

Breathing Fresh: Insights to Positive Externalities of COVID-19 Lockdown in Indian Megacities

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ABSTRACT It has been widely reported that as a consequence of nation-wide lockdown in India to control COVID-19 pandemic, the air pollution levels have significantly reduced. The near-complete shutdown of economic activities and stay-at-home instructions have tremendously helped in reducing emissions. This paper has attempted to look into the pattern of change in Air Quality Index in five megacities (Delhi, Bengaluru, Chennai, Mumbai and Kolkata) of India from pre-lockdown period to first week of lockdown and fifth week of lockdown. The paper has also discussed changes in air quality parameters at different monitoring stations in Bengaluru during the same period. A discussion on air quality, grounded on contemporary studies conducted to evaluate impact of lockdown on ambient air in different cities, has provided an overview of the changes in air quality. The results provide an understanding that the overall air quality has been improved in all the studied cities; but further comprehensive assessment, considering the factors controlling the present air quality, is suggested to identify pathways for emission reduction to maintain the air quality in business as usual situation in future.