



PRESS RELEASE

Varanasi's air is not healthy to breathe, claims CEED reports

Only 18 days in 2017 were good to breathe in Varanasi

Varanasi, 23 January 2018: In a recent analysis by the Centre for Environment and Energy Development (CEED) of the air quality of Varanasi in 2017, it was found that the holy city's air was not healthy to breathe throughout the year, which indicates serious health risks. CEED studied the ambient air quality data from the monitoring station of the Pollution Control Board (PCB) to understand the air quality of Varanasi for the year 2017 (<https://goo.gl/bWtDmW>). In 2017, only 18 days were found under 'Good' air quality category. Maximum number of days (253 days) in Varanasi had 'Bad' air quality, while 77 days (22%) were under the 'Satisfactory' category. In the month of December, Varanasi's air was not less than toxic smoke and for half-a-month the quality of air remained in a category which could affect healthy individuals too. The air quality was found under 'Very Poor' to 'Severe+' category for 31 consecutive days of December.

The report highlighted Chandpur as the most polluted place in Varanasi, among the five locations where PM₁₀, SO₂ and NO₂ were measured manually. The annual mean PM₁₀ concentration in Chandpur was 296 µg/m³, followed by Saket Nagar (260 µg/m³) and Jawaharnagar (239 µg/m³). The other polluted locations included Sigra (236) and Banaras Hindu University (223 µg/m³).

Talking about the air quality trend of Varanasi, Ramapati Kumar, Chief Executive Officer of CEED said, "In a situation where about 75% of the days are found in 'Bad' air quality category in Varanasi, it is a matter of great concern. Also, throughout the year Varanasi remained among the top five most polluted cities of India. Although, a lot of commendable steps have been taken by the government to safeguard the environment and well-being of the citizens but the problem of air pollution has not yet been given as much attention as needed. The government should chalk out an affirmative Clean Air Action Plan for Varanasi with a time-bound implementation strategy. The Clean Action Plan will prioritise actions based on emission sources and also recognise regulations and institutional arrangements that will reduce the pollution level. A regional collaboration is also important to control emis-

sions from transboundary sources of pollution. I hope the government will soon take some concrete measures to reduce Varanasi's increasing pollution levels," Mr. Kumar added.

Elaborating on the findings, Ankita Jyoti, Senior Programme Officer of CEED said "In our analysis December was found as the most polluted month of the year 2017, while January and November occupied the second and third most polluted positions respectively. In December, the monthly mean value of PM2.5 was 278 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$. The analysis has highlighted April 24 as the most polluted day of 2017, when the PM2.5 concentration was 504 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$, which is 8 times higher than the national safety limits. It is based on the daily concentration of PM2.5. Further explaining the report, Ms Jyoti says, "Chandpur (industrial area) has been found to be the most polluted, which is acceptable to some extent. But pollution level of other places like Saket Nagar and Jawaharnagar, which comes in the residential category, highlights an emergency situation. The annual concentration of PM10 in Saketnagar and Jawaharnagar is comparable to the pollution level of Chandpur. The value varies only by 12% and 19% respectively. This validates the need for strong air quality monitoring in Varanasi with an emphasis on Continuous Air Quality Monitors.

Uttar Pradesh should work out a targeted action plan to reduce emissions from all sources, and stringent measures must be employed to clean the ambient air. CEED urges the Uttar Pradesh Government to take concrete measures to improve the air quality of Varanasi.

Note to Editor: <https://goo.gl/bWtDmW>

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