'Severe' season: GRAP III in force as air quality plummets

Hybrid Classes, WFH; Curbs On Building, Cars

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New Delhi: GRAP III kicked into action Friday as a precautionary measure, with the city's air quality index steadily moving towards 'severe' (AQI above 400). Average AQI was 382 at 4pm, against 369 the previous day, nudging CAQM to further GRAP.

The move comes four days after the second stage of the graded pollution action plan was imposed.

GRAP III includes a ban on major dust-generating construction and demolition work, closure of stone crushers and mining, restrictions on BS-III petrol and BS-IV diesel cars in Delhi and five high-vehicle-density NCR districts, possible hybrid classes up to Class V, and 50% WFH in offices.

While GRAP-III comes into force once the air quality turns severe or worse, many areas in the city are already recording severe levels, and air quality is set to become severe late Friday night or Saturday.

The most polluted areas were Punjabi Bagh, with an AQI of 455, DTU 455, Jahangirpuri 449, Rohini 449, RK Puram 443, Mundka 438, North Campus 431, Najafgarh 430, and Vivek Vihar 430. P4



Piyal Bhattacharjee

People pass through a mist spray, meant to combat particulate matter and dust, in Delhi on Friday

'WFH breach': Staffers tell on law firms

Two law firms in Gurgaon were issued showcause notices for violating the 50% work-from-home directive currently in force in Delhi-NCR. The action, sources said, followed inspections at the premises of the firms on Nov 5 after disgruntled employees reported the "breach" to CAQM. Issued by the subdivisional magistrate of Badshapur, the notices are the first time penal provisions have been invoked in Delhi-NCR for WFH violation since the mandate came into force on Nov 5. P4

SC: People tend to violate curbs with vengeance

New Delhi: Acknowledging that the enormous amount of judicial time spent over the years to tackle pollution in Delhi had yielded only marginal benefits, Supreme Court Friday said when more and more restrictions, without scientific basis, were put in place, people tended to violate them with a vengeance, **reports Dhananjay Mahapatra.**

Reflecting on numerous orders and subsequent monitoring of their implementation to improve air quality, a bench of Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and V Mohana said, "To think we can achieve air quality of less than 100 (AQI) in Delhi during winters is utopian when 'very poor' and 'severe' have become the new normal."

▶'Awareness alone...' P 10

Want only serious players, no place for frivolous applicants in Semicon 2.0: Vaishnaw to industry

NEW DELHI, Nov 6 (PTI)

IT MINISTER Ashwini Vaishnaw on Friday said the Government's semiconductor programme, as well as manufacturing schemes for components and mobile phones are meant only for serious, technologically capable players and that there is no place for "frivolous" applicants.

"We don't want placeholders," Vaishnaw said in a strong message to the industry, and added that he had asked IT Secretary to remove 18-19 non-serious players from the Electronics Components Manufacturing Scheme (ECMS) list as well.



On Friday, the Government launched the web application portal for Semicon 2.0, which will initially receive applications related to three of the programme's six pillars: machines and materials, fabs, and packaging. Guidelines have so far been issued only for these three pillars, and the portal is now inviting applications for them. Other three areas pertain to design, R&D and talent. Describing the semiconductor industry as a foundational industry, Vaishnaw emphasised that the portal will only accept applications that are complete in all respects. He added that it had been designed such that no frivolous or incomplete application could be accepted. "The portal will accept only those applications which are complete in all respects. Its purpose is that only extremely serious players should participate. There is no place for frivolous applicants...We have made this clear to the industry," the Minister said.

He was addressing an event where the Government announced that a new tranche of 12 applications, worth over Rs 7,500 crore have been green-lit under the Electronics Components Manufacturing Scheme, and that the Semicon 2.0 web application portal is now inviting project proposals.

Stressing that the approach was driven by the desire to secure the country's future, the Minister said the Government will take important decisions and calls - however tough they may be - to ensure a bright future for India. The guidelines and the portal, he said, were shaped by this thinking. Vaishnaw said the same principle would apply across other schemes too, including the Electronics Components Manufacturing Scheme (ECMS) and the freshly-minted mobile phone manufacturing scheme.

China confirms it's discussing Xi-Trump-Putin summit

BEIJING, Nov 6 (AP)

CHINA on Friday confirmed for the first time that it's discussing a possible meeting between President Xi Jinping, his US counterpart Donald Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Mao Ning, spokesperson for the Chinese foreign ministry, said at a regular briefing that China "is in communication with relevant parties regarding a meeting between the three heads of state".

The three-leader meeting would be historic if it happens during a regional economic summit this month in the southern Chinese city of Shenzhen. But experts say the trio may not agree on what to discuss when their interests are at odds.

Trump has said he wants to discuss nuclear arms control, while Putin is interested in discussing the war with Ukraine without Kyiv at the table.

If it happens, the meeting is certain to upset Europe.

