



THE HINDU

ANALYSIS

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THE HINDU ANALYSIS



22ND APRIL

BY PRASHANT MAVANI



IN ENGLISH





Keep the Faith. The most amazing things in life tend to happen right at the moment you're about to give up hope.

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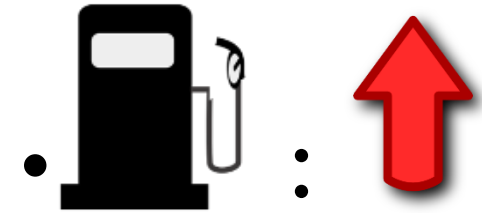
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Special Focus: Fuel Prices

- Global  prices: four-year high of \$75/barrel



- 2014: crash in world prices



- It is very tempting to return to subsidies and price controls to woo middle-class owners of two-wheelers and four-wheelers.



- Every **PM/CM** will do his/her best to woo voters before elections.
- **Cleverest**: well-packaged but minor freebies
- **Worst**: massive freebies, oblivious to long-term damage.
- **Fiscal Deficit** last year was **3.5%** of GDP, well short of the **3%** finance minister Arun Jaitley had **originally aimed** for. He **aims** to reduce this to **3.3%** this year and **3.1%** next year.



- This leaves **little** fiscal space for **giveaways**.

