

'Congress Govt not up to scratch'

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, December 4

THE CONGRESS Government in Delhi will complete two years in office on Wednesday. And the opinion of the Delhiites is that the performance of the government has not been up to the mark. Power, water and transport were some of the key issues.

Results of an opinion poll conducted by Taylor Nelson Sofres Mode on behalf of *The Hindustan Times* on Sheila Dikshit's two years in office reveal that 70 per cent of those interviewed consider the CM's performance average/poor/very poor; 30 per cent consider it good/excellent.

Similarly, 34 per cent regard Mrs Dikshit as a good/excellent leader; 66 per cent feel she's average/poor/very poor.

The TMS mode poll was on the basis of interviews done at street



corners. The age group was 18-50. The sample size was 310.

The poll revealed that 48 per cent people rated the performance of the Congress government worse than that of the BJP government before 1998. Thirty seven per cent said it was better and 15 per cent

felt that there was no difference in the performance of the two.

The poll also revealed that 63 per cent people do not want non-polluting industrial units to be shifted out of residential areas. Nine per cent were unable to give any opinion and 28 per cent were in favour

of shifting non-polluting units.

To a question on whether the Congress government achieved the target mentioned in its manifesto, 28 per cent said yes, 63 per cent no and 9 per cent can't say. Surprisingly, 52 per cent believe that the BJP has been an effective opposition in the Assembly while 45 per cent replied in the negative.

Again, 57 per cent people felt that the performance of the Congress government had been hampered by dissident activity, 36 per cent said no and 7 per cent were unable to give any opinion.

Fifty-two per cent were opposed statehood, 45 per cent were for it.

To a question as to who they wanted as CM, 35 per cent voted for Urban Affairs Minister Jagmohan, 26 per cent Mrs Dikshit, 19 per cent Madan Lal Khurana, 15 per cent Sahib Singh Verma and 6 per cent for others.

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Why we shouldn't mess with Delhi's Master Plan

4/12/2000, The Hindustan Times

THE MANNER in which the culture of superficiality has seeped into the present-day mindscape of India should be evident from the way the current controversy regarding amendment in the Master Plan, in the context of the case of shifting of polluting and non-conforming industries from the residential areas, has been presented to the public.

The Master Plan is certainly not the law of the Medes and Persian that it cannot be amended. But the issue is of justification of amending it and the extent to which it should be amended. Should we ignore facts and fundamentals and forget that this Plan was notified in 1990, after inviting and considering public objections and after placing it before the highest executive authorities and Parliament? And should we resort to 'short-termism' and keep out of mind the well-known dictum: "Where there is no vision, people perish".

Quite a few persons have gone on television and to the Press, accusing me, even on inaccurate facts, of being inflexible. I do not wish to enter into any controversy in regard to such accusations. Because, for me, it is not a narrow issue but an issue of healthy urban governance, of commitment to certain basic principles of justice and fairplay, of not sacrificing truth at the altar of expedi-

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ency and of not allowing Delhi to be ravaged and become a monument of urban chaos and confusion. May I, in this connection, repeat what I said in my statement in the Lok Sabha on November 24, 2000.

"I would invite attention of this august House to a large question: in what type of Delhi do we want to live, and what type of legacy do we wish to bequeath to posterity and to our children and grand children?

Do we want our city to become a junk yard of un-authorised constructions, mirroring civic and moral chaos? Or do we want an orderly and disciplined capital of a Resurgent Republic, embodying values of justice and honesty on the basis of which we have often claimed a pre-eminent position for our culture and civilisation?

Delhi has already earned the dubious distinction of having become the third worst polluted city in the world. Around 50 million gallons of industrial waste is going into the Yamuna every day and what is seen flowing in it today is nothing but sewer and industrial waste."

Having said this, I would like to make it clear that if the underlying rationale and motivation of the Master Plan is not violently undermined and if the principles of equity, justice and fairplay are not disregarded, amendment in the Plan could be done to the extent indicated by me in my statement to the Lok Sabha on November 24, 2000, which, inter alia, reads:

"Government is aware of the problems that are

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Why we shouldn't tinker with Delhi's Master Plan

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being faced by the industries functioning in the residential areas as well as of the house-owners and occupiers who are using their property for industrial purposes in the residential areas.

Government is keen to find a solution which would be just and fair to all concerned. Government has agreed, in principle, subject to observance of safeguards in respect of pollution norms, to redefine household industries in terms of the recommendations made by a Committee known as the Jagdish Sagar Committee. Government would also amend the Master Plan, if necessary, to acquire more lands for relocation of industries in industrial areas. Government would also request the Supreme Court to give a little more time for relocation. The

matter at present rests with the SC." But, in the case of a large number of residential colonies, with so called seventy per cent concentration of industries, of which the entire land use is sought to be changed from residential to industrial, the position is quite different. Here, fundamental questions not only of planning and Delhi's fate and future but also of a equity and justice are involved.

