

City can't breathe easy if satellites choke

Pollution High In Neighbouring Towns; One Strategy Needed



LET DELHI BREATHE

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: Measures to counter severe smog episodes are likely to have limited success until Delhi's satellite towns get serious about their air quality. Some, like Ghaziabad and Faridabad, have heavily polluting industries.

The level of PM2.5 (fine, respirable pollution particles) in Noida has been 2-4 times the national safe standard for the past

seven days. Faridabad's air quality has been hovering between "very poor" and "severe" since the start of winter.

Experts say Delhi cannot clean up its air in isolation and a composite strategy is needed for the NCR 'airshed' (a region with consistent atmospheric traits) because pollution in one NCR town impacts air quality in the others. They recommend real-time monitoring stations in all the satellite towns for cla-

city about air quality. Gurgaon and Ghaziabad do not have a single automatic real-time air quality monitoring station.

"There are multiple sources of pollution in the NCR, including industries, brick kilns, vehicles, etc, that need to be addressed in tandem," said Anumita Roychowdhury, head of Centre for Science and Environment's (CSE) Clean Air campaign.

UP Pollution Control Board does not monitor even the PM2.5 levels in Ghaziabad. It publishes only the monthly averages for PM10 (coarse pollution particles), SO2 and NO2. In October, the monthly PM10 average was 275 micrograms per cubic metre when the 24-hour standard is only 100µg/m3.

Ghaziabad is the second-most polluted industrial cluster in India after Vapi in Gujarat, as per latest Comprehensive Environmental Pollution Index scores compiled in 2013.

CSE's analysis of Gurgaon's vehicular pollution shows it has 232 private vehicles per 1,000 persons, compared with 120 in Delhi. "Traffic could be a huge contributor in Gurgaon and Noida because we also know they lack public transport infrastructure," said Roychowdhury. There are just 0.6 buses per 5,000 persons in the NCR, as against the UN standard of six buses.

Gufran Beig, project director with SAFAR who has been following the air quality data for Noida, said, "Their (NCR towns) levels are consistently high, sometimes higher than Delhi's. I think long range transport of pollutants has a role to play in Noida." Satellite-based studies by University of Miami and Nasa found the air quality on the borders of Gurgaon, Noida and Faridabad deteriorated significantly after 2002.

► Related report on P 6

NATIONAL CHOKE REGION

The Central Pollution Control Board doesn't conduct any real-time air quality monitoring in Gurgaon and Noida. The closest station that issues the air quality index (AQI) for Gurgaon continuously is Faridabad. There is no AQI available for Noida, but SAFAR under the ministry of earth sciences monitors the PM 2.5 concentration there

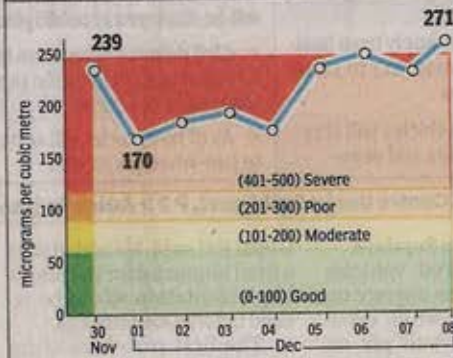
FARIDABAD Dec 8

AQI: 432
Category: Severe
Lead pollutant: PM2.5
2pm

AQI: 441
Category: Severe
Lead pollutant: PM2.5
5pm

AQI: 439
Category: Severe
Lead pollutant: PM2.5
7pm

NOIDA Nov 30-Dec 8



source: CPCB



Photo: Anindya Chattopadhyay

Capital has another bad-air day

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: Beijing's air quality fell to the worst category on its air quality index (AQI) on Tuesday and the red alert system kicked in. Delhi's air quality too remained 'very poor'.

In Beijing, schools were closed, vehicle movement restricted and hundreds of construction sites and factories were shut down.

In Delhi, which doesn't have a smog alert system yet, the AQI since December 1 has been well above 300 at the 'very poor' level, with PM2.5 (fine, respirable pollution particles) and PM10 (coarse pollution particles) as the lead pollutants.

The only day the AQI fell

TALE OF TWO CITIES

BEIJING
Severely Polluted
AQI | **314**
Worst category under China's grading system
Source: China Environment Protection Center

DELHI
Very Polluted
AQI | **383**
Second-worst category under India's grading system
Source: Central Pollution Control Board

THE AQI VALUES OF THE TWO CITIES AREN'T COMPARABLE BUT GRADES ARE

to 271 was on December 6. Environmentalists hoped that the odd-even formula for cars for 15 days starting January 1 may give a fair idea of how effective it is in dealing with severe pollution episodes like the current levels.

On Tuesday, the real-time

air quality monitoring by Delhi Pollution Control Committee (DPCC) showed peaks as high as 407 micrograms per cubic metres for PM2.5 in Punjabi Bagh, 373 in Mandir Marg and 541 in Anand Vihar around 8pm. But levels also dipped to 70 to 90 micrograms per cubic

metres in Punjabi Bagh and Mandir Marg in the afternoon.

"In the next three days, the PM2.5 concentrations are likely to be in the range of 190 micrograms per cubic metres to 200 micrograms per cubic metres after which a cold wave is likely. But it is too early to predict the air quality during the cold wave," said Gufran Beig, project director, SAFAR under ministry of earth sciences (MoES).

He added, "I think the PM2.5 levels are high because of long range transport of pollution particles from neighbouring areas. It is still relatively warm so its not the low boundary layer which is causing the problem".