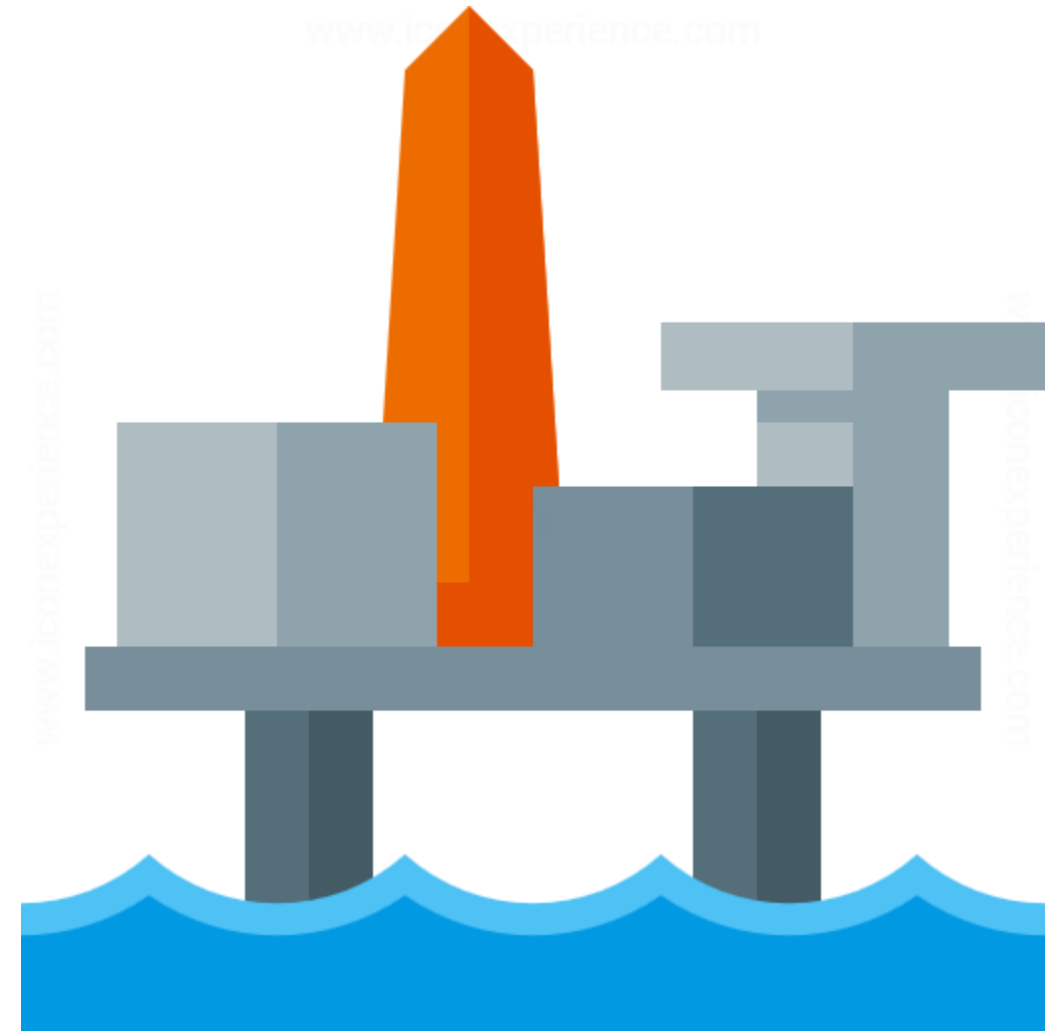


- **MSP** promise will fully occupy whatever is left.

- 2004: \$37/barrel

- 2008: \$140/barrel (**peak**)

- 2014: \$108/barrel



- To **cushion** the impact on consumers, the UPA government **slashed taxes** on crude, petrol and diesel, forced government oil companies to provide **massive implicit subsidies**, and added budgetary handouts.
- That once added up to over **Rs 100,000 crore/year**.
- **Chidambaram**: increasing the controlled price of diesel by small amounts every month, **pruning** the subsidy bill **gradually** without creating a political backlash.

- This **excellent strategy** was followed by Modi on attaining office.
- Soon afterwards, the price of oil fell so sharply that **no subsidy was needed**.
- The government **seized this opportunity** to decontrol the prices of petrol and diesel, and **partially restore taxes** on these that had earlier been slashed.
- Prices went up and down with market trends, without any **political backlash**.

- Chidambaram has tweeted that the BJP is anti-middle class. He says crude oil is down from **\$108/barrel in May 2014 to \$75/barrel** today, so **why** have Indian petrol and diesel prices risen in this period?
- **Answer:** elimination of **subsidies** and **tax cuts**
- **Decontrol has taken the politics out of pricing.**
- As long as petrol and diesel prices were government-controlled, an increase of even **Rs 3/litre evoked widespread protests.**

- Yet since 2014, prices have risen almost Rs 20/litre without provoking protests.
- Small increases spread over months are shrugged off by the public.
- When the government (rather than the market) sets the price of an item, vote banks scream murder at any price increase at all.
- 1965 steel was regulated and fuel was not.

- Fluctuation in oil prices was seen as market phenomenon but steel price fluctuation was seen as political decision.
- This pattern was **reversed** in the **2000s**, with steel getting decontrolled (and hence de-politicized) and oil getting controlled (and hence highly politicized).
- Events have proved the need to take politics out of oil pricing.
- **Return of control** means **return of headaches**.

Important News

- Cabinet approves death for rape of girls under 12 years
 - Criminal Law (Amendment) Ordinance increases minimum jail term to 20 years
 - In response to the outrage over recent cases of rapes in Kathua and Unnao the Union Cabinet on Saturday approved the promulgation of an Ordinance to provide death penalty for rapists of girls below 12 years, according to a senior government official.
 - The Criminal Law (Amendment) Ordinance provides for stringent punishment of a jail term of minimum 20 years or life imprisonment or death for rape of a girl under 12 years.

- An official of the Ministry of Women and Child Development said amendments would be made to the Indian Penal Code, the Criminal Procedure Code, the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act and the Indian Evidence Act.
- As per the ordinance, for the crime of rape of a girl under 16 years, minimum punishment has been increased from 10 years to 20 years, which can be extended to imprisonment for the rest of life. Minimum punishment for rape of women has also been increased from rigorous imprisonment of 7 years to 10 years, which can be extended to life imprisonment.

