

Bursting of fire crackers, dense fog once again choke Capital

SC-mandated EPCA will issue emergency directions if situation persists for next 48 hours

DNA Correspondent
correspondent@dnaindia.net

As the national Capital ushered in the New Year amid dense fog, the air quality deteriorated severely on the first day of 2018, with the air quality index (AQI) shooting up to 400 units and bordering on 'severe' level of air pollution.

According to the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), an AQI of up to 400 units is classified as 'very poor', while above 400, it is categorised as 'severe'. The permissible standard of a healthy AQI is 60 units, while the current figure is almost six times that limit.

The AQI on Sunday was recorded at 398 units.

Even with zero visibility, however, people came out in large numbers to welcome 2018 on a rather cold day. The maximum temperature recorded by the India Meteorological Department (IMD) was 13 degrees Celsius, while fog and haze enveloped the city throughout the day. The mercury dropped to 5.7 degrees Celsius in early morning.

According to the CPCB officials, what added to the dipping of air quality was the bursting of firecrackers in many parts of the city.

PM 2.5 — most prominent pollutant in Delhi-NCR — had reached past 400 at many pollution monitoring stations in the city. NCR towns, including Noida, Ghaziabad, and Faridabad, reeled under 'severe' levels of pollution nearing the 'emergency mark' (500 units) at 483, 482, and 411, respectively.

The CPCB laboratory also recorded a downward graph of air quality.

"The high level of moisture manifested itself in the form of fog, which trapped pollutants in the air. The air quality



A car plying with its headlights on in New Delhi on Monday morning — PTI



The Jama Masjid shrouded in smog on Monday morning — PTI

AQI LEVELS

DELHI: 400
(very poor)

GHAZIABAD: 482
(severe)

NOIDA: 483
(severe)

GURUGRAM: 378
(very poor)

FARIDABAD: 411
(very poor)

could get better, if wind speed picks up," a senior official said.

The Environment Pollution (Prevention and Control) Authority (EPCA) — a Supreme Court mandated body — stated that if pollution levels enter the 'severe plus (500+)' category in the next 48 hours, it will issue emergency directions.

'Very poor' AQI comes with the warning that people may develop respiratory illness and prolonged exposure to air may affect healthy people and seriously impact those with existing respiratory or cardiovascular diseases.

Educate kids on pollution, worried DoE tells schools

DNA Correspondent
correspondent@dnaindia.net

The Delhi government on Monday directed schools in the national Capital to sensitise and educate students regarding the health hazards and ill effects of breathing polluted air, including air that has been polluted by fireworks. Special assemblies were by conducted and lectures and other activities were organised for the purpose.

The action plan was issued by the Directorate of Education (DoE) in the backdrop of increased concerns about city's air pollution, which had reached alarming levels last month, prompting suspension of classes in schools for a week.

"All festivals and other such occasions should be celebrated during the day time to avoid use of more energy and to prevent the various pollut-



A man takes a walk on foggy Monday morning — PTI

ants from entering the environment. No crackers should be burnt during such occasions," the circular read.

The DoE further directed all schools that themes for all zonal, district or state level competitions should be related to good or pollution-free environment. Further, frequent awareness sessions should also be held in the week before Dusshera and Diwali, to sensitise students towards the consequences of burning crackers.

The circular also asked the schools to organise plantation programmes, in which each student may grow at least one plant every year with the sole responsibility to nurture it. "SMC/PTA members should also be motivated and encouraged to help in generating awareness in the society about the importance of good environment," the circular read.

"All schools should display the consequences of polluted environment as well as the necessity of healthy and good quality environment in the form of drawings and paintings on related themes or topics," it added.

The DoE had earlier issued several directives to schools, following an advisory from the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), which recommended various measures as part of the Graded Response Plan for dealing with the pollution situation.