

NGT SEEKS CENTRE'S RESPONSE

Star rating for vehicles gets push

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The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has sought responses from some ministries of the Union government on a plea seeking implementation of a star-rating system based on fuel efficiency and carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions across all vehicles in the country — a move that could have a significant bearing on India's growing problem of air pollution leading to serious health issues.

The ministries from which the NGT has sought responses include the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH), the Ministry of Power (MoP), the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MoEFCC), and the Ministry of Heavy Industries (MHI), which is the administrative ministry of auto

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- Star rating systems for vehicles based on fuel efficiency are already prevalent in many countries
- Voluntary implementation in some countries has been lukewarm
- India's vehicular pollution accounts for 40% of the total air pollution



companies. The case will come up for hearing again on January 10, 2025, when responses from the government would be expected.

The plea, which was heard by the NGT on September 20, has argued that vehicular pollution is the most important contributor to air pollution and as per the Ministry of Earth Sciences, it accounts for 40 per cent of overall pollution in the country.

The applicant, in the course of his argument, referred to a draft notification dated January 7, 2016, which was issued by the MoRTH, inviting objections to amendment of the Central Motor Vehicle Rules 1989 in order to introduce the star-rating system for all vehicles. The plea also pointed out that in most of the developed countries, such a star-rating system is already in prevalence. Even this system is in force in developing Asian

countries like Thailand, Vietnam and Singapore, it said.

In 2016, the MoRTH had come out with a draft, specifying the design of the star-rating stickers that were to be placed on the windows of vehicles — with the onus of putting them lying on the manufacturers — so that it can end any confusion at the dealer's end on the fuel efficiency details, which they tell to potential customers.

A star rating of vehicles is, of course, not a new concept globally — vehicle fuel efficiency labelling has been issued in many countries since 1978. Its main purpose was to raise the consciousness of customers on the importance of fuel efficiency, with the assumption that properly informed people will always buy fuel-efficient vehicles.

For instance, in the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) region, more than 13 countries have already

implemented VFEL. These countries include Australia, Canada, China, Japan, Korea, US, Vietnam and Thailand. Also, non-APEC countries like Brazil, the UK and Germany, among others, have VFEL in place.

Star rating includes information that vary from country to country but key ones that are common are: fuel consumption per litre for a stipulated number of kilometres (it could be separate for urban and rural), CO₂ emissions in grams/km, annual fuel cost based on certain parameters, fuel economy, and greenhouse gas emission ratings. Data from these countries on participation in a rating system provides interesting learnings — a voluntary implementation of the system for vehicles has seen low coverage, with very few auto firms implementing it, but a mandatory rule has been more effective.