



## State of Global Air 2020: HEI

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### Why in News

Recently, a global study, **State of Global Air 2020** (SoGA 2020) has been released by the **Health Effects Institute (HEI)**.

- It highlights that **air pollution is the largest risk factor for death** among all health risks and it is the **first-ever comprehensive analysis of air pollution's global impact on newborns**.
- HEI is an **independent, nonprofit research institute** funded jointly by the USA's Environmental Protection Agency and others.

### Key Points

- **India, Bangladesh, Pakistan and Nepal** are among the top ten countries with the **highest PM2.5 (particulate matter) exposures in 2019** and all of these countries experienced increases in outdoor PM2.5 levels between 2010 and 2019.
- **India is also among the top ten countries with highest ozone ( $O_3$ ) exposure in 2019.** Also, **among the 20 most populous countries, India recorded the highest increase (17%) in  $O_3$  concentrations** in the past ten years.
- **Long-term exposure to outdoor and household (indoor) air pollution** contributed to over 1.67 million annual deaths from stroke, heart attack, **diabetes**, lung cancer, chronic lung diseases, and **neonatal diseases**, in **India in 2019**.
- **Important Government Initiatives:**
  - **Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana** (Household LPG programme).
  - **National Clean Air Programme.**
  - Introduction of **BS-VI** emission standards.
  - Implementation of the **Graded Response Action Plan** (GRAP).

- **Infant Related Data:**

- High PM contributed to the **deaths of more than 1,16,000 Indian infants** who did not survive their first month.

Infants in the first month of life are already at a **vulnerable stage** and a growing body of scientific evidence-supported studies in India indicates that **particulate air pollution exposure during pregnancy is linked to low birth weight and preterm birth.**

- More than half of these deaths were associated with **outdoor PM2.5** and others were linked to the **use of solid fuels such as charcoal, wood, and animal dung for cooking.**

Although there has been a **slow and steady reduction in household reliance on poor-quality fuels**, the air pollution from these fuels continues to be a key factor in the deaths of these youngest infants.

- **Significance of the Study:**

Addressing impacts of air pollution on adverse pregnancy outcomes and newborn health is **important for low- and middle-income countries**, not only because of the high prevalence of low birth weight, preterm birth, and child growth deficits but because it **allows the design of strategic interventions** that can be directed at these vulnerable groups.

- **Air Pollution and Covid-19:**

- Although the link between air pollution and **Covid-19** is not completely established, there is **clear evidence linking air pollution and increased heart and lung disease.**
- Also, there is growing **concern that exposure to high levels of air pollution during winter months** in South Asian countries and East Asia could **exacerbate the effects of Covid-19.**

- **Current Pollution Status:**

- **Average pollution levels in India are declining** over the past three years but these have been **marginal**, particularly in the **Indo-Gangetic plains which see extremely high PM pollution especially during winter.**
- After a **decline in pollution due to the nationwide lockdowns** after March, pollution levels are again rising and **air quality is dipping to the 'very poor' category** in several cities.

Source: IE