

Press Release

Makar Sankranti is one of the most auspicious days and is celebrated in almost all parts of India. In Tamil Nadu, it is celebrated as Thai Pongal. The day preceding Thai Pongal is called Bhogi. During the Bhogi, at dawn people light a bonfire with logs of wood, cow-dung cakes, other solid-fuels and wooden furniture at home that are no longer useful. However, with the lack of farm wastes in the city, those living in the cities are just keen to make a bonfire with old tyres and tubes, plastic materials, old mats, broomstick, garbage and a few other harmful materials - Thus increasing the levels of various pollutants like PM_{2.5}, PM₁₀, SO₂ and NO₂ in the city's atmosphere.

During the year 2018 high humidity, low temperature and low wind speed, there was no dispersal and dilution of pollutants, which has resulted in higher value of particular matter observed in the 13 corporation zonal wards in the range of 135 to 386 against the prescribed limits 100 micrograms per meter cube for PM₁₀. Exposure to such particles can affect both our lungs and our heart. Long-term exposure to particulate pollution can result in significant health problems including: Increased respiratory symptoms, such as irritation of the nasal airways, coughing or difficulty in breathing and decreased lung function.

Bonfires lit by residents in the presence of high humidity, low temperature may cause smog which disrupts visibility and put motorists in great hardship and flight operations may also be disrupted because of smog.

Further, flight operation where disrupted at Chennai. More than 16 flights including 9 international flights have been diverted to Bangalore, Hyderabad and Coimbatore, further 42 flights were delayed and 40 more were cancelled. Motorists are also put in to great hardship after smog reduced visibility to less than 50 meters.

In order to create awareness among the public, TNPCB is conducting awareness programme in all the Districts in association with District Administration, School Education Department. This is being done for past 15 years. This year Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board also planning to conduct patrol comprising 30 teams on the eve of Bhogi in all 15 zones in association with Department of Police.

In order to monitor the ambient air quality in Chennai city during Bhogi Festival, Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board (TNPCB) has programmed to conduct survey at 15 locations covering all the Zones of Greater Chennai Corporation on Pre-Bhogi day and Bhogi day. The survey will be conducted for 24 hours on each day. The survey report will be released in the TNPCB web site.

In this occasion, I appeal to all not to burn the waste materials so as to maintain the air quality of our environment. I wish you all a ***HAPPY PONGAL***.

Issued By :- DIPR, Secretariat, Chennai - 9.