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Transport operators have to switch to compressed natural gas

Commuters in the Indian capital, Delhi, are bracing for chaos after thousands of buses and taxis were declared unfit for the road in a court ruling.

On Monday, India's Supreme Court stood by a 1 April deadline to transporters to switch to cleaner fuel, in an attempt to improve Delhi's air quality.

However, the court has offered a six-month extension to bus operators who have already placed orders for vehicles running on compressed natural gas (CNG).

Transport operators say most of them will not be able to comply with the ruling leaving a majority of Delhi's 12,000 buses off the road.

**Costly ruling**

The Supreme Court has been at the forefront of attempts to improve Delhi's sharply deteriorating air quality.

Last year, it ordered hundreds of polluting factories to relocate, despite violent protests.

But its latest ruling has dismayed the capital's transporters who argue they carry 80% of Delhi's commuters.

"We think there will not be more than 1,500-2,000 buses on Delhi roads on 1 April," HS Kalra, leader of the Delhi bus operators association told the BBC.

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Bus operator HS Kalra

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Delhi bus operator HS Kalra "Delhi has no alternative public transport"  real **28k**

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The operators say the cost of converting to the cheaper fuel is too high, since they have to either buy new buses or replace engines in their existing vehicles.

"Nearly 70% of the bus operators in Delhi own a single bus and the conversion cost would be double that of a diesel bus," Jitendra Saxon of the All India Motor Transport Congress told the AFP news agency.



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"How will they bring in the funds when their old buses will have negligible resale value?" he asked.

Pollution is a problem for all

### Criticism

Some have argued that it would be simpler for the court to ask operators to switch to a less polluting form of diesel.

The Tata Energy Research Institute (TERI) suggested that ultra-low sulphur diesel would be a cleaner and cheaper alternative.

"Nowhere in the world has such a large fleet of buses been converted to CNGs," TERI director, RK Pachauri, said.

"Even after they are operational, CNG buses will continue to run up higher fuel bills. Who will pay these additional costs? Obviously the consumer," Mr Pachauri said.



Taxis will stay off the roads

Besides the buses, it is estimated that 15,000 taxis and 50,000 three-wheel scooter rickshaws will also be banned from the road from Saturday.

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