Developing nations' foreign debt hits $9.4 tn: World Bank

WASHINGTON, Nov 6 (IANS)

DEVELOPING countries' external debt reached a record $9.4 trillion in 2025, the World Bank said, warning that renewed access to private finance was coming at borrowing costs that threatened essential development spending. Debt rose 5.5 per cent, its fastest pace since 2021. Low- and middle-income countries paid $1.4 trillion in principal and interest during the year, the fifth consecutive annual increase, the International Debt Report 2026 said.

The pressure was particularly acute for countries eligible for concessional financing from the International Development Association, the World Bank's arm serving poorer economies. Their external debt increased 8.1 per cent to $1.3 trillion.

These countries faced an average interest rate of 8.2 per cent on new commitments from private creditors, the highest since 1989. New bonds carried an average rate of 9.4 per cent.

By comparison, countries eligible only for non-concessional borrowing from the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development paid an average of 5.5 per cent on new bonds, down from 5.8 per cent a year earlier.

The figures show that the reopening of capital markets has not brought equally affordable financing to all borrowers.

World Bank Group Chief Statistician Haishan Fu welcomed the return of private lending but warned that larger borrowing and repayment obligations could leave fewer resources for development.

"Managing debt responsibly means giving everyone—including future generations—a chance to thrive," she said in the bank's release.

Public entities issued $251 billion in bonds, nearly 35 per cent more than in 2024. Many Governments used new borrowing to repurchase debt approaching maturity, spreading repayments over time without substantially reducing the amount owed.

That refinancing often came at higher interest rates. Payments to bondholders reached $363 billion, partly reflecting buybacks and early repayments financed through new issues.

Indian-Americans' splendid win in US mid-term polls

Several Indian-American candidates emerged victorious across the country in the US mid-term elections that concluded on Tuesday and delivered a significant rebuke to President Donald Trump and the Republicans as the Democrats gained control of the House and Senate, flipping seats and traditional party strongholds in a massive Blue wave across America.

Nithya Raman scripts history in Los Angeles

■ By Yoshita Singh and Sagar Kulkarni
NEW YORK, Nov 6 (PTI)

INDIAN-BORN democratic socialist Nithya Raman has been elected Mayor of Los Angeles, scripting history as she becomes the first South Asian Mayor of the nation's second-largest city.



Raman, 45, who was a Los Angeles City Council member, defeated incumbent 73-year-old Karen Bass in the November 3 mid-term elections. With this victory, America's two largest cities - New York and Los Angeles - are now run by Indian-descent mayors who are Democratic Socialists.

"Los Angeles, I am deeply honoured to be your next Mayor. Thank you to the thousands of people who knocked on doors, sent texts, made phone calls, convinced their neighbours to believe in the promise of this big, beautiful, joyful city that we get to call home," Raman said in a video posted on X Thursday.

Ranjeev Puri elected Speaker of Michigan House

WASHINGTON, Nov 6 (PTI)

DEMOCRAT Ranjeev Puri has been elected as the Speaker of the Michigan House, the first Indian-American to hold the coveted post.



"Today, I'm humbled to be elected by my colleagues as Speaker of the Michigan House," Puri said in a Facebook post on Thursday.

Puri, 42, was elected as Speaker of the Michigan House of Representatives on Thursday. Puri said he looked forward to working with Senate Majority Leader-Elect Darrin Camilleri and Governor-Elect Jocelyn Benson to deliver on the promises made in the run-up to the election. "Thank you to my colleagues for your trust. Excited to get to work," he said.

Puri became the first Sikh American elected to the Michigan House of Representatives in 2020. Born to Punjabi immigrants, Puri was appointed as the leader of the Democratic Party in 2025.

Saba Haider wins Illinois State Representative poll

NEW YORK, Nov 6 (PTI)

INDIA-BORN Democrat Saba Haider has won election to the Illinois House of Representatives, becoming the first South Asian woman to be elected to the State's General Assembly.



Haider won the November 3 US mid-term elections from the 84th District with 70.9 per cent of the votes, securing 20,756 ballots against her Republican rival Brian Scopa, who received 8,520 votes, or 29.1 per cent.

The 84th District covers parts of Will, DuPage, Kane and Kendall counties, including Aurora, Naperville, Oswego, Montgomery and Boulder Hill. "We did it! We worked hard for the last 15 months talking to voters in every corner of District 84 to learn what they care about, what they want to see change, and how we can work together to build stronger, more prosperous, and more inclusive communities," Haider said in a social media post on Thursday.

Jyot Singh is first Sikh elected to Georgia Assembly

NEW YORK, Nov 6 (PTI)

SCRIPTING history in the US mid-term elections, Jyot Singh has been elected to the Georgia House of Representatives, becoming the first Sikh to serve in the State's Assembly.



Singh, a Yale University alumnus, won his election to represent Georgia House District 97 in the November 3 elections, becoming the first Sikh and Indian-American in the state's General Assembly. "We made history for our community here in House District 97," Singh said in a video posted on X after his election victory. In his vision statement ahead of the polls, Singh had said that growing up in Norcross, Georgia, "I learned that our diversity isn't just a number-it's our strength. It's the intricate fabric of Gwinnett, a complex and colourful design where every stitch matters. But I also know that for a tapestry to stay strong, every thread must be secure."