

# Farm fires at record low but impact on Delhi air still high

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**New Delhi:** As per satellite data, stubble-burning incidents this season (Oct-Nov) in Punjab and Haryana were by far the lowest on record. The farm fire count in Punjab was down a steep 70% as compared to last year while Haryana saw a reduction of 42%.

## ► 'Cleanest city' Indore logs 21% PM10 rise, P 28

But here's the rub: Data on different pollution sources in Delhi shows that farm fires continued to be a major contributor to the capital's PM2.5 levels from late Oct to Nov.

How's that possible? Experts said low stubble burning doesn't necessarily me-

## LOW NO., BIG EFFECT

- This season, share of stubble burning in city's PM2.5 was close to **15% or more on 26 days**, as per DSS data
- Last year, stubble burning share was **15% or higher on just 18 days**, as per IITM study
- This year, the share rose to **20% or more on 14 days**, as compared to **12 last year**, peaking at 35.2% on Nov 1

an the impact on Delhi's air quality will be proportionately less. Intrusion of pollution from stubble burning into the capital depends on transport level winds and air ventilation conditions in Delhi.

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# Felt obligated to join Army as it took care of dad: NDA topper

Gold Medallist  
Had Cleared  
JEE-Main Too

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**Pun:** "I feel obligated to serv in Army because it took care of my ailing father, who succumbed to liver cancer three years ago after retiring from the force," said Army cadet Ankit Chaudhar, President's gold medalist of 147th course at National Defence Academy (NDA).

Ankit had cleared JEE Main entrance exam but JEE Advanced examination and interview for the Service Selection Board (SSB) for DA clashed. Ultimately, he chose to join NDA.

"I prepared only for JEE entrance exam. I took NDA entrance with my friends. JEE Advanced examination and SSB interview were scheduled the same day. It was a career-defining moment for me. I listened to my inner feelings and sacrificed my dream. In the end, I felt compelled to join the academy to serve in Army, as



Cadets at the passing out parade of the 147th course at National Defence Academy in Khadakwasla on Saturday

it provided top quality medical care to my father through Ex-servicemen Contributory Health Scheme (ECHS)," Ankit told TOI.

Ankit's father, Sultansing, had served in the 11 Rajputana Rifles infantry battalion for 17 years. "I saw how well Army took care of him. Today, I believe I made my father proud. He would have been happy with my decision," Ankit said.

Ankit's mother Sarojdevi, a teacher in Rajasthan govt, stood proudly beside him with tears in her eyes. "Being a single mother after my husband's death, my sole aim was to educate my chil-

dren well. While Ankit joined NDA, my younger son Aanshu will join AIIMS to pursue a medical degree. Both sons have made me proud," Sarojdevi said.

Ankit's family is from Barsinghpura village in Rajasthan's Sikar district, about 115km from Jaipur. Ankit completed his schooling at St Mary's Senior Secondary School in Sikar. He had the honour of commanding the parade for his course. "Out of 11 cadets considered, I was selected this (Saturday) morning. It was a significant honour and I will cherish it throughout my life," Ankit said.

Manipur school  
van driver's  
son wins  
bronze medal

The son of a school van driver from Manipur made his parents proud by winning a bronze medal at NDA. Reflecting on his early days in Imphal, where his father drove him and other students to school in a van, Jodha Thongiaomayum said, "My father supported my career ambitions. Because of his encouragement, I was able to achieve this milestone."

Jodha did his schooling at Imphal's Sainik School before getting selected for Rashtriya Indian Military College, Dehradun. His father, Rosoraj, who attended the event with his wife and daughter, said, "He made us extremely proud."

Meanwhile, Army cadet Yuvraj Singh Chauhan, who topped science stream and won President's Silver Medal, studied at Army Public School in Lucknow. TNN

# Nepal rules out loans for BRI projects

**Kathmandu:** Nepal on Saturday said it is not in a position to take loans for projects under China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and will instead primarily rely on grants, moving forward based on mutual consensus among all stakeholders.

Speaking to reporters at Tribhuvan International Airport upon returning from a three-day visit to China, foreign minister Arzu Rana Deuba sought to clarify Nepal's position on the implementation of BRI projects.

BRI is a pet project of Chinese President Xi Jinping to further the global influence of China with investments to build infrastructure projects. AP

# Trudeau: Had excellent conversation with Trump

**West Palm Beach (US):** Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said Saturday he had an "excellent conversation" with Donald Trump at his Mar-a-Lago club after the president-elect's threat to impose significant tariffs on two of America's leading trade partners raised alarms in Ottawa and Mexico City. It was unclear, as Trudeau headed back to Canada from Florida, whether the conversation had alleviated his concerns.

A person familiar with the details of the leaders' hastily arranged meeting Friday night said it was a "positive wide-ranging dinner that lasted three hours." The official, who was not authorised to discuss the matter publicly and spoke to AP on condition of anonymity, said topics included trade, border security, fentanyl, defence, Ukraine, Nato, China, the Mideast and pipelines, as well as the G7 meeting in Canada next year.

## **Trump threatens 100% tariff on BRICS countries**

President-elect Donald Trump has threatened to impose a 100% tariff on the BRICS group nations if they undercut the US dollar. "We require a commitment... that they will neither create a new BRICS currency, nor back any other currency to replace the mighty US dollar or, they will face 100% tariffs," Trump wrote on his Truth Social website. AP, AFP

# US OKs \$385 million arms sales to Taiwan

The United States has approved the proposed sale of spare parts for fighter jets and radar systems as well as communications equipment to Taiwan, in deals valued at \$385 million, a US agency said Friday. While Washington does not have official diplomatic relations with Taipei, it remains the island's most important backer and biggest arms supplier.

The proposed sale of the F-16 and radar system parts consists of equipment in existing US military stocks and was worth an estimated \$320 million, the Defense Security Cooperation Agency said in a statement, with deliveries estimated to start in 2025.

"This proposed sale serves US national, economic and security interests by supporting the recipient's continuing efforts to modernise its armed forces and to maintain a credible defensive capability," the DSCA said. "The proposed sale will improve the recipient's ability to meet current and future threats by maintaining the operational readiness of the recipient's fleet of F-16 aircraft." The deals were approved by the state department, with the DSCA providing the required notification to Congress Friday. AFP

AFP



In this handout photo taken and released by Taiwan's defence ministry on Saturday, F-16 jets escort the plane of Taiwan President Lai Ching-te who embarked on a trip to visit Taiwan's allies in the , with a stopover in the US, drawing the ire of Beijing

## Russia, China carry out joint air patrol

Russian and Chinese strategic bombers conducted a joint air patrol over the Sea of Japan, East China Sea, and western Pacific Ocean, Russian defence ministry said Saturday. Russian Tu-95MS and Chinese H-6K bombers conducted an eight-hour patrol accompanied by fighter jets from both countries. The Russian aircraft took off from and landed at an airfield in China. REUTERS