

The blockade of 1.3 billion people returned to India a clear blue sky, people easier to breathe, see more stars at night.

Meanwhile, the level of NO₂ (the typical substance that can cause air pollution) in Milan and other areas in northern Italy has decreased by 40%.

On March 24, the Indian Prime Minister announced a nationwide blockade in 21 days, starting from the night of March 25 to curb the spread and outbreak of Covid-19. And shortly thereafter, the country's air pollution level dropped to unprecedented lows due to factory shutdowns and limited transportation.

The sky in many places became clearer, completely different from the cloudy, dusty sky often seen in a country of billions of people. It can be said that the Covid-19 pandemic is indirectly helping to improve air quality in India. When the blockade order took effect, there were very few vehicles around the street.

Locals say they feel easier to breathe than before. In addition, skyscrapers often covered with dust are now more visible. People also say they observe more stars at night than usual.



Clear skies in the capital New Delhi.

Reuters said the Mumbai air quality index is now at 90, a significant reduction from the 153 average level of the same period last year. In New Delhi, a megacity with a population of 26.7 million, the index also dropped to 93 from 161 in March 2019. (Air quality when judged to be good when under 50).

According to Switzerland's IQAir, about half of the world's 50 most polluted cities are in India. The main reason is due to the overcrowding of vehicles on the road and emissions from coal plants.

As of 2020, India is the third most polluted country in the world. According to Dr. Gufran Beig, project director at the Indian government's environmental monitoring agency, due to the blockade, traffic volume plummeted for the first time in a long time. significantly.

Despite this, Vincent-Henri Peuch, director of an atmospheric monitoring service, said some sources of emissions, such as energy production or emissions from residential areas, have not dropped much due to the large number of people at home.

Environmental activists say about 30,000 people die prematurely every year in New Delhi due to air pollution. According to a study published in Lancet Planetary Health, the toxic atmosphere in India claimed the lives of 1.24 million people in 2017.

Many are proposing drastic action plans to improve this frightening statistic by calling for a switch to solar power, an increase in the use of green buses, trams and bicycles in New Delhi.

In fact, India is not the only country to see an improvement in air quality "thanks to" the Covid-19 pandemic. When a disease outbreak in China last December, NASA said air pollution in Hubei Province and elsewhere had plummeted. Not long ago, the Director of the Spanish General Department of Transport said that traffic in Madrid during peak hours has decreased by 14%. Meanwhile, the level of NO₂ (the typical substance that can cause air pollution) in Milan and other areas in northern Italy has decreased by 40%.

As of March 27, the world had more than 532,000 Covid-19 infections and more than 24,000 deaths. In particular, India recorded 727 people infected and 20 people died.

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