Stringent measures

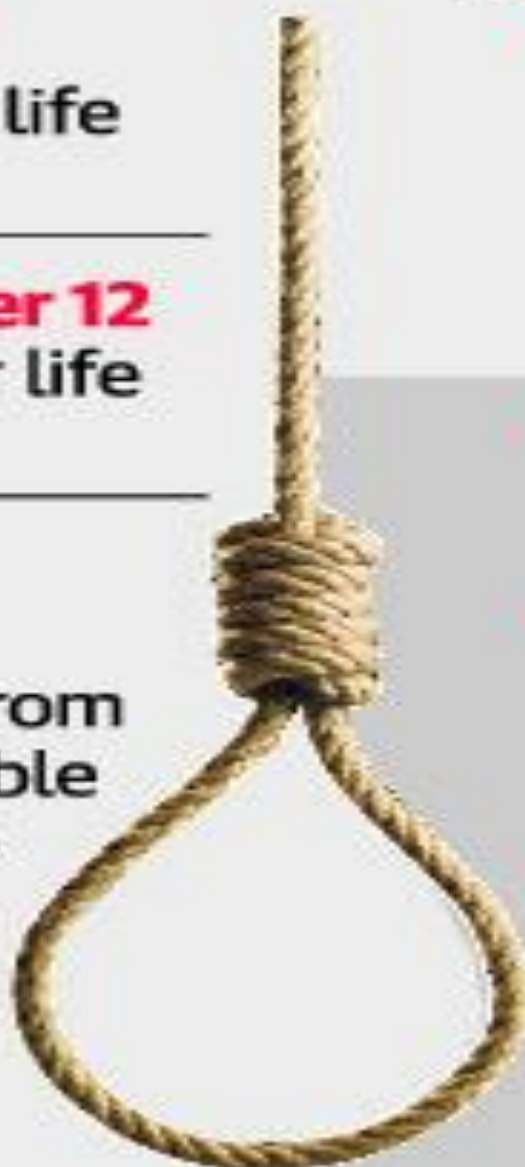
Key provisions in the Criminal Law (Amendment) Ordinance

Rape of a girl under 12 years: 20 years in jail or life imprisonment or death

Gang-rape of a girl under 12 years: Imprisonment for life or death

Rape of a girl under 16 years: Minimum punishment increased from 10 to 20 years, extendable to imprisonment for life

Gang-rape of a girl under 16 years: Imprisonment for life



Rape of women: Minimum punishment raised from imprisonment of 7 years to 10 years, extendable to life

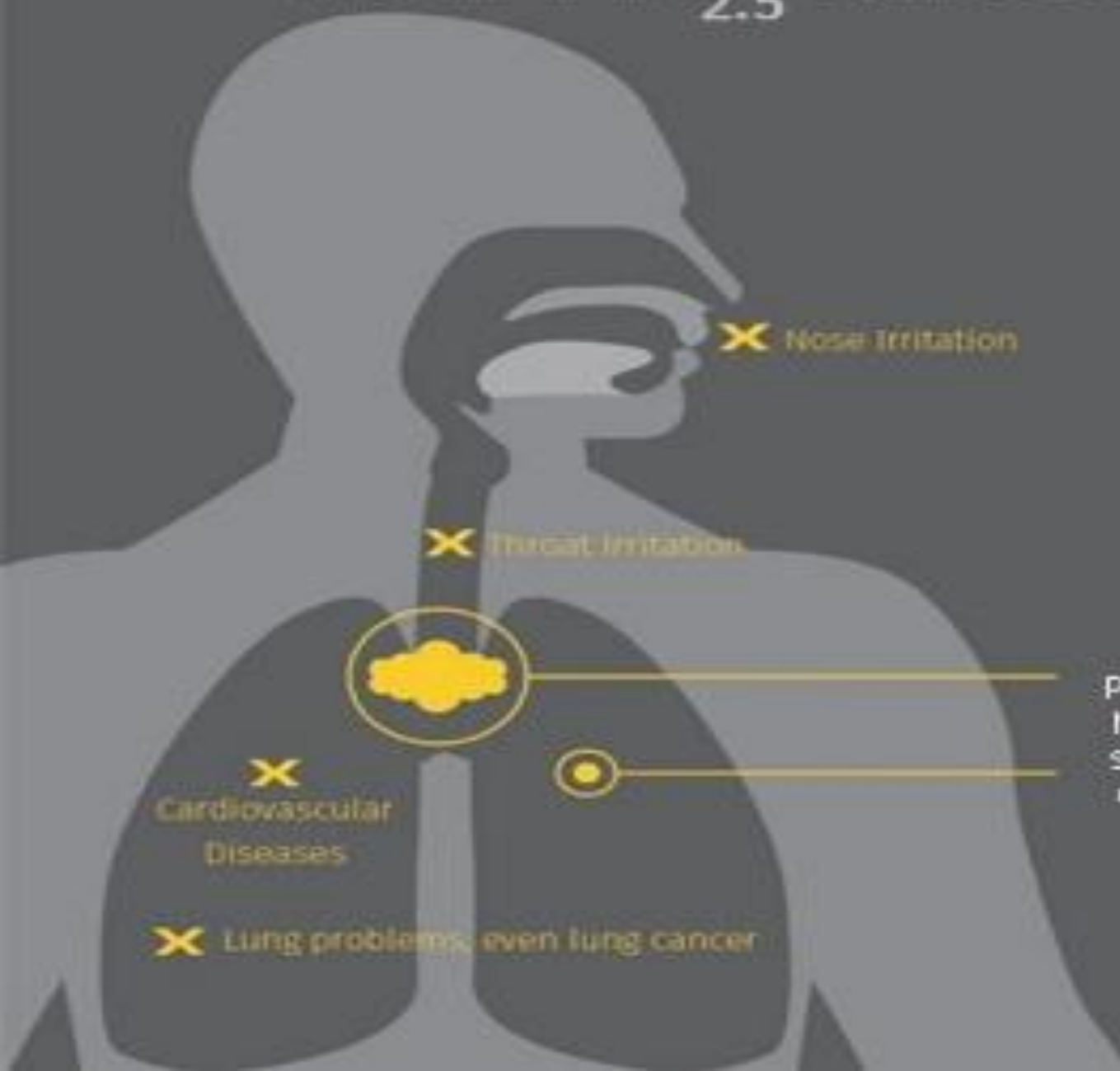
- Dedicated manpower for investigation of rape cases
- Probe and trial each to be completed in two months
- No anticipatory bail for accused in rape or gang-rape of a girl under 16 years

