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HYDERABAD: Pollution levels spiked to dangerous levels in several parts of Hyderabad on Wednesday with people celebrating the festival of lights with sound and lots of smoke in defiance of the Supreme Court two-hour limit for bursting firecrackers.

Harmful particulates entered the "hazardous" category leaving the entire city gasping for breath. Over 70 cases were booked for bursting firecrackers in the city till midnight on Diwali. Particulate matter is a complex mixture that may contain smoke, soot, nitrates, metals, sulphates, dust and other fine particles that can enter the lungs and bloodstream, causing serious health issues.

According to Telangana State Pollution Control Board data, the concentration of PM 2.5 (particulate matter) increased by a staggering 61% and that of PM 10 shot up by 34% as compared to a normal day.

TSPCB, which monitored air quality from six real-time monitoring stations within the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) limits, said there was sharp rise after 6pm on Wednesday.

"Higher than usual air pollution levels were recorded in most places in the city as compared to the previous year. We have been constantly monitoring the pollution levels and this time, it is more than what we expected. The noise pollution levels too crossed the prescribed limits," said D Prasad, scientific officer, TSPCB.

PCB officials said this could have an impact on weather conditions as pollution from firecrackers could remain suspended in the air due to temperature inversion.