Global Burden of Disease report

Why in news?

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Global Burden of Disease report was recently published by The Lancet Planetary Health journal.

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What does the report say?

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- India, which accounts for 18% of the global population, recorded 26% of the global premature deaths and disease burden due to air pollution.
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- One in every eight deaths in India (2017) could be attributed to air pollution, which now contributes to more disease burden than smoking.
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- The states which recorded the highest exposure to particulate matter PM 2.5 were Delhi, Haryana and Punjab.
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- The disease burden associated with air pollution in India includes ischaemic heart disease, stroke, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and lung cancer.
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- The average life expectancy in India would have been 1.7 years higher if the air pollution levels were less than the minimal level causing health loss.
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- Also, no state in India had an average exposure norm of less than 10 micrograms per cubic metre for PM 2.5 as recommended by WHO.
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- The recommended limit set by the National Ambient Air Quality Standards of India is higher than WHO limit at 40 micrograms per cubic metre.
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- Even then, 77% of India’s population was exposed to mean PM 2.5 more than the recommended limit.
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What are the measures needed?

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- Stubble-burning and the use of solid fuels in households serve as the two major sources of pollution.
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- **Agricultural field** - The Centre should work with Punjab and Haryana to ensure that the machinery already distributed to farmers and cooperatives to handle agricultural waste is in place and working.
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- A mechanism for rapid collection of farm residues and new approaches to recovering value from biomass has to be instituted.
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- **Pollution – rural** - The potential of domestic biogas units, solar cookers and improved biomass cook stoves has to be explored, since they impose no additional expenditure on rural and less affluent households.
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- **Pollution – urban** - Fuels may be relatively cleaner today and vehicles better engineered to cut emissions, but traffic densities in cities have led to a rise in pollution.
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- Thus, real-time measurement of pollution using ground-level monitoring stations for PM2.5 should be explored.
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- **Global experience** - According to the WHO database of air pollution, 14 of the 15 cities with the worst air pollution in the world are in India.
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- India should learn from the experience in controlling high pollution levels in the cities of Mexico City and Beijing.
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- **Focus** - High pollution levels do not necessarily translate into a high disease burden.
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- For example, Delhi has high ambient air pollution level but the number of deaths are comparatively lower.
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- Hence, the country need to pay greater attention to the people living in the worst-affected States of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan and Jharkhand.
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- These are the regions with low social development, which still relies on solid fuels for cooking and engaging in stubble-burning and hence need more

attention.
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Source: The Hindu, The Indian Express

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