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Daily News Feed

D.N.F

28.11.2025

Sabaijor Complex, Near Jamunajor Pul,
Castair Town
Deoghar, Mob: -9162500508

Cyclone Ditwah to bring intense rainfall till weekend in T.N.

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

Cyclone Ditwah, now positioned over coastal Sri Lanka and adjoining southwest Bay of Bengal, is set to bring intense rainfall over the delta and adjoining districts on Friday, before shifting towards north Tamil Nadu by weekend. The Regional Meteorological Centre (RMC) has declared a red alert for several districts on Friday and Saturday.

B. Amudha, Head (Additional in-charge), RMC, said Ditwah, meaning lagoon, a name suggested by Yemen as part of the cyclone naming convention, lies about 570 km south-southeast of Puducherry and 670 km south-southeast of Chennai. It is likely to move across Sri Lanka's coast and adjoining southwest Bay of Bengal, and reach near the north Tamil Nadu, Puducherry, and south Andhra Pradesh coasts by the early morning of November 30.

The RMC has declared a cyclonic storm as of now, based on various weather observations. "We will get more clarity on the landfall as the cyclone moves closer to the region," Ms. Amudha said.

Cyclone Ditwah is set to trigger heavy to very heavy rainfall in southern, delta, and adjoining districts on Friday. A red alert has been issued for four districts, including Nagapattinam.

Intense downpour may cover north Tamil Nadu and adjoining interior districts on Saturday as the cyclone is expected to move closer to the region. Six districts along the coast between Chengalpattu and Nagapattinam have been issued a red alert, while 10 other districts, including Chennai, Tiruvallur, and Vellore, have been issued an orange alert.

Cyclone Ditwah — Key Points (English)
Cyclone **Ditwah**, currently located over **coastal Sri Lanka and the southwest Bay of Bengal**, is moving towards Tamil Nadu. The **Regional Meteorological Centre (RMC)** has issued a **red alert** for several

districts on **Friday and Saturday**, especially the **delta, southern**, and **adjoining districts**.
The cyclone is expected to bring **intense to very heavy rainfall** over the **delta belt on Friday**, later spreading towards **north Tamil Nadu**, including **Chengalpattu, Nagapattinam**, and adjoining areas. **Six coastal districts** have been placed under a red alert, while **Chennai, Tiruvallur, and Vellore** are under an **orange alert** due to heavy rainfall probability.
RMC officials noted that Ditwah—meaning *lagoon* in the Yemeni naming scheme—lies around **570 km south-southeast of Puducherry** and **670 km south-southeast of Chennai**. As it moves northwest, rainfall intensity is expected to peak by **November 30**. The landfall location is yet to be determined as the cyclone approaches closer.

चक्रवात 'डिटवा' — मुख्य बिंदु (हिंदी)
चक्रवात **डिटवा**, जो वर्तमान में **श्रीलंका तट और दक्षिण-पश्चिम बंगाल की खाड़ी** के ऊपर स्थित है, तमिलनाडु की ओर बढ़ रहा है। **रीजनल मीटियोरोलॉजिकल सेंटर (RMC)** ने **शुक्रवार और शनिवार** के लिए कई जिलों में **रेड अलर्ट** जारी किया है, विशेषकर **डेल्टा, दक्षिणी** और आसपास के क्षेत्रों में।
यह चक्रवात **तीव्र से अत्यधिक वर्षा** ला सकता है—पहले **डेल्टा क्षेत्रों** में, और फिर धीरे-धीरे **उत्तर तमिलनाडु** तक फैल सकता है। **छह तटीय जिलों** में रेड अलर्ट है, जबकि **चेन्नई, तिरुवल्लुर और वेल्लोर** में **ऑरेंज अलर्ट** जारी किया गया है।
RMC अधिकारियों के अनुसार 'डिटवा'— जिसका अर्थ *लैगून* है—यमन की नामकरण प्रणाली के अनुसार रखा गया है। यह **पुडुचेरी से लगभग 570 किमी** और **चेन्नई से 670 किमी दक्षिण-दक्षिण-पूर्व** में स्थित है। इसके उत्तर-पश्चिम बढ़ने के साथ **30 नवंबर** तक वर्षा की तीव्रता बढ़ सकती है। वास्तविक **भूमि-प्रवेश (landfall) बिंदु** चक्रवात के और निकट आने पर स्पष्ट होगा।

