quick fixes.



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‘Inculcate eco-friendly habits like cycling’

Javadekar also listed some of the initiatives taken by the Narendra Modi government since 2016 to fight pollution. These include introduction of BS VI vehicles and fuel, incentives to boost e-vehicles usage, and completion of peripheral highways that prevent unnecessary traffic from entering the capital.

He, however, said despite all efforts Delhi is likely to see increased pollution levels for two-three months in winter due to meteorological conditions.

According to a report by the CPCB and the MoEFF & CC, cold, dry air, and **ground based inversion** with low wind conditions are responsible for increasing concentration of pollutants during winter in Delhi.

Wind blowing from the north and north-west toward the east direction during winters results in a combination of pollution and fog, and ultimately creating heavy smog formation in the capital city.

Javadekar also encouraged citizens to inculcate eco-friendly habits such as cycling to reduce pollution. He pointed out how Delhi residents enjoyed clean air during the Covid-19 lockdown since all industries were closed, and vehicular traffic was at an all time low.

Now that the economic activities have opened up, the minister said, air pollution is likely to rise to pre-lockdown levels.