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## **POLLUTION CONTROL BOARD: ROLE AND RELEVANCE**

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### **ABSTRACT**

It is a well known fact that Air Pollution has been a matter of grave concern since time immemorial. But it was brought to the attention of stakeholders in the last two decades. The adverse repercussions of the same are still being observed, which have indicated gaps not only in existing management policies but also control strategies. To reduce the detrimental consequences of air pollution, more stringent, quick and impeccable set of decisions that could govern the issue is the need of the hour.

To tackle these issues, a special law was enacted- Air (prevention and control of pollution) Act, 1981, a law passed by the Parliament following Article 253 of Indian Constitution and resolutions created during the Stockholm conference. During the conference, a proposal was approved urging all the nations to protect the natural resources and to reduce the level of pollution for a healthier and cleaner environment. The Preamble of the act affirms that the act states measures for control, abatement and prevention of air pollution in the country.

The act also established Central Pollution Control Board, which is a statutory organisation under the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change. These boards act as creators, supervisors and propellers of various policies to reduce air pollution in India. The primary role of the pollution control board is to advise the central government on all issues regarding prevention, abatement and control of air pollution as well as regarding enhancement of air quality.

This research paper analyses the role of central pollution control board in addressing air pollution in India. It will also provide an insightful learning on the need, importance and functions of the central pollution control board.

## **INTRODUCTION**

The last three decades of increasing population, shift towards urbanisation, rapid industrialisation, growing modes of transportation, adoption of western culture and other factors have contributed to Indian cities becoming some of the most polluted in the world. Studies have shown that large scale air pollution not only affects the health and quality of life but also places significant economic burden that people can ill afford. With the view to achieve the desired economic growth, it is inevitable that air pollution levels will continue to grow unless significant actions are taken at regulatory level. With decline in air quality, especially in urban areas, there is greater risk of cardio vascular diseases, lung cancer, breathing difficulties, asthma, low birth and pre-term weight, all of which could also lead to death of an individual. India is no exception, but in fact is one the worst affected countries in the world.

With this in mind, Central Pollution Control Board was set up, to play a crucial role in regulating and reducing the pollution levels. It was incorporated in September 1974 under Section 3 of the Water (prevention and control of pollution) Act, 1974. It was entrusted with the powers and functions under the Air (prevention and control of pollution) Act 1981. The board conducts environmental assessments and research. It is responsible for enforcing national standards under a variety of environmental laws, in consultation with zonal offices, tribal and local governments. The main purpose or task of the Central Pollution Control Board is to prevent, abate and control air pollution. It serves as field unit and provides technical assistance to Ministry of Environment and Forest under the provisions of Environment (Protection) Act 1986.

We will now discuss about the need, role, relevance and importance of Central Pollution Control Board in detail.

## **HISTORY**

The Water (prevention and control of pollution) Act, 1974, enacted under Article 253 of the Indian Constitution led to establishment of the Central Pollution Control Board at the centre and state level. The board was originally created under Section 3 of the Water (prevention and control of pollution) Act, 1974 with main function to promote the cleanliness of streams and wells in the country. It was constituted on 22<sup>nd</sup> September 1974. In 1981, Air (prevention and control of pollution) Act was passed. Under the Act, Central Pollution Control Board was

entrusted with the powers and functions with aim to improve quality of air in the country. This was done with the view that the Board had to implement both Air and Water Act by one agency namely, Central Pollution Control Board. Under Environment (protection) Act, 1986 also known as the Umbrella Act, more functions were given to the pollution control board.

Article 253 under which the Water (prevention and control of pollution) Act was passed, allowed for creation of pollution control board at both centre and state level. The board acts as a multi-disciplinary technical organisation under Ministry of Environment and Forest. It plays the role of the advisor and coordinator of the State boards. State boards are mainly for ensuring that the policies and programmes introduced by the central board is being followed and implemented properly at each state.

Central Pollution Control Board plays a key role in abatement, prevention and control of pollution in the country by introducing and implementing various policies and programmes, preparing reports, conducting research, releasing the annual report, organising training and development sessions of manpower and promoting awareness at different levels of the government and public at large.

Presently, Central Pollution Control Board is playing a multi faced role in sphere of pollution abatement and control.

