

## Breathing clean

### Political will is integral to the tackling of India's hazardous air pollution

An assessment of the quality of air across countries and in cities has come as a fresh warning to India on the levels of deadly pollutants its citizens are breathing. The IQ AirVisual 2018 World Air Quality Report published in collaboration with Greenpeace underscores that Delhi remains an extremely hazardous city to live in. The national capital exposes people to air containing annual average fine particulate matter (PM<sub>2.5</sub>) of 113.5 micrograms per cubic metre, when it should be no more than 10 micrograms as per WHO guidelines. In fact, Gurugram, which borders Delhi, fares even worse with a PM<sub>2.5</sub> level of 135.8 micrograms, while 15 of the 20 cities worldwide ranked the worst on air pollution metrics are in India. Delhi's air quality has been making headlines for years now. Yet, measures to mitigate emissions have not moved into crisis mode: the launch this year of the National Clean Air Programme for 102 cities and towns, including the capital, talks only of long-term benefits of mitigation programmes beyond 2024, and not a dramatic reduction in near-term pollution. This has to change, and an annual target for reduction be set to make governments accountable. Achieving a reduction within a short window is not impossible if there is the political will to reform key sectors: transport, biomass and construction.

The monitoring of air quality in real time across cities and towns in India is far from adequate or uniform. The evidence from Delhi, which is relatively more robust, has clear pointers to what needs to be done. The Ministry of Heavy Industries and Public Enterprises learnt from a commissioned study last year that dusty sources such as roads, construction sites and bare soil added about 42% of the coarse particulate matter (PM<sub>10</sub>) in summer, while in winter it was a significant 31%. Similarly, PM<sub>10</sub> from transport varied between 15% and 18% across seasons. Yet, it is the even more unhealthy PM<sub>2.5</sub> penetrating the lungs that causes greater worry. Vehicles contributed 18-23% of these particulates, while biomass burning was estimated to make up 15-22%, and dusty sources 34% during summer. These insights provide a road map for action. The Delhi government, which has done well to decide on inducting 1,000 electric buses, should speed up the plan and turn its entire fleet green. A transition to electric vehicles for all commercial applications, with funding from the Centre's programme for adoption of EVs, should be a priority in cities. Cutting nitrogen and sulphur emissions from industrial processes needs a time-bound programme supervised by the Environment Ministry. These are priority measures to get urban India out of the red zone.

<b>WORD</b>		<b>MEANING</b>	<b>SYNONYMS</b>
Will	Modal verb	Expressing a strong intention or assertion about the future.	Have A Tendency To, Are Bound To, Have A Habit Of, Do
Integral	Adjective	Necessary to make a whole complete; essential or fundamental.	Essential, Fundamental, Basic, Intrinsic, Inherent, Constitutive, Innate, Structural
Tackle	Noun	Make determined efforts to deal with (a problem or difficult task)	Get To Grips With, Apply Oneself To, Address Oneself To, Address, Set About, Go About, Get To Work At, Take Forward, Busy Oneself With, Set One's Hand To
Hazardous	Adjective	Risky; dangerous.	Dangerous, Risky, Unsafe, Perilous, Precarious, Insecure, Tricky, Unpredictable, Uncertain, High-Risk, Touch-And-Go, Fraught With Danger
Assessment	Noun	The action of assessing someone or something.	Evaluation, Judgement, Gauging, Rating, Estimation, Appraisal, Opinion, Analysis
Underscores	Verb	emphasize	All Attention To, Focus Attention On, Focus On, Spotlight, Foreground, Underline, Feature, Point Up, Play Up, Show Up, Bring Out, Accentuate, Accent, Give Prominence To
Extremely	Adverb	To a very great degree; very.	Very, Exceedingly, Exceptionally, Especially, Extraordinarily, To A Fault, In The Extreme, Extra, Tremendously, Immensely, Vastly,
Expose	Verb	Make (something) visible by uncovering it.	Reveal, Uncover, Lay Bare, Bare, Leave Unprotected
Measure	Verb	Ascertain the size, amount, or degree of (something) by using an instrument or device marked in standard units.	Ake The Measurements Of, Calculate, Compute, Estimate, Count, Meter, Quantify, Weigh, Size, Evaluate, Rate, Assess, Appraise, Gauge, Plumb, Measure Out,
Mitigate	Verb	Make (something bad) less severe, serious, or painful.	Alleviate, Reduce, Diminish, Lessen, Weaken, Lighten, Attenuate, Take The Edge Off, Allay, Ease, Assuage, Palliate, Cushion, Damp, Deaden
Crisis	Noun	A time of intense difficulty or danger.	Catastrophe, Calamity, Cataclysm, Emergency, Disaster
Reduction	Noun	The action or fact of making something smaller or less in amount, degree, or size.	Depletion, Cut, Cutting, Cutback, Scaling Down, Trimming, Slimming, Slimming Down, Pruning, Axing, Chopping, Curtailment, Limiting
Accountable	Adjective	Required or expected to justify actions or	Responsible, Liable, Answerable, Chargeable

