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Environment ministry writes to civic body about night sweeping

Because the Municipal Corporation of Delhi has been unable to implement night sweeping across the city, the Ministry of Environment and Forest has shot off a letter to the civic agency asking it to give "serious consideration" to the project. An officer on special duty with the environment minister Jairam Ramesh has written to the MCD, saying the ministry has received several petitions on this matter.

Saying that night sweeping reduces pollution level and improves air quality, the letter has asked the civic agency to update the minister on the matter. "The Delhi High Court had directed the MCD to consider introducing night sweeping in the city on the lines of other metropolitan cities," reads the letter.

The letter, which has been sent to municipal commissioner KS Mehra, states that by implementing night sweeping "ambient air quality in morning hours can be improved".

The civic agency has not implemented night sweeping in the city for the past many years citing several reasons. "It is quite difficult to implement this project. Vehicles are parked everywhere on the road how can our staff sweep the streets? Also, a number of our workers are women and they don't feel safe during night," said a senior MCD official.

Night sweeping was launched in December 2000 at the order of the Delhi High Court on a public interest litigation to curb dust pollution.

"They have been making excuses for the past many years. When other Indian cities can implement it why can't Delhi? Several studies have shown that sweeping roads in the morning adds to morning haze and dust raised during sweeping leads to asthma, bronchitis. It affects people who commute in the morning," said Ravinder Raj who had filed a PIL in the Delhi High Court asking the civic agency to start night sweeping.