

Rain Cleans Up Delhi's Act, To An Extent

City Breathes Best Air In 3 Months As AQI Improves Sharply From Near Severe To Moderate

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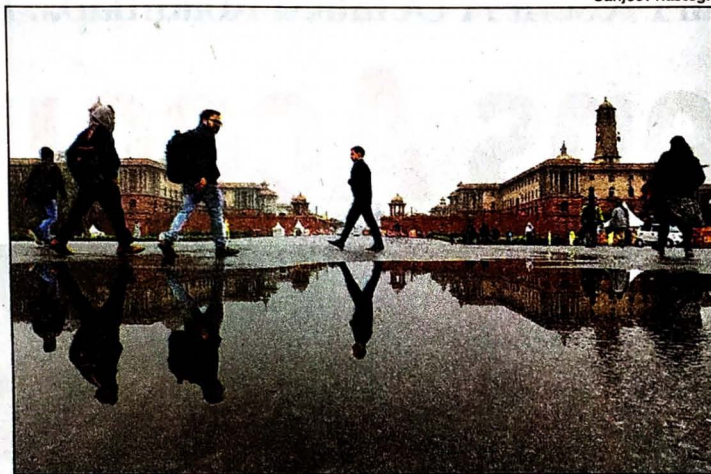
New Delhi: Rain and strong winds helped clean up Delhi's air quality on Thursday when the Air Quality Index (AQI) slid to 177 in the "moderate" range from 392, which was "near severe" on Wednesday.

The sudden improvement in air quality, although still not ideal, happened after a gap of over three months. A lower AQI than Thursday's was last seen on Oct 19, 2023, when it was 121.

The last "moderate" air quality

in Delhi before Thursday was on Oct 20 last year when the AQI was 195. Central Pollution Control Board's data shows that Delhi did not see any "moderate" air quality day in Nov and Dec 2023 or Jan 2024.

Experts said there was a drastic improvement in the air quality due to the rain, which helped in washing out pollutants. Anumita Roychowdhury, executive director for research and advocacy at Centre for Science and Environment, said: "This is clearly the wash-out effect of the rain. This has cleared the



PRETTY PICTURE: The air quality is likely to be 'moderate' till Feb 4

particulates that were trapped due to extremely calm weather conditions and exacerbated by winter inversion for so many days."

The Air Quality Early Warning System for Delhi (EWS), which is the forecasting body under the Union ministry of earth sciences, in its bulletin on Thursday said the predominant winds "were from the northeast or southeast direction with wind speed 6-18 kmph in Delhi on Wednesday". Safdarjung got 26.5 mm of rainfall, Palam 20.1 mm and the Ridge 23.4 mm.

EWS said the air quality is likely to be "moderate" till Feb 4.

This January was the most polluted since 2016 with an average AQI of 354. The lowest daily AQI was 273 on Jan 10.

With an average AQI of 348, Dec 2023 was the most polluted in the past five years. The month saw three severe days with AQI hovering in the "very poor" category on most days.

Nov last year was the worst polluted ever. Delhi saw 17 Nov days when the AQI was 390 or above. The air quality in Delhi in Oct 2023 was the most polluted in the past three years.