

# It seems like we are living in a gas chamber, says HC

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TAKING NOTE of air quality monitoring data on high amount of pollutants in the national capital, Delhi High Court Thursday observed, "It seems like we are living in a gas chamber."

A bench of Justice Badar Durrez Ahmed and Justice Sanjeev Sachdeva also observed the Centre and Delhi government's action plans on air pollution were "not in action" because people were not following the rules. The court directed the Delhi government to ensure "zero tolerance" for violation of rules. The bench observed "one problem with India" was people did not follow the laws.

The court directed traffic police to strictly implement laws to ensure people did not change lanes and cross the yellow line to the other side for overtaking, as it causes jams. "Don't allow them to do that," said the court. "As a first measure, you announce on TV and radio that there will be zero tolerance for shifting lanes and crossing the yellow lines. Issue challans."

Expressing ire over the non-implementation of "action plans", the court directed the Centre, Delhi government, Delhi Pollution Control Committee and civic agencies to submit a "complete action plan with specific timelines for work" within three weeks. The court directed the Delhi government to file detailed reports on implementation of notifications issued in October regarding challans for burning garbage and leaves, as well as a notification empowering sub-divisional magistrates (SDMs) and tehsildars to penalise builders if dust and debris were being emitted at construction sites.

"GNCTD to file report from all SDMs by next date of hearing," directed the court.

It also asked the Centre and Delhi government to raise awareness about burning of leaves, garbage and plastic being banned in the capital. Under orders from National Green Tribunal, the Delhi government had issued notifications on October 20 empowering SDMs and tehsildars to issue challans

## NO LEEWAY FOR GOVT ON FOREST AREAS SURVEY

In its affidavit, the Delhi Government admitted that the exercise of conducting a survey of forest areas and encroachments in the city's forests so far had been a "desktop exercise" and sought four more months to submit a proper ground report. Observing that the government "would not have done anything" if the issue had not been taken up by the high court and the NGT, the bench directed it to file its reports by December 21.

for these violations.

The court also directed the Delhi government to come up with a policy to regulate bursting of firecrackers during the coming wedding season and festival season. It asked the government to "try to dissuade people from excessive use of firecrackers, through electronic and print media as it is for the safety of the citizens themselves."

The bench took up the issue of air pollution in the city as a suo motu PIL earlier this year. The matter will now be taken up on December 21.

## Some suggestions from court

- Traffic police to give protective gear including masks to personnel.
- Delhi government to consider creating rules to restrict entry of cars on roads, make car-pooling compulsory/ban entry of even or odd number vehicles on certain days.
- Centre to expedite work on funding intelligent traffic management system.