

Minister promises clean Delhi air in three years

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A top Indian minister has made an ambitious promise that the government will clean New Delhi's toxic air in the next three years.

The World Health Organization ranks New Delhi as the world's most polluted capital, with the 20 million residents breathing air way above danger limits for most of the year.

Transport and [water resources](#) minister Nitin Gadkari, plunged into a tense election campaign, vowed the megacity will be pollution free in three years because of measures the government has taken.

"Our government has done 100 per cent corruption-free, transparent, time-bound, result-oriented and quality work and that is why Delhi will be free of air and [water pollution](#) in the next three years," Gadkari told an election-campaign press conference late Thursday.

"This is my promise to you," he said, speaking at the headquarters of the ruling conservative Bharatiya Janata Party.

Gadkari said the government plans to spend more than \$7 billion on infrastructure around the capital that would cut pollution by more than 30 percent. Two of the highways on the list are already open however.

Cars and trucks account for about 20 percent of the deadly PM2.5 particles in the city air that are blamed for heart and [respiratory diseases](#).

Most of the spike in PM2.5—particles so tiny they can enter the lungs and bloodstream—comes from unregulated construction and road dust that peaks in winter months, blanketing the city in a poisonous smog.

On Friday, pollution levels in Delhi were "severe", with the volume of harmful particles seven times above UN safe limits.

India's air pollution crisis has worsened in recent years, with 14 Indian cities among the world's 15 most polluted, according to a UN list.

Studies say the pollution causes hundreds of thousands of premature deaths each year.

India is holding a national election, but most political parties are sidestepping talk of air pollution. Delhi is to vote in Sunday's penultimate round of voting.

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