- **Fugitive Economic Offenders Ordinance cleared**
 - The Union Cabinet on Saturday approved the promulgation of the **Fugitive Economic Offenders Ordinance**, 2018, which would empower the government to **seize the domestic assets** of those deemed by a court to be fugitive economic offenders.
 - Based on inputs gathered from intelligence sources, investigating agencies have confirmed that diamond merchant Nirav Modi, wanted in the Rs13,578-crore Punjab National Bank (PNB) fraud cases, is still in Hong Kong and his whereabouts have been established.

• Plants butterflies depend on

- Before they become colourful nectar-feeding butterflies, caterpillars are voracious leaf-eaters.
- Scientists have compiled a list of 834 such plants that most butterfly caterpillars of the Western Ghats feed on, hoping this will aid ecological studies and butterfly conservation.
- The **Western Ghats is home to 336 butterfly species**. Their 'larval host plants' — plants that butterfly larvae or caterpillars feed on — range from common plants like the Indian curry leaf tree to rarer ones like the curled Aerides orchid found only in the southwestern tracts of the Ghats.
- The authors hope their list will highlight the diversity of plants on which butterfly species of the **Western Ghats depend; 48 species of butterflies are found nowhere else in the world**. The plants are also important because their decline can signal a decrease in butterfly diversity too, says Nitin. "**Endemic butterflies** like the **Malabar banded peacock**, **Kodagu forest hopper** and **Shiva sunbeam** which feed only on a single plant species would be more at risk," he adds.

How PM_{2.5} affects your health



X Nose Irritation

X Throat Irritation

X Cardiovascular Diseases

X Lung problems, even lung cancer

Human Hair

Fine Beach Sand



PM_{2.5} particles can travel deep into lungs and have long term health effects which include some respiratory disease, heart disease and cancer, can be severely debilitating or fatal.

