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Pak-EPA unveils landmark plan to tackle air pollution

STAFF REPORTER

The Pakistan Environmental Protection Agency (Pak-EPA) has announced a sweeping new Vehicular Emission Control Action Plan (VECAP) aimed at curbing air pollution and smog in the capital, in what officials described as a major step towards cleaner, healthier urban air.

The plan, launched under the supervision of the Ministry of Climate Change and Environmental Co-ordination, sets out a framework for stricter emissions enforcement, cleaner fuels, and the gradual electrification of transport across the Islamabad Capital Territory. It has been developed in coordination with the ICT Administration, Islamabad Transport

Authority, and Traffic Police.

Talking to APP on Sunday, Muhammad Saleem Shaikh, spokesperson for the Ministry, said the initiative represents "a structured, long-term roadmap that moves beyond temporary measures by combining enforcement, innovation and public engagement."

He warned that vehicular emissions — now one of the capital's leading sources of air pollution — are releasing harmful levels of carbon monoxide, nitrogen oxides, hydrocarbons and fine particulate matter (PM2.5), contributing to respiratory and cardiovascular diseases.

Under the short-term phase (0-18 months), Pak-EPA and the Islamabad Traffic Police will launch regular road-

side inspections to ensure compliance with National Environmental Quality Standards (NEQS).

All government transport fleets will be required to meet 100 per cent compliance, while private and commercial vehicles must undergo third-party emissions testing through certified laboratories. Compliance certificates will be linked to vehicle registration and ownership transfer.

Public awareness drives will also be rolled out via television, radio and digital media to encourage proper vehicle maintenance and discourage smoke-emitting vehicles. Recent monitoring campaigns led to fines for 215 vehicles and the impounding of 32 for exceeding emission limits.