GS Paper Linkages (UPSC/BPSC Relevance)
GS-I (Geography)
- Cyclone formation in Indian Ocean
- Tropical cyclones & naming conventions
- Climatic patterns of South India

GS-III (Disaster Management)
- IMD/RMC forecasting mechanisms
- Early warning systems (red/orange alerts)
- Preparedness in vulnerable coastal districts
- Impact on agriculture, fisheries, and settlements

GS-III (Environment & Ecology)
- Extreme weather events linked to climate variability
- Vulnerability of eastern coastline

GS-II (Governance)
- Role of state disaster response forces (SDRF)
- Administrative coordination during natural hazards

Exam-Oriented Insights (Useful for Mains & Prelims)
- Ditwah shows **increasing frequency & intensity** of Bay of Bengal cyclones.
- Highlights **IMD's improved early-warning capabilities**.
- Demonstrates **regional vulnerability** of Tamil Nadu and the delta belt.
- Shows importance of **disaster preparedness & inter-agency coordination**.

SC asks govt. to regulate content on Internet

The court suggests 'impartial, and autonomous body ' to vet 'prima facie permissible' content

Court says victims of online abuse have to be protected, and seeks 'preventive mechanisms'

A takedown takes 24 hours; in that time the harm is already done, Justice Bagchi says

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday asked the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting to work on guidelines for user-generated content to protect innocents from becoming victims of obscene, even perverse, "anti-national" or personally damaging online content.

The top court considered the idea of an "impartial and autonomous authority", neither bound to private broadcasters nor the government, to vet "prima facie permissible" content.

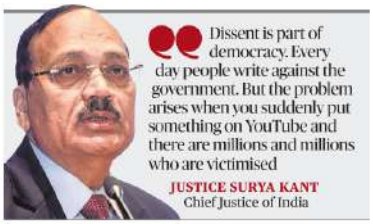
A Bench of Chief Justice of India Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi said user-generated content, potentially disastrous to reputations or even having "adult content", go viral even before social media intermediaries could take them down.

Aadhaar suggestion

At one point, referring to the easy access to uncurated material online, the court said a few seconds of 'adult content' warning was not enough. It suggested further checks such as sharing Aadhaar details to verify the age of users.

The Chief Justice found it "very strange" the phenomenon that users could create their own online channels and still be not accountable to anyone. "Is there no sense of responsibility?" he asked.

The court clarified that it did not intend to have the proposed guidelines for user-generated content "tinker" with free speech. Though the right was subject to reasonable regulation under Article 19(2) of the Constitution, it was nevertheless to be respected and protected. However, misuse of online speech has exposed millions of innocent people to abuse. They too have a right to be protected, it reasoned.



'Millions victimised'

"Dissent is part of democracy. Every day people write against the government. But the problem arises when you suddenly put something on YouTube and there are millions and millions who are victimised. They do not have a voice. They do not have a platform, and by the time they rush to court, the damage is done," Chief Justice Kant said, highlighting the need for guidelines.

Advocate Prashant Bhushan said any guidelines restraining free speech mandated prior and extensive public consultations, to be initiated by the Union government.

He cautioned that the term 'anti-national' was both over-broad and ambiguous.

The Chief Justice said there were enough laws to turn to after the damage was done. Victims could approach court for damages or opt for criminal proceedings. But there was nothing to protect them before the post went online.

"A takedown takes at least 24 hours. By the time it is effectuated, the harm is already done. Social media is mercurial, goes across borders and is transmitted in seconds. This preventive exercise is not to throttle anyone but to have a certain degree of stick. Technology with AI makes you (social media intermediaries) enormously powerful, to curate your material, assess its impact. Platforms are monetising content," Justice Bagchi observed.

The judge termed prosecution of the creator of the offending social media post a "post-occurrence penalty", saying "we must have preventive mechanisms to ensure there is no spread of misinformation, loss of property as well as sometimes lives".

Senior advocate Amit Sibal, for Indian Broadcast and Digital Foundation, expressed reservations about the court using the term 'preventive' to describe the proposed guidelines. 'Preventive' could be read as 'pre-censorship', Mr. Sibal said.

He suggested changing the prefix to 'effective'.

"The difficulty we are facing is the response time. By the time intermediaries respond to such content, it has already gone viral. Millions of viewership, etc. How do you plug that gap? That is the question," Justice Bagchi emphasised.

