

Sun and wind clear the air, but only a bit

POLLUTION DOWN, BUT STILL BAD

Delhi air has become cleaner in recent days...

Date	AQI	Category
Dec 7	390	V poor
Dec 8	383	V poor
Dec 9	382	V poor
Dec 10	350	V poor
Dec 11	352	V poor
Dec 12	323	V poor
Dec 13	281	Poor
Dec 14	206	Poor
Dec 15	208	Poor
Dec 16	254	Poor

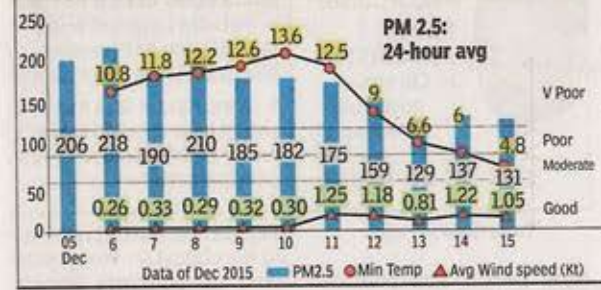
Lead pollutant: PM 2.5; Source: Central Pollution Control Board

...but it's still worse than last year on monthly average...

Month	RK Puram	Mandir Marg	Punjabi Bagh
Nov 2014	248	220	254
Dec 2014	228	210	217
Nov 2015	NA	222	281
Dec 2015*	267	NA	250

Till Jan 15; figures show PM 2.5 concentration. Source: DPCC/NAQI/Greenpeace India

...the few good days could be due to high wind speed



Favourable Weather, Lower Truck Traffic Help

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: Almost coinciding with the Supreme Court's landmark verdict on dealing with air pollution in Delhi, the skies in the city cleared up making way for a sunny Wednesday. Very unusual for the city during the winter, air pollution levels have been falling since December 7—according to both national air quality index (NAQI) monitored by Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) and the earth sciences ministry.

Although a Greenpeace report based on the NAQI data indicated at higher monthly averages for November and December than 2014, the sudden improvement in the air quality this month is being felt by everyone. Several people even said they felt relieved and actually enjoyed being outdoors.

Delhi Pollution Control Committee's real-time air quality monitoring on Wednesday revealed that between 10am and 7.30pm, the PM2.5 levels ranged between 150 microgrammes per cubic metres and 39 micrograms per cubic metres. Even at Punjabi

Bagh, the levels were between 196 and 70. At RK Puram, the lowest recorded was about 56 microgrammes per cubic metres around 2.30pm. The good news is that similar conditions are likely to persist for three more days followed by a western disturbance, according to India Meteorological Department (IMD).

Experts gave two explanations for this sudden improvement.

PARTIAL RELIEF

ment. Gufran Beig, project director, System of Air Quality and Weather Forecasting and Research (SAFAR) under MoES, felt that there was a reduction in some emission sources. "I don't think the levels have fallen because of meteorological conditions. The reduction in truck numbers may have had an impact. There may have also been a reduction in vehicle numbers possibly due to the air pollution campaign. When temperatures are so low, the air quality doesn't improve like this," he said.

According to Anumita Roychowdhury, head of Centre for Science and Environ-

ment's clean air campaign, if there is a 30% reduction in the truck traffic after the imposition of the environment compensation charge (ECC) by the Supreme Court, it will have an impact on air quality—even if very minor. "Trucks contribute to 30% of particulate matter (PM) emissions from the transport sector. They are a big contributor to Delhi's air pollution problem. But I am sure favourable weather also has a role to play."

The very chilly weather may have acted as a catalyst in bringing down the particulate matter pollution, suggested B P Yadav, director, IMD. "Particles don't remain suspended if it's very cold, so there is less fog. They convert into dew and settle on the ground surface. Also, earlier the winds were easterly which were light and stable but now the winds are from the north-westerly direction and are a bit stronger. The winds may be helping in dispersing the pollutants. You have to also remember that Delhi has started recording minimum temperatures of 5 to 6 degrees Celsius which aids in dew formation," Yadav explained.

Trucks carrying perishables need not pay ECC



LET DELHI BREATHE

Continued from P1

Confirming a ban on registration of new high-end diesel cars in NCR till March 31, a Supreme Court bench on Wednesday said, "There is no reason why registration of private cars and SUVs using diesel with an engine capacity of 2,000cc and above should not be banned up to March 31, 2016. Diesel vehicles of 2,000cc and above and SUVs are generally used by more affluent sections of our society and, because of the higher engine capacity, are more prone to cause higher levels of pollution. A ban on registration of such vehicles will not affect the common man or the average citizen."

Toyota Motors sought exemption for its popular Innova model from the rigour of the ban saying it was a "people's car". But the bench declined the request on learning that it had an engine capacity of more than 2,000cc. This means high-end luxury sedans and SUVs running on diesel would not be registered in Delhi, Gurgaon, Faridabad, Ghaziabad, Noida and other smaller cities falling within the NCR till March 31.

The court fixed January 5 for hearing parties, including amicus curiae Harish Salve, to fix the quantum of pollution tax to be levied on diesel cars with engine capacity of less than 2,000cc.

