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# India tops in under-5 deaths due to toxic air, 60,000 killed in 2016: WHO

## 'Air Pollution Killed Over 1L Children In '16'

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New Delhi: India's toxic air has been linked to the premature deaths of close to 1,10,000 children in 2016, with the country witnessing highest number of deaths of children under five years of age attributed to their exposure to ambient air pollution of particulate matter (PM) 2.5, said a World Health Organisation (WHO) report released on the eve of the first-ever conference on air pollution and health.

As many as 60,987 children of under five years of age in India died because of their exposure to PM 2.5, followed by Nigeria with 47,674 deaths, Pakistan with 21,136 deaths and Democratic Republic of Congo with 12,890 deaths.

In India, the death rate for this age bracket is 50.8 per 1,00,000 children with more girls under the age of five dying than boys due to pollution. About 32,889 girls died, compared to 28,097 boys in 2016, according to the report.

Between five and 14 years, India saw the deaths of 4,360 children attributed to ambi-

## AIR POLLUTION: HEALTH EMERGENCY FOR CHILDREN

### IN INDIA IN 2016

Deaths of children under 5 yrs of age linked to ambient pollution of PM 2.5 **60,987**

Death rate of children due to exposure to pollution **50.8/1,00,000**

About **32,889** girls under 5 yrs of age and **28,097** boys in the same age group died due to ambient pollution

Between five to 14 years age, India saw deaths of **4,360 children**



Across both these age groups, **over 1 lakh** children died in India due to both ambient and household pollution of PM 2.5 in 2016

Over **2 million** deaths occur prematurely in India due to pollution, accounting for 25% of the global deaths due to air pollution

### GLOBALLY

➤ Over 90% of the world's children (1.8 billion) breathe toxic air every day

➤ In 2016, 6 lakh children are estimated to have died from acute lower respiratory infections caused by foul air

➤ In low and middle income countries, 98% of children under five are exposed to PM 2.5 pollution

➤ In high income countries, this number nearly half at 52%

ent air pollution in 2016. Across both these age groups, over 1 lakh children died in India due to both ambient and household pollution of particulate matter 2.5 in 2016. Particulate matter 2.5 or PM 2.5 are fine dust particles in air which are considered highly harmful for health.

The report, titled 'Air Pollution and Child Health—Prescribing clean air', seeks to caution against the rising levels of pollution causing growing burden of diseases as well as deaths.

Over 2 million deaths oc-

cur prematurely in India due to pollution, accounting for 25% of the global deaths due to air pollution.

Globally, every day around 93% of children under the age of 15 years (1.8 billion children) breathe air that is so polluted it puts their health and development at serious risk. WHO estimates that in 2016, 6,00,000 children died from acute lower respiratory infections caused by polluted air.

While in low and middle income countries, 98% of children under five are said to be exposed to PM 2.5, in high in-

come countries, this number is almost half at 52%. The report also highlights adverse impact of pollution on pregnant women and children. Pregnant women, exposed to polluted air, are more likely to give birth prematurely, and have small, low birth-weight children, the report says.

"Air pollution is stunting our children's brains, affecting their health in more ways than we suspected," said Dr Maria Neira, director, department of public health, environmental and social determinants of health at WHO.

## Report: Delhi, Odisha, UP among world's NO<sub>2</sub> hotspots

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Hyderabad: Delhi, Odisha and the Uttar Pradesh-Madhya Pradesh region are among the top 50 global hotspots for NO<sub>2</sub> emissions, environmental watchdog 'Greenpeace' said on Monday after analysing new satellite data.

NO<sub>2</sub> is a dangerous pollutant that impacts human health. The satellite data was gathered from European Space Agency's Sentinel 5P satellite recorded between June and August 2018. Coal and vehicular emissions were identified as the two principal sources of NO<sub>2</sub>.

Greenpeace said toxic clouds hover over parts of Secunderabad and Hyderabad, Vijayawada, Vishakapatnam, Ramagundam in the two Telugu states. While the toxic clouds over the twin cities is due to vehicular pollution, in Vijayawada and Vizag it is due to vehicular pollution and presence of thermal plants while in Ramagundam it is due to thermal plants alone.

Ramagundam in Telangana has a Red Spot because of the highest level of NO<sub>2</sub> thickness measured in Dobson units because of the presence of thermal plants there. The high presence of toxic clouds in Vishakapatnam and Atchutapuram is due to the presence of Vizag thermal power station, Simhadri power station and Vizag steel power plant, while in Vijayawada, it is due to Dr Narla Thermal power Plant. Ramagundam has very high NO<sub>2</sub> clouds because of the thermal plants at Ramagundam, Paloncha and Kothagudem.