		decisions; responsible.	
Political will	Noun	Political intention or desire to commitment on the government policies.	
Adequate	Adjective	Satisfactory or acceptable in quality or quantity.	Sufficient, Enough, Ample, Requisite, Apposite, Appropriate, Suitable
Robust	Adjective	Strong and healthy; vigorous.	Strong, Vigorous, Sturdy, Tough, Powerful, Powerfully Built, Solidly Built, As Strong As A Horse
Coarse	Adjective	Rough or harsh in texture.	Rough, Bristly, Scratchy, Prickly, Hairy, Shaggy, Wiry
Penetrating	Adjective	Able to make a way through or into something.	Pungent, Pervasive, Strong, Powerful, Suffocating, Stifling
Transition	Noun	He process or a period of changing from one state or condition to another.	Change, Move, Passage, Transformation, Conversion, Adaptation, Adjustment, Alteration, Changeover, Metamorphosis
Supervise	Verb	Observe and direct the execution of (a task or activity)	Superintend, Oversee, Be In Charge Of, Be In Control Of, Preside Over, Direct, Administer, Manage,

### Probing the press

#### The Official Secrets Act can't be an instrument to censor embarrassing media revelations

The essential distinction between public interest and the interest of the government of the day seems to have been lost on the Attorney General. K.K. Venugopal's claim that documents pertaining to the purchase of Rafale jets published by the media, including this newspaper, have been "stolen" amounts to a definitive admission that they are genuine. The documentary evidence published so far indicates that "parallel parleys" held at the behest of the Prime Minister's Office undermined the Indian Negotiating Team's discussions with the French side; that internal questions had been raised about the absence of bank guarantees to hedge against possible default by the vendor; and that this had an adverse effect on the pricing of the 36 jets to be bought in fly-away condition. Few can doubt that these revelations advance the public interest, and have no impact on national security. The publication of the documents and news reports based on them constitute the legitimate exercise of the freedom of the press. The threat of a criminal investigation under the Official Secrets Act, 1923 (OSA) is disappointing, if not downright perverse. The government is also on weak legal ground when it claims the court should not rely on "stolen" documents while hearing petitions seeking a review of its judgment declining a probe into the Rafale deal. As the Bench, headed by Chief Justice of India Ranjan Gogoi, pointed out, the manner in which a document has been

procured is immaterial, if it is relevant to an adjudication. As one of the judges asked, can the government seek shelter behind the notion of national security if a corrupt practice had indeed taken place?

It is to the credit of successive governments that the OSA has rarely been used against the press. The law primarily targets officials entrusted with secret documents, codes and other material, but Section 5 criminalises voluntarily receiving and possessing such documents, if given to them in contravention of the Act. In a limited examination of this section, the Law Commission observed in a 1971 report that its wording was quite wide. However, it left it to the government to decide against prosecution, if the information leak did not materially affect the state's interest. There is undoubtedly a case for distinguishing between an act that helps the enemy or affects national security, and one that advances legitimate public interest. In times when information freedom is seen as salutary for democracy, laws such as the OSA should yield to the moral imperative behind the Right to Information Act. This reasoning is embedded in Section 8(2) of the RTI Act, which says that notwithstanding the provisions of the OSA, "a public authority may allow access to information, if public interest in disclosure outweighs the harm to the protected interests." The government should refrain from using its secrecy laws to contend with embarrassing media revelations. It would do well instead to respond responsibly to questions thrown up by the revelations.