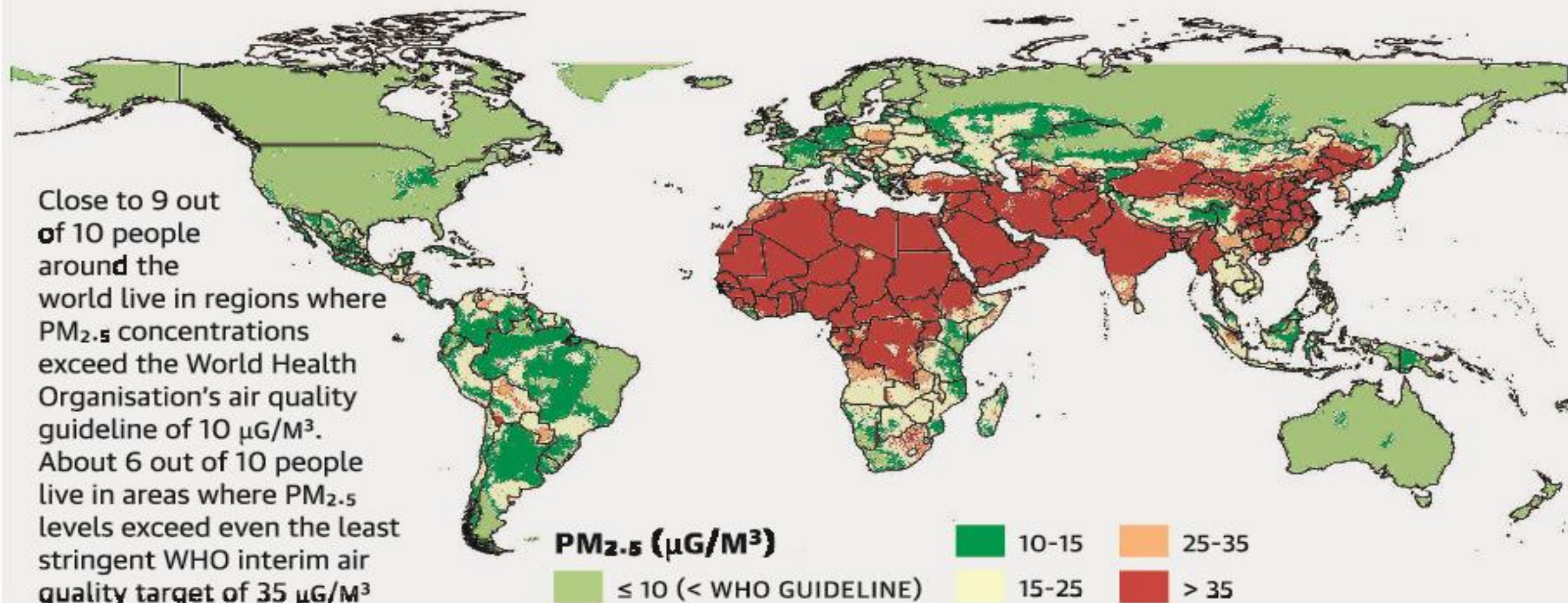
Purlife

Taking your breath away

Exposure to PM_{2.5} (fine particulate matter such as small dust or soot particles in the air) contributed to 4.1 million deaths worldwide from stroke, lung cancer, heart and chronic lung disease and respiratory infections in 2016, according to the State of Global Air Report 2018. It was the sixth leading cause of death worldwide

