

Capital earning bad name as world's most polluted city, says SC

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REGRETTING THAT "Delhi is earning a bad name as the most polluted city in the world," the Supreme Court Thursday urged the Centre and Delhi government to sit together and devise a "multi-pronged" policy to tackle the "very serious problem" of rising pollution.

A bench led by Chief Justice T S Thakur emphasised that all authorities should shirk their "adversarial" attitude and work out proper short-term and long-term plans to control the spurt in pollution.

It pointed out that some contingent plans and ad-hoc measures, such as the recently-proposed odd-even car formula by the Delhi government, would only be transient steps. What the city really needs, it said, is a "roadmap" where the Centre, state government and other expert bodies are on the same page and work in tandem to achieve time-bound goals.

The bench, also comprising Justice R Banumathi, said it would examine a proposal by amicus curiae Harish Salve to either ban or curb the plying of diesel vehicles in the capital

Court urges Centre, Delhi govt to come together to devise a multi-pronged approach, along with a roadmap, to tackle the spurt in pollution levels

while simultaneously assessing its consequences.

"Banning diesel vehicles is one suggestion that the government may consider but there cannot be one solution. There has to be multiple solutions to this problem and a multi-pronged approach is required..." it observed.

Hearing a PIL filed by environmentalist M C Mehta in 1985, the court lamented, "There does not seem to be a meeting point.... a consensus. It should not be adversarial for any authority. All of you must agree on a roadmap. It is a very serious matter..."

The CJI said the President of the International Court of Justice had visited the Supreme Court last week and it was "embarrassing" for him to tell the foreign judge about the level of pollution in Delhi. "The absence of a

proper policy reflects very poorly on our ability to cope with this problem. This is not the kind of name we want to earn. Let everybody come together and prepare a common minimum acceptable programme," observed the bench.

Salve informed the bench that while some points of consensus had emerged in past meetings involving various authorities, their implementation has been the real dampener.

To this, the bench — which was hearing this issue for the first time — sought to peruse all such decisions arrived at following a consensus and said it may issue appropriate directions for implementing such measures when it hears the case Tuesday.

About the levy of environmental compensatory charges (ECC) as an additional tax on commercial vehicles entering Delhi, the court agreed to discuss if their entry should be completely banned for a certain period.

"Also, why should a truck be allowed to enter Delhi if it does not have to deliver goods in Delhi? Levy of an additional tax is alright but should we be allowing such vehicles to enter at all?" it questioned.