Lancet report - India’s pollution problem.

Why in news?

The Lancet Planetary Health journal has published a recent report namely ‘Pollution and health: a progress update’

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What are the other findings?

- The effect of pollution on disease and disability varies by sex.
- Men are more likely to die from exposure to ambient air pollution, lead pollution, and occupational pollutants than women.
- Women and children are more likely to die from exposure to water pollution than men.
- Pollution is also responsible for more deaths than war, terrorism, malaria, HIV, tuberculosis, drugs, and alcohol.
- Pollution kills almost the same number of people as smoking.
- The WHO has lowered its global air quality guideline value for PM2.5 from 10 µg/m3 (microgram per cubic metre) to 5 µg/m3.

What are the other findings with respect to India?

- PM2.5 pollution is well above WHO guidelines in 93% of areas in India.
- India’s toxic air is a major cause for concern, especially in north India where air pollution peaks during winter months.
- As per the 2021 World Air Quality Report by Swiss-based IQAir, 35