The **Supreme Court of India** has asked the **Ministry of Information & Broadcasting (MIB)** to create **guidelines to regulate user-generated content (UGC)** on digital platforms to prevent the spread of **obscene, perverse, anti-national, defamatory, or personally damaging content**.

The Court discussed the idea of setting up an **"impartial, autonomous authority"**—independent of the government and private broadcasters—to vet **prima facie permissible content** before it is widely circulated.

Chief Justice **Surya Kant** highlighted that **millions of people are victimised** by harmful online content before takedown mechanisms respond. A takedown typically takes **at least 24 hours**, by which time the damage is already done. He emphasised the need for **preventive mechanisms**, not censorship.

The Court flagged the risk of **AI-driven amplification**, global transmission of harmful content, and the lack of accountability for influencers and content creators running their own channels without oversight.

The Bench suggested exploring measures such as **age verification using Aadhaar** for access to adult content. Yet, the Court also stressed that **free speech (Article 19(1)(a)) must not be "tinkered with,"** even though it can be reasonably restricted under Article 19(2).

Experts raised concerns:

- Advocate Prashant Bhushan warned that terms like **"anti-national"** are vague and overbroad.
- Senior advocate Amit Sibal said that the term **"preventive"** may imply **pre-censorship**, suggesting it be replaced with "effective."

Overall, the Court sought a **balanced framework** that protects citizens from online harm without curbing legitimate free expression.

हिंदी सारांश

भारत के **सुप्रीम कोर्ट** ने **सूचना एवं प्रसारण मंत्रालय (MIB)** को निर्देश दिया है कि वह **यूज़र-जेनरेटेड कंटेंट (UGC)** को नियंत्रित करने के लिए दिशानिर्देश तैयार करे, ताकि **अश्लील, विकृत, राष्ट्र-विरोधी, मानहानिकारक या व्यक्तिगत रूप से हानिकारक सामग्री** के प्रसार को रोका जा सके।

न्यायालय ने एक **"निष्पक्ष और स्वायत्त संस्था"** बनाने का सुझाव दिया, जो सरकार या निजी प्रसारकों से स्वतंत्र हो और **prima facie** (प्रथम दृष्टया) **अनुमेय सामग्री** की जांच कर सके।

मुख्य न्यायाधीश **सूर्या कांत** ने कहा कि **लाखों लोग सोशल मीडिया से प्रभावित होते हैं** और 24 घंटे की **takedown प्रक्रिया** बहुत धीमी है—तब तक नुकसान हो चुका होता है। इसलिए **रोकथाम संबंधी तंत्र** जरूरी है, न कि सेंसरशिप।

AI-आधारित प्रसार, सोशल मीडिया की सीमाहीन पहुंच, और कंटेंट क्रिएटर्स की **जवाबदेही की कमी** पर अदालत ने चिंता जताई।

अदालत ने **आधार से उम्र सत्यापन** जैसे उपायों पर भी विचार करने की बात कही। साथ ही, कोर्ट ने कहा कि **अभिव्यक्ति की स्वतंत्रता (अनुच्छेद 19(1)(a))** से छेड़छाड़ नहीं की जानी चाहिए, हालांकि अनुच्छेद **19(2)** के तहत **यथोचित प्रतिबंध** लगाए जा सकते हैं।

विशेषज्ञों की आशंकाएँ:

- प्रशांत भूषण ने **"राष्ट्र-विरोधी"** शब्द को अस्पष्ट और खतरनाक बताया।
- अमित सिब्बल ने कहा कि "**preventive**" शब्द को "pre-censorship" समझा जा सकता है, इसलिए इसे "effective" करने का सुझाव दिया।

कुल मिलाकर, न्यायालय एक ऐसी **संतुलित नीति** चाहता है जो ऑनलाइन हानि से लोगों की रक्षा करे और साथ ही **वैध अभिव्यक्ति की स्वतंत्रता** भी बनी रहे।

GS Paper Linkages (UPSC/BPSC Relevance)

GS-II: Polity & Governance

- Regulation vs. Freedom of Speech
- Reasonable Restrictions under **Article 19(2)**
- Role of MIB in digital content governance
- Need for **autonomous oversight authority**

GS-III: Cyber Security & Internal Security

- Online abuse, misinformation, deepfakes
- AI-driven amplification of harmful content
- Tackling cross-border digital threats

GS-II & GS-III: Ethics & Governance

- Balancing free speech and public safety
- Accountability of digital platforms
- Protection of victims of online harassment

GS-IV: Ethics

- Social responsibility of content creators
- Harm principle (Mill's philosophy)
- Ethical digital behaviour

Exam-oriented Insights

- Highlights the evolving digital jurisprudence in India.
- Marks a shift from **reactive takedown model** to **preventive safety model**.
- Raises constitutional questions: censorship vs. protection.
- Important for debates on **data protection, online harms, safe Internet ecosystem**.

