

Penalise companies for non-compliance with Ambient Air Quality Norms: CII-Niti Aayog report

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The monitoring mechanism for air pollution should be strengthened and entities must be penalised for not complying with Ambient Air Quality Standards, recommends the CII-Niti Aayog report on clean industry for reducing air pollution from major industrial sources in Delhi-NCR.

Individuals, organisations and utilities who own or service the building and any other infrastructure in the national capital region (NCR) cities and towns may be penalised 5-10 per cent of the project cost for not being able to comply with the ambient air quality standard, says the report.

It recommends a two-tier monitoring and enforcement mechanism which includes monitoring and enforcement at local level by conducting random checks through local bodies at hotspots of air pollution. The tier-II includes real-time monitoring and enforcement which needs to be strengthened by the concerned state pollution control boards, suggests the report.

“It is recommended that competent authority (Central Pollution Control Board) notifies under the Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981 that the civic agencies (local bodies, authorities, landowning agencies, etc) may be penalised for non-compliance in their area,” recommends the report. Such sources include construction and demolition of urban infrastructure or buildings; maintenance of urban infrastructure; and operations of public or private utilities.

In addition to penalties for individuals and organisations, civic or landowning agencies may be penalised based on the direct correlation of estimated health impact from air pollution and cost to society. The proposed notification under the Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981, may suggest an appropriate mechanism for attributing social and environmental cost to these activities, the report said.

Making Corporate India Comply

Key anthropogenic activities addressed in this report include fugitive emissions from construction, demolition and allied activities (manufacturing and transportation of construction materials) and energy-related emissions from diesel generators, thermal power plants and brick kilns.

The Task Force on Clean Industry, as constituted by the Niti Aayog on 5 June, 2017, under the 'Cleaner Air-Better Life' initiative, was convened by the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII). Recommendations of the task force are grounded in scientific understanding of sources and their associated load of pollutants (PM2.5, SO2 and NOX emissions) which have implications for public health.

Consultations with important stakeholders in the airshed, such as local bodies and authorities in NCR towns, construction industry, DG manufacturers and thermal power generators, were carried out to arrive at these actionable recommendations.

Two key strategies for addressing these fugitive emissions and energy-related emissions have been outlined in this report. Fugitive emissions, which contribute to air pollution, are emissions of gases or vapours from pressurised equipment due to leaks and other unintended or irregular releases of gases, mostly from industrial activities.

“If we wish to breathe fresh air, it is imperative for Industry to adopt the recommendations of the report across sectors, be it manufacturing, energy generation or construction; and embed it into its business strategy, policies and future plans. Businesses should shift from environmental compliance to environmental stewardship for the sake of healthy planet,” CII Director General Chandrajit Banerjee said.

Managing energy-related emissions would require significant progress in adoption of clean fuel technologies and end-of-pipe solutions across sectors, the chamber stated.