

Govt caught in logjam

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New Delhi

◆ Politicians are reluctant to shift polluting units
◆ Officials in dilemma ◆ Special session convened

DESPITE SUPREME Court's directive to relocate polluting industries

from the residential areas of the Capital within four weeks, the Delhi government on

Friday looked anything but prepared to carry out the diktat.

Chief Minister Sheila Dikshit has decided to convene the Congress Legislative Party (CLP) meet on Saturday which will be followed by a special session of the Delhi assembly on Monday.

The Congress Legislative Party and assembly session will articulate the stand of the City government, which strongly holds the view that relocation of industries was not at all justified.

City Finance Minister Mahendra Singh Saathi in fact said on Friday that "elected government could not afford to be ruthless."

Though the chief secretary P S Bhatnagar attended the meeting of the Urban Development Ministry's nodal agency under the chairmanship of Mr Jagmohan Friday afternoon which drafted the plan of action for the relocation of polluting units, the political leadership contemplated an alternative plan.

The city bureaucracy is also in a dilemma whether to abide by the view point of their political leadership or the Supreme Court order which has already issued contempt of court notice to the chief secretary on the charge of non-compliance of court orders.

Apprehending punishment in case of failure to relocate in-

Jagmohan meet remains inconclusive

Staff Reporter

New Delhi

ALTHOUGH IT was summoned within 24 hours of the Supreme Court's (SC) order, the meeting called by Urban Development Minister Jagmohan on Friday did not reach any concrete decision. Jagmohan also held discussions with the Lt Governor Vjay Kapoor on Friday morning.

According to sources, no concrete solutions were reached at the meeting between Jagmohan and the representatives of all civic bodies in the Capital.

The urgent meeting had been called by Mr Jagmohan following SC instructions to close down polluting units within four weeks. Senior officers of the Delhi government, DDA, DSIDC, MCD and Delhi Police were also present. The panel was also expected to formulate a time frame within which to shift non-polluting industries from non-conforming zones. According to Municipal Commissioner S P Aggarwal, a decision regarding the time frame will be taken after the SC passes its final order on Saturday. Meanwhile, a survey of all industrial units had been undertaken. The survey is expected to be completed by next week.

Representatives of small-scale industrial sector have demanded that the survey be carried out by an autonomous body. According to a statement issued by the Laghu Udyog Sangharsh Samiti, identifying polluting units in the Capital must be done by a "trustworthy autonomous body". They said that the body should comprise professionals and be presided over by a retired judge appointed by the SC itself.

Deadline on vehicles cannot be met: Hashmi

Staff Reporter

New Delhi

TRANSPORT MINISTER Parvez Hashmi said that it was not possible to convert all commercial vehicles plying in the Capital to CNG by March 31 2001, as directed by the Supreme Court.

Mr Hashmi said he would explain the facts to apex court in January that he would require more time to implement the court order. He said adoption of vehicles with Euro-II and Euro-III norms was another possible way to contain the pollution in the city.

He said that difficulties were being faced in the CNG mechanism and the availability of the fuel.

However, the City government was prepared to invest Rs 300 crore to purchase adequate number of CNG buses for the public transport system.

The Transport Minister said the Government would not take the responsibility for the failure or success of CNG buses.

He said though it was difficult to implement the court order, the Government was ready to enforce any pollution standard set up by the Supreme Court.

On the other hand, Chief Minister Sheila Dikshit also emphasised that the transport would be the thrust area of her government in the coming years.

industries, the chief secretary had constituted a task force of senior officials and the Sub-Divisional Magistrates (SDMs) had been ordered to seal the polluting units.

However, the action was stopped when agitations started in the city.

In fact, a city minister claimed on the condition of anonymity that there was no reason as to why these industries should be shifted from the National Capital of Delhi.

"Let them pass strictures against us. We are also political creatures and we do have to continue in politics," added the minister.

Ms Sheila Dikshit averted query on the relocation of industry saying that she was yet to go through the court order.

It was surprising that the Chief Minister as well as Industry Minister Narendra Nath feigned ignorance about the apex court order delivered on Thursday.

"We will decide our approach after going through the court order," said Narendra Nath.

The Chief Minister advocated the human aspect of the whole issue which will affect the livelihood of lakhs of people.

"I hope Mr Jagmohan will work with a sense of co-operation ... we would also like that our industries are not closed down. They are far more interested in carrying out their agenda without caring for the human aspect of the situation," said Chief Minister.

Ms Dikshit also charged Mr Jagmohan of quoting misleading facts as not even a single meeting of consultative committee was held till date. "If Mr Jagmohan continues working with similar attitude, then the spirit of co-operation will be doomed. He must be reasonable in his approach," said Ms Dikshit.