India and Indonesia make progress on BrahMos deal at Defence Ministers' Dialogue

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh in a meeting with Indonesia's Defence Minister Sjafrie Sjamsoeddin in New Delhi on Thursday. ANI

India and Indonesia strengthened their defence partnership as Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and Indonesian Defence Minister Sjafrie Sjamsoeddin co-chaired the third India-Indonesia Defence Ministers' Dialogue in New Delhi on Thursday. Both sides also made notable progress on the proposed BrahMos supersonic missile deal.

A senior defence official said the discussions reflected a "progressive approach" from both nations, adding that the agreement "might get locked at the earliest".

The Ministers recalled Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto's visit to India as the Chief Guest for Republic Day this year and noted that his talks with Prime Minister Narendra Modi had bolstered the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership. The participation of 352 personnel from the Indonesian Armed Forces in the parade was highlighted as a symbol of defence cooperation.

According to the Defence Ministry, while reiterating their commitment to a free, open, stable, and prosperous Indo-Pacific, the two sides emphasised adherence to international law and respect for sovereignty. They noted strong alignment between the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific and India's Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative, agreeing to intensify collaboration through multilateral platforms such as the Indian Ocean Rim Association, where India currently holds the chair.

Both countries were committed to enhancing cooperation in maritime domain awareness, cyber-resilience, and joint operational readiness. Indonesia welcomed India's proposal to form a Joint Defence Industry Cooperation Committee aimed at advancing technology transfer, and joint research and development.

India and Indonesia have strengthened their defence cooperation during the **3rd India–Indonesia Defence Ministers' Dialogue**, co-chaired by Defence Minister **Rajnath Singh** and Indonesian Defence Minister **Sjafrie Sjamsoeddin** in New Delhi. Both sides made substantial progress on the **proposed BrahMos supersonic missile deal**, with officials describing the talks as reflecting a "**progressive**

approach." The agreement is expected to be finalised soon.
The meeting also reviewed broader defence collaboration, including President **Prabowo Subianto's** recent visit to India as Chief Guest for Republic Day, which significantly deepened bilateral strategic ties.
Key areas highlighted:

- Participation of **352 Indonesian Armed Forces personnel** in the Republic Day parade, symbolising defence camaraderie.
- Reaffirmation of commitment to a **free, open, stable, and prosperous Indo-Pacific**.
- Alignment between the **ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP)** and **India's Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI)**.
- Agreement to intensify cooperation in **maritime domain awareness, cyber-security, cyber-resilience**, and **joint operational readiness**.
- Indonesia welcomed India's proposal to establish a **Joint Defence Industry Cooperation Committee** for technology transfer, joint research, and defence production collaboration.

The strengthened ties reflect both countries' long-term vision for regional security in the Indo-Pacific and shared interest in countering strategic challenges.

हिंदी सारांश

भारत और इंडोनेशिया ने नई दिल्ली में आयोजित **तीसरे भारत–इंडोनेशिया रक्षा मंत्रियों के संवाद** में अपने रक्षा सहयोग को और मजबूत किया। भारत के रक्षा मंत्री **राजनाथ सिंह** और इंडोनेशिया के रक्षा मंत्री **सजफ़री स्यामसुद्दीन** ने बैठक की सह-अध्यक्षता की। दोनों देशों ने **ब्राह्मोस सुपरसोनिक मिसाइल सौदे** पर महत्वपूर्ण प्रगति की है, जिसे "**प्रगतिशील दृष्टिकोण**" के रूप में वर्णित किया गया। उम्मीद है कि सौदा जल्द ही अंतिम रूप ले सकता है।
बैठक में व्यापक रक्षा सहयोग की समीक्षा की गई। इसमें इंडोनेशिया के राष्ट्रपति **प्रबोवो सुबियांतो** की हालिया भारत यात्रा को भी महत्वपूर्ण बताया गया, जहाँ वे गणतंत्र दिवस पर मुख्य अतिथि थे।
मुख्य बिंदु:

