

Ban on use of Coal in Delhi-NCR

The Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) has issued directions to ban the use of coal in industrial, domestic and other miscellaneous applications in the entire Delhi-NCR region from 1st January 2023. This step is taken to bring down greenhouse gas emissions in Delhi NCR. Delhi is among the world's most polluted capital cities. According to the pollution index, on average, the AQI in the capital, its neighbouring cities - Gurgaon, Noida, and Ghaziabad - is in the 300-400 level mark.

Significance of this Step:

- **Save Tonnes of Coal Annually:** The Step to drive the switching over to cleaner fuel such as natural gas and biomass will not only help save 1.7 million tonnes of coal annually, but also reduce pollutants including Particulate Matter (PM), Nitrogen Oxide (NOx), CO₂ and Carbon monoxide (CO). However, thermal power plants in NCR are allowed to use low-sulphur coal.
- **Help in Tackling Air pollution:** Heavy pollution from coal is a significant contributor to the degrading quality of air in the NCR and surrounding areas, and thus a need to switch to a cleaner fuel has been felt over time. Every year, air pollution from fossil fuels takes millions of lives, increases our risk of stroke, lung cancer and asthma, and costs us a huge amount of money.
- **Natural Gas gets a Boost:** The decision to ban use of coal as a fuel will boost the prospects of natural gas in the NCR. As per the Petroleum Planning & Analysis Cell, the global per capita natural gas consumption is 496 cubic meters) compared to 43 cu m for India.

Details about Coal:

- It is one of the most abundantly found fossil fuels. It is used as a domestic fuel, in industries such as iron and steel, steam engines and to generate electricity. Electricity from coal is called thermal power.
- The coal which we are using today was formed millions of years ago when giant ferns and swamps got buried under the layers of earth. Coal is therefore referred to as Buried Sunshine.
- The coal producing areas of India include Raniganj, Jharia, Dhanbad and Bokaro in Jharkhand.
- Coal is also classified into four ranks: anthracite, bituminous, subbituminous, and lignite. The ranking depends on the types and amounts of carbon the coal contains and on the amount of heat energy the coal can produce.

Steps taken to Combat Air Pollution:

- **Promoting Clean Fuels:** CAQM has been focusing on shifting industries to piped natural gas and other clean fuels. Around 1.7 million tonnes (MT) of coal is consumed annually by various industries in the NCR, with about 1.4 MT alone being consumed in the six major industrial districts.

- Supreme Court Order: In December 2021, the Supreme Court ordered the government to find a permanent solution to the air pollution menace occurring every year in Delhi and NCR. Accordingly, the CAQM formed an Expert Group to deliberate upon all such suggestions and proposals. The Expert Group has strongly recommended phasing out use of heavily polluting fossil fuels like coal and mandating cleaner fuels, to the extent possible.

Related Initiatives:

- System of Air Quality and Weather Forecasting and Research (SAFAR) Portal
- Air Quality Index: AQI has been developed for eight pollutants viz. PM2.5, PM10, Ammonia, Lead, nitrogen oxides, sulphur dioxide, ozone, and carbon monoxide.
- Graded Response Action Plan
- For Reducing Vehicular Pollution:
 - BS-VI Vehicles,
 - Push for Electric Vehicles (EVs),
 - Odd-Even Policy as an emergency measure
- New Commission for Air Quality Management
- Subsidy to farmers for buying Turbo Happy Seeder (THS) Machine

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