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School students move Delhi High Court for bar on outdoor sports events during pollution months

According to the plea, authorities continue to conduct zonal, inter-zonal, state and national-level outdoor sporting events at a time when Delhi's air quality is 'severe' and 'hazardous'.



Pollution and Delhi High Court Ai image

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A group of minor schoolchildren have moved the Delhi High Court seeking directions to ensure that outdoor sports trials and tournaments for school students are not scheduled in the national capital during the peak winter pollution months of November to January [***Nyasa Bedi Vs Government of Delhi***].

The petition, filed through their guardians, states that year after year, authorities continue to conduct zonal, inter-zonal, state and national-level outdoor sporting events at a time when Delhi's air quality is verifiably and foreseeably 'severe' and 'hazardous'.

According to the petitioners, this repeated scheduling forces children, recognised as a vulnerable group, to undertake strenuous physical activity in toxic air, violating their fundamental rights under Articles 21 and 21A of the Constitution.





As per the plea, it is a matter of public record that Delhi faces an annual public-health emergency between November and January, with the Air Quality Index (AQI) frequently remaining in the “Severe” category.

At the time of filing the plea, the city was under the Grade Response Action Plan-III (GRAP-III) emergency plan and risked escalation to GRAP-IV, the petitioners have pointed out.

The petition underscores the medical risks of prolonged exposure to airborne pollutants, relying on expert material from the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, the World Health Organisation (WHO) and other studies.

It warns that such exposure causes “diminished growth of lungs”, cognitive impairment and acute cardiovascular strain in children.

The petitioners have submitted that the authorities are fully aware of the annual pollution crisis. In this regard, they have relied on a November 2023 order of the Directorate of Education, which suspended all sports activities while citing threats to the health and security of students.



However, the suspension was later revoked and sporting events continued to be scheduled in the same period, the plea states.

This conduct, the petitioners argue, is arbitrary, negligent and a flagrant violation of children's right to clean air, health and education.

While sports and physical literacy are integral to a child's development, but cannot be pursued at the cost of long-term physical harm. The State has a constitutional duty to harmonise these rights, rather than forcing children into a choice between health and participation, it has been contended.

The petitioners have sought directions to the Delhi government and sports authorities to frame and implement an annual sports calendar that avoids outdoor events for schoolchildren during the "predictably toxic" months of November to January.

The petition has been filed through advocates Manjira Dasgupta, Bhargav Ravindran Thali and Mayank Khaitan.



Delhi High Court

Air Pollution



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