- गणतंत्र दिवस परेड में **इंडोनेशियाई सशस्त्र बलों के 352 सैनिकों** की भागीदारी, जो रक्षा सहयोग का प्रतीक है।
- **मुक्त, खुला, स्थिर और समृद्ध इंडो-पैसिफिक** के प्रति साझा प्रतिबद्धता।
- **ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP)** और **India's Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI)** के बीच मजबूत सामंजस्य।
- **समुद्री डोमेन जागरूकता, साइबर सुरक्षा, साइबर-रेजीलिएंस** और **संयुक्त परिचालन तत्परता** पर सहयोग बढ़ाने का निर्णय।
- भारत के प्रस्ताव पर सहमति कि एक **संयुक्त रक्षा उद्योग सहयोग समिति** बनाई जाए, जो तकनीकी हस्तांतरण, संयुक्त अनुसंधान और रक्षा उत्पादन में सहयोग को बढ़ाए।

यह बैठक भारत-इंडोनेशिया के साझा क्षेत्रीय दृष्टिकोण और इंडो-पैसिफिक में सुरक्षा एवं स्थिरता के लिए दीर्घकालिक रणनीतिक साझेदारी को दर्शाती है।

GS Paper Linkages (UPSC/BPSC Relevance)

GS-II: International Relations

- India–Indonesia Defence Cooperation
- Indo-Pacific geopolitics
- Alignment with AOIP and IPOI
- Defence diplomacy & strategic balancing in Southeast Asia

GS-III: Defence & Security

- BrahMos export strategy
- Maritime domain awareness
- Cyber-security cooperation
- Regional joint operational readiness

GS-I / GS-II (India and the World)

- India's Act East Policy
- Strategic partnerships with ASEAN members

Exam-Oriented Insights

- BrahMos export strengthens India's defence manufacturing and strategic credibility.

- India–Indonesia partnership is crucial for **strait of Malacca maritime security**.
- Reflects ASEAN–India strategic convergence against coercive Indo-Pacific behaviour.
- Enhances India's defence exports under **Atmanirbhar Bharat**.

If you want, I can prepare:
10 UPSC Prelims MCQs based on this news,
One 150-word & 250-word GS-II Mains answer,
A map-based representation of India–Indonesia defence cooperation.

Why India struggles to clear its air

India confronts a recurring pollution crisis shaped by quick fixes such as cloud seeding, smog towers and odd-even rules; fragmented air-quality governance, scattered accountability and short-term political incentives keep long-term progress out of reach

FULL CONTEXT

Ajay Singh Nagpure

Each winter, as Delhi slips back into its familiar grey haze, India reaches for the same set of quick fixes, treating the pollution crisis as if it were temporary. Cloud seeding, smog towers, water sprinkling, odd-even rules, and festival crackdowns reappear in a predictable cycle. These are all high-visibility steps that promise urgency, but they change little on the ground (or in the air).

Public debate breaks down just as quickly: scientists are blamed for weak solutions, politicians for weak will, and administrators for blindly importing Western ideas. There is some truth in each charge, but none explains the full picture by itself. Over the last couple of weeks in Delhi, the public response has also included small public protests. In the November 24 edition, 50-60 protesters gathered near India Gate under heavy security presence; the police eventually detained five people, even though the protests were peaceful.

Fight for rights: People protesting against air pollution near the India Gate in New Delhi. SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

Slices of control

The repeat pattern of short-term interventions points to a structural flaw: the country's air-quality institutions – scientists, governments, regulators, cities, and communities – operate largely on their own. With no clear ownership or shared authority, lasting progress remains elusive.

This disconnect is no accident; instead, it is the product of how India's air-quality governance has taken shape. Unlike countries such as the U.S., the U.K., Japan, or China, where strong national laws and empowered regulators drove decades of steady progress, India's system has been fragmented from the start. The responsibility for clean air is scattered across a long list of bodies: the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change; the Central Pollution Control Board; the State Pollution Control Boards; the Commission for Air Quality Management; the Delhi Pollution Control Committee; municipal bodies such as the Municipal Corporation of Delhi and the New Delhi Municipal Council; and various State departments overseeing agriculture, transport, industry and energy. Sectoral agencies such as the National Highway Authority of India, the Public Works Department, the power distribution companies, and planning authorities add yet more layers.

Each agency oversees a slice of the problem, and no single institution holds full authority or full accountability for air-quality outcomes. The result is uneven enforcement across States, weak inter-state coordination in the National Capital Region, and frequent contradictions between court orders, Union government directives, and local decisions.

