Worsening Air Pollution

Why in news?

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A new study of global air pollution finds out that India is surpassing China's as the deadliest polluting country in the world.

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What are the findings of the study?

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- About 1.1 million people are dying prematurely each year because of India's rapidly worsening air pollution.
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- The number of premature deaths in India caused by Particulate Matter - PM2.5 (tiny particles or droplets that are 2.5 microns or less in width), has risen sharply in India.
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- India has also registered a **50% increase in premature deaths** from Particulate Matter (PM) between 1990 and 2015.
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- The confluence of rapid industrialisation and population growth are cited as major reasons. And India had **yet to undertake sustained public policy initiative** to reduce pollution.
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- Study also reported that the air pollution has worsened in many parts of the world, including South Asia, but, it has improved in the U.S. and Europe owing to the policies enacted to curb emissions.
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- The particles that are released from vehicles, industry, as well as from natural sources, enter the bloodstream through the lungs and causes cardiac disease, increases the risk of stroke and heart failure and also causes asthma and pneumonia.
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Has the report cited any progess?

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- Although death by air pollution grew to 4.2 million in 2015 from 3.5 million in 1990, **the rate of increase was slower than the rate of the population rise** during that time.
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- It is because of improved healthcare in many parts of the world, as well as public policy initiatives undertaken that reduced emissions from industrialisation.
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- China also offers an encouraging sign. Premature deaths from particulate matter have stabilised at around 1.1 million since 2005.
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Why the situation is worsening in India?

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- **Weak environmental regulation** in India leaves India's citizens with few alternatives other than to petition the courts to take action.
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- But the courts often lack the power or mechanisms to enforce their actions.
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- In 2015, the National Green Tribunal, ordered farmers to stop burning their crops in the region around New Delhi. But the practice still continues.
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- Smoke from the farm fires also contributed about $1/4^{th}$ of the levels of the most dangerous air pollution in the Indian capital.
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Source: The Hindu

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