

## GURGAON FIRST

• OUR CITY • OUR VOICE

Towards a Sustainable, Inclusive and Empowered Gurgaon

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### Special Feature: State Elections

#### Haryana State Assembly Elections 2024: Agenda and Gurgaon's Voter Engagement

Gurgaon was abuzz with activity in anticipation of the state elections scheduled for October 5. The Gurgaon district consists of 4 assembly seats namely Gurgaon, Badshahpur, Sohna and Pataudi. Some of the electoral issues that were discussed were economic growth, healthcare, education liveability, and rural development with farmer-friendly policies. Citizen groups also fielded their concerns and expectations to the candidates. In Gurgaon, efforts are underway to boost historically low voter turnout, especially among younger voters and the urban middle class. The 'My Vote My Voice' campaign, led by local NGOs and the Election Commission, aimed to educate citizens on the importance of voting. Voter registration drives in schools, colleges, and corporate offices target first-time voters, while social media campaigns like #VoteForHaryana aimed to engage the youth. *The BJP secured 48 out of 90 assembly seats in Haryana (including all four Gurgaon seats), while Congress won 37. This was BJP's 3<sup>rd</sup> win in a row in Haryana.*

### Rainfall

#### Gurgaon Records Wettest August in Over a Decade with 84% Rainfall Surplus

In August 2024, Gurgaon experienced its wettest month in over a decade, recording nearly 340mm of rainfall—an 84% surplus compared to the usual 185.1mm. This sharp increase contrasts with previous years of significant deficits, such as 2023 and 2022, which saw 62% and 65% less rainfall, respectively. Meteorologists attribute this year's heavy rainfall to an active monsoon system, primarily driven by the Arabian Sea's influence. Gurgaon recorded the third-highest rainfall in Haryana, behind Nuh at 386.8mm (108% surplus) and Chandigarh at 351.6mm (23% surplus). This year's surplus highlights the variability of weather patterns in the region, significantly influenced by complex monsoon dynamics.

### Infrastructure

#### Gurugram Metro Expansion to Boost Connectivity and Economic Growth

The Gurugram Metro Expansion Project is set to enhance intercity transportation with a 28.5-kilometer extension from Huda City Centre to Cyber City. Recently approved by the Union Cabinet, the project will feature 27 elevated stations, including key areas like Sector 22, Krishna Chowk, and Subhash Chowk. Prime Minister Narendra Modi laid the foundation stone on February 16, with completion expected by 2027. The new line will serve over 2.5 million residents, with ridership expected to reach 540,000 by 2026 and 726,000 by 2031. A highlight of the project is an underground station at Hero Honda Chowk, connecting to the Delhi-Gurgaon-Dharuhera Rapid Rail Corridor, further improving regional connectivity. The project, with an estimated cost of INR 6,800 crores, aims to address transportation issues in Gurugram, especially in the slower-developing Old Gurugram area. Once operational, the metro expansion is expected to significantly boost economic growth and enhance commuting efficiency across the region.

#### Delays Continue in MG Road Revamp Project, Completion Now Uncertain

The long-awaited revamp of a 2.5km stretch of MG Road, aimed at improving infrastructure with wider footpaths, cycle tracks, green belts, and bus stops, is still not completed over a year after work began. Initially slated for December 2023, the project, costing Rs 11.3 crore, has faced multiple delays and is only 75% finished. It stretches between Sikanderpur metro station and IFFCO Chowk, a crucial route connecting residential areas, metro stations, and commercial hubs. The project, which was first tendered in December 2021, encountered delays due to issues with bidders, leading to a fresh tender in August 2022. Work commenced only in June 2023, with a revised deadline set for December. However, frequent delays have led to unfinished, dug-up stretches, causing traffic jams and dust pollution, frustrating local commuters. In addition to the streetscaping project, GMDA plans to enhance service roads along MG Road at Rs 8.8 crore, with completion expected by March 2025. Despite assurances from authorities, concerns remain about further delays, especially with the upcoming Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) potentially halting construction to tackle pollution.

### **EVFY Launches First Fast-Charging Station in Gurgaon, Plans 100 More**

EVFY, a new player in India's electric vehicle (EV) market, has launched its first fast charging station in Sector 73, Gurgaon. This marks the beginning of their ambitious plan to establish 100 charging stations across the region. The station, located at The One Sales Gallery on Southern Peripheral Road, features dual gun capability, RFID-enabled secure user interaction, and power outputs of 120 kW, 60 kW, and 7.4 kW, making it suitable for both two-wheelers and four-wheelers. India's public EV charging infrastructure has grown rapidly, from 1,800 stations in February 2022 to 16,347 by March 2024. With projections of 50 million EVs on Indian roads by 2030, there is a clear demand for more charging facilities. EVFY plans to expand to areas like Dwarka Expressway, the Airport region, and New Gurgaon, introducing ultra-fast chargers (150 kW) and hyper-fast chargers (350 kW).

## **Environment and Pollution**

### **Air Quality**

#### **Gurgaon's Air Quality Deteriorated in July 2024**

In July 2024, Gurgaon's air quality deteriorated significantly, with the Air Quality Index (AQI) reaching 108, the worst since 2021. This 'moderate' level marked a sharp rise from July 2023's AQI of 89. Environmentalists and residents have raised concerns as no 'good' air quality days were reported throughout the month. Key factors behind the decline include lower rainfall, increased vehicular traffic, and widespread open waste burning.