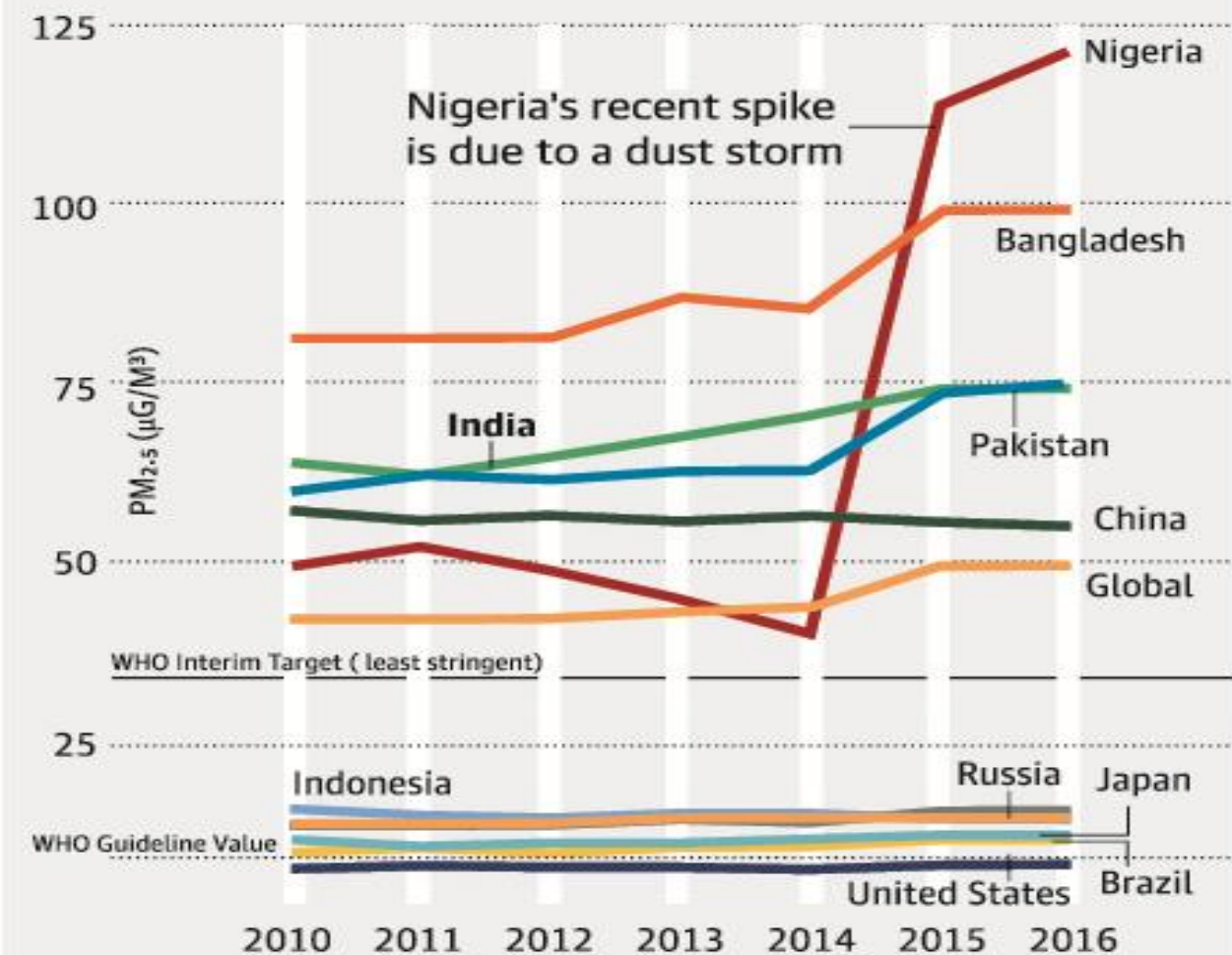
Unhealthy majority

Close to 9 out of 10 people around the world live in regions where PM_{2.5} concentrations exceed the World Health Organisation's air quality guideline of 10 $\mu\text{G}/\text{M}^3$. About 6 out of 10 people live in areas where PM_{2.5} levels exceed even the least stringent WHO interim air quality target of 35 $\mu\text{G}/\text{M}^3$



