…is not just the name of a terrific volume of short stories by Murzban Shroff (mandatory reading if you come here): it is a condition that most residents here deal with daily. But the government is actually beginning to do something about it, which should be highly embarrassing to their US counterparts.

This is a city full of taxicabs — 55,000 of them. Municipal regulations mandate that every cab use CNG fuel, and as far as I can tell, the taxis actually abide by it. (~~The buses still use diesel, which is typically Indian: make the private sector do something that the public sector doesn't have to do.~~). CORRECTION: See update below.

Which raises a question: if they can do this is Bombay, is there any reason why every taxicab in the United States — and in fact every bus — shouldn't be on CNG? The health and pollution benefits would be enormous: as my UCLA colleague Arthur Winer has demonstrated, children's exposure just from riding diesel buses to school has potentially devastating health impacts. And no, it's no excuse to say it would be too expensive: 85% of the Indian population lives on less than $2 a day. If they can do it with taxis, we should be able to do even more.

Americans like to tell other countries what to do. Maybe we can learn from other countries once in a while.

UPDATE: After investigating it further, I have learned that all the public buses are also running on CNG (some of the private ones do not). So there is something else that the Indians have on us.