

City lights Holi fires to keep evil at bay, can't keep pollution away

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MUMBAI: The city woke up on Monday to both colours and thick black smoke emanating from the Holika Dahan or bonfires lit the previous evening.

Air pollution saw a significant increase between Friday to Monday as the pollutant measuring indicator — air quality index (AQI) — moved from 75, falling under the 'good' category, which also happened to be the cleanest air day in 2017 so far, to 315 on Monday, falling under the 'very poor' category. AQI levels fell to 313, still under the 'very poor' levels by Monday evening. AQI levels between 0-100, falls under the 'good' category, 101-200 is 'moderate', 201-300 is 'poor' and

AIR QUALITY IN MUMBAI

- AQI in Mumbai on Monday: **315 (Very Poor)**
- AQI in Mumbai on Sunday: **112 (Moderate)**
- AQI in Mumbai on Saturday: **78 (Good)**
- AQI in Mumbai on Friday: **75 (Good)** – Cleanest this yr

301-above is 'very poor'. When wood and other organic material is burnt, more than one gas is released. Other than carbon dioxide and carbon monoxide, chemicals are produced, including one of the most potent greenhouse gases, nitrogen dioxide.

Eight of 10 locations in Mum-

bai recorded 'very poor' AQI levels with Mazgaon, Bhandup, Chembur and Malad recording the city's worst air quality. The two locations that recorded marginally cleaner air, but still fell under 'poor' levels were – Navi Mumbai and Borivli. The System of Air Quality Weather Forecasting and Research (SAFAR) research records AQI levels across 10 locations in Mumbai.

Mumbai also recorded a sharp drop in night temperatures between Sunday night and Monday morning. The weather station at Santacruz recorded the night temperature at 15.2 degrees Celsius, almost 6 degrees Celsius below normal while Colaba recorded 21 degrees Celsius, 1.5 degree Celsius below normal.

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SoBo residents..



■ **The Metro 3 corridor will provide crucial north-south rail connectivity and will supplement the overburdened suburban rail network.**

This is a precautionary move as we do not want to risk any lives.”

The corporation will bear the expenses incurred during the residents’ hotel stay, the official said.

The Metro 3 corridor will provide crucial north-south rail connectivity and will supplement the overburdened suburban rail network.

It will link key business districts such as MIDC and SEEPZ in Andheri to the plush business district of Bandra-Kurla Complex, and Nariman Point.

The corridor will be commissioned in two phases. The first — between SEEPZ in Andheri (East) and Bandra-Kurla Complex — is expected to be commissioned by December 2020. Phase 2 will be commissioned by December 2021.

City lights...

Officials from SAFAR attributed the rise in pollution to open burning cases as an additional factor to already existing meteorological conditions. “Along with weather factors such as low wind speed and low temperatures, the additional factor of open burning led to the sudden rise in air pollution. This is a temporary condition and pollution levels will fall to the ‘moderate’ category by Wednesday,” said Gufran Beig, director, SAFAR.

‘750 Holika fires this year in Mumbai’

Holika Dahan are lit on the eve of Holi, symbolising ‘truth prevailing over evil’. Environmentalists said there were fewer Holika fires this year. “We observed around 750 Holika Dahan bonfires across the eastern and western suburbs, but hardly any were seen in south Mumbai this time,” said Godfrey Pimenta, trustee, Watchdog Foundation.

Environmentalists suggested that bonfires should not be lit in every building and there should be community celebrations. “In the city it makes no sense to have large fires as it will further deplete the already poor air quality. The smaller the fires the better through the idea of one symbolic community bonfire to reduce pollution,” said Stalin D.

the Holika. “We saw one large community bonfire in Malabar Hill but the SAFAR data indicates that additional refuse might have been burnt that further deteriorated the city’s air quality,” said Indrani Malkani, managing trustee, V Citizens Action Network.

Meanwhile, different departments from Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) and Mumbai police were unaware about the number of bonfires as permissions are not given by either authority during the festival. “We will conduct a check in terms of tree hacking across the city, which we do after Holi every year. We will take strict action against anybody found cutting trees,” said a senior official from BMC.

15,000 shops...

The 23.55 km EEH connects the city with the eastern suburbs starting from Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus to Chembur and stretched up to Thane, while the WEH helps in connecting eastern and western suburbs starting from Bandra to Dahisar.

The Indian Hotel and Restaurant Association (AHAR), which is also one of the petitioners in the Apex Court, has expressed apprehensions of big losses to the hotel industry because most bars will have to down shutters if they can’t sell liquor. AHAR president Adarsh Shetty said more than three lakh people are likely to lose their job, while the financial losses to the industry would be around Rs 30,000 crore annually.

However Rohatgi said the Supreme Court’s order does not apply to bars and restaurants that serve alcohol along highways. The judgment categorically applied to liquor vends and not to other establishments serving liquor, he has said. The opinion was sought by the Kerala government after it was facing problem in implementing the court’s order.

This has put the state government in a fix over implementing the court orders. “We are ready to implement the court’s order. The government has identified around 15,500 establishments that will not be allowed to serve liquor from April 1 by taking a drive across the state. This includes liquor shops, bars and restaurants,” said Pradeep Pawar, deputy commissioner (inspection) of the state excise department.

He, however, said the Attorney General’s fresh opinion has created a kind of confusion. The state is now hoping to get some clarity from the Supreme Court on March 20 when it is likely to hear petitions from the several hotel associations on the matter.

Of the 15,500 establishments identified by the state, more than 12,000 will be bars and restau-

director, NGO Vanashakti.

South Mumbai residents said that the spike could have also been due to trash burning with

rants that will be badly hit as they will not be allowed to serve liquor. In case of the bars, they will have to shut their business