

Planned in phases: Paris shows way to clean air

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Paris: The blue, clear skies this summer in Paris hardly indicate it has an air pollution problem. But the top agenda for the Paris municipality—Marie De Paris—is dealing with tiny, respirable pollution particles or PM 2.5 that can get lodged in the lungs or enter the bloodstream of residents.

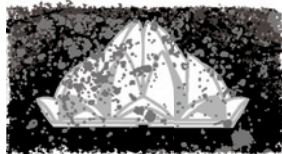
Paris, which will be hosting the United Nations climate change conference or COP21 in December, has decided to phase out diesel vehicles completely in the city by 2020. This doesn't mean the existing fleet of vehicles will remain. The municipality has pretty much given six years' time to Parisians to junk their diesel cars.

"We are telling the car industry that by 2020, diesel cars can't run in Paris. It's a tough call. We have a very powerful auto industry in France. Residents have six years to change," Patrick Klugman, deputy mayor of Paris for international relations, told Indian journalists during a media visit organized by the French ministry of foreign affairs.

Phasing out diesel vehicles is only one of the many strategies the city is adopting to improve its air quality. For a year now, Paris hasn't been allowing half its cars to ply whenever there are two consecutive days of high air pollution levels. It has massively increased

the share of electric and hybrid vehicles and is planning to have a Sunday without cars in September. This would be a message to residents to change their lifestyle as soon as possible to keep up with the new policies on air pollution. About 75% Parisians have supported the policies on phasing out diesel-run transport, according to Klugman.

Even more surprising is what Paris considers to be a high air pollution day. Accord-



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ing to scientists from the French National Centre for Scientific Research, it's a very poor air quality day when concentrations of PM 2.5 or PM 10—coarse, pollution particles—go up to 100 micrograms per cubic metre, which is the safe standard or prescribed limit for PM 10 in India.

On the other extreme, levels of PM 2.5 routinely go over 200 micrograms per cubic metre and levels of PM10 also go up to 300 to 400 micrograms per cubic metres in Delhi with no emergency pollution mitigating measures in place. While comparing Paris and Delhi may be difficult because of demographics, economy

and urban infrastructure, the two cities are facing a similar challenge.

The latest Airparif report on air quality shows that Paris region regularly exceeds limits set by the European Union. They reach almost twice the regulatory limit set by the European Commission directive. Nitrogen dioxide (NO2) levels exceed the limit near main roads and in the heart of Paris.

Paris has zeroed down on traffic for its air pollution problem. Since more than 75% of its electricity is from nuclear energy sources, the pollution cannot be due to thermal power plants. According to Paris's road traffic pollution action plan, two-thirds of NO2 emissions and 55% of particle emissions are from road traffic. "The Parisian population used to love cars. There was a highway around the Seine. Now a large part of Seine has been converted to pedestrian areas. France has one of the highest proportions of diesel cars," added Klugman.

Paris will host 1,000 mayors just before COP21 to discuss the role of cities in mitigating climate change where air pollution will also be on the agenda. Paris municipality is urging Indian mayors to join the discussion.

Recently, the National Green Tribunal, too, ordered that diesel vehicles over 10 years old be phased out in the NCR. A verdict will come in July.