

Govt intensifies action against air pollution

Contractors Fined, Emergency Plan In Works

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New Delhi: With the National Green Tribunal coming down on Delhi government for the city's deteriorating air quality, the environment department has decided to step up action against polluters. Thursday was the seventh consecutive day when the city witnessed dense smog. Visibility, in fact, worsened on Thursday as it touched a high of only 1,100m against 1,400m on Wednesday.

Delhi Pollution Control Committee carried out a special drive for major construction projects towards the end of November and fined 39 of them Rs 50,000 each for dust pollution. NGT has issued specific guidelines to check rising dust pollution in the city, though the norms are not being met across the board. Dust is a major contributor to smog and has emerged as a major concern for environmentalists and doctors alike.

A four-member committee, including member secretaries of DPCC, Central Pollution Control Board, secretary health services and environment secretary, met on Thursday at NGT's directions to chalk out an emergency plan to deal with air pollution at specific spots. While the recommendations will be submitted to the court on the next date of hearing (December 11), environment secretary Ashwani Kumar said that the government will be stepping up efforts to curb pollution.

"There is some supplementary information that we need to gather to firm up this



LET DELHI BREATHE



POLLUTION FRIGHT

AIR QUALITY INDEX

PM2.5

Delhi	356	Very Poor
Tomorrow	344	Very Poor
Pune	95	Good
Tomorrow	105	Moderate
Mumbai	251	Poor
Tomorrow	260	Poor
Hyderabad	84	Good
Chennai	30	Good
Kolkata	301	Very Poor

Source: SAFAR@MoES-IITM-IMD (10 stations)

US Embassy data, calculated as per Indian standards by SAFAR@MoES-IITM-IMD
Based on 1 Station Data Per City at 4pm

report. The administration has already put in measures, which will now be intensified. For instance, enforcement of the law against open burning

of leaves, garbage and biomass will be stepped up," Kumar said.

"On Wednesday I wrote to the DCs, commissioners of municipal corporations and the police to ensure strict action against anyone found violating the law. We will also start a public awareness campaign on open burning of waste," he added.

The government will also be starting a pollution checking drive of vehicles at vulnerable places like Anand Vihar. "There is massive traffic movement in Anand Vihar area. Random PUC checks will be carried out on vehicles, especially if they are seen to have abnormal emissions. This will be done across various locations for the next few weeks. Another measure that will be enforced strictly is checking of pollution in industrial areas through diesel generator sets, etc," said Kumar.

Some long-term measures to check dust and smoke, especially for those areas that lack vegetation and see high traffic volumes, have also been decided. Sources said that large-scale tree plantation will need to be undertaken, but this activity will take some time.

Classrooms as polluted as roads during rush hour

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: The school commute is not the only time when children get exposed to very high levels of particulate pollution. A weeklong indoor study by Greenpeace India in seven Delhi schools has found alarming levels of PM2.5 in six of them while the seventh met Indian air quality standards but not those set by World Health Organization.

PM2.5 is microscopic airborne particles that can enter the bloodstream through the lungs. India's 24-hour PM2.5 standard is 60µg/m3 and WHO's 25µg/m3. Microgram (µg) is a thousandth part of a milligram.

Round-the-clock monitoring at the schools showed that four of them—located in Paschim Vihar, Tagore Garden, Pushp Vihar and Meera Bagh—had average PM2.5 levels higher than 300µg/m3—worse than the outdoor air quality in Punjabi Bagh at 8pm on Thursday.

The worst indoor air quality was found at a school in Meera Bagh, west Delhi, where Greenpeace India's portable monitoring equipment recorded 629µg/m3 of PM2.5.

PM2.5 at the Dhaula Kuan school averaged 48.37µg/m3. The remaining two schools were in Pitampura and Yusuf Sarai.

"Closing down schools, limiting physical activities, reducing exertion; in effect, air pollution is changing what it means to be a child today," said Sunil Dahiya, campaigner with Greenpeace India. "While closing down schools and restricting physical outdoor activities

are important precautionary measures, it is vital to recognise that children all across our country are at risk from air pollution, both indoors and outdoors, and the government needs to do much more to head off this public health crisis," Dahiya added.

Centre discusses ban on old trucks

Amid rising concerns over the bad air quality in Delhi and other cities, the Union road, transport and highways ministry has initiated consultations on banning all trucks and buses more than 15 years old. A final decision is expected to be taken after minister Nitin Gadkari reviews the consequences of the proposal, said sources. There is already a notification banning all such commercial vehicles with national permit, they said. "Old vehicles of more than 15 years cause much more environment pollution due to an outdated and faulty emission system," a source said. PTI

He said, "Availability of reliable, real-time data via National Air Quality Index is a critical first step, and must be followed by clear health advisories and response protocols. While restricting outdoor activities can be a standalone step for now, this practice must be expanded to include other advice and precautionary measures by the government. It should also cover the country via an enhanced National Air Quality Index (NAQI) platform."