Should the Master Plan be amended to destroy its very soul and structure or subvert the basic norms of health, habitation and environment or reward the illegal establisher of industries and in the process penalise the law-abiding residents and condemn them to stay for ever in industrial areas or force them to abandon their houses built with hard-earned income?

To be concluded tomorrow

The Indian Express

If Delhi dies, who lives?

Mastering the plan

4/12/2000

DEBATE on amending the Delhi Master Plan to convert residential areas into industrial zones inevitably means taking a position for or against Jagmohan. Ranged on one side are those who see Sanjay Gandhi's Demolition Man during the Emergency as the city's only saviour from rape and depredation by land sharks, builders and self-seeking politicians looking for short-term solutions. The other side, which includes most of Jagmohan's fellow BJP MPs, perceives the minister for urban development as an ostrich who refuses to accept the reality of the changing city and that bulldozers are no solution.

When the Master Plan was brought out in 1962 it deliberately provided a rigid framework for urban expansion. Land use zones were specified to ensure that local officials and politicians had little discretionary power in urban planning. Even today the Delhi government and the municipal corporation have to refer proposed changes to the Delhi Development Authority, which is under the overall control of the ministry of urban development.

Delhi politicians argue that the Master Plan was conceived when the city had a population of some 30 lakh and is irrelevant today when the city has around 13 million and an influx of 50,000 a year. And who, after all, is Delhi meant for? The pampered few who reside in Lutyens' gracious New Delhi or the 40 per cent of residents living in unauthorised slums?

After all, the Master Plan is not sacrosanct. Jagmohan's opponents say it has been amended in some form or the other as many as 200 times. After every election the municipal corporation and state assembly routinely pass resolutions condoning past violations of plan bye-laws. Such Delhi landmarks as the Taj Hotel, Le Meridien Hotel, Lalit Suri's Inter-Continental Hotel and Radisson Hotel came up in clear violation of the Plan. More than 95 per cent of the

plush villas on Delhi peripheral green belt, euphemistically termed "farmhouses", are illegal.

So why make an example of the small-scale industries run in residential areas, critics of Jagmohan ask. There are an estimated 100,000 such units and their relocation will render lakhs of workers jobless. This logic sounds reasonable to those unfamiliar with the full facts of the case and explains why many of those normally at the forefront of campaigns to clean up the city are curiously silent this time. Even Sonia Gandhi, despite the commitment of both Pandit Nehru and Indira Gandhi to Delhi's Master Plan, has been swayed by the politi-

commercial complexes are often spared from the bulldozers on the grounds that it would be a loss to the national exchequer.

Such arguments may sound convincing but they obfuscate the issue and distort facts. Take the present demand to convert residential zones into industrial zones where it is claimed that 70 per cent of the houses are running illegal industries. It is projected as a simple case of bending the Master Plan slightly. In fact, it amounts to subversion of the very purpose for which the Plan was introduced. Jagmohan, though accused of being dogmatic, has demonstrated pragmatism by liberalising the norms for defining a



COOMI KAPOOR

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cally correct line: 'That compassion for the poor and pragmatism must take precedence over planning and pollution norms.'

Politicians, when arguing against the rule of law, can be remarkably persuasive. In 1996, BJP MP Vijay Kumar Malhotra recommended liberalising building bye-laws, the floor-to-area ratio (FAR) and the number of permissible floors, even though the city's existing infrastructure was already stretched to near breaking point. The logic was that since many residents had already built illegal floors and basements, regularisation would yield more revenue for the corporation coffers rather than for corrupt inspectors and policemen. Similarly, the rationale for not demolishing opulent Delhi farmhouses, although they have nothing whatsoever to do with agriculture, is that they at least guard against encroachments by slum dwellers. Illegal shops and

household industry, so that some of the smaller, non-polluting units slated to be shifted according to the Supreme Court order can now remain where they were. He has also sought more time from the court for relocating all units.

To suggest that the solution lies in allowing all industries — many of which are without licenses and run on stolen domestic power and without paying taxes — to continue by simply altering zonal laws is a total negation of the rule of law. These industries, including paint, electroplating, plastic, moulding, garment manufacturing and dyeing units, are a major nuisance to their law-abiding neighbours because of noxious fumes, noise, congested sewer lines, traffic jams, etc. They are a major fire hazard too. Last year's Lal Kuan tragedy, in which over 50 died, illustrates the perils of running industries in crowded residential areas.

Delhi politicians talk glibly of mixed land use zones in modern town planning, whereas the concept is for combining residential and commercial activity and not for allowing industries in housing colonies. In any case most of the affected units violate safety norms and industrial regulations. In fact, when the Supreme Court set up an expert committee to examine which industries could be permitted in residential areas, out of the 43,045 applications submitted only 376 qualified for permission.

