

Protesters damage Rajghat main gate

NEW DELHI, DEC. 18. Parts of the main entrance of Mahatma Gandhi's samadhi at Rajghat were today damaged by people protesting against the closure of polluting industrial units in the Capital. Among others, the "dharna" was attended by senior BJP leaders including its national vice-president, Mr. Madan Lal Khurana, and general secretary, Mr. Sahib Singh Verma. Several electrical installations, including two globe lights, at the main entrance gate, were broken and plants trampled upon and destroyed. The "dharna" was organised by the Laghu and Kuteer Udyog Sangharsha Samiti in protest against the closure of polluting industries and those in the non-conforming areas.

A formal complaint has also been lodged at the Daryaganj police station by the Central Public Works Department (CPWD). Conceding that parts of the main entrance were vandalised, an official of the Rajghat Samadhi Committee said: "This has been the venue of many a protest rally, but this type of destruction and that too of the main gate has never happened before."

Officials also complained that the organisers did not take mandatory permission from the Samiti for the dharna. "They just landed here without any notice and caused undue harassment to hundreds of visitors," officials said, adding the visitors had to be diverted to the VIG gate. 116

MCD to go ahead with sealing units

By Our Staff Reporter

NEW DELHI, DEC. 18. While the Delhi Government has decided to wait for fresh instructions from the Nodal Agency on sealing and closure of industrial units in the Capital, the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) has decided to start sealing polluting units in the Capital from this Monday.

According to highly placed sources, the action will begin from industrial areas like Samaspur Badli in North-West Delhi which has a high concentration of polluting industries.

The MCD would move under the directions of the SDM accompanied by officials from the Delhi Vidyut Board (DVB), the Delhi Jal Board (DJB) and engineers of the Delhi Pollution Control Committee (DPCC).

The sealing would be only of those industries which fall under the "F category" the list of which is available with the Delhi Government. As per the list, over 6,000 polluting industries fall in this category are in this part of the Capital.

The MCD has formed as many as 50 crack teams headed by senior officials, that will work towards implementing the guidelines of the Nodal Agency by completing the sealing formalities.

These crack teams are expected to be accompanied by a large number of police contingent. It is learnt that the teams underwent an orientation camp on Friday to discuss the strategy and modalities of sealing. Top officials from various agencies briefed the crack team members about the sealing operation.

Meanwhile, even though the civic body completed the survey of identifying industrial units in non-conforming areas, the MCD was still identifying the figures.

Nodal Agency blamed for relocation mess

By Our Staff Reporter

NEW DELHI, DEC. 18 The Delhi Government today sought to shift the blame on the Nodal Agency, functioning under the Urban Development Minister, Mr. Jagmohan, for the confusion created on the issue of closure of polluting industries from the non-residential areas and decided to seek fresh guidelines in this regard.

At a high-level meeting held under the Industry Minister, Dr. Narendra Nath, the Health Minister, Dr. A.K. Walia, the Chief Secretary, Mr. P.S. Bhatnagar and the Environment Secretary Mr. Vivek Rae, it was decided that in view of the confusion that has been created by the various instructions issued by the Nodal Agency, it was felt that clear instructions should be sought immediately on the issue.

It should also be clarified as to what type of industries would constitute polluting industries and if necessary the Central Pollution Control Board be asked to

identify the grossly polluting industries.

It was also felt that it was not possible to close all the "F" category industries which are more than 38,000 within the given time limit ordered by the Nodal Agency keeping in mind the large-scale dislocation and human misery, unemployment and economic loss it would cause.

However, the meeting finalised and discussed the action plan prepared on the basis of the instructions issued by the Nodal Agency.

The meeting also noted the assurance given by the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, to the delegation of BJP MPs from Delhi that the Centre would back the Delhi Government for seeking more time to relocate the industries.

In view of the latest development, it was felt that clarification should come from the Nodal Agency as to what should be done now.

