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# Centre sets stiffer 40% air pollution reduction target for cities by 2026

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NEW DELHI: Encouraged by the performance of 95 cities that showed improvement in air quality in 2021-22 as compared to 2017 levels, the Centre has revised the target of reducing air pollution (PM concentrations) in cities from 20-30% by 2024 to 40% by 2025-26.

Though a 40% reduction in PM concentrations over 2017 levels still wouldn't make air quality reach acceptable limits in Delhi and other NCR cities, Mumbai, Kolkata, Lucknow and Kanpur, the revised target may at least prompt the respective states to ratchet up their ambition through city-based action plans under the National Clean Air Programme (NCAP).

The new target was conveyed to states during the national conference of environment ministers in Ekta Nagar, Gujarat last week. "Achieving a minimum 40% reduction is desirable under the revised target. We believe

many cities can achieve much higher cuts, such as seen in Varanasi that recorded the highest 53% reduction in PM10 levels in 2021-22 (over 2017 levels)," said an environment ministry official.

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## CITY RANKINGS SOON

**Earlier target | 20-30% reduction** in PM levels by 2024

**Revised target | 40% reduction** by 2025-26 under National Clean Air Programme

➤ 131 cities to be **ranked on actions to reduce pollution**

➤ Environment ministry's recently released analysis showed **PM10 levels in 95 cities had improved** over 2017 levels. It didn't analyse levels of the more hazardous PM2.5

Delhi among cities with improved PM10 levels in '21-22

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Revising the air-pollution reduction target for Indian cities to 40% by 2025-26 over 2017 levels, the Union environment ministry said the final goal was to bring particulate matter concentrations within acceptable limits everywhere.

"The idea behind the revised target is to ultimately achieve acceptable limits of both PM10 and PM2.5 concentrations. We may revise the target further in future," a ministry official said.

The ministry's recent analysis of cities under NCAP showed that 20 cities, including Chennai, Madurai, Nashik and Chittur, have even conformed to the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) that put acceptable annual average limit of PM10 at 60

micrograms per cubic meter (g/m<sup>3</sup>). The analysis, however, remained silent on the more hazardous PM<sub>2.5</sub> as its monitoring is not done in all NCAP cities. Under NAAQS, the annual average prescribed standards for PM<sub>2.5</sub> is 40 g/m<sup>3</sup>.

There are 131 cities under NCAP, launched in January 2019, which have been working on their respective action plans to reduce air pollution through multiple actions on the ground. During the national conference, the ministry decided to rank these 131 cities annually based on different actions taken for improving air quality, like solid waste management, road dust management, management of construction and demolition waste, control of vehicular emissions and industrial pollution.

Besides Varanasi, the other cities that had shown improvement in PM<sub>10</sub> levels in 2021-22 include Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Lucknow, Nagpur and Chandigarh. Most of the cities didn't conform to NAAQS.

Delhi's PM<sub>10</sub> level reduced from 241g/m<sup>3</sup> in 2017 to 196 g/m<sup>3</sup> in 2021-22. Similarly, the PM<sub>10</sub> level in Mumbai reduced from 151g/m<sup>3</sup> in 2017 to 106 g/m<sup>3</sup> in 2021-22 whereas it reduced from 119 g/m<sup>3</sup> in 2017 to 105 g/m<sup>3</sup> in Kolkata in 2021-22.

It shows that these cities will have to reduce PM<sub>10</sub> concentrations much more than 40% to reach the acceptable limit of 60 g/m<sup>3</sup>.