Policymakers also face real constraints. The environmental powers are constitutionally shared, budgets and staffing are uneven, and judicial pressure often pushes immediate action over long-term planning. In a system where many actors are involved but none is empowered to lead, progress becomes slow, inconsistent, and easily overtaken by short-term, high-visibility measures that step in to fill the governance vacuum.

The dominance of short-term measures is not simply the result of weak institutions: it reflects the incentives that drive Indian governance. Quick fixes allow governments to show visible action within a single news cycle, avoid confronting powerful sectors such as construction, transport, and agriculture, and postpone politically risky reforms. They also fit comfortably within annual budgets, unlike long-term investments in clean fuel, waste systems, or industrial upgrades.

This is why cloud seeding, smog towers, water sprinkling, and odd-even schemes return each winter: they are inexpensive to announce, easy to deploy, and rarely provoke resistance (notwithstanding the recent protests). Tools such as anti-smog guns and festival crackdowns help officials demonstrate responsiveness, even if they do little for public health. In effect, these interventions serve the politics of pollution more than the science of it, masking structural failures with momentary action, while public exposure to harmful air remains largely unchanged.

Two traps

Another reason India's pollution response struggles is what can be called the intellectual trap: the belief that solutions conceived within elite institutions, think-tanks, multilateral agencies, or top scientific organisations will automatically translate into effective action on the ground. Much of India's clean-air discourse is shaped by people who are analytically rigorous but often removed from the day-to-day realities of municipal administration, enforcement bottlenecks, informal economies, and political constraints. Their proposals may be technically sound, but they frequently underestimate the complexity of implementation in cities that lack staff, budgets, regulatory continuity, or even basic record-keeping. As a result, many "expert-designed" strategies rarely move beyond pilot stages or are adopted without the institutional scaffolding they need to succeed.

This disconnect becomes clearer when these ideas encounter the lived systems that actually produce pollution: scattered governance, informal construction practices, diesel-dependent freight, fragmented land markets, and the economic pressures faced by farmers, transporters, and small industries. Elite policy frameworks tend to assume a level of administrative capacity and social compliance that simply does not exist uniformly across Indian cities. They focus on what should work in theory rather than what can work in practice. In doing so, they risk producing policies that are ambitious on paper but unmanageable for the institutions expected to implement them.

The second distortion is the Western trap: the tendency to import global "best practices" without redesigning them for Indian realities. Many of these models come from cities with abundant resources, stable public finance, strong regulatory credibility, and high institutional trust. When adopted wholesale, these approaches often carry assumptions that do not hold in India: consistent enforcement, reliable public transport, low informal activity, or predictable administrative coordination.

Technologies and regulations that function smoothly in European or East Asian settings encounter vastly different constraints in India's dense neighbourhoods, politically negotiated spaces and overstretched agencies. The issue is not the foreign origin of ideas but the lack of adaptation.

Together, the intellectual trap and Western trap shape a policy environment where strategies acquire their legitimacy by sounding sophisticated or globally aligned rather than by being grounded in how Indian institutions actually work. They produce initiatives that attract attention, secure funding, and generate impressive documents, yet struggle to scale or endure. Many fade quietly after a few months when confronted with routine bureaucratic churn, unclear mandates or resistance from stakeholders whose behaviour the policy sought to change. In the process, India's clean-air agenda becomes heavy on conceptual ambition but light on operational traction – a landscape of ideas that travel well but land poorly.

Indian constraints

Escaping the intellectual and Western traps means learning from global and expert ideas as well as accepting that even strong solutions must be redesigned for India's administrative and social realities. That requires institutions capable of planning beyond election cycles, coordinating across sectors, and staying focused even when political priorities shift.

For this, India needs clearer rules about who leads on air quality, who is accountable, and how decisions move between national, State, and municipal levels. A modern clean-air law with explicit mandates could create this basic clarity. The goal is not another powerful regulator but a coordinating body that can be trusted enough to align policies, resolve routine jurisdictional overlaps, and make sure implementation remains steady. Public access to compliance data and visible enforcement would make environmental rules credible while stable multi-year funding would allow agencies to build staff, maintain monitoring systems, and sustain long-term programmes instead of reacting to crises.

Effective institutions also need the right expertise. India needs a professional layer of science managers, i.e. people who understand science, governance, and political constraints, and can convert knowledge into workable, context-specific decisions. Their role is not to generate more studies but to adapt existing insights to local capacity, guide ministries through complex transitions, and keep reforms coherent despite bureaucratic turnover. Without this bridging function, India's scientific strengths, including its models, sensors, and analytical tools, remain disconnected from day-to-day decision-making.