The bench banned entry of trucks into Delhi which used the city as a transit route for reaching destinations in oth-

er states by ordering authorities to block their entry at two major points—Kundli border on NH-1 and Rajokri on NH-8. It allowed entry of trucks carrying goods for Delhi with a rider—these should not be more than 10 years old. Those which fulfil this condition would be allowed entry on payment of environmental compensation cess of Rs 1,400 (for light commercial vehicles) and Rs 2,600 (for big trucks),

SC fixed January 5 for hearing parties to fix the quantum of pollution tax to be levied on diesel cars with engine capacity of less than 2,000cc

which is double the ECC imposed by the SC on October 9. Trucks carrying food articles, vegetables and essential commodities would be exempt from ECC but these must not be more than 10 years old. Nearly 40,000 trucks enter Delhi daily and the two major entry points account for 70% of the total.

"We direct that (truck) traffic from these two entry points shall be diverted to bypass Delhi through such alternative routes as the transport/traffic departments of the governments concerned may stipulate," the bench said. The orders will come into effect immediately as the SC did not fix any date for implementation of its order.

SC ruling a leap for Delhi in emission fight: Activists

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: Environmental activists and researchers have welcomed the Supreme Court's judgment of not registering diesel SUVs in NCR, barring entry of pre-BS III trucks in Delhi and mandating all taxis to convert to CNG among other important orders on the issue. Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) said "Delhi took a leap in cutting toxic diesel emissions with the order."

"These steps are expected to catalyse long-term solutions to clean up the air. This winter, Delhi has already experienced rapid increase in pollution—PM2.5 levels have remained three to four times the standard. On smoggy days, the level can go up to six to seven times the standards. The Chief Justice bench has taken strong notice of the evidences of health impacts which indicate that the lungs of every third child is impaired," said Sunita Narain, director general of CSE.

They referred to IIT Kanpur's draft study on pollution sources in Delhi which found that diesel cars, that are a quarter of all cars in the city, are responsible for 60% to 70% of PM2.5 emissions from vehicular sector in the city.

"By barring the luxury diesel segment, SC has established a critical principle that diesel taxed low for poor farmers and freight cannot be misutilised by the rich car owners for luxury consumption and add to pollution," the CSE statement said.

When a similar major strategy was implemented with introduction of CNG for public transport in December 2002, PM levels tapered off between 2003 and 2006.

Ashwani Kumar, environment secretary of Delhi government, too said the order on restricting BS II and BS III trucks is likely to have a major impact on Delhi's air.

Amit Bhatt, strategy head, urban transport at Embarq said, "The two good things that have happened is that a clear link between transport emissions and air pollution has been established, and people have started demanding clean fuel now."

No leeway for construction industry

Dhananjay Mahapatra @timesgroup.com

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Wednesday brought the recession-hit construction industry in the National Capital Region (NCR) under the pollution scanner by directing central and state pollution control boards to strictly enforce anti-dust norms at construction sites with immediate effect.

The NCR, spread as far as Jind and Karnal districts of Haryana and Muzaffarnagar district of Uttar Pradesh, accounts for a substantial share in the real estate activities of the country's Rs 2.48 lakh crore construction industry, the second largest contributor to the GDP after agriculture.

Amicus curiae Harish Salve, advocate Aparajita Singh and environmental activist Sunita Narain, along with senior advocate K K Venugopal who had appeared for three toddlers who moved the court

for curbing pollution, had accused the construction industry of not following anti-pollution norms and causing dust pollution.

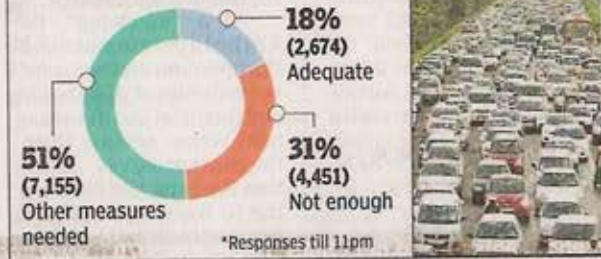
They quoted independent sources to allege that the construction industry was a major source of pollution, responsible for around 4% of particulate emissions, more water pollution incidents than any other industry, and thousands of noise complaints every year.

A bench comprising Chief Justice T S Thakur and Justices A K Sikri and R Banumathi said, "It was argued by counsel for parties that one of the major contributors to the current pollution levels is the construction activities going on in the National Capital Region."

The counsel had argued that the Centre and states concerned—Delhi, UP, Haryana and Rajasthan—must be directed to take steps to ensure that those engaged in const-

TOI POLL

What do you think of the Supreme Court ban on new diesel SUVs and luxury cars with engines above 2000cc in Delhi?



ruation activities followed Central Pollution Control Board's (CPCB) norms to prevent further rise in pollution levels.

The bench said, "We see no reason to decline a direction to that effect. CPCB norms regarding prevention of pollution by putting curtains and other devices at construction sites must be strictly enforced by enforcement

agencies concerned. We direct accordingly."

According to Construction Industry Development Council (CIDC), India's construction industry employs a workforce of nearly 32 million and its market size is worth about Rs 2.48 lakh crore. It is the second largest contributor to the GDP after the agricultural sector.

"Construction sector is vi-

ewed as a service industry. It generates substantial employment and provides growth impetus to other manufacturing sectors like cement, bitumen, iron and steel, chemicals, bricks, paints, tiles etc whose combined value is Rs 1.92 lakh crore annually. The construction equipment market is valued at Rs 1.05 lakh crore," CIDC said.

Independent sources cited by the counsel claimed that construction activities contributed to air pollution through land clearing, operation of diesel engines, demolition, burning and working with toxic materials.

All construction sites generate high levels of dust (typically from concrete, cement, wood, stone, silica) and this could carry for large distances over a long period of time. Construction dust is classified as PM10—particulate matter less than 10 microns in diameter, invisible to the naked eye, the counsel had said.