PM stresses unambiguous selection of polluting units

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, Dec 16

AT AN high level meeting with BJP MPs from Delhi this morning, Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee emphasised the fact that pollution-causing industries in the city's residential areas should be unambiguously identified and closed as per the Supreme Court directive.

He also asked Union Law Minister Arun Jaitley to fix the definition of industrial units that could be labelled as pollution causing. With respect to all other industrial units



in the non-conforming areas here, the

Prime Minister was in favour of relocation. The small scale service industries like laundry units, flour grinding units and others like auto as well as cycle repair units, however, should be allowed to continue in their present state, it was felt.

Present at the meeting were Urban Development Minister Jagmohan, Mr Arun Jaitley, two former chief ministers of Delhi — Madan Lal Khurana and Sahib Singh Verma, Vijay Kumar Malhotra, Vijay Goel, Lal Bihari Tiwari, Anita Arya, Delhi BJP president Mange Ram Garg, leader of the opposition Jagdish Mukhi and Mayor Shanti Desai.

Briefing newsmen, Mr Garg said, it was felt that the Delhi Government should seek additional time from the Supreme Court

for relocation of industries to developed alternate sites. Alternate land could then be identified and developed with essential services like water and electricity.

He said, there were an estimated 5,000 "extremely polluting industries" which would be affected by the Supreme Court order. But out of these only those should be sealed which were at present termed to be pollution-causing.

After the meeting, Mr Khurana drove to Rajghat where a large crowd had gathered for the day-long dharna to press for proper relocation of industrial units. Among others present there were Sahib Singh Verma, Lal Bihari Tiwari, Harsharan Singh Balli and Ramvir Singh Bidhuri.

Addressing the huge gathering

comprising large number of industrial unit owners and the workers, Mr Khurana said following Mr Vajpayee's assurance that the units will be relocated he had decided to suspend the agitation. He pointed out that the problem dated back to early 1980s. At that time, DDA was to provide 4,000 acres of land for the relocation of the industrial units.

But the then chief executive councillor Jag Pravesh Chandra had declared that the land would not be required. Had the land been developed then there would not have been any problem now.

Mr Khurana said: "I have always been against the closure of industries as it would lead to unemployment and displacement. Instead industries should be relocated."

BJP leaders Lal Bihari Tiwari, Madan Lal Khurana and Sahib Singh Verma at a dharana on Saturday at Rajghat. Photo: R K Raj

17 Dec 2000

L-G's stance on polluting units was overruled Delhi Cabinet creates history

NECKI TANI
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, Dec. 16. — The Delhi Cabinet made history yesterday. By approving closure of 98,000 group E polluting industries from Monday — even if reluctantly — the Cabinet practically overruled the Lieutenant-Governor, Mr Vijai Kapoor, who had been advocating a soft line on the closure of industries.

It is not a situation that the Delhi Lieutenant-Governor comes across often. None of them have come across a similar occasion in the last seven years after the Delhi Assembly was constituted.

It is the L-G who can overrule the elected government in case of a difference of opinion. And if the elected government does not have a change of heart, refer the issue to the Centre for a final decision

Mr Kapoor wanted the administration to close only those units which do not comply with the pollution norms stipulated in the Environment (Protection) Rules. And went ahead and passed the order under the EP Act on 11 December 2000, directing such polluting units to close by 17 December

But the bureaucracy just did not move to get the official machinery in place to identify and penalise these polluting units after 17 December. They had also received contrary directions from the Union Urban Development Ministry — empowered by the Supreme Court as the Nodal Agency — and did not want to be found on the wrong side of the Lieutenant-Governor or the Supreme Court.

They played safe and directed the sub-divisional magistrates to pull out from the field.

CABINET: *Has an upper hand*

(Continued from page 1)

No more industries were to be sealed till further orders, the SDMs were told.