What India lacks, ultimately, is not ideas but alignment: between ambition and capacity, between what experts recommend and what institutions can actually enforce. Imported frameworks and elite prescriptions often fail because they assume levels of staffing, coordination, and public compliance that vary widely across States and cities. Indian solutions must therefore begin with Indian constraints: uneven municipal capacity, informal labour markets, competing development pressures, and diverse regional priorities. Policies must be designed to be implementable, not just elegant, which means they must be built around what agencies can realistically enforce, what communities will accept, and what local budgets can support. Without this grounding, well-intentioned initiatives will continue to stall once they leave conference rooms and meet real-world conditions.

What India needs

Clean air is not a seasonal aspiration: it is essential to public health, economic productivity and basic functioning of cities. India can learn from global experience and from its own scientific advances, but lasting progress depends on institutions and policies shaped for Indian conditions. Technology may offer moments of relief but only governance built for India's complexity can deliver durable change. The tools exist and the demand for cleaner air is unmistakable. Thus, what India needs now is the confidence to design solutions that reflect its own realities and the commitment to sustain them long enough to make the air genuinely breathable.

Ajay S. Nagpure is an urban systems scientist at the Urban Nexus Lab at Princeton University

THE GIST

- India's repeat cycle of cloud seeding, smog towers, odd-even rules and festival crackdowns reflects a structural flaw in air-quality governance, where responsibilities are scattered across many bodies and no institution has full authority or accountability.
- India's response is weakened by the 'intellectual trap' and the 'Western trap' — expert and global ideas that look good on paper but fail in practice because they don't account for India's limited municipal capacity, informal economies, and complex political and administrative realities.
- What India needs is institutions designed for Indian constraints: clearer rules on who leads, a modern clean-air law with explicit mandates, steady multi-year funding, credible enforcement, public access to compliance data, and science managers who can bridge science with governance and politics.

English Summary (High-quality, Exam-oriented)

India continues to face a **recurring winter pollution crisis**, especially in northern cities like Delhi. Despite annual emergency measures—cloud seeding, smog towers, odd-even rules, water sprinkling, festival crackdowns—the underlying **structural weaknesses in India's air-quality governance** prevent long-term improvement.

Why the crisis persists:

1. **Fragmented Governance:**
   Responsibility for air quality is scattered across multiple bodies—MoEFCC, CPCB, SPCBs, the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM), municipal corporations, agriculture, transport, energy, industry, and urban departments. No single institution has **full authority, accountability, or coordination powers**.
2. **Short-term, politically safe solutions:**
   Governments prefer visible quick fixes (smog towers, odd-even, bans) because they avoid confronting powerful lobbies (transport unions, industry, construction, agriculture). These measures have **low risk, low cost, and high public visibility**, but little long-term impact.
3. **Lack of "ownership" of clean air:**
   Unlike China, the U.S. or Europe—where national regulators have political backing and autonomous powers—India's institutions remain weak, under-staffed, and dependent on State governments, leaving air-quality action **episodic and inconsistent**.
4. **"Western models fallacy":**
   Policymakers often import foreign solutions unsuited to Indian realities. Using Europe/U.S. templates—relying on abundant resources, steady finance, strong monitoring networks, and strict enforcement—fails in India due to very different socio-economic, administrative, and infrastructural contexts.
5. **Two traps:**
   - **The Intellectual Trap:** Policymakers focus excessively on Western models and concepts without adapting them to Indian governance and resource conditions.
   - **The Political Trap:** Politicians announce ambitious plans but avoid confronting entrenched interests, leading to symbolic actions rather than structural reforms.

What India needs:

- **Clear institutional responsibility** for air quality, with a single accountable body integrating urban governance, public health, transport, agriculture, and industry regulation.
- **Localized solutions** that consider Indian constraints—informal transport, diverse pollution sources, weak enforcement capacity, and socio-economic disparities.
- **Long-term funding**, scientific capacity, and continuous air-quality monitoring.
- **Reducing administrative overlap** and empowering municipal bodies with technical staff and enforcement powers.
- **Health-focused policy** that prioritizes public protection over ad-hoc crisis management.

India's pollution crisis is therefore a **governance failure**, not merely an environmental or technological one. Without structural reforms, annual winter smog cycles will continue.