#### **Study Reveals Real-World Vehicle Emissions Higher Than Lab Tests, Questions CNG's Cleanliness**

A recent study, part of The Real Urban Emissions (TRUE) Initiative, has shown that actual emissions from vehicles on Delhi and Gurugram roads far exceed those recorded in laboratory tests. Using remote sensing technology, the study, conducted in partnership with local authorities, found that nitrogen oxide (NOx) emissions from BS-VI vehicles are significantly lower than from older BS-IV vehicles. BS-VI private cars emit 81% less NOx than BS-IV models, while BS-VI buses produce 95% less NOx compared to their BS-IV counterparts. However, the study also challenges the common perception of compressed natural gas (CNG) as a cleaner fuel. It revealed that CNG-powered vehicles, including taxis and light goods vehicles, emit high levels of NOx—up to 14.2 times the NOx limit for some models, while taxis exceed their limits by four times. This indicates that real-world emissions are crucial for improving air quality, rather than relying solely on lab tests. The findings come as the Supreme Court pushes for the implementation of Automotive Industry Standard (AIS) 170, which will standardise remote sensing equipment to measure vehicle emissions.

#### **Supreme Court Issues Notices Over Delayed Afforestation for Highway Project**

The Supreme Court has issued notices to panchayats of four Gurgaon villages and the Haryana Forest Development Corporation (HFDC) after learning that compensatory afforestation (CA) for a highway project, which involved felling 12,000 trees, had not begun. The CA was mandated two years ago following the National Highways Authority of India's (NHAI) tree felling to widen a 43km stretch of the Pataudi-Rewari-Gurgaon

highway. The court had directed NHAI to implement CA within Gurgaon, but progress stalled due to delays in acquiring 110.3 hectares of land. The forest department identified 103.8 hectares in four villages, but panchayat consent is required to proceed. Environmentalists initially raised concerns about the proposed CA site in Panchkula, 300 km away, arguing it would not restore local green cover. The National Green Tribunal (NGT) ruled that the CA must occur within 10 km of the project site, a decision upheld by the Supreme Court. The case will be revisited on December 2.

### **Illegal Dyeing Units in Gurgaon Polluting Najafgarh Drain and Yamuna River**

Gurgaon's dyeing units, concentrated in Sector 103, Basai, and Sector 36, continue to illegally discharge toxic effluents into the Najafgarh drain, eventually polluting the Yamuna River. Though these units appear abandoned, with gates locked, they remain active with workers accessing the premises through small gaps, while dyed garments dry behind closed doors. Residents report that the drain water frequently changes colour, depending on the dyes used, and carries a foul stench. Toxic chemicals such as lead and cadmium, found in dye effluents, pose severe risks to human health and aquatic life. Despite a 2013 court order to relocate such industries from residential areas, the dyeing units continue to operate unchecked. The Haryana Pollution Control Board has been directed to survey and take necessary steps against these illegal operations.

### **Air Launches Eco Restoration Project in Aravalli Nagar Van**

Bry-Air, in partnership with I Am Gurgaon NGO, has launched an eco-restoration initiative in Aravalli Nagar Van, aimed at promoting sustainability and biodiversity. Inaugurated on September 25 as part of Bry-Air's 60th anniversary celebrations, the project focuses on rehabilitating degraded land and reintroducing native species. It will also enhance groundwater recharge by creating wetlands for rainwater capture and improving water management. To tackle urban flooding, stormwater from areas like MG Road to Sunset Boulevard will be channelled into the forest, reducing erosion and raising groundwater levels. The project includes restoring water bodies and seasonal ponds and supporting diverse flora and fauna. Bry-Air, in collaboration with government bodies and partners like The Rewilders and Rootscapes, will create functional landscapes with minimal intervention. Community spaces for recreation and education, such as forest trails and nature exploration areas, will raise awareness about environmental issues. Additionally, Bry-Air organized a nature walk for students to educate them on the growing environmental crisis through hands-on learning.

### **Rs. 3,600 Crore Power Infrastructure Upgrades Approved for Gurugram and Faridabad**

To improve the quality and reliability of power supply and address the rising power demand in Gurugram and Faridabad, the Ministry of Power has approved projects worth Rs. 3,600 crore under the Government of India's Revamped Distribution Sector Scheme. These projects will modernise power distribution in Manesar, Badshahpur in Gurugram, and Old Faridabad, NIT, Ballabhgarh, and Greater Faridabad. Key initiatives include the construction of 20 Gas Insulated Substations (12 in Faridabad and 8 in Gurugram), 3,500 km of underground cabling, 5,000 new distribution transformers, and bifurcation of 486 feeders into 821. Automation of the network will enhance fault detection and restoration, improving both power quality and reliability.

### **Haryana Launches Stubble Management Plan to Tackle Farm Fires and Pollution**

The Haryana government has introduced a new framework aimed at reducing farm fires, which significantly contribute to air pollution in the Delhi-NCR region during winter. The state's agriculture department estimates that 38.8 lakh acres of paddy will be cultivated this year, generating 81 lakh metric tonnes (LMT) of crop residue. Traditionally, farmers burn this stubble to clear fields for new crops, which, combined with winter conditions, exacerbates pollution and leads to smog. To manage these residues, the state has outlined a comprehensive plan. Of the total residue, 22.65 LMT will be used for fodder, 33.04 LMT will be processed on-site (in-situ), and 25.39 LMT will be handled off-site (ex-situ). To promote in-situ management, the government will provide 90,000 machines and offer Rs 1,000 per acre to farmers. For ex-situ management, stubble will be repurposed into biofuels or used in industries like packaging. The plan also includes establishing 1,405 baler machines and collaborating with industries to purchase the residue, with the government investing Rs 107.2 crore and the central government contributing Rs 160.9 crore.