WORD		MEANING	SYNONYMS
Probing	Adjective	Enquiring closely into something; searching.	
Censor	Verb	Examine a book, film, etc. Officially and delete the unacceptable parts of it.	cut, delete, delete parts of, redact, make cuts in, blue-pencil, unpublish
Embarrass	Verb	Cause (someone) to feel awkward, self-conscious, or ashamed.	hame, humiliate, make ashamed, demean, abash
Revelation	Noun	A surprising and previously unknown fact that has been disclosed to others	disclosure, surprising fact, divulgence, declaration, utterance, announcement, report, news, leak, avowal
Essential	Adjective	Absolutely necessary; extremely important.	crucial, necessary, key, vital, indispensable, needed, required, called for, requisite, important, all-important, vitally important,
Distinction	Noun	A difference or contrast between similar things or people.	difference, contrast, dissimilarity, dissimilitude, divergence, variance, variation
Pertain	Verb	Belong to something as a	belong to, be a part of, be an adjunct of,

		part, appendage, or accessory.	go along with, be included in
Amounts	Noun	A quantity of something, especially the total of a thing or things in number, size, value, or extent.	quantity, number, total, aggregate, sum, quota, group, size, mass, weight, volume, bulk, load, consignment
Definitive	Adjective	Done or reached decisively and with authority.	conclusive, final, ultimate
Parleys	Noun	A conference between opposing sides in a dispute, especially a discussion of terms for an armistice.	negotiation, talk, talks, meeting, conference, summit, discussion, dialogue, conclave, consultation, deliberation, colloquy
Behest	Noun	A person's orders or command.	instruction, bidding, request, requirement, wish, desire
Undermined	Verb	Lessen the effectiveness, power, or ability of, especially gradually or insidiously.	subvert, sabotage, threaten, weaken, compromise, diminish, reduce, impair, mar, spoil, ruin,
Hedge	Verb	Limit or qualify (something) by conditions or exceptions.	confine, restrict, limit, hinder, obstruct, impede, constrain, trap
Adverse	Adjective	Preventing success or development; harmful; unfavourable.	unfavourable, disadvantageous, inauspicious, unpropitious, unfortunate, unlucky, untimely
Impact	Noun	The action of one object coming forcibly into contact with another.	collision, crash, smash, clash, bump, bang, knock, jolt, thump, whack, thwack, slam, smack
Legitimate	Adjective	Conforming to the law or to rules	legal, lawful, licit, legalized, authorized, permitted, permissible, allowable, allowed, admissible, recognized, sanctioned, approved, licensed,
Downright	Adjective	(of something bad or unpleasant) utter; complete (used for emphasis)	complete, total, absolute, utter, thorough, perfect, out-and-out, outright, thoroughgoing, all-out, sheer, positive,
Perverse	Adjective	Awkward behaviour	awkward, contrary, difficult, unreasonable, uncooperative, unhelpful, obstructive, disobliging, unaccommodating, troublesome
Procured	Verb	Obtain (something), especially with care or effort.	obtain, acquire, get, find, come by, secure, pick up, get possession of
Immaterial	Adjective	Unimportant under the circumstances; irrelevant.	irrelevant, unimportant, inconsequential, insignificant, of no matter, of no moment
Adjudication	Noun	A formal judgement on a disputed matter	arbitration, refereeing, umpiring

Notion	Noun	A conception of or belief about something.	idea, belief, concept, conception, conviction, opinion, view, thought, impression, image, perception, mental picture
Successive	Adjective	Following one another or following others.	consecutive, in a row, straight, solid, sequential, succeeding, in succession, following, serial,
Possess	Verb	Have as belonging to one; own	own, have, be the owner of, have in one's possession, be in possession of, be the possessor of
Contravention	Noun	An action which offends against a law, treaty, or other ruling.	breach, violation, infringement, non-observance, breaking, transgression, neglect, dereliction
Prosecution	Noun	The institution and conducting of legal proceedings against someone in respect of a criminal charge.	indictment, accusation, denunciation, trial, charge, summons, citation
Undoubtedly	Adverb	Without doubt; certainly.	doubtless, indubitably, doubtlessly, no doubt, without doubt, without a doubt, beyond doubt,
Distinguishing	Adjective	Characteristic of one thing or person, so serving to identify it; distinctive.	
Salutary	Adjective	Producing good effects; beneficial.	beneficial, good, good for one, advantageous, profitable, productive, helpful, useful, of use, of service, valuable, worthwhile, practical
Imperative	Adjective	Of vital importance; crucial.	vitaly important, of vital importance, all-important, vital, crucial, critical, essential, of the essence, a matter of life and death, of great consequence
Notwithstanding	Adverb	Nevertheless; in spite of this.	nevertheless, nonetheless, even so, all the same, in spite of that, in spite of this, despite that, despite this, after everything, however, still, yet,
Disclosure	Noun	The action of making new or secret information known.	revelation, surprising fact, divulgence, declaration, announcement, news, report
Outweigh	Verb	Be heavier, greater, or more significant than.	exceed, prevail over, have the edge over, preponderate over, override
Refrain	Verb	Stop oneself from doing something.	abstain, desist, hold back, stop oneself, withhold