

Vehicles, generators nullified measures to clean **Delhi's** air

POLLUTION The Economic Survey shows air quality in the Capital went up a notch between 1997 and 2007 but ever since it has only deteriorated further

hindustantimes

the air we breathe



Mallica Joshi

mallica.joshi@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI: The city seems to have lost whatever little it gained between 2000 and 2010 in terms of air quality.

A look at the Economic Survey of Delhi 2014-15, shows that while concerted efforts to weed out air pollution at the beginning of the millennium marginally improved the air quality, especially in the latter half, those gains are now being lost to the increasing number of vehicles, use of diesel generators and overloaded goods trucks.

In 1997, when air quality in the city was very poor, the SO2 levels were 18.7 and the NO2 levels were 44.9. Figures on particulate matter (PM) were not recorded at this time. PM 10 figures were first recorded in 2000 when it was 191.



■ **The biggest problem in Delhi is that of overloaded trucks. An overloaded truck pollutes 4 times more than a truck with normal load.** HT FILE PHOTO

In 2007, the SO2 figures were 4, NO2 figures were 38 and the PM10 figure was 161. In totality, this seems to be the best year for Delhi, air quality wise.

Since then, however, there has been a steady increase, especially after 2010 in pollutants in the air. In 2014, the annual average for SO2 was 16.9, NO2 was 79 and PM10 was a whopping 318.

According to experts, a concerted effort against air pollution in late 1990s made Delhi's air better.

"In 1997-98 the air quality in the city had deteriorated very much and a number of efforts, including shutting down pollution industries and introducing CNG were made to improve air quality. Lead in gasoline was also phased out and benzene concen-

tration, which at that time was uncontrolled, was also lowered. We also brought in Bharat Stage I-IV emission standards. There were major interventions to purify the air we breathe," said SK Tyagi, scientist and member, Indian Association for Air Pollution Control.

According to Tyagi, the cycle of deterioration that has set in again can be attributed to the rising number of vehicles in the city along with dependence of diesel generator sets.

"Over the past few years, the vehicle density in Delhi has gone on increasing. Another problem are diesel generator sets. There are close to 3.5 lakh such gensets in the city right now which are being used by institutions or for commercial purposes. The biggest problem, however, is that of overloaded trucks. They need to be fitted with diesel particulate filters and overloading needs to be checked. An overloaded truck pollutes 4 times more than a truck with normal load. The bus fleet also needs to be doubled from 6000 to 12000," Tyagi said.