

With our efforts to control vehicular pollution and threat to glacier & ecology of rohtang, The Honble Himachal High Court & National Green Tribunal Took serious actions from 2010:

The National Green Tribunal has capped the number of vehicles at the pass at 1,000 per day. (Source: Express Archive)

Written by [Ashwani Sharma](#) | Shimla | Published: July 20, 2015 1:46 am
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No passage at Rohtang: background and fallout of Green Tribunal order

Livelihoods of more than 8,000 residents of Manali and nearby villages are said to have been affected by the NGT's order that has capped the number of vehicles at the pass at 1,000 per day.

What happened then?

In 2009-10, Himachal Pradesh High Court turned a letter from one Dr Sanjay Kulshreshtha about conditions at Rohtang Pass into a PIL. A committee headed by the chief secretary was set up to look into the issue. On the orders of the court, Nagpur-based National Environmental Engineering Research Institute studied the situation and confirmed damage to the ecology due to unregulated tourism. The chief secretary's committee proposed restrictions on the number of vehicles, the setting-up of a ropeway, running special buses, and allowing only battery-operated snowscooters. Then Chief Justice A M Khanwilkar passed directions to arrest the damage. However, the government did little on the ground.

What is the situation at Rohtang Pass?

The ban imposed earlier this month by the National Green Tribunal (NGT) on all tourism-related commercial activity continues. Following a visit to Rohtang Pass on June 22, NGT Deputy Registrar Sheetal Sharma had submitted a report alleging that earlier orders passed by the Tribunal were being flouted. Sharma claimed that there were 5,000 vehicles at the Pass, five times the maximum number allowed by the NGT. She also referred to the blackening of snow and insanitary conditions. Stakeholders and officials contested the report, but the Tribunal cracked the whip. It also threatened to attach the treasury accounts of the government, and salaries of top officials including the Principal secretary (Environment), and the Kullu Deputy

What has been the fallout of the order?

Local people who ran dhabas and tea stalls, and were involved in tourism businesses such as paragliding, snowscooter- and horse-riding, and renting out snowboots, jackets and sledges, have been hit. Livelihoods of more than 8,000 residents of Manali and nearby villages are said to have been affected. The NGT has asked the government to submit a comprehensive relief and rehabilitation plan after meeting all stakeholders.

- The NGT has taken a strong view of the situation. In 2013, it ordered the removal of encroachments at Marhi between Manali and Rohtang Pass and, this year, it imposed a ban on diesel-run tourist vehicles at the Pass. It subsequently relaxed the ban, but imposed a ceiling of 1,000 vehicles — 600 petrol and 400 diesel — only on valid permits. The government was told to explore CNG-run buses, and strictly monitor air quality.

The Pass is part of a highly fragile ecosystem that has been degraded by irresponsible commercialisation over the years. Some 2,500-3,000 tourist vehicles travelled to the Pass daily during peak tourist season, besides those going on to Ladakh. The area saw a massive increase in vehicular pollution, and was littered with plastic waste. An environmental expert report said glaciers in the area were receding at the rate of 10-12 m a year.

THIS WAS THE LETTER TO CHIEF JUSTICE OF HIMACHAL PRADESH HIGH COURT THAT BROUGHT THE CHANGE:

Hon'ble Mr. Justice Kurian Joseph,
Chief Justice, High Court of Himachal Pradesh
Shimla

June, 2010

**Sub: [1] Request to Hon'ble court to intervene for conserving the glacier of the Rohtang pass that is being affected by severe automobile induced environmental pollution.
[2] To make a government policy to control/check the dangerously increasing number of motorized vehicles reaching everyday to visit Rohtang Pass.**

Respected Sir,

I have visited the Manali - Rohtang Pass recently a week ago on 16th June and I found that there is a significant threat to the environment there. As a conscious citizen of India, I would like to attract your kind attention to the following facts and also few suggestions to lessen the threat to environment for your kind consideration.

[1] Everyday around 4000 – 5000 personal four wheelers or taxis are making a round trip [to and fro] from Manali to this glacier. Virtually every day there is traffic jam on both the ways so that a round

trip that usually takes around 4 hours is taking 8-10 hours, there by further increasing the level of pollution there. It is a common scene there that at the time of traffic Jam, the first vehicle is near the Manali end while the other one near the Rohtang Pass. I am sending some photographs showing this jam.

[2] **The level of air pollution due to vehicular exhaust is so high that the traffic policemen have to use mask to protect them even at glacier.** Although this is not very unusual to find them using mask in other cities, but to find such problem in the hills that too at the glacier level is some thing that is really very alarming. I am also sending a photograph as an evidence where one can see a traffic policemen using his hankie on face and just behind him one can see the snow or glacier.

[3] The area on the top was badly littered by all sort of disposable, etc and most of them were non biodegradable. I am also sending such a photograph.

Why You Sir? : In present circumstances, the judiciary appears to be the only body which takes decisions purely in the interests of the general public and our environment. That is why I believe at present you are the most appropriate person to share my agony and believe that you can initiate some serious measures against this traffic hazards.

With humble regards

Dr SANJAY KULSHRESHTHA, MBBS, MS [general surgery], MCh [pediatric surgery]

President : Society Against Birth Defects in Children

Author of book: Tsunami on Roads: Wake up India! This book discusses the present situation of traffic related hazards & problems of our country and their management in a very rational and scientific way touched with forthright approach, some philosophy and a tinge of humour.

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Suggestions made to HP High Court

[1] We should strongly promote the means of mass transport like buses that can carry much more number of persons as compared to taxis. This will not only lessen the pollution but also will be very economical and time saving to the visitors. Widening of this road to a double lane is already under process so running many busses on this route will not be a problem.[detailed explanation on page 144 of the book]

[2] Alternatively, we can use a trolley/cable system as we are already using to travel from Joshimath to Auli in Uttaranchal. On the Manali - Rohtang highway there is a flat mid point called Vyas Nulla, that is around 32 Km from Manali. We can allow motorized vehicles from Manali to this point and from this point further 18 Km can be covered by trolley. Diagonally or in a straight fashion this remaining distance would be very less and can be very well covered by trolleys in around 20 minutes. This will be much more time saving and will also give a thrilling experience to the visitors.



The level of air pollution due to vehicular exhaust was so high that traffic policemen have to use mask to protect them even at glacier



Pictures of Traffic Jam: Everyday around 4000 – 5000 personal cars/taxis were making a round trip from Manali to this glacier with a common scene that at the time of traffic Jam, the first vehicle is near the Manali end while the other one near the Rohtang Pass.



The area on the top was badly littered by all sort of disposable, etc and most of them were non biodegradable.

Rohtang: Curbs on pvt tourist vehicles to stay May 27 2015:

The Times of India : Tourists passing through Rohtang to Lahaul-Spiti and Leh will have to fork out extra money after the Supreme Court on Tuesday refused to relax recent restrictions imposed by National Green Tribunal (NGT) on tourist movement along the ecologically sensitive pass on Manali-Leh highway , reports Amit Anand Choudhary.

Each private petrol vehicle will have to pay an environmental compensation of Rs 1,000; the amount is Rs 2,500 for the diesel ones. Only 1,000 tourist vehicles will be allowed in Rohtang per day on a first-come-first-served basis till August 14, which will in turn restrict the flow of tourists to Lahaul-Spiti and Leh