On 12 December, the chief secretary, Mr P S Bhatnagar, constituted 50 teams, with directions to close polluting industries in group F from 14 December. An "uncalled for" clarification by the Nodal Agency, however, threw its plans in a disarray.

The Nodal Agency had left it to the discretion of the government on how the polluting units were to be closed and directed that the affected factory owners be given a hearing before closing their units.

The direction was initially interpreted by the politicians — within and outside the government — to mean that the Nodal Agency was relaxing his initial directions. The government immediately deferred its plan to close the units and got busy studying the order.

By the time this was done, the officials realised that what was important in the direction was not what was said, but what it did not say. "It did not say that group F industries should not be closed. This point was important," an official said. The Lieutenant-Governor, however, was not willing to back the officials on this one. He gave clear indications that

the government should only close units which were polluting beyond the norms stipulated in the Environment (Protection) Rules, 1986.

He wanted the teams to first lift effluent samples from water-polluting units, test them and close industries if they failed to meet the standards. In case of air polluting units, he wanted the government to get the required equipment and follow a similar procedure.

But if the government went by his advice, it might have had a list of just a few hundred closed units to show the Nodal Agency by the 3 January 2001 deadline. In any case, there were doubts whether this is how the court would like them to proceed against the polluting units. "The Environment (Protection) Act could not be implemented for industries in non-conforming areas. It was only applicable for units in industrial estates, not illegal units," he said. Incidentally, the L-G is reported to have passed orders earlier this year which allowed unauthorised water-polluting units to continue if they installed effluent treatment plants. This direction was then complied with. "But this time the Cabinet did not have an option *either*," an official remarked.

Closure complaint cell goes into overdrive

SANGEET KUMAR
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 18

IN their missionary zeal, the sealing squads have made mistakes that are ending up at the complaint cell at the Tis Hazari courts. Close to 180 complaints have come in already.

"These," says one of the SDMs looking after the cell, "will be forwarded to the DPCC and the MCD who will refer it back to us after looking at each case." What's leading squads astray is the fact that many units that had been sealed in February-March moved out of the premises but their addresses were not deleted from the list.

The tea-stall at the Ravi Nagar extension was a case in point: The local SDM sealed the stall because the address existed on the list of units to be sealed. The stall is located at the Ravi Nagar extension, part II, and remained sealed for seven days before it was de-sealed. There also have been cases of premises with wrong addresses being sealed. In one particular case, the power press unit with the address 169 was sealed when the sealing squad was looking for number

owner of unit 169. "I tried to convince them it was not the address they were looking for but they insisted on sealing it." It was de-sealed after 10 days.

At Ravi Nagar Extension another factory 261, was sealed after its name was found printed in the list of industries meant for sealing. In this case, the factory owner came up to the sealing squad and informed them about the mistake being committed.

Other complaints received at the ADM Headquarters include one from the Shanti Nagar Saree Printers Association representing 12 units. The Association claims all of them had installed ETPs and yet their units had been sealed. Says Narain Dutt Sharma, whose saree-printing unit was sealed: "Our job consists of putting the saree on tables and then printing them with blocks of wood on which designs have been made." Sharma tells us, "The only effluents that we emit into the drains are when we wash those blocks of wood and even for that we have ETPs installed."

Another factory owner, Rajesh Sharma, who has an anodising unit in East Azad Nagar says: "I have been allotted an alternate plot at



Chander Prakash sits in his tea shop (unit no. 169) located in a non-conforming industrial area in Dharampur, village Khyala in west Delhi. *Newsline photo by CHERIAN THOMAS*

Narela and have paid 30 per cent of the money for it. But how do they expect us to shift when the land there has not yet been devel-

oped? I have spent around Rs 1.5 lakh on installing the ETP and yet the unit was sealed." He also claims he spent Rs 15,000 on an

adequacy report for the ETP. The complaint cell is headed by ADM (HQ) Virender Kumar and SDM (Environment) Y. V. Rajshekhara.

LOOK WHAT THEY WENT AND CLOSED