

New Delhi gasps for clean air

POLLUTION, FROM PAGE 1

by spraying water around the more than three dozen air-quality monitoring stations, to lower their readings.

Opposition leaders have accused the government of an even more brazen manipulation, saying data from several of these stations have gone missing during the worst hours of pollution.

8 A.M., OUTSIDE A SECONDARY SCHOOL

As children arrived for classes at the D.T.E.A. Senior Secondary School, the level of dangerous pollutants at the entrance was more than 20 times the recommended daily average for safe breathing.

Education in New Delhi is disrupted every year by pollution emergencies, when the government tells students to stay home and take classes online because of peak contamination levels. For teachers and parents, the sudden moves add confusion to an already struggling education system.

10:30 A.M., OUTSIDE A PUBLIC HOSPITAL

Doctors at All India Institutes of Medical Sciences, India's most prestigious health institution, have reported a 30 to 40 percent increase in patients' arriving with respiratory complaints. Preventive measures at an individual level can only have "negligible effects," they say.

"This is public health emergency, and it should be treated like a public health emergency now," Dr. Anant Mohan, the head of the pulmonary department, told local news media.

At L.N.J.P. hospital, one of the most crowded in New Delhi, attendants and families of patients were resting on blankets in the hospital yard, where the PM2.5 was about 17 times the recommended level for safe breathing. Inside the hospital's crowded halls, it was about 10 times the guideline.

12:30 P.M., OUTSIDE THE INCOME TAX OFFICE

Shailendra Chauhan, 49, was getting a shave at a roadside barber stall. He works as the driver of an official in India's tax authority.

"Breathing is difficult, and the eyes become itchy," he said.

Mr. Chauhan said his boss had recently installed a small air purifier in the car. That made him wonder about the ways the rich clear the air in their homes.

Mohamad Kalim, the barber, said he didn't know what an air purifier was.

"We have to come out for the livelihood of our children," Mr. Kalim said. "We can't just stay at home."

5:30 P.M., AT CHANDNI CHOWK MARKET

At opposite ends of a crowded market area in Old Delhi, we found a telling contrast.

At one end, traffic on the Chandni Chowk area's main road has long been limited to cycle rickshaws and electric rickshaws. Because of a festival at a nearby Sikh temple, the traffic was further restricted, and the sidewalks were washed twice a day for three days.

Near the temple, we measured PM2.5 at a little over 10 times above the level for safe breathing. But a mile down the road, where the traffic restrictions ended, the reading was nearly double.

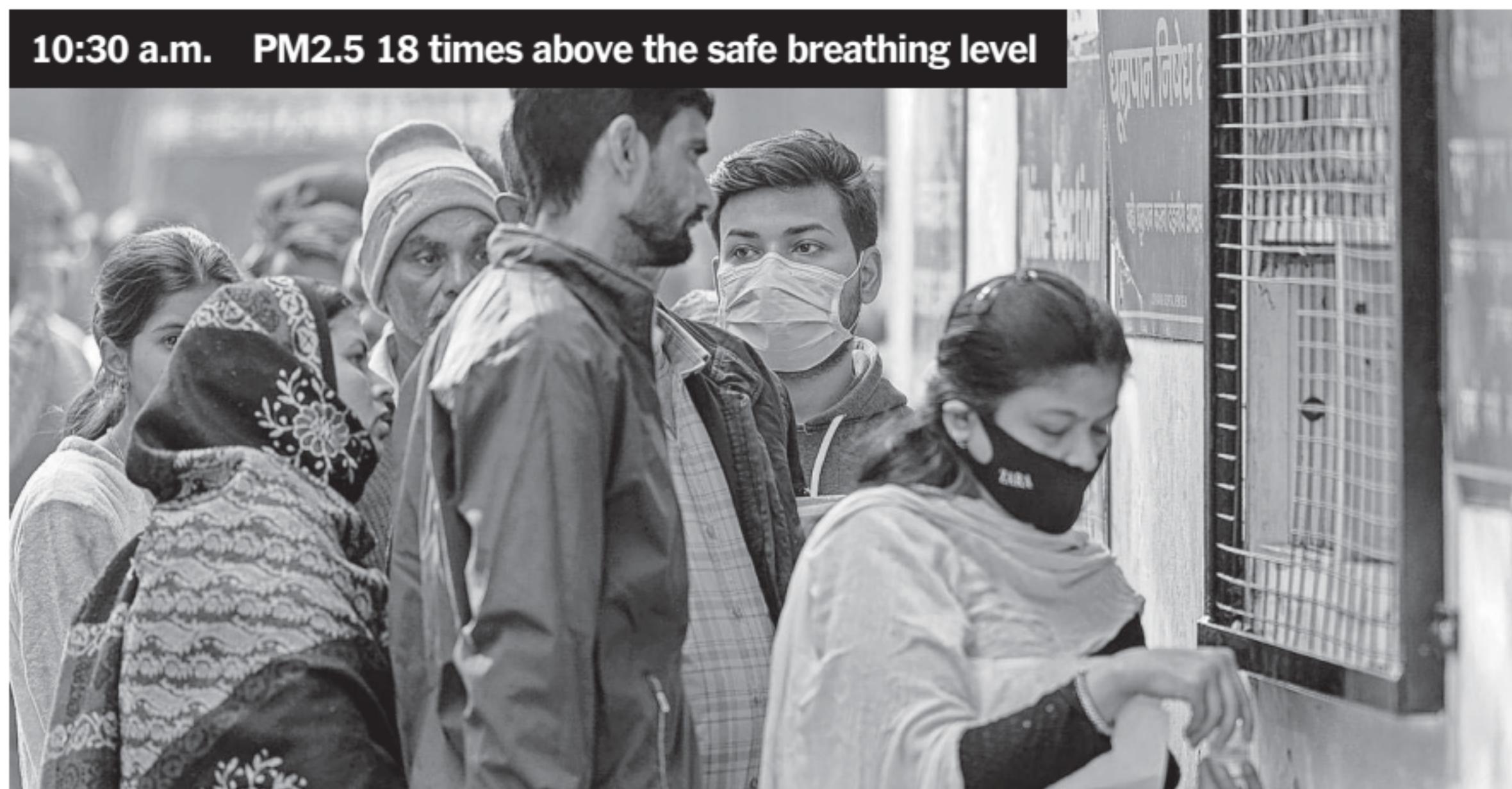
8 P.M., AT ANAND VIHAR BUS STATION

Deepak Rawat, 31, makes a living at one of Delhi's busiest bus stations working at a chai and biscuits stall.

A native of the eastern state of Bihar, he said he opens his tea stall at 4 a.m. and goes home at 10 p.m. On most days, he earns \$5 to \$6. The tang of smog mixed with the pungent odor of rot from the large open sewer behind his stall.

"My eyes burn all the time. Some days, I get tired very early," he said, trying to suppress a frequent cough.

10:30 a.m. PM2.5 18 times above the safe breathing level



12:30 p.m. 13 times above



5:30 p.m. 17 times above



8.00 p.m. 18 times above



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