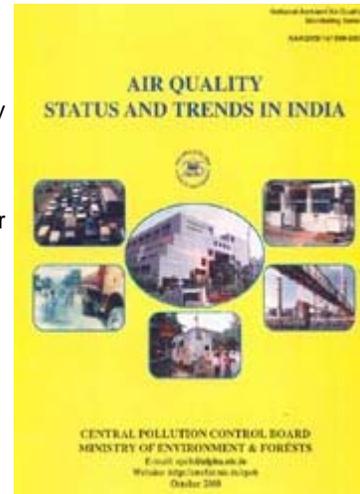


Air Quality Status and Trends in India

Foreword

We can also make do without water for a few days. But, we cannot live without breathing air even for a few moments. The air that we breathe directly gets into our bloodstream. Hence, it is necessary for us to ensure that the air quality is not polluted beyond the threshold limits.

The human activities whether for cooking, space heating, transportation or for industrial production use fuels of various kinds. Burning of fuels leads to a plethora of combustion products, which contribute towards air pollution. Besides man made pollutants, air pollution such as in arid and semi-arid areas which are having high levels of suspended particulate matter (SPM) can also be caused by natural conditions.



Air pollutants whether man made or natural are to be monitored to ascertain their characteristics and concentration in the ambient air. Monitoring helps us to take necessary preventive and control measures. With this in view, the Central Pollution Control Board and the State Pollution Control Boards have set up a network of air quality monitoring stations (total 290). The Central Pollution Control Board collates the air quality data and brings out the annual air quality statistics. Based on such data, it has been possible to identify the polluted areas and also prepare action plans. I may mention here about the Action Plan which has been prepared for the Capital City of Delhi. Because of initiatives taken for controlling the air pollution from different sources, particularly automobiles, the increasing trend of air pollution in the city has been arrested. We have been able to phase out lead from petrol throughout the country from February, this year. It has been possible within a span of 5 years, which is by no means a mean achievement. The results of initiatives taken for improvement of fuel quality, tightening of emission norms for vehicles and emissions from industrial sources are being felt through findings of air quality monitoring.

We are already confronted with the environmental and health problems on account of poor shelter and lack of safe water, sanitation and drainage. The problems are further aggravated by harmful emissions caused by motor vehicles, industries and domestic combustion of biomass and fossil fuels. The present report highlights the status and trends of air quality in different parts of the country based on the data collected through the national ambient air quality network.

I am grateful to my colleagues namely Dr. C. S. Sharma, Scientist 'C' and Dr. B. Sengupta, Member Secretary, CPCB for preparing the report.

We hope, the report will be useful to all concerned with protection and improvement of air.

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