

Air quality index, old school practices to battle pollution

FORWARD AND BACK Modi launches new index as Delhi gets harder to breathe

HT Correspondent

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The index based on global parameters to measure air quality provides a consolidated number after tracking eight pollutants on four hourly-basis and uses colour coding to describe associated health impacts.

Although the AQI, developed by the Central Pollution Control Board and IIT Kanpur, has been launched, there is no clarity on how it will lead to improvement in quality of air in cities like Delhi which the World Health Organisation in 2014 termed as the world's most polluted place.

The environment ministry in a statement said that the AQI would also help enhance public awareness and involvement, and create a competitive environment

EVERY BREATH YOU TAKE

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- These extremely fine particles of less than 2.5 micrometres in diameter are linked with increased rates of chronic bronchitis, lung cancer and heart disease as they penetrate deep into the lungs and can pass into the bloodstream
- India disputed the WHO's assertion, but has conceded that air pollution in Delhi is comparable with that of Beijing.

THE NEW INDEX

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627,000
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among cities to take steps for air pollution-mitigation.

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ed in areas whose air quality is labelled as "severe". People are also informed about health facilities available in the area for pollution-caused problems.

Environment Ministry officials said while the ministry has prepared a format for AQI,

issuing advisories and related information was job of the Delhi government.

Apart from Delhi, the AQI has been launched for Agra, Kanpur, Lucknow, Varanasi, Faridabad, Ahmedabad, Chennai, Bangalore and Hyderabad which have multiple pollution monitoring centers. Environment minister Prakash Javadekar said that in subsequent phases, the AQI will cover all state capitals and million plus cities.

The Prime Minister, however turned the tables on the global climate debate saying India should not bow to foreign pressure to commit to cuts in carbon emissions, but instead pledge to use more clean energy.

"The world guides us on climate change and we follow them? The world sets the parameters and we follow them? It is not like that," Modi said at an event in Delhi. "We can lead the world."

Suggesting traditional methods, Modi emphasised on recycle and reuse and said the government can provide viability gap funding to urban bodies for creating "wealth from waste".

Delhi air quality continues to stay at 'very alarming' levels

HARIS ZARGAR
NEW DELHI, APRIL 6

Amidst the growing debate about the grim situation of air pollution in the national capital, and the Central government again expressing its serious intent to tackle the deterioration of air quality, Delhi's air quality continued to remain very alarming even on Monday.

The Environmental Monitoring and Research Centre, which is a nodal agency for India Meteorological Department (IMD) and provides colour-coded air

quality rankings for Delhi ranging from "good" to "severe," on Monday showed the air quality index for capital city as "very poor." The PM2.5 readings were 235, 223, 246, 254, 216 at Mathura Road, Pusa, Delhi University (North), Dirpur, and IGI Airport, respectively, all of which are "very poor."

Even as the Central government on Monday launched a fresh air quality index to monitor city's air quality, its statutory organisation, the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) tasked with prevention, control and

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◆ **The particulate matter PM 2.5 at Punjabi Bagh was recorded at 72 micrograms, and 86 micrograms at R.K. Puram**

abatement of water pollution, and, to improve the

quality of air and to prevent air pollution — doesn't even have a real time air quality monitoring system. Only a few of its stations actually monitor PM2.5 (fine, respirable pollution particles) particulates.

The real-time ambient air quality data by the Delhi Pollution Control Committee (DPCC) also showed that the air quality in various areas of Delhi either as "unhealthy for sensitive groups" or "very poor." The particulate matter PM 2.5 at Punjabi Bagh was recorded at 72 micrograms, and 86 micrograms at R.K.

Puram, both of which are higher than prescribed levels of 60 micrograms.

The DPCC was recently rapped for releasing "raw" or "unedited" air quality data on its website. The Union environment ministry had also decided that committee's data would be "validated" by the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) and "quality control" mechanisms put in place, before it is released online. It is the only state agency in India to provide real-time feed from multiple stations and for a wide range of pollutants such as PM10, PM2.5, SO2, NO2, CO, ozone and benzene.

An air quality index compiled by the US embassy in Delhi recorded a PM2.5 reading of 172 on Monday evening, which is considered "unhealthy." It recorded a reading of 314 for Anand Vihar which is considered "hazardous" on the index.

Delhi has the dual-distinction of being the most polluted city in the world in terms of its air quality, after a WHO study found the national capital with the highest concentration of PM2.5 — particulate matter smaller than 2.5 microns — form of air pollution, which is considered most serious.

Rules in 15 days to curb construction pollution: Min

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Environment Minister Prakash Javadekar has taken serious note of construction waste as a big contributor to air pollution in Delhi, saying rules to manage and regulate this will be brought within the next 15 days. He stated this during the opening function of the two-day meet of Environment Ministers of all State Governments on Monday.

The Minister said if Delhi Metro can deal with dust pollution so effectively, why can't others manage it?

"Huge amount of dust is being generated due to increasing construction work in and around the city, oblivious of the norms and regulations in this regard," he said.

