

# Delhiites urged to accept controversial car ban plan

December 24 2015, by Annie Banerji

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A man in New Delhi covers his face with his handkerchief outside a bus station in the Anand Vihar District

Delhi's firebrand Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal called on residents of India's capital Thursday to cooperate with his ambitious plans to clean up the toxic air of the world's most polluted city.

His plea came as the city's government gave final details of a trial plan

announced this month which will only allow car users to drive on alternate days for the first two weeks of January.

"Pollution is becoming a very serious problem... And it's a problem that all of us need to solve together," Kejriwal said at a press conference at his New Delhi residence.

"We have to make this a movement, a people's movement. We cannot implement this with the fear of punishment," he added.

Under the scheme any cars with odd-numbered licence plates will only be allowed to drive in the capital on odd-numbered dates and those with even-numbered plates on the others.

Traffic police and 10,000 volunteers will monitor cars at checkpoints across the city and violators will be fined 2,000 rupees (\$30)—extremely steep for the average resident.

The government will also add thousands more buses to bolster creaking public transport in the city, where more than 8.5 million vehicles jostle for space and 1,400 new cars are added daily.

It has ordered schools to close saying it needs to co-opt school buses to help people travel to work.

"My family and I are not exempted from anything," the activist-turned-politician said, adding that he and his ministers would carpool.



New Delhi is ranked as the most polluted globally in a World Health Organization survey of more than 1,600 cities

The ban, which runs from 8:00 am to 8:00 pm, has several exemptions—it will not apply on Sundays, and exempts dozens including dignitaries, women driving alone or with young children, and motorcycles.

It has met a mixed response, with many looking forward to the novelty of congestion-free roads and clearer skies while others, especially in Delhi's vast commuter belt, complain that getting to work will be impossible.

Sceptics have said Delhiites will deploy the famed Indian skill of "jugaad"—creating a cheap alternative solution—by forging number plates or buying second-hand cars.

But Kejriwal's deputy, Manish Sisodia, urged Delhi residents to swallow the scheme as "a bitter pill right now rather than die from breathing this poison".



Under the new government scheme any cars with odd-numbered licence plates will only be allowed to drive in New Delhi on odd-numbered dates and those with even-numbered plates on the others

The Indian capital is ranked as the most polluted globally in a World Health Organization survey of more than 1,600 cities.

The city has been shrouded in a toxic blanket of smog in recent weeks as winter sets in, cutting visibility and pushing PM 2.5 levels more than 10 times over the WHO's recommended safe limit.





The new scheme in New Delhi has been met with a mixed response—many look forward to the prospect of congestion-free roads while other complain getting to work will be impossible

These fine particles less than 2.5 micrometres in diameter are linked to higher rates of chronic bronchitis, lung cancer and heart disease as they settle into the lungs and can pass into the bloodstream.

Indian courts have stepped in to tackle the mounting crisis, ordering several steps including a moratorium on large diesel cars in Delhi.

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