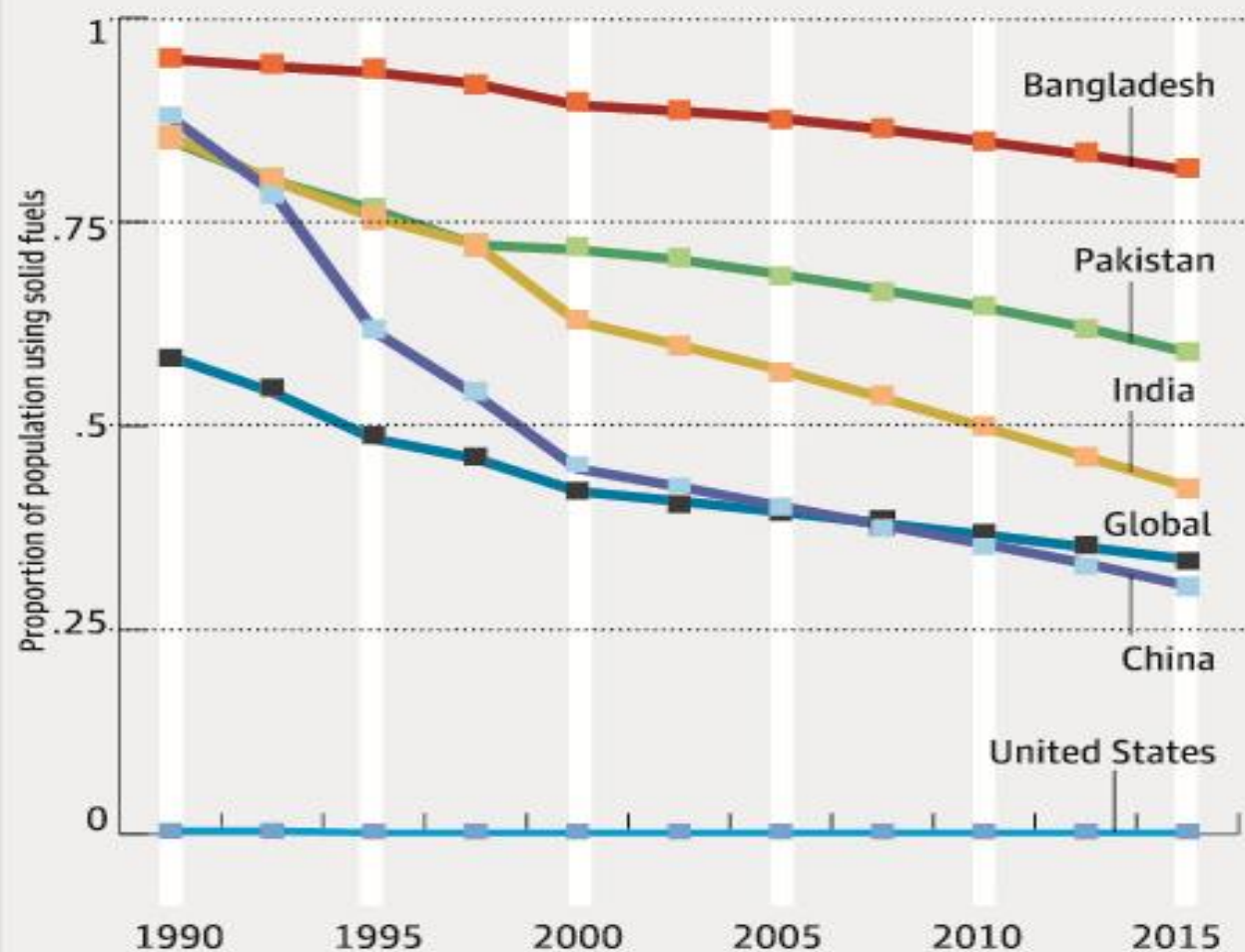
It's getting worse

China's pollution levels are on the decline while those in Pakistan, Bangladesh and India have seen the steepest increases since 2010. The chart plots trends in population-weighted annual average PM_{2.5} levels in the 10 most populous countries



People still using solid fuels

Those using solid fuels are exposed to PM_{2.5} levels about 20 times higher than the WHO guideline. While the proportion of population using solid fuels has dropped worldwide, the decline was steepest in China. In developed nations (including the U.S.), this proportion was negligible





Australian Government

Great Barrier Reef
Marine Park Authority

Great Barrier Reef Marine Park



AREA

344,400 km²

LENGTH

2300 km long

70 million
football fields

Roughly the
same area as...



ITALY



JAPAN



GERMANY



MALAYSIA

3000



coral reefs

600



continental islands

1625



types of fish

133



varieties of
sharks and rays

600



types of soft
and hard corals

- **Great Barrier Reef: 30 percent of the reef's coral died** in the heatwave from March to November 2016
- **World Heritage-listed** reef off Australia's northeastern coast.
- Coral which serve as habitats for other creatures, were particularly hard hit by the **rising sea temperatures** caused by global warming.
- Coral reefs make up **less than one percent of Earth's marine environment**, but are home to an estimated **25 percent of ocean life**, acting as nurseries for many species of fish.

Answers-

1. Which of the following statements are true?
 1. The direction of Canary current is North to South
 2. The direction of Benguela current is South to North
 3. The direction of North Atlantic drift is West to East
 4. The direction of Californian current is North to South

Choose the correct option

- A. 1 and 2
- B. 1,2 and 3
- C. 2, 3 and 4
- D. 1, 2, 3, 4**

Questions-

1. Will stringent laws prevent rapes in India. Discuss loopholes and provide suggestions.

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