# Controlling Air Pollution – Global Experience

## What is the issue?

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Delhi government needs to look at the experience of global cities in cutting down their automobile usage and to improve air quality.

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## What are the measures taken by the government?

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- The Delhi government recently flagged off a trial run for its first e-buses.
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- The government’s looking to add 1,000 electric and 3,000 CNG buses to Delhi Transport Corporation’s fleet by end-2019.
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- It also aims to build sleek, modern bus terminals to spur people to switch from private transport and taxis to buses.
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- However, far more needs to done to reduce pollution as the air quality index hits new high in the city.
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- The air quality index has topped 600 in many parts of Delhi (the WHO mentions any reading over 25 harmful), making it the most polluted mega-city globally.
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- Successive Delhi governments and the courts have attempted to devise solutions for Delhi’s pollution, but their actions have been scattershot.
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- The new BS-VI cleaner fuels are already selling in Delhi and very recently, the ageing Badarpur power station was closed.
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- Also, new restrictions were placed on trucks entering Delhi and on construction.

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- But the government constantly relies on short-term solutions, while lacking consistency in its implementation.
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- For example, though the court ordered ban on SUV registrations in Delhi, the Delhi government swiftly withdrawn the ruling.
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## What are the global experiences in this regard?

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- London was an early starter in discouraging car use and is world leader among big cities in putting up roadblocks to automobiles.
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- The congestion charges levied in the country slashed the number of vehicles using the central zone by 39% between 2002 and 2014.
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- From April, London will charge drivers of older petrol and diesel cars a Euro 12.50 fee on top of the existing Euro 11.50 congestion charge to drive into the central Ultra-Low-Emission-Zone.
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- Only Electric Vehicles will be exempt from this congestion charge.
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- In Germany, a German court ruled that cities can ban diesel vehicles to fight air pollution.
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- Spain recently imposed stringent new rules banning older petrol and diesel vehicles from a two-sq-mile zone in Central Madrid.
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- The city reports the ban has already cut the number of vehicles plying the roads by 20% and public transport speeds have risen by 14%.
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- China, on its part, is rolling out extensive EV infrastructure and offering automakers numerous incentives to produce clean cars.
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## What should be done?

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- Vehicular pollution account for one-third of overall pollution in Delhi.

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- The Delhi metro lacks last-mile connectivity and carries just 5-6% of total commuters.
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- Many pollution-checking centres were recently found to be not working and older vehicles are still plying Delhi streets while others are sold and exported to less strict smaller cities.
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- Hence, Delhi needs to promote public transport, taxi services like Uber and extensive bicycle routes to reduce vehicular pollution.
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- Also, like Netherlands, the government cangivetax credits for cycling commuters to encourage bicycling.
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- Though congestion chargescan be introduced, it is not a one-stop measure to control vehicular pollution in the city.
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- For example, since taxis were exempt from congestion charges in London, the number of taxi-rides into London's restricted zone increased by 29%.
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- Thus, the promotion of alternate mode of transport does not seem to drastically reduce the pollution levels in the city.
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- Also, though there are efforts to promote electric vehicles in Delhi, speeds in EVs are slower and in sprawling cities like Delhi, the distances the e-vehicles can go are often not enough.
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- The electric buses also cost significantly more than CNG buses, raising concerns on the affordability of the measure.
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- Though India declared a goal of 30% of vehicles to be electric by 2030, there's still no clear-cut policy framework for achieving even that target.
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- Hence, a clear policy framework has to be laid down for it, along with road safety for cyclists and better sidewalks to encourage walkers.
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**Source: Business Line**

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