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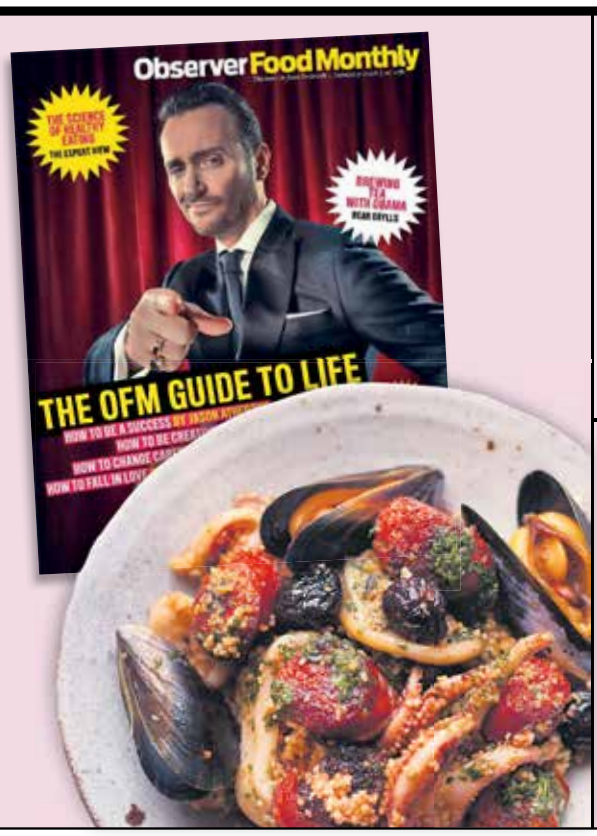

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By Debbie Harry, Julien Temple and more

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The Observer

Shock figures to reveal deadly toll of global air pollution

- It's a health emergency – UN body
- Crisis influences Heathrow decision

by John Vidal and Toby Helm

The World Health Organisation today issues a stark new warning about deadly levels of pollution in many of the world's biggest cities, claiming poor air quality is killing millions and threatening to overwhelm health services across the globe.

Before the release next month of figures that will show air pollution has worsened since 2014 in hundreds of already blighted urban areas, the WHO says there is now a global "public health emergency" that will have untold financial implications for governments.

The latest data, taken from 2,000 cities, will show further deterioration in many places as populations have grown, leaving large areas under clouds of smog created by a mix of transport fumes, construction dust, toxic gases from power generation and wood burning in homes.

The toxic haze blanketing cities could be clearly seen last week from the international space station. Last week it was also revealed that several streets in London had exceeded their annual limits for nitrogen dioxide emissions just a few days into 2016.

"We have a public health emergency in many countries from pollution. It's dramatic, one of the biggest problems we are facing globally, with horrible future costs to society," said Maria Neira, head of public health at the WHO, which is a specialist agency of the United Nations. "Air pollution leads to chronic diseases which require hospital space. Before, we knew that pollution was responsible for diseases like pneumonia and asthma. Now we know that it leads to bloodstream, heart and cardiovascular diseases, too – even dementia. We are storing up problems. These are chronic diseases that require hospital beds. The cost will be enormous."

Last week David Cameron, whose government has been accused of dragging its feet over air pollution and is

ON OTHER PAGES

Dark cloud of smog poisons world's cities
In Focus special, 30–31

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Stuart Broad took six wickets for 17 runs in Johannesburg as England crushed South Africa by seven wickets to win the Test series with one match to play. Rex/Shutterstock

Six-wicket hero Broad lays waste to South Africa

by Rob Smyth

Bliss it was yesterday to be alive, but to be an English cricket fan was very heaven. England dethroned the world's number one team, South Africa, with a crushing win in the third Test in Johannesburg that secured a series victory with a match to spare.

It is the first time since 1968 that England have beaten the world's top side away from home.

Fast bowler Stuart Broad added to an already outstanding portfolio of match-winning performances by taking six wickets for 17 runs as South Africa were dismissed for 83, their lowest score in a home Test for 59 years. Yesterday's afternoon session, when Broad rampaged through their batting line-up with a spell of five wickets for one run, was among the most exhilarating in England's modern history.

In the evening session, England cruised to their winning target of 74 with the loss of three wickets.

"It's one of those days we'll look back on for a very long time," said the England captain, Alastair Cook. "I'm very lucky to captain this side. It has been a great tour and the lads can be really proud of what they've achieved. The director of cricket, Andrew Strauss, has told us to have a big one tonight, so we're going to."

ON OTHER PAGES

How Broad put South Africa to the sword
Full report and analysis, Sport, 2–3

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