

Dust from S Arabia settles as haze in city

Intensity Has Eased But Left Mumbaikars Breathless

Pratibha Masand | TNN

Mumbai: Even as dust haze continued to envelop the city for the third day on Thursday, its density has diminished. This is the second year in a row that such a haze—direct consequence of a dust storm over distant Arabian Peninsula—has visited the city.

V K Rajeev, director of weather forecast at Indian Meteorological Department (IMD), Mumbai, said the dust storm, which started on March 24, has been blowing through parts of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Iraq. "This dust storm was favoured by Westerly winds, which caused it to move across Arabian sea on the west coast, thus affecting places such as Mumbai, Goa and Ratnagiri."

The visibility was low on Tuesday; it was reportedly half the normal visibility of 6,000 metres at 3,000m. "The intensity of the haze has eased since Tuesday as the dust mass has been carried away further eastwards."

Last year in March, too, Mumbai had been in the grip of a very high density dust storm. South-westerly air currents had carried the dust from Saudi Arabia to several parts of northern India and then to Mumbai by northerly winds. The MET department, though, had said a sandstorm in Rajasthan was responsible for the haze last year.

High pollution levels this time have spelt trouble for those who already suffer from asthma, sinusitis or rhinitis.

Neha Khera (38), for instance, was among several Mum-

VISIBILITY STILL LOW

K K Choudhary

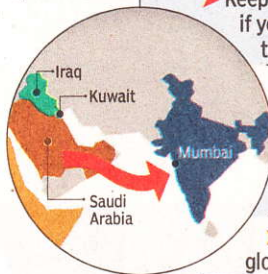


HEALTH ALERT

People suffering from **chronic respiratory ailments** such as asthma, sinusitis, rhinitis and bronchitis **are more susceptible** to the sudden rise in suspended particulate matter due to the haze

SYMPTOMS |

Wheezing, breathlessness and long bouts of coughing



DOCTORS' ADVICE

- Stay indoors early mornings when there is more pollen in air
- Keep the windows shut if your house is close to a construction site
- Turn on AC to prevent dust from entering the home
- Travel by train to avoid pollution
- Wear a mask & gloves while cleaning
- Consult your doctor if breathlessness persists

LAST YEAR'S DUST STORM

Mumbai was witness to a large-scale dust storm on March 21, 2012. South-westerly air currents had carried the dust from Saudi Arabia to several parts of northern India and then to Mumbai along with northerly winds. MET department had said a sandstorm in Rajasthan was responsible for the haze last year

baikars who had problems breathing. Khera, who suffers from asthma, found her symptoms aggravated by Tuesday noon. "By the time I reached my office, I started coughing. By lunch, I had to go to see my doctor."

Dr Ashok Mahasur, chest physician at Hinduja Hospital, said, "At such times, we mostly get senior citizens who complain of breathlessness. Even a few students are brought in during exams because of coughing."

"A high amount of particulate matter in the air can cause

respiratory problems. It is not advisable for chronic respiratory patients to go outdoors," said Dr Amita Athavale, chest specialist at KEM Hospital. "Wearing masks will not help. Patients will have to take extra medications. But the only way to avoid a troublesome bout of wheezing or cough is by staying indoors."

"People should avoid morning jogs or excessive exercise in the open for a few days," said Dr Rohini Chowghule, Indian Institute of Environmental Medicine (IEM).