Interestingly, when one studies the progress of M.C. Mehta's PIL, for action to be taken against polluting and non-conforming industries, one finds that the extraordinary suggestion to change land use cropped up only last December, four years after the court ordered the authorities to begin the process of relocation. Till then officials had slept over the relocation exercise, assuming the violators would — as in the past — somehow wriggle out of complying with the court's orders. Some new industries were even given licences during this period. Even the recent sealing of offending industrial units, polluting or non-conforming, small or large, all together, rather than in a phased manner depending upon the degree of violation and size, smacks of a deliberate attempt to whip up resistance to the order.

Delhi today has the dubious distinction of being the third most polluted city in the world. Every fifth schoolchild suffers from a respiratory ailment. The city is crippled by power shortages and a collapsing drainage system. Its highly polluted water table is falling rapidly. Fifty million tonnes of industrial waste flows into the Yamuna. The biochemical oxygen demand (BOD) level in the river is 25 times the permissible standard. The question today is not who is Delhi meant for, but, at this rate, can the city be saved for any one of us. Without the courts and uncompromising men like Jagmohan, the Capital would fast head for complete urban chaos.

4/12/2001

POLLUTED PLANET

A Serious Challenge To Life

By YP GUPTA

THE Supreme Court had taken a serious view of the alarming vehicular air pollution in Delhi. In a bid to improve air quality, the court had directed that Euro II norms be followed to phase out the old vehicles, upgrade fuel quality and run vehicles with compressed natural gas kits. It has also fined the Delhi government for not checking Yamuna pollution. Several industrial units have been polluting the river.

After the ban on older vehicles, the Delhi government and the Central Pollution Control Board claimed that Delhi's air is cleaner and its quality has improved. But the survey conducted by the Tata Energy Research Institute shows that Delhi's air is dirtier now than what it was in March. The concentration of fine particles finer than 10 micrometres has gone up by as much as 50 per cent. Besides, the Air Quality Index, that takes into account three major pollutants, namely, particulate matter, nitrogen oxides

and sulphur dioxide, has not changed, despite the ban on older vehicles, and continues to range between 85 and 100 indicating a dangerous air quality.

A UN report on environment and health has earlier said that nearly four million children die annually of acute respiratory infections from air pollution, and that cases of asthma have risen in the industrial world by 50 per cent in the last two decades.

AIR AND WATER

The World Health Organisation has estimated that air pollution in India has been killing around one lakh people every year, of which 10,000 die in Delhi. Air pollution, insanitary conditions and deteriorating public health due to the rapid pace of urbanisation are considered to be major contributing factors in the developing world. The World Bank has reported that nearly 88 per cent of the world's total population would be located in the urban areas by 2025.

In Delhi the levels of suspended particulate matter have increased to 410.5 micrograms per cubic metre of air from 367.9 micrograms, which is

ing over 30 lakh account for 65 per cent of the air pollution, while their contribution in Mumbai is 52 per cent. Nearly, 3,000 metric tonnes of pollutants are belched out in the Delhi atmosphere every day, of which more than three-fifths is from vehicles.

Water pollution and sewage disposal have polluted Delhi's environment as much. Nearly, 18,000 million litres of domestic and industrial waste enter the Yamuna river, polluting the river water with toxic chemicals, which has poisoned

mal babies.

Delhi is at the top in respect of lung diseases with 30 per cent of its pollution suffering from respiratory diseases due to pollution. Many people in affluent residential areas of Mumbai have been suffering from bronchitis, asthma and lung cancer.

Asthma is a major pollution-related problem in Delhi. Every tenth schoolgoing child suffers from asthma caused by air pollution. The incidence of bronchitis in Delhi has been rising by 25 to 60 per cent each year. In some localities of Delhi, like Daryaganj, where you have railway stations, the

amount of SPM in the air has been as high as 945 micrograms per cubic metre of air, which is about 20 times the safe limit prescribed by WHO. The other badly affected cities are Mumbai, Calcutta, Kanpur and Ahmedabad.

Delhi also tops in lead emissions mainly from automobiles. A Delhi citizen has been accumulating a higher quantity of lead in the body than the limit



or killed thousands of fish. The Supreme Court had directed the industrial units discharging effluents into the river to instal treatment plants to prevent further degradation of the Yamuna river.

Air pollution is common throughout the world, choking many of its cities and thereby posing a serious challenge to life on this planet. The Kargil war in Kashmir polluted vast areas. During the Gulf war, vast areas surrounding Kuwait were highly polluted with suspended particulate matter, poisonous gases and toxic substances from burning Kuwaiti oil wells, petroleum refineries and the resultant oil slick. The thick black smoke covered most of Asia and caused climatic changes. Iraq became a "poisoned desert" with widespread epidemics, in which thousands of its children died.

