

Voluntary car fuel economy ratings won't work: NGO

The auto industry's recent proposal of voluntary fuel economy labeling will not work, the Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) said here Friday, a day after the Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (SIAM) announced the measure.

'Self labelling cannot be a substitute for mandatory fuel economy standards and an official fuel economy labelling programme,' said Anumita Roychoudhury, coordinator of the NGO's Right to Clean Air Campaign.

The automobile industry has been resisting mandatory fuel economy standards, Roychoudhury charged in a statement.

'While disclosure of certified fuel economy data by the industry is needed for crafting of fuel economy standards and labelling, the car industry will have to accept mandatory standards and an official labelling programme to benchmark technology improvement, prevent the drift towards oil-guzzling cars, and help achieve targeted improvement in fuel savings,' she added.

The CSE welcomed the recent initiative by the government's Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE) to craft fuel economy standards under the Energy Conservation Act that empowers it to set norms for any equipment or appliance 'which consumes, generates, transmits or supplies energy'.

'The overarching scope of this act is to conserve energy. The BEE's initiative is further reinforced by the Integrated Energy Policy and the National Action Plan on Climate Change that have categorically asked for fuel economy standards for vehicles.'

Roychoudhury said: 'CSE is very concerned that this initiative is being opposed by the car industry. Its patron ministry - the ministry of heavy industries - is also supporting the industry's voluntary initiative. This must not be allowed to dilute the stand on the mandatory fuel economy standards.'

She pointed out that [Europe](#) had failed to meet its targeted carbon dioxide emission reductions through voluntary approaches and was now moving towards mandatory standards.

'Only legally enforceable standards can ensure targeted improvement in technology and have in-built safeguards to prevent the drift towards heavier vehicles that guzzle more fuel,' Roychoudhury said.

'In India, not only have car numbers increased, demand is also shifting towards mid-sized and bigger cars. Luxury car numbers are also increasing. The industry's voluntary efforts cannot reverse this trend.'

The statement referred to the government's Integrated Energy Policy 2006 estimates which said that 50 percent improvement in fuel efficiency can help save nearly 86 million tonnes of fuel by 2030-31 which is estimated to be nearly 65 percent of total current consumption and in terms of carbon dioxide emissions reduction is equal to removing from the roads seven million of today's four-wheeled vehicles.

CSE urged the government to enforce mandatory fuel economy standards for cars, labelling of all

car models based on their fuel economy levels and a policy of mandatory disclosure of fuel economy of vehicle for all car models.

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