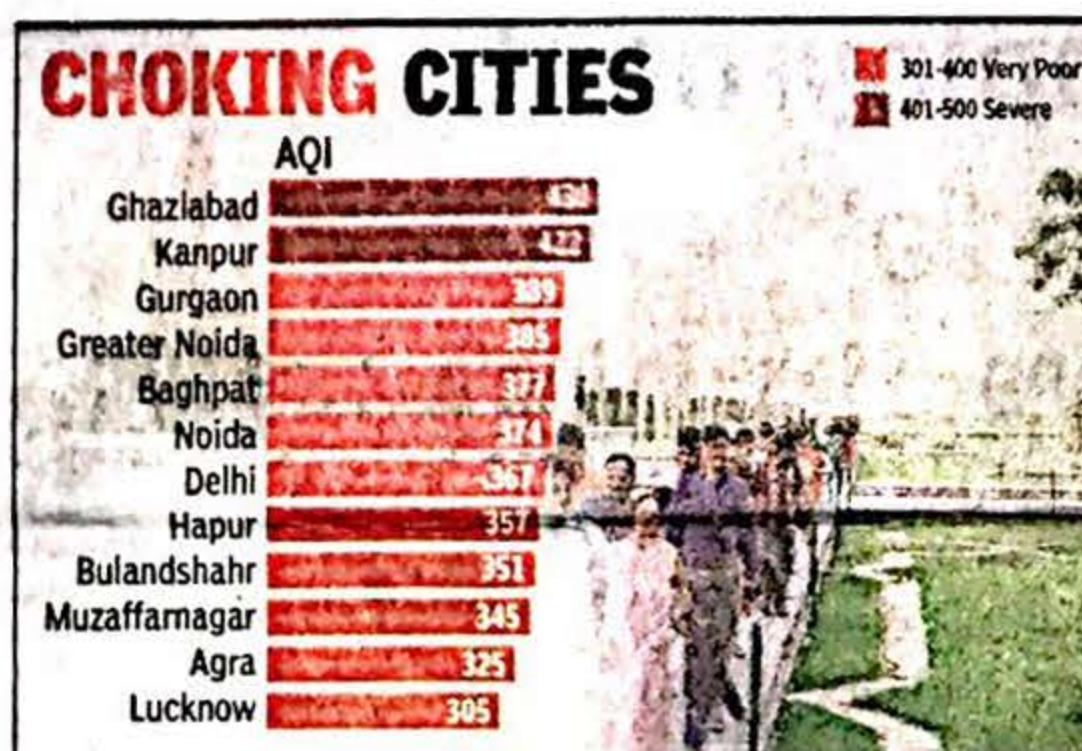
Former joint environmental chief scientist of Telangana Pollution Control Board Dr P Veeranna told TOI, "NO<sub>2</sub> pollution is caused due to vehicular pollution. The concentration of nitrogen dioxide depends on the wind direction too. In Hyderabad, we don't have other sources except for vehicular emissions. The boiler units of drug industries are small compared to thermal power plants."

## 10 UP cities among India's most-polluted

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Lucknow: In an alarming reflection of poor air quality in Uttar Pradesh, 10 out of 12 most polluted cities of the country on Monday were from UP. In all these cities, the air quality was monitored to be 'severe' or 'very poor'. In the dubious list on Monday, barring Delhi and Gurgaon, all other cities are from the state.

According to the air quality monitoring data released by the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) on Monday, the pollution levels in nine UP cities had crossed 350 and were recorded as high as 430. The two cities from the state had crossed an alarming level of 400, making the air quality fall in 'severe' category of the CPCB, which means exposure to such air severely affects healthy people and seriously impacts



those with existing diseases. At 430, Ghaziabad had the poorest Air Quality Index (AQI), followed by Kanpur with an AQI of 422. The two cities figured in the 'severe' air quality which leads to an emergency health situation.

On the other hand, 10 cities of the state figured in 'very poor' air quality category

which means prolonged exposure to such air can lead to respiratory illness. "UP has the most polluted cities in the country due to heavy construction activities following major project works being carried out in most of the cities. The absence of green belt and addition of around lakhs of vehicle on the roads every year in

the main cities of the state is responsible for the poor air," said Alok Dhawan, the director of Indian Institute of Toxicology and Research.

He said the situation of the state capital where the AQI levels had been above 300 for six consecutive days and cities like Kanpur where it was above 400 thrice in the previous week, presents a sorry state of the air quality in UP cities. The national capital has been struggling with toxic air for the past two weeks but it was left behind by six other cities from UP.

Prof Dhruv Sen Singh, the director of Lucknow University's air quality monitoring station said: "There is an urgent need for policy-making at the government's end to keep a tab on the high pollution levels in the state. There is not one but multiple factors behind the bad air."