The Washington-based World Watch Institute had earlier warned of an unprecedented biological collapse worldwide because three-fourths of the world's bird species are threatened with extinction. The National Institute of Oceanography has reported that shrimp, prawn and fish yield off the Kerala coast in India has declined by 25 per

prescribed by WHO. Increasing lead pollution from industry and automobiles poses a serious environmental hazard. Lead from exhaust fumes accumulates in the form of dust. Organic lead emitted from cars gets easily absorbed in the brain, liver, kidney and blood and becomes cumulative poison leading to brain damage, muscular paralysis and even death. The level of lead has increased alarmingly in Calcutta, Mumbai and Delhi's atmosphere. Fifty per cent of Mumbai's population has a proportion of 30 micrograms of lead in 100 ml of blood; 50 micrograms is enough to cause brain damage.

SOLUTIONS

Developing countries account for 70 per cent of the atmospheric pollution in the world. Mexico City has been described as the most polluted. The concentration of the carcinogenic substance benzol in Mexico City's atmosphere is reported to be 150 micrograms per cubic metre of air, which is 10 times higher than that in Berlin. The concentration of carbon monoxide in some localities of Delhi and Mumbai is as high as 35 parts per million, where 25 ppm is

than what it was in March. The concentration of fine particles finer than 10 micrometres has gone up by as much as 50 per cent. Besides, the Air Quality Index, that takes into account three major pollutants, namely, particulate matter, nitrogen oxides

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AIR AND WATER

The World Health Organisation has estimated that air pollution in India has been killing around one lakh people every year, of which 10,000 die in Delhi. Air pollution, insanitary conditions and deteriorating public health due to the rapid pace of urbanisation are considered to be major contributing factors in the developing world. The World Bank has reported that nearly 88 per cent of the world's total population would be located in the urban areas by 2025.

In Delhi the levels of suspended particulate matter have increased to 410.5 micrograms per cubic metre of air from 367.9 micrograms, which is nearly seven times the average critical limit of 60 micrograms prescribed by the WHO. Kanpur tops in the level of SPM having 470.9 micrograms. The other major Indian cities also have critical SPM levels (more than 210 micrograms).

A World Bank report says that Indian cities have been choking with industrial and vehicular pollution. The number of deaths due to air pollution has increased by over 28 per cent from about 40,000 earlier. Vehicles, thermal power plants and industrial units in Delhi are the major toxic air pollutants. Delhi is ranked fourth among the 41 polluted cities of the world monitored for air pollution. Its vehicles number-

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DISEASES

In India, a relatively underdeveloped country, the damaging pollutants in the form of hydrocarbons, suspended particulate matter, nitrogen oxides, carbon monoxide, sulphur dioxide, lead oxide, etc, belched out into the atmosphere by industry and by petrol-driven vehicles amount to a few million tonnes per year. These pollutants have been poisoning the atmosphere, causing a number of diseases like lung cancer, asthma and bronchitis. The Institute for Research on Reproduction (Mumbai) has reported that the sperm count of the Indian male has declined from 60 million per millilitre earlier to just 20 million due to environmental causes. The result is infertility and abnor-

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The increased level of consumption of renewable and non-renewable resources particularly in Asia has caused a faster degradation of the environment due to an increase in demand for water and arable land for food and energy. To meet the challenge for survival, world bodies have proposed to impose taxes and levies on industrial units causing pollution. The Supreme Court had ordered suitable action against those polluting the environment and disturbing the ecological balance. The neem tree is reported to help in checking pollution caused by vehicular and industrial emission, and, therefore, planting of its saplings in cities should be encouraged.

For health & livelihood

The Times of India 4/11/2000



Do you think industrial unit workers in Delhi were justified in resorting to violent agitations?

No 64% Yes 27%

Was the daily routine of anyone in your family disrupted because of the riots?

Yes 63% No 37%

DELHIITES SAY

Delhi Government is mainly to blame for allowing polluting industries to operate in residential areas. **71%**

All polluting industries should be relocated to new industrial areas. **92%**

This is not a political issue but a civic issue. **83%**

Graphic: Neelabh

OUR VIEW

Delhi Government, DDA, MCD, Urban Development ministry - all have had their part in allowing thousands of hazardous and polluting industries to come up in "non-conforming" areas in violation of the Delhi Master Plan. Despite the prodding of the High Court all these years, little action has been taken in developing new industrial areas; installation of common effluent treatment plants; and relocating the hazardous units. It's shocking that industrial areas developed by adjoining states in National Capital Region have been languishing for lack of occupancy due to the inaction of the Delhi authorities. Leaders of Congress as well as BJP should put politics aside while dealing with this civic issue - for, the health as well as livelihood of the Capital's citizens lie in orderly development according to the Master Plan.