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## HEALTH ALARM

# India sees highest pollution-related deaths of children

**WHO REPORT** 100,000 children below five died in 2016 due to health complications associated with air pollution



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**NEW DELHI:** India recorded the highest number of air pollution-induced deaths of children below five years in 2016, according to a World Health Organization (WHO) report that analysed the impact of toxic air on the health of children in 194 countries.

At least 100,000 children below five years died that year in the country due to health complications associated with high outdoor and indoor air pollution, according to the report titled 'Air Pollution and Child Health' released in Geneva on Monday.

Nigeria (98,001), Pakistan (38,252), Democratic Republic of Congo (32,647) and Ethiopia (20,330) followed India, completing the list of the worst five countries in child mortality in the study.

Death rates, or the ratio of deaths to population during a particular period, were higher in these four countries than that of India.

Of the countries surveyed, India recorded the highest premature deaths among chil-

## Silent killer among us

Death rates of children below five years of age in 2016 due to exposure to outdoor and indoor PM2.5 pollutants:

	Deaths of children below 5 years	Deaths/100,000
India	101,788	84.8
Nigeria	98,001	308.2
Pakistan	38,252	153.2
DR Congo*	32,647	225.2
Ethiopia	20,330	134

■ WHO study finds India has one of the highest death rates due to acute lower respiratory infections among children below 5 years due to outdoor air pollution. India's rates are comparable with that of Sub-Saharan Africa

■ Globally, the five leading causes of deaths of children below 5 years are: premature birth, respiratory infections, intrapartum-related complications and congenital anomalies

■ Premature birth is the only factor that kills more children in this age group than them being affected by acute respiratory infections

Source: Air Pollution and Child Health report by WHO \*Democratic Republic of Congo

dren under five years due to outdoor air pollution in 2016 and the second highest number of deaths due to exposure from indoor air pollution — only after Nigeria.

About 98% of the children in that age group in India are exposed to PM2.5 levels that exceed WHO's annual stan-

dard of 25 micrograms per cubic metres. PM2.5 pollutants are particulate matters that have a diameter of less than 2.5 micrometers.

These tiny particles are so fine that they can enter the bloodstream and lodge deep into the lungs.

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