



NB: This is not a word-for-word transcript

**Rob:** Hello I'm Rob. Welcome to 6 Minute English. I'm joined today by Finn. Hello Finn.

**Finn:** Hello Rob.

**Rob:** In this programme we're talking about a serious problem that has been affecting some of the big cities in China: that's **air pollution**.

**Finn:** Yes, or better known as **smog**. Smog is polluted air that is a mixture of smoke and fog. I've experienced this in Shanghai and it's not a nice thing to breathe in.

**Rob:** It certainly isn't good for your health. We'll talk more about this soon and explain some pollution-related vocabulary. But let's start with a question for you, Finn. According to research by the World Health Organisation, which country has the city with the world's worst air pollution? Is it:

- a) China
- b) India
- c) Iran

**Finn:** Well, I think it definitely used to be China. I'm going to say it's still China.

**Rob:** We'll find out if you are right later on. Let's talk more now about the pollution problem which is **choking** – or making it difficult to breathe in – many Chinese cities.

**Finn:** Pollution is a word that can describe anything that damages something that is pure. So light pollution is when a pure dark sky is **contaminated** – or spoiled by street lights and lights in the city.

**Rob:** And noise pollution is when loud or annoying sounds like traffic noise spoil a quiet and peaceful environment. But the smog affecting Chinese cities is a form of air pollution – clean air has become dirty.

**Finn:** Yes. Well, smog used to be a problem in other world cities like London, where a combination of fog and smoke from factories and trains sometimes made the air quite dirty and dangerous.

**Rob:** Yes, sometimes the air was so dirty and so thick they described it as a '**pea-souper**' – meaning as thick as pea soup!

**Finn:** A 'pea-souper' – that's good isn't it! In Los Angeles, **fumes** – that's the bad gases from car engines – and poor weather conditions used to cause poor air quality. But now, new laws and a change in technology mean the air in these cities is cleaner and safer. So, Rob, why is it bad in China now?

**Rob:** Well Finn, China is becoming more **industrialised**. That means more factories are being built, and more electricity is needed, and that often comes from coal-fired power stations. And of course, more people are driving cars.

**Finn:** Yes they are. Well, at certain times last year, the air was so **poisonous** in Shanghai that children were not allowed outside and schools were closed.

**Rob:** Generally, the air is a threat to public health. It's particularly bad for people with **asthma** – and it could lead to lung cancer. In the capital Beijing, pollution regularly goes over the safety limits set by the World Health Organization (WHO). So what can be done?

**Finn:** Well, the BBC's David Shukman has been investigating the problem and found that the Chinese authorities are spending £180 billion on cleaning up the air. See if you can hear what the two main things are that they're trying to do in Beijing:

**David Shukman, BBC Science Editor:**

*Well first, they're closing down any power stations within the city that burn coal, that's the biggest source of pollution; next they're trying to limit road traffic – greener cars will get priority. And officials say they're confident they can clean up.*

**Rob:** So the plan is to close down coal-fired power stations because they are the source – or the place where most of the pollution comes from.

**Finn:** Yes, and the other plan is to limit – to set a maximum amount of – traffic on the roads. **Greener** cars will be allowed on the roads first – they will have priority.

**Rob:** Of course 'greener' isn't referring to the colour of the car, Finn – it's a term to describe something that causes less pollution and is better for the environment.

**Finn:** So these are the cars that use less fuel or might use cleaner fuel that has less particles in it that usually make the air dirty. Officials believe that this green technology will clean up the air.

**Rob:** China is also going to use more **renewable energy** – this is power made by natural materials that never get used up, such as wind and water. This would reduce air pollution caused by burning coal.

**Finn:** Yes, well of course, all these changes will take a long time. But Rob, it's time now for you to tell me the answer to today's question.

**Rob:** Yes, earlier I asked you, according to research by the World Health Organisation, which country has the city with the world's worst air pollution?

**Finn:** I thought it was a) China.

**Rob:** You did but the answer is Iran.

**Finn:** Is it now?! Which city?

**Rob:** Apparently the city of Ahwaz. Now, before we go, Finn, could you remind us of some of the vocabulary that we've heard today?

**Finn:** OK. We had:  
**air pollution**  
**smog**  
**choking**  
**contaminated**  
**pea-souper**  
**fumes**  
**industrialised**  
**poisonous**  
**asthma**  
**greener**  
**renewable energy**

**Rob:** Well, that brings us to the end of today's 6 Minute English. We hope you've enjoyed today's programme. Please join us again soon.

**Finn:** Please do.

**Rob:** Bye bye.

**Finn:** Bye.

## Vocabulary and definitions

air pollution	particles that make the air dirty and difficult to breathe
smog	mixture of smoke, gases, chemicals and fog
choking	(here) preventing people from breathing properly
contaminated	made dirty or less pure
pea-souper	a slang term used to describe poor quality air that is difficult to see in
fumes	strong-smelling and dangerous gas
industrialised	having lots of heavy industry
poisonous	very harmful and could cause death
asthma	medical condition that makes it hard to breathe
greener	(here) better for the environment
renewable energy	power made from natural resources that never get used up

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