

New Solutions to Air Pollution

What is the issue?

\n\n

Solutions such as introduction of **Hot lanes and Toll differential system** are being debated to control air pollution.

\n\n

Is the air pollution under control?

\n\n

\n

- The odd-even (licence number) scheme undertaken by the government during the first half of 2016 was one of the most ambitious.

\n

- However, despite the initiative, general air pollution in the city, which is measured by PM2.5 rose by 15% and 23% during the first and second phase of the odd-even rule, respectively.

\n

- This raises some important concerns regarding the current policy on tackling air pollution.

\n

\n\n

What are HOT lanes?

\n\n

\n

- A high-occupancy toll lane (or HOT lane) is a type of traffic lane or roadway that is available to high-occupancy vehicles and other exempt vehicles without charge.

\n

- Other vehicles are required to pay a variable fee that is adjusted in response to demand.

\n

- While this was pioneered in the U.S. in 1969, its effective implementation in other countries such as China and Indonesia has **encouraged millions of**

commuters to opt for car-sharing as it ensured them a speedier and less costly journey.

\n

- In India, however, such an idea is still far from being imagined. Ex. In Delhi, there exists no policy in relation to car-pooling till date.

\n

- Critics highlight that given India's **peculiar disregard for lane-driving**, the implementation of HOT or HOV lanes seems to be a long shot.

\n

- However, the effective implementation of HOT lanes can provide significant incentive to fostering a more disciplined driving culture.

\n

\n\n

What could be done?

\n\n

\n

- Its implementation would require important considerations like,\n\n
 - whether it should be enforced during particular hours, or
 - whether the minimum number of passengers required to avail of the benefit should be two or more, or
 - whether HOT lane commuters will pay a lower road toll or will be completely exempt from it, to name a few.

\n

\n

\n

- However if we impose **significant fines on violators on HOT lanes** and strictly monitor the policy by first applying it to limited areas, the results are bound to reduce air pollution by **incentivising passengers to carpool**.

\n

- Also, in India, where most cars carry two-three people on average, it is perhaps preferred to dedicate such HOT or HOV lanes to cars carrying more than three occupants.

\n

- Completely exempting these lanes from toll or substantially reducing the toll levied on them in relation to other lanes would provide significant incentive to the commuter.

\n

\n\n

What is the way ahead?

\n\n

\n

- A **toll differential system** based on the number of car occupants and on the latest pollution check of the vehicle is the need of the hour.

\n

- The government should introduce a **differential toll treatment** for less polluting and higher occupancy vehicles.

\n

- Moreover, electric cars or battery electric vehicles should be completely exempt from the toll.

\n

- This will not only incentivise people to regularly check their vehicle's pollution, but will also help reduce air pollution.

\n

\n\n

\n\n

Source: The Hindu

\n