हिंदी सारांश (UPSC स्तर)

भारत हर वर्ष विशेषकर दिल्ली-एनसीआर में **सर्दियों के दौरान प्रदूषण संकट** का सामना करता है। बादलों में बीज छिड़कना, स्मॉग टावर लगाना, ऑड-ईवन, पानी का छिड़काव, त्योहारों पर प्रतिबंध—ये सभी **अस्थायी उपाय** हैं, क्योंकि असली समस्या भारत की **वायु गुणवत्ता शासन व्यवस्था की संरचनात्मक कमज़ोरी** है।

संकट क्यों बार-बार दोहराता है?

1. **विखंडित शासन (Fragmented Governance):**
   कई संस्थाएँ—पर्यावरण मंत्रालय, CPCB, SPCBs, CAQM, नगर निगम, कृषि, परिवहन, उद्योग विभाग—वायु प्रदूषण पर अलग-अलग काम करते हैं। किसी एक संस्था के पास **पूर्ण अधिकार, जवाबदेही या समन्वय शक्ति नहीं** है।
2. **अल्पकालिक और राजनीतिक रूप से सुरक्षित उपाय:**
   सरकारें ऐसे कदम चुनती हैं जो **दिखने में बड़े लगें पर असल में कम प्रभावी हों**, ताकि बड़े आर्थिक हित समूहों को नाराज़ न किया जाए। नतीजतन लंबे समय तक हवा साफ़ नहीं होती।
3. **"क्लीन एयर" का स्वामित्व नहीं:**

चीन, अमेरिका, यूरोप की तरह भारत में एक शक्तिशाली, स्वायत्त नियामक व्यवस्था नहीं है। भारतीय संस्थाओं में **कर्मियों, संसाधनों, और राजनीतिक समर्थन की कमी** है।

4. **पश्चिमी मॉडलों का गलत उपयोग:**
   भारत, यूरोप/अमेरिका के मॉडल अपनाता है जो वहाँ की मजबूत संस्थाओं, वित्तीय संसाधनों और कड़े प्रवर्तन पर आधारित हैं—भारत की सामाजिक-आर्थिक परिस्थितियाँ अलग हैं, इसलिए ये मॉडल यहाँ अप्रभावी हो जाते हैं।
5. **दो बड़े "ट्रैप":**
   - **बौद्धिक ट्रैप:** नीति-निर्माता भारतीय वास्तविकताओं के बजाय विदेशी रूपरेखाओं पर निर्भर रहते हैं।
   - **राजनीतिक ट्रैप:** बड़े लक्ष्यों की घोषणा, लेकिन कठिन सुधारों से बचना, जिससे केवल प्रतीकात्मक उपाय होते हैं।

भारत को क्या चाहिए?

- वायु गुणवत्ता पर **एकल और जवाबदेह संस्था**।
- स्थानीय परिस्थितियों के अनुरूप नीतियाँ—अनौपचारिक परिवहन, विविध प्रदूषण स्रोत, कम प्रवर्तन क्षमता आदि को ध्यान में रखते हुए।
- **दीर्घकालिक वित्त, वैज्ञानिक क्षमता**, और मजबूत मॉनिटरिंग सिस्टम।
- प्रशासनिक ओवरलैप को कम करना और नगर निकायों को **तकनीकी और प्रवर्तन शक्तियाँ** देना।
- **स्वास्थ्य-केंद्रित नीति**, जो हर वर्ष की आपदा प्रबंधन-शैली से आगे बढ़े।

स्पष्ट है कि भारत की वायु प्रदूषण समस्या **प्रशासनिक विफलता** है; तकनीकी या वैज्ञानिक समस्या नहीं। जब तक संरचनात्मक सुधार नहीं होते, हर सर्दी वही प्रदूषण संकट लौटता रहेगा।

GS Paper Linkages (UPSC/BPSC Relevance)

GS-III: Environment & Ecology

- Air Pollution, AQI, smog formation
- Sources: transport, industry, agriculture, biomass, construction
- Governance challenges

GS-II: Governance & Policy

- Fragmented institutional structure
- Regulatory gaps, centre–state–local coordination failure
- Role of regulatory bodies (CPCB, SPCB, CAQM)

GS-III: Disaster Management

- Recurrent winter pollution = slow-onset disaster
- Public health emergency

GS-I (Urbanisation)

- Informal transport, unplanned growth, construction boom