Javadekar said the issue will be discussed in the ongoing meet as the State Government's concerned are all there on the occasion.

Capital has **great expectations** from air index

FRESH INITIATIVE Experts say data must be used to issue alerts and chalk out plans to tackle menace



By Darshan
Hindustan Times Staff Writer

Why Breathe the Air? As Delhi's air quality index (AQI) continues to rise, experts say the government must use the data to issue alerts and chalk out plans to tackle the menace.



Dwarka air quality worst on Day 1 of index

City Fails On Debut; 3 Of 5 Monitoring Stations Record Very High Pollution

Times News Network

New Delhi: The air quality index launched by Ministry of Environment and Forests on Monday confirmed that several monitors will not turn air pollution. Of the five stations nationwide in Delhi, three recorded "poor" air quality while two from the rest were insufficient for monitoring.

Dwarka is one of the worst air quality on Monday with a "poor" AQI of 251 on a scale of 500. Levels of NO₂, CO, PM_{2.5} and SO₂ touched moderate levels at least once a day. PM_{2.5}, the deadliest respirable pollutant, peaked between 11am and 1pm and remained on the high side till 3pm. Dwarka had the highest PM_{2.5} level among the five stations.

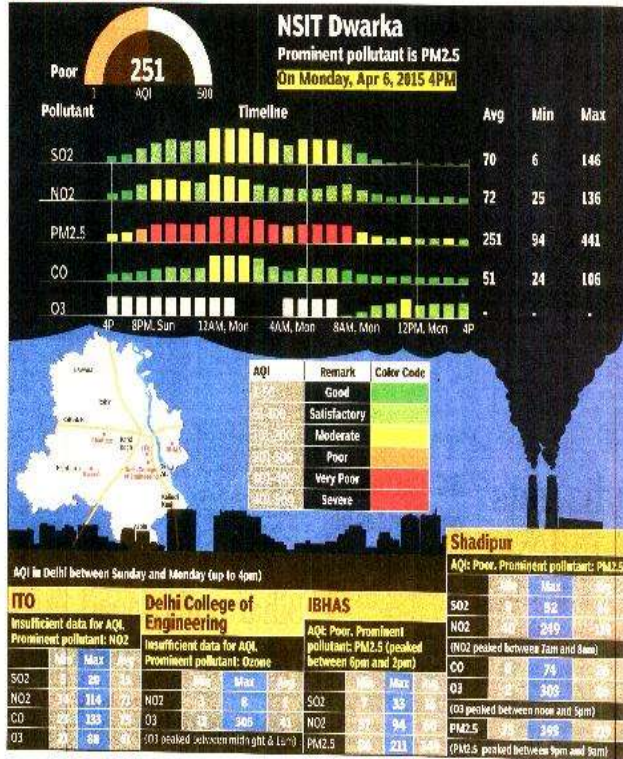
At Shadipur, the level of AQI shot up to 218 around 11am while PM_{2.5} reached "very poor" levels as it rose to 176 and there till 3pm. IBHAS in Bhisad Garden, the third location with a "poor" AQI, saw PM_{2.5} climb to "very poor" levels between 11am and 1pm and then again between 3pm and 5pm.

The AQI confirms that Delhi is dealing with an extremely unhealthy level of PM_{2.5} while ozone is threatening to get on of hand as the summer sets in. The high levels of PM_{2.5} are worrying as it can lodge inside lungs and has several health effects. It is emitted by vehicles, power plants and buildings' organic matter, among other processes.

While experts welcomed the launch of the AQI, they said the government needs to draw up a real map to deal with the pollution. "It is good that the government is finally taking ownership of air quality data and informing people of the possible health consequences but it needs to direct a concrete plan to deal with days when pollution levels remain consistently high," said Anurag Rajgopal, an urban director, Centre for Science and Environment. "The results shown by the AQI on Monday were not surprising since Delhi already has another AQI system in place under the Pollution Control Committee. The government needs to integrate the two systems and will have a very good network at its disposal."

Ranjit Gulera, head of the department of pulmonary medicine at AIIMS, said the AQI should help the govern-

HOW BAD IS BAD



ment decide what measures are needed to deal with pollution levels on "bad" days.

By knowing the likely pollution levels in advance, the government can take steps to inform people and prepare as-



LET DELHI BREATHE

and longly Gulera said. "With this data, the government has to draw up long-term strategies specifically to speed of action among people. Right now, it seems that the public is not particularly aware of how it is

contributing to rising pollution levels and its participation is needed if the level is to be brought down."

Ashwaja Madhavi, a Ganga campaigner, said, "Our air quality survey conducted inside schools across Delhi revealed that schools had a lot of dust, being exposed to unsupportable levels of pollution. This is because public health emergencies and an Air Quality Index needs to be matched with actionable plans to bring down the pollution levels, with a health advisory at the very least." She said Rajgopal said the AQI not merely to say how bad the air is but to ensure that immediate action is taken to minimize the health impact on the public.

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