

ODD-EVEN TO FIGHT POLLUTION STARTS TODAY; ALL NCR SCHOOLS SHUT



(Left) Devotees brave polluted air and Yamuna to worship the Sun god in New Delhi on Sunday, even as youngsters hold a protest march demanding better air in the Capital

As Delhi chokes, sales of air purifiers, masks spike

30-100% rise in demand compared to same period last year: Manufacturers

ARNAB DUTTA New Delhi, 3 November

As air quality in the Capital continues to deteriorate, sale of preventive items like air purifiers and pollution masks have spiked significantly.

According to the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), the national capital's 24-hour average air quality index (AQI) stood at 494 at 4 pm on Sunday, the highest since November 6, 2016, when it was 497.

While Hindware is expecting sale of its air purifiers to double this year, Xiaomi, Blue Star and Daikin, too, are expecting significant rise in sales.

Haier is already observing a spike in demand from markets in Delhi and adjoining regions, that contribute over 80 per cent of the total market volumes.

Rakesh Kaul, president, CEO and whole-time director at Somany Home Innovation, a Hindware group firm, said that over the past three to four years, the degrading air quality and increasing concern towards health issues has fuelled sales of air purifiers and pollution masks in the country.

But with the current situa-

tion in Delhi NCR, there has been a significant growth in the air purifier market. Firms are not only focusing on meeting the heightened demand as a public health emergency is underway in the region, they are also taking measures to ease the purchasing process.

Indian residential air purifiers market projected to grow at a CAGR of over 29% to ₹275 cr in 2023, says a study

Panasonic, for example, is offering extended warranty and consumer finance options to make purchases affordable, said Syed Moonis Ali Alvi, general manager for air purifier business at the Japanese firm.

Management of other firms like Blue Star and Nirvana masks are rather concerned about the unavailability of natural solutions to the growing problem. The deteriorating quality of air that began with firecracker pollutions on Diwali last week, has now got worse.

B Thiagarajan, joint managing director at Blue Star, said that while installing air purifiers at homes, offices and in cars help in reducing pollution levels inside the premises, it is the ultimate step when no other options are available.

Air purifiers only purify the air inside, which over time turns toxic with the rising levels of carbon dioxide.

Given the spike in demand, Blue Star is now launching air conditioners with in-built air purifiers that will suck in fresh air from outside and purify it, at the same time.

Jai Dhar Gupta, proprietor at Nirvana masks, is facing a supply-side constraint given the spike in demand. He is now procuring additional shipment from countries such as China, the US, and Thailand.

"Early trends suggest that this year the growth will be much higher than the past average of 30-40 per cent. With temperature coming down, wind speed is expected to become slower, which will deteriorate the situation," said Gupta, who was an advisor to the Delhi government in the past.

While the masks market is booming, with thousands of

players entering with cheaper products, Gupta said that use of low-quality masks will not help given the severe air quality outside.

Kanwaljeet Jawa, managing director and CEO, Daikin India, said that, in the past few years, it has conducted many sessions on air quality at various social and corporate platforms and collaborated with few health oriented organisations to spread awareness on air pollution and its impacts on human health.

Despite growing awareness about the menace, the size of the air purifier market, however, remains miniscule. According to an ASSOCHAM-TechSci study, Indian residential air purifiers market is projected to grow at a CAGR of more than 29 per cent from the current level of ₹100 crore (\$14.14 million) to ₹275 crore in 2023.

While the study only considers products from major brands, industry estimates suggest size of the portable air purifier products now stands at ₹180-200 crore, with some 200,000 units sold last year. This, however, industry experts said may grow to ₹240 crore.

According to Jawa, while last year a shift towards unbranded cheaper products was on the rise, this year consumers are betting on trusted brands.

EMERGENCY Gurugram 486, Faridabad 496, Delhi 494, Ghaziabad 491, Noida 495

Study: 40% want to quit Delhi-NCR Over 40 per cent residents of Delhi and NCR want to move to another city because of bad air quality while 16 per cent want to travel during the period, according to a survey by LocalCircles.

NHA fined ₹6.84 crore The National Highways of India (NHA) of India has been fined ₹6.84 crore for polluting air due to consistent construction activity in Uttar Pradesh's Agra, officials said on Sunday.

Centre to monitor situation daily The Centre reviewed the situation of worsening air quality on Sunday with the governments of Delhi, Haryana and Punjab and said Cabinet Secretary Rajiv Gauba would monitor it on a daily basis.



19 flights cancelled, over 550 delayed, 37 diverted in Delhi

ARINDAM MAJUMDER New Delhi, 3 November



As many as 37 aircraft operating out of the Indira Gandhi International Airport were diverted due to a severe decline in visibility in the country's Capital city on Sunday. More than 250 departures and 300 arrivals were delayed and 19 cancelled till 8 pm, affecting thousands of flyers.

Visibility on both runways of the airport dropped to 600 metres from 9 am to 1.30 pm. "Due to low visibility 37 flights have been diverted to places including Jaipur, Amritsar, and Lucknow, among other cities," said a spokesperson of the Delhi International Airport Limited (DIAL), which operates the Delhi airport and is owned by GMR Infra.

Delhi is India's busiest airport and handles around 1,400 aircraft per day. The cost of diverting an aircraft impacts finances and operations of an airline and points to the impact the air pollution crisis can have on the economy. While diverting an aircraft burns fuel, duty hours of pilots also get extended, posing operational and cash burn issues for firms.

This time, however, the unusual timing of such conditions caught them off guard. "We train a certain number

MORE BURDEN ON AIRLINES

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IndiGo, Air India plan to

put pilots trained in low visibility operations in early morning flights for the next two days
Airlines will have to train a larger pool of pilots for low visibility operations. The cost of the training is ₹25 lakh per pilot

of pilots for operating in low-visibility conditions. From first week of December, we usually pair them in aircraft operating out of north Indian airports in early morning hours. However, such conditions in the first week of November was not accounted for," an Air India official said.

Sanjiv Kapoor, chief commercial officer, Vistara, said, "Lots of disruptions today (Sunday) across airlines due to low visibility at the Delhi airport, unprecedented for this time of the year. It is not fog season yet." Vistara was forced to cancel four flights till 8 pm.

A senior official of the Indian Meteorology Department termed the event as unusual, blam-

ing pollutants for deterring rain. "The particulate matter in the air is obstructing proper rainfall," the IMD official said. "The light rain worsened the situation by increasing humidity and helping the pollutants getting more concentrated."

The unprecedented change in weather pattern has forced airlines to rethink crew scheduling. Sources said IndiGo and Air India have decided to put pilots trained in low-visibility operations in early morning flights for the next two days.

What it means is that airlines have to train a larger pool of pilots for low-visibility operations and incur an additional cost — almost ₹25 lakh per pilot.

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