## **ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE**

Central Pollution Control Board is the apex technical body of the Ministry of Environment and Forests imbued with the power to control, prevent and abate air pollution. It receives hundred percent of financial aid from the Ministry for both plan and non plan expenditure. In order to discharge its functions properly, central board is composed of following members-:

- A full time chairman, having special knowledge or practical experience in matters related to environment protection, nominated by central government.
- Number of officials, not more than five, nominated by the central government to represent it.
- Number of members, not exceeding five, nominated by the central government from among the members of state board and from local authorities.

- Number of non officials, not more than three, who represent interest in fishery, trade, agriculture or any other field which in opinion of central government is fit to be represented.
- A full time member secretary having qualification and knowledge related to scientific and managerial aspect of environmental protection.
- Two person to represent companies, corporations owned, managed and controlled by the central government to be nominated by that government.

Board is supposed to comprise of fifteen members excluding the chairman and the member secretary. So it can have maximum of seventeen members and minimum of seven members. All appointments are made by the central government for a term of three years provides that the central government has power to remove any member before the expiry of the term as per the grounds mentioned in Section 8 of Air (prevention and control of pollution) Act, 1981.

## **ROLE OF THE BOARD**

Now the major question which arises in our minds is- What was the need to establish the pollution control board and was it really necessary?

Well, the simple answer to this question is yes. With the advent of urbanisation and rapid industrialisation, the pollution levels had increased considerably and tremendously. Pollution levels would have continued to grow unless some significant actions were taken at the regulatory level. The need to establish the pollution control board was felt, so that the board can not only formulate laws and policies related to air pollution but also make sure that they are being implemented properly. The board was entrusted with certain roles and responsibilities, it had to comply with. These were:-

1. To plan and execute nation wide programme for prevention, control and abatement of air pollution.
2. To advise central government on matters relating to air pollution.
3. To provide technical assistance to state board and resolve disputes arising between them.

4. To collect, compile and publish statistical data related to air pollution.
5. Organise mass awareness programmes on prevention, control and abatement of air pollution.
6. To lay down the standards for quality of air in consultation with central government.
7. To carry out investigations and research related to prevention, control and abatement of air pollution.
8. Disseminate information related to prevent, control and abatement of air pollution.
  - Perform other functions as and when prescribed by the government of India.

The mandate provided to the central pollution control board under the Air (prevention and control of pollution) Act, 1981, is to set standards for the quality of air and lay down measures for prevention, control and abatement of air pollution.

With respect to air pollution, the board has recognised some main areas for action, namely-

1. Information and Management System
2. Vehicular Pollution
3. Laboratory Management
4. National Air Quality Monitoring Programme (NAMP)
5. Pollution control policy implementation in Major Polluting Industries
6. Research and Development for prevention, control and abatement of air pollution.
7. Development and Review of emission standards and guidelines

In order to curb the air pollution, it is important to assess the quality of air through continuous survey and monitoring of the emissions that lead to the pollution. Four pollutants- sulphur dioxide, suspended particles, respirable suspended particles and nitrogen dioxide are monitored continuously under the National Air Quality Monitoring Programme, an initiative by the central

pollution control board in order to improve the quality of air. The board provides the technical and financial assistance to the agencies engaged in this work.

In addition to all of this, there are certain responsibilities entrusted to the central pollution control board by Ministry of Environment and Forests:-

- a) Action plan of sixteen cities for air pollution control
- b) Plastic waste management
- c) Hazardous waste management
- d) Municipal solid waste management
- e) Vehicular pollution control
- f) Fuel quality standard and many more.

The roles and responsibilities mentioned above are to be looked into and performed by the board in order to curb air pollution and improve the standards for quality of air. All of this is performed by the board in consonance with certain acts namely- Environment (protection) Act, 1986, Water (prevention and control of pollution) Act, 1976, Air (prevention and control of pollution) Act, 1981 etc.

## **DIVISIONS OF BOARD**

The central pollution control board is divided into further different divisions. This is done in order to ensure that the policies are properly implemented and there is not much of burden on one single agency. Separating and dividing the work would not only reduce the burden but would ensure efficient implementation of the rules and regulations.

