Environment & Ecology · GS - III

What are the key features of the National Clean Air Programme (NCAP) initiated by the Government of India?

EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
2020	GS - III	Environment & Ecology

MARKS	WORD LIMIT
15	~250 words

Answer Hint

Air pollution mitigation; Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change; non-attainment cities; particulate matter reduction; monitoring networks; city action plans; source apportionment; inter-agency coordination; public participation

Model Answer

Introduction

The National Clean Air Programme (NCAP) was launched by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change in 2019 to improve air quality through coordinated, time-bound pollution-control measures across India.

Key features

- **National framework:** NCAP provides a coordinated approach to reducing air pollution across sectors and regions.
- **Target setting:** The programme originally aimed for a 20–30% reduction in particulate matter concentrations by 2024, relative to the 2017 baseline. The target was subsequently revised to achieve up to a 40% reduction in PM10 levels or meet national standards by 2025–26 in identified cities.
- **City action plans:** Non-attainment cities and other identified urban areas prepare plans addressing local pollution sources.

- **Monitoring infrastructure:** Expansion and improvement of air-quality monitoring networks help assess pollution levels and progress.
- **Source identification:** Source-apportionment studies help identify contributions from transport, industries, road dust, construction and other activities.
- **Sector-specific interventions:** Measures include cleaner transport, industrial emission control, dust management, waste management and improved fuel use.
- **Institutional coordination:** The programme promotes collaboration among central ministries, state governments, pollution-control boards and urban local bodies.
- **Public participation:** Awareness campaigns and citizen engagement encourage behavioural changes and local accountability.

Challenges

Uneven implementation capacity, inadequate monitoring in some areas, pollution crossing municipal boundaries and dependence on multiple agencies can constrain results.

Way forward

Strengthen enforcement, expand reliable monitoring, improve public transport, control industrial emissions and adopt airshed-based planning that addresses pollution across administrative boundaries.

Conclusion

NCAP provides an important framework for improving urban air quality. Its success depends on measurable outcomes, effective enforcement and coordinated action across sectors and regions.

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