WHEN the Supreme Court of India ordered on the 29th of March this year that 1 April 2017 onwards it will not allow the sale and registration of any vehicle having the obsolete Bharat Stage III (commonly known as BSIII) technology, it sent a big chunk of the automobile industry into a frenzy.

The biggest impact though was on the two-wheeler manufacturers, who immediately scrambled to clear their soon-to-be-scrap inventory. Unheard of discounts were offered during that narrow time window and people thronged the showrooms by the thousands. Most of the two-wheelers of BS III models were being sold at roughly two-third of their standard price, and some even as much as half of it.

The interesting observation was that despite the automakers sweating about the old stock, a majority of the showrooms were out of stock in less than 48 hours of the verdict! People were scouting for any available models of BS III and travelling across the cities to encash this once in a blue moon opportunity.

Well, now that the storm in the automobile market has settled somewhat and manufacturers are brainstorming over ways to minimise their inventory losses, let us take a quick look at the essential differences between the old and the new technology and why the move is in our best interest.

The Story of BS
Bharat Stage Emission Standards are guidelines set by the Indian Government to control the emissions released by the internal combustion engines (IC engines – both petrol and diesel) used in all kinds of motor vehicles throughout India. Also known as Bharat Stage (BS), these standards are based on the European regulations and were first implemented in the year 2000 as Euro 1 or Bharat Stage 1.

Over the years, these regulations have become progressively stringent for two main reasons. One, due to the continuous advancement of automotive technologies in the world, and secondly due to alarming pollution levels which are degrading the overall health of the people.

The second reason was why the Apex court denied the automobile industries’ plea to extend the final
deadline beyond 1 April 2017. The court said that the health of the common man was way more important than any commercial interests whatsoever.

**How is it Good for us?**

BS III was implemented all across India in April 2010 for all two, three and four wheelers. Seven years later on 1 April 2017, BS IV became mandatory nationwide. The essential difference between BS III and BS IV is a technology known as Evaporative Emission Control Unit.

Basically, it reduces the evaporation of fuel from the fuel tank and fuel lines in the form of vapours into the atmosphere. These vapours when released into the air contribute to air pollution, apart from the exhaust fumes. Thus, controlling these evaporative losses means reducing air pollution.

Other than that, BS IV engines will require a larger catalytic converter to filter harmful gases from the exhaust more efficiently thereby reducing the emissions of carbon monoxide, sulfur, oxides of nitrogen, hydrocarbons and Particulate Matter (PM). It means that BS IV engines will be more eco-friendly than the BS III engines.

In addition, they will also be more fuel efficient and less noisier. That’s how they will contribute towards making a cleaner environment and a less polluted atmosphere.

**What’s the Problem Then?**

The automakers who were not able to sell off the older BS III stock by the 1st of April 2017 have been crying foul over the consequent losses, and even filed some pleas in the apex court requesting an extension of the deadline. The pleas were, however summarily rejected.

**The Road Ahead**

The government has proposed to skip the subsequent Euro 5 standard and move directly to Euro 6 or BS VI by 2020. This is keeping in view the rising air pollution at alarming rates, and being in tandem with the global emission standards.

The current benchmark of emission norms in the auto industry is Euro 6. It was introduced in 2014 for light passenger and commercial vehicles. A vehicle complying with the Euro 6 emission norms would be the least polluting IC engine to date.

Whereas a Euro 5 engine already reduces the NOx pollutants from a Euro 4 engine by 28%, a Euro 6 engine further reduces the NOx pollutants from a Euro 5 diesel engine by a significant 67%. It’s not that the Euro 5 emissions are not sufficiently stringent or the technology not as effective. The reality is that we still have not been able to implement Euro 4 completely due to our country’s limitations related to enforcement, infrastructure, technology, etc. So, by the time we start adopting Euro 5 in India other countries will already be implementing Euro 7.

Euro 7 emission norms are already under development and are rumoured to be implemented within a time span of 5-7 years. The focal point of Euro 7 would be reducing not just the particulate matter and oxides of nitrogen by half of that of Euro 6, but also to reduce CO2 emissions.

Also, it will have a major impact on the fate of diesel engines worldwide because they are far more polluting than petrol engines. Hence, if Euro 7 norms are implemented anytime, it will be a reverse countdown for diesel engines in the European Union at least. It’s not that easy though; because of the technical challenges as well as the steep costs of Euro 7 technology, manufacturers might be reluctant to adopt these standards soon.

Lastly, it’s a proven fact that vehicular emissions have always been a major contributor in the degradation of air quality standards. With BS IV becoming mandatory now and BS VI set for a target launch by 2020, things finally look positive. Let’s hope that India is soon able to implement the latest international automobile technologies as well as emission norms, for our better health and our better future.