### **1. POLLUTION CONTROL PLANNING –**

This division is the think tank of the pollution control board. It provides blue print for the goals and objectives which are to be achieved, keeping in view the resources. It deals with preparing the annual action plan as well as the five year plan of the board, which reflects the short and the long term objectives and aim of the board. It also coordinates with all divisions at the

headquarters.

## **2. ENVIRONMENT TRAINING UNIT –**

Training is essential for Human Resource development in every organisation. The Water Act, 1974 and the Air Act 1981 also emphasise on the same. Training in aspects of prevention, control and abatement of air pollution is not only important but also efficient to curb the pollution and improve quality of air. This unit provides training to staff at both centre and state level. It also trains personnel hospitals, municipalities for day to day work.

## **3. LABORATORY DIVISIONS –**

Laboratory plays a major role in carrying out the function of monitoring the pollution sources. Main purpose of the laboratory is to- carry out research and development, monitoring the sources of pollution, conducting training programmes, carrying out collaborative projects, analyse specific pollutants and preparing report on it and much more.

## **IMPACT**

Central Pollution Control Board has made significant contributions to environmental protection and public health in India. It's efforts have led to reduction of pollution levels in both air and water, and the improvement of environmental quality in many parts of the country.

For instance, Central Pollution Control Board has played key role in controlling vehicular emissions by setting standards for vehicle manufacturers and promoting the use of cleaner fuels. The board has also implemented measures to control industrial pollution, such as requiring industries to install pollution control devices like chimneys etc. and treating effluent before discharge. Pollution control board has played a very crucial role in reducing air pollution and safeguarding public health.

To curb the air pollution, pollution control board has implemented several measures such as National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) and the Air Act, 1981. The NAAQS stipulates highest permissible level of pollutants in air while the air act regulates emissions from industries and vehicles. It's efforts have had a significant impact with implementation of NAAQS reducing the suspended particulate matter in the air. The board regularly conducts

campaigns and workshops to educate people about importance of environmental protection and need to adopt sustainable lifestyles.

However, despite boards continuous efforts, air pollution remains a significant problem in India. It must continue enforcing stricter regulations and working with industries and other stakeholders to reduce emissions and improve air quality.

Furthermore, it is also true that the board has been instrumental in creating awareness among public about environmental issues and promoting sustainable development practices.

## **CHALLENGES AND SUGGESTIONS**

Central Pollution Control Board is responsible for monitoring and controlling pollution levels in India. However, the pollution control board faces several issues in fulfilling its mandate, and addressing them is crucial to ensure country's environment remains healthy and sustainable.

One significant and major challenge faced by the board is lack of proper enforcement mechanisms. While the board has the power to regulate pollution, it often lacks the authority to enforce its decisions effectively. This results in polluters disregarding regulations, and the current penalties for non compliance are limited. The board can work with the government to develop more stringent enforcement mechanisms such as increasing penalties, utilising better monitoring technologies, and establishing specialised enforcement teams to monitor polluters.

Another challenge is the lack of public awareness and engagement. Many individuals in India are unaware of the detrimental effects of pollution on the environment as well as their health. Therefore, they do not take necessary steps or actions to reduce the pollution levels or hold polluters accountable. To address this, the board could launch an extensive public awareness campaign, including education programmes, public service announcement on television or radio to promote awareness of harmful effects of pollution and encourage individuals to reduce their pollution levels.

Third challenge faced by the board is lack of coordination among different levels of the government. Although this board is responsible for controlling the pollution at national level but various state and local governments have their pollution control boards too. Lack of coordination leads to a lot of confusion and duplication of work. To address this, the board

should work with the state and local governments to establish better coordination mechanisms which could involve joint Committee meetings, common guidelines etc.

## **CONCLUSION**

This research paper aimed to provide an insight on the role and relevance of the pollution control board. It also tried to analyse the challenges faced by the board in discharge of its functions and provide some suggestions for the same.

Board plays a vital role in protecting the environment and public health in India. It's efforts have led to significant improvement in environmental quality, but there is still much more to address the challenges of pollution and sustainability. The board needs to continue to innovate and adapt to challenging and changing circumstances to fulfil its mandate effectively.

Government and board alone will not be able to achieve the desired results until and unless people also make small efforts from their side to reduce the pollution level. However, it is no wrong to say that establishment of the central pollution control board has proved to effective for the society, the people and environment.