



# Non-Transparent Pollution Control Boards

## Why in News

Recently, a new report by the **Centre for Science and Environment (CSE)** has revealed that most of the **State Pollution Control Boards (SPCBs) and Pollution Control Committees (PCCs)** in India remain **non-transparent entities** when it comes to sharing information with the public.

- CSE is a public interest research and advocacy NGO based in New Delhi.

## Key Points

### ▪ About the Report:

- The report is titled, Transparency Index: Rating of pollution control boards on public disclosure.
- It has assessed the **data disclosure performance of 29 State Pollution Control Boards And Six Pollution Control Committees** from across the country. Of these, only **17 boards and committees scored 50% or above.**
- Pollution control agencies under **Air Act 1981** and **Water Act 1974** is to **collect and disseminate information related to air and water pollution** and also about its prevention, control or abatement.
  - The law also asks the **boards to share the data in the public domain.**
  - However, this is rarely done in practice.
- The pollution control boards of **Odisha and Telangana were the top performers** and had scored 67% in transparency.
- Putting in the public domain crucial pollution-related information, data and details of actions taken is critical. It **can help policy-makers** take the discussions to the next level of pollution management.
  - It can also **reassure the people** about the efficiency of these boards and committees.

### ▪ Other Issues Pertaining to SPCBs:

- **More Responsibilities, Limited Institutional Capacity:** Over the last two decades, SPCBs have seen an expansion in the scope and scale of their work but not in their budgets and workforce.
  - Remuneration is meagre, making it hard for the board to retain talent.
- **Shortage of Technical Experts:** Further, an acute shortage of technical experts and other staff has reduced central and state pollution regulators to mere advisory bodies, leaving them unable to enforce air quality standards.
- **Top Administrators Have No Domain Expertise:** Leadership positions in SPCBs are usually held by civil servants with no expertise in science or environmental studies--necessary for comprehending issues relating to pollution and climate change.
  - For example, the CPCB is dominated by government representatives and is

- constituted by the central government “which conflicts with the expectation of it acting as a watchdog”.
- **Low Motivation and Accountability:** State board officials often have a diminished view of their own role and responsibility.
  - Also, the process of framing standards was not inclusionary and state officials were simply asked to implement these.
- **Poor Multi-Sectoral Coordination:** The lack of convergence and coordination between various state and central departments often means that other departments do not implement SPCB directives.
- **Little Expertise in Monitoring:** While the capacity for real-time monitoring increases every year, gaps in data collection and erroneous readings due to poor calibration remain.

## Pollution Control Boards in India

### ▪ Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB):

- CPCB is a statutory organisation which was constituted in September, 1974 under the [Water \(Prevention and Control of Pollution\) Act, 1974](#).
- It was also entrusted with the powers and functions under the [Air \(Prevention and Control of Pollution\) Act, 1981](#).
- It serves as a field formation and also provides technical services to the **Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change** of the provisions of the [Environment \(Protection\) Act, 1986](#).
- **Principal Functions** of the CPCB:
  - To promote cleanliness of streams and wells in different areas of the States by prevention, control and abatement of water pollution.
  - To improve the quality of air and to prevent, control or abate air pollution in the country.

### ▪ State Pollution Control Board (SPCB):

- They **supplement the CPCB** as they are a statutory organization entrusted to implement Environmental Laws and rules within the jurisdiction of a state.

### ▪ Pollution control committees (PCC):

- They perform similar functions to SPCB. The difference between the two is that **PCC belongs to Union territories**.

## Way Forward

- **Uniform Standards:** There should be a uniform format for presenting annual reports and sharing information on websites.
  - The Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) should come up with a website format for the SPCBs/PCCs and guidelines for framing annual reports.
- **Specialised Recruitment:** There is a need for clear qualifications to be laid down for the recruitment of various members to the pollution control boards.
  - Having special knowledge or practical experience in respect of matters relating to environmental protection can be one of the criteria.
- **Strengthening Institutional capacity:** Regulatory bodies that enable their implementation are strengthened with the technical and financial resources needed.

[Source: DTE](#)

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