

Govt turns to aam aadmi to fight war on pollution



LET DELHI BREATHE

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: The next time you see a vehicle belching out toxic smoke in the city, you may be able to get it challaned. One of the highlights of the Delhi government's 13-point agenda to deal with air pollution was crowdsourcing of complaints against visibly polluting vehicles. The Swachh Delhi App has already started receiving such complaints that are being forwarded to the transport de-

partment, said government officials. But transport department sources claim that guidelines on how to deal with such complaints have not been framed yet.

According to the sources, a missing link in the entire process is the lack of clarity about norms for vehicles coming from other states. For the ones plying in Delhi, the preliminary plan is to send a notice and then challan the polluting vehicles. Complaints against visib-

ly polluting industries can also be made on the app. These will then be forwarded to Delhi Pollution Control Committee.

Spotting visibly polluting vehicles to ensure emission compliance is a tried-and-tested strategy in many countries simply because it instils fear in those who have flouted pollution norms or have been driving without a valid PUC certificate. According to International Council on Clean Transportation (ICCT), in Beijing "spot checks and public spotter programmes are used to test on-road vehicles with high emission potential or those that visibly emit black smoke". Local authorities there create checkpoints by the roadside or in parking lots and conduct emission tests.

They also encourage citizens to voluntarily report the licence plate numbers of smoky vehicles. Even financial incentives are given to spotters in

HOW HONG KONG DOES IT

Delhi government proposes to clamp down on smoke-emitting vehicles on the lines of measures initiated by Hong Kong some 25 years ago

WHAT

Smoky Vehicle Control Programme



WHEN

Introduced in 1988 by the Environmental Protection Department (EPD)



HOW

Programme trains accredited spotters who SPOT smoky diesel vehicles on the road on a part-time basis



EPD, under Road Traffic Ordinance, ISSUES NOTICES notices to owners of these vehicles



Owners need to bring their vehicles to emission-testing centre

If smoke exceeds prescribed limit, owners can lose vehicle licence if they fail to take corrective measures



As per data put up by EPD on its website, it received 7,020 smoky vehicle reports and revoked 66 licences in 2014

some places. In Hong Kong, the government claims that there is a 50% reduction in smoky vehicles since the strategy was implemented in 1988. Volunteers have to join a training course offered by the Hong Kong administration in spotting polluting vehicles. The training includes identifying vehicle classes, visual assessment of smoke levels, etc.

Delhi doesn't have such advanced testing mechanism but officials in the transport department said there are legal provisions to fine polluting vehicles under the Motor Vehicle

Act. Anumita Roychowdhury, head of CSE's clean air campaign, said a Hong Kong-type spotting programme can be very effective. "In any case, smoky vehicles should be flagged and tested. We have more than 500 PUC centres, then why can't it be done? If there is regular checking, the fear of getting caught will be instilled."

Amit Bhatt, strategy head, integrated urban transport at Embarq, said most smoky vehicles are either old diesel vehicles or commercial vehicles. "When a challan is sent to the owner of a vehicle emitting smoke, his/her address may have changed. The challans will keep accumulating until the owner tries to sell the vehicle. That's when these challans will be settled. Often people don't even sell these vehicles. So, the Delhi government needs to devise some other way of challaning visibly polluting vehicles," said Bhatt.



SWACHH BHARAT

AIR QUALITY INDEX

PM2.5

| | | |
|---|-----|-----------|
| Delhi | 372 | Very Poor |
| Tomorrow | 380 | Very Poor |
| Pune | 95 | Good |
| Tomorrow | 97 | Good |
| Mumbai | 237 | Poor |
| Tomorrow | 245 | Poor |
| Source: SAFAR@MoES-IITM-IMD (19 stations) | | |
| Hyderabad | 36 | Good |
| Kolkata | 373 | Very Poor |

US Embassy data calculated as per Indian standards by SAFAR@MoES-IITM-IMD

Based on 1 Station Data Per City at 4pm