

Artificial rain might give Delhi a clean breather



Kolkata might have taken over Delhi's place as the most air polluted city in India, but the national capital still desperately waits for a clean breather and if the pollution levels show no sign of improvement in few days, the Central government is planning for artificial rain to wash away the toxicity in air and give Delhi a chance to breathe better.

The air pollution level in Delhi keeps worsening and if it keeps deteriorating, the government is planning to conduct artificial rain by seeding clouds in the sky and triggering induced rainfall this week. The artificial rain is expected to wash away all the toxic pollutants from the air, and make the air quality a little better. The cloud seeding is done by mixing up different kinds of chemicals like silver iodide, dry ice and even common salt, with existing thin clouds. The addition of these chemical agents thicken the natural clouds and hence increase the chances of precipitation - which means induced rainfall aka artificial rain.

The authorities have been planning for this since past few weeks, but the wait is for the right meteorological conditions for artificial rain to happen. Plenty of clouds, correct humidity levels and perfect wind speed are some atmospheric conditions needed for artificial rain to actually happen. Also, the currently available cloud seeding technology in India is limited to inducing rainfall potential to pre-existing natural clouds - which are currently not available and hence, the scientists are waiting for the right conditions to happen.

However, this is not the first time that plans for artificial rain in Delhi have been discussed, as the Centre had planned for artificial rain in 2016 ? but it never happened. In 2017, the Delhi government had proposed sprinkling water from helicopters on the entire city to control the dust and smog, but the proposal never received an approval from the Union Cabinet. But seems like this year, the government is serious with the plan as an ISRO aircraft has been acquired and modified to install a seeding system and necessary clearances are being sought from different agencies for its use.