



# Cracker ban not enforced strictly, officials face flak

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**Gurgaon:** The impact of firecracker emissions on Gurgaon's air quality was quite apparent as the index slipped into the 'very poor' zone on Diwali night. Some 20 cases of fire across the city also made it evident that crackers were used widely by many people.

Both experts and Haryana State Pollution Control Board (HSPCB) officials admitted that firecracker emissions led to an increase in air pollution this Diwali and blamed the authorities for not taking enough measures were not taken to implement a strict ban on usage of non-permitted firecrackers. Officials, however, said that the ban couldn't be enforced strictly as most of their colleagues were busy on election duty. But some residential societies were able to implement a 'no-cracker' policy this year.

Anumita Roychowdhury, executive director-research and advocacy, Centre for Science and Environment, said, "From a very clean afternoon on Sunday, the change to severe pollution levels after 10 pm at night was drastic. There was a 10-fold jump in PM 2.5 concentrations between 5pm and 1am due to bursting of firecrackers. The peak level during 1am to 3am was quite similar to the peak levels observed during Diwali in 2018."

Officials of the Haryana State Pollution Control Board (HSPCB) also said that the usage of firecrackers contributed to the increase in air pollution. "As compared to last year and 2017, there seems to be a slight reduction in air pollution. However, the bursting of firecrackers continued even after the permitted time-frame this year, even though there was restriction on the sale of the crackers," said S Narayan, HSPCB member secretary.

Some officials accepted



Indranil Das

Bursting of firecrackers continued even after the permitted time-frame this year even though there was restriction, according to HSPCB

“This year, we pledged to provide a better and safer environment for the people residing in this vicinity. It is vital for each of us to recognise climate change concerns as a priority and opt for clean and green Diwali

—AK SINGH | RESIDENT OF ENVIRO, VATIKA INDIA NEXT, IN SECTOR 82

“While Delhi has already announced and is gearing up for the odd-even scheme, those at the helm in Gurgaon don't have any action plan in place. It seems the authorities were waiting for the situation to get worse

—DR HIMANSHU GARG | SENIOR PULMONOLOGIST AT W PRATIKSHA HOSPITAL

that the ban couldn't be implemented strictly as many of them were busy on election duty. "Despite that nodal officers to combat pollution were deployed by all departments, most of them were busy in election duty. Air pollution measures took a backseat. This is one of the reasons that not enough measures could be taken to combat air pollution pre- and post-Diwali this year," said an official of MCG, who didn't wish to be named.

But there were some residential societies that celebrated a cracker-free Diwali this year. "This year, we pledged to provide a better and safer environment for the people residing in our society. We have also organised Diwali mela from 19th to 24th

of this month. Moreover, looking at the recent poor air quality index, it is vital for each of us to keep the concerns of climatic change on the priority list," said AK Singh from Enviro, Vatika India Next, a township in Sector 82.

Many, including doctors, criticised the authorities for not having any plan to deal with the rising air pollution levels in the city. "It seems the authorities were waiting for the situation to get worse. Meanwhile, pollution poses a major threat to public health as the number of cases of breathlessness, asthma, viral infection, cough and cold, and allergies are rising continuously," said Dr Himanshu Garg, a city-based pulmonologist.