

NATIONAL AFFAIRS

India

Closure of Polluting Factories

On 7 December 2000, the Supreme Court ordered the New Delhi government to shut down 125,000 polluting factories within four weeks.

The Court heard arguments in the case seeking relocation or closure of the industries in question. The Delhi government has refused to carry out several previous such orders, dating back to 1985. The three-judge bench ruled that this order would not be affected by any stay or injunction granted by any other court.

Already on the 14 November, the Supreme Court had ordered officials of the New Delhi government to implement its earlier orders to shut down nearly all of the

125,000 polluting installations. Government officials did start to close down the units, which led to civil unrest in the capital. Hundreds of thousands of angry factory workers protesting against the closure set scores of government vehicles on fire. As a result, the government has appealed to the Supreme Court to allow more time to relocate these industrial units, which is expected to affect the livelihood of an estimated 2 million workers.

However, this time the Supreme Court refused to move on their decision, having already extended three times since 1996 the deadline for the Delhi government to take the requisite action.

