

Green panel directs Delhi govt to identify city's pollution hotspots

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the air we breathe



CAPITAL CHOKING

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NEW DELHI: With Delhi's foul air getting more toxic by the day, the city's pollution control body is planning daily warnings informing people about 'pollution hotspots' and advice that includes going car-free.

The move comes on the orders of the National Green Tribunal to the Delhi government on Wednesday to roll out such notifications within a week.

"We are working on a dashboard on the Delhi Pollution Control Committee (DPCC) website that will have notifications such as 'this area most polluted' and 'don't use vehicles today'. Areas with high pollution levels will be flashed along with measures people can take," Delhi environment and forest secretary Ashwani Kumar told HT, adding that the dashboard will be mobile-friendly while a mobile app is also in the works.

The Delhi government isn't looking at Beijing-style notifications, he said. Smog-hit Beijing recently



■ Delhi's air quality remained 'very poor' - its second most severe level - on Wednesday.

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sounded an orange alert — its second highest — that entailed orders to stay indoors, close schools and suspend construction activities.

"We are not looking at the Beijing model. How will closing down schools help as the air at home is no better," Kumar said.

Delhi pipped the Chinese capital as the city with the worst air in the world in the WHO rankings, where 13 of the 20 most polluted cities are

all in India. Delhi's air quality on Wednesday remained at a 'very poor' level — only one category better than 'severe' — with particulate matter 2.5 (PM2.5) way above the permissible limit.

It was this situation that prompted the green court to direct the environment and health secretaries, Delhi government and Delhi Pollution Control Committee (DPCC) to hold an urgent meeting

and come out with steps.

"What is the status of air pollution? All you can say is there is no pollution... All stakeholders indicate Delhi is highly polluted. Levels of PM2.5 and PM10 are above prescribed limits. We can't permit such a state of affairs to prevail," a bench headed by NGT chairperson justice Swatanter Kumar said.

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