

Smog is back in city with a vengeance

Pollution Levels Worse Than Pre-CNG Days

Sapna Verma | TNN

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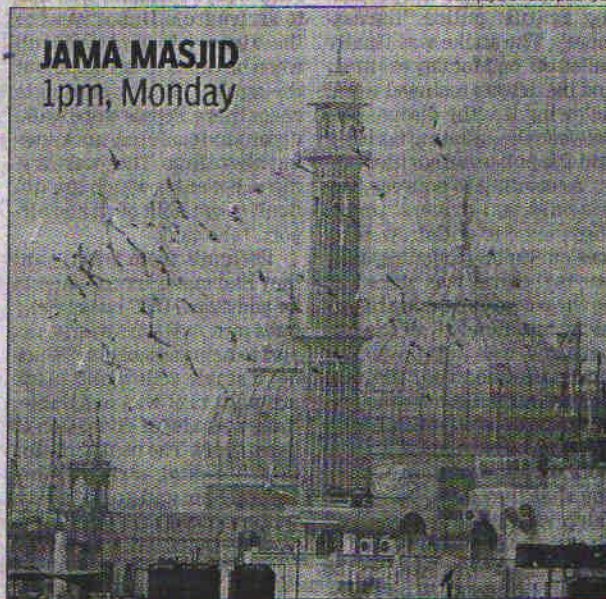
New Delhi: Smog is back. The gains of the city going CNG were lost last year as pollution levels were back to the pre-CNG days. This year, as vehicle population went through the roof with the number of registered vehicles touching 58 lakh, it's worse than the pre-CNG years when Delhi would be enveloped right through winters in a dreary haze.

For the past few days, the ominous signs have been visible. A haze has been hanging over the city, right through the day making even the afternoon look like a bleary morning. This is taking a toll of people's health. Complaints of burning sensation in the eyes and nausea are rampant. Doctors said there's a 30% rise in asthma cases. If the smog did not lift, even those without a history of asthma may develop breathing problems, they warned.

Central Pollution Control Board officials said pollution levels have been steadily going up in Delhi for the past three years. As for the smog in the city, the met office said the hike in pollution has coincided with unusual stillness in the atmosphere that is preventing suspended particulate matter from being blown away.

This rising pollution, and the resultant smog, might require yet another drastic intervention. Last time when Delhiites were threatened by such smog, the Supreme Court had stepped in to ram through compulsory switchover to zero-pollution CNG for all commercial vehicles in the city.

If not checked, pollution could affect the forthcoming



Air pollution worse than pre-CNG days. At Siri Fort on Monday, SO₂ level was 72% more than prescribed standards, NO around 175% over and CO more than 3 times the limit

Thick smog has been hanging through the day for past few days in the city

Burning sensation in eyes and nausea being reported on large scale

Doctors report 30% rise in cases of congestion, asthma and allergies

Don't self-medicate. If cold persists for more than 48 hours, see a doctor

showpiece — the Commonwealth Games. The Games are scheduled for this time of the year two years from now, by which time the number of vehicles in the city would only increase. Vehicles have registered double-digit growth in Delhi for the past many years. The city could, therefore, face the kind of embarrassment that Beijing faced ahead of the Olympics.

Explaining the haze, Met di-

rector SC Bhan said: "With lowering of temperature and persistent calmness in wind, dust particles are settling closer to the ground. And water droplets are condensing creating smog. The situation can change only if there is wind or rainfall." Both the Met and pollution board can't predict how long the conditions will persist.

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30% increase in asthma patients due to smog: Do

Sapna Verma | TNN

New Delhi: Even as hazy conditions due to rise in vehicular pollution continue, the city has seen a surge in health problems. Said Sanjeev Bagal, a doctor at the Sirsi Fort Hospital. "Due to a lowering of temperature, the diurnal range of temperature, more and more patients are complaining about various problems. There is a 30% increase in the number of asthma cases due to smog. And the worst hit are school children who go out early morning."

Pollution levels in the city are alarming. These figures taken at Siri Fort on Monday: Sulphur dioxide stood at 19 microgram per cubic metre against the safe limit of 11. Nitric oxide was 92 against the safe limit of 36 and carbon monoxide is 3,695 against the limit of 3,164.

Bagal said the common complaints were respiratory problems, lower respiratory problems, allergic manifestation of respiratory problems. The kind of weather continues for some more days, apart from the asthmatic patients, even the normal people will develop breathing problems."

Added Nevin Kishore of Max Hospital, "This is the worst time for asthmatics and people who are allergic. Statistics says one out of 10 children in the age group of 5-14 years suffer from asthma. People advised to cover their faces and necks when they go out and people who are allergic must carry inhalers. The best advice is: don't self-medicate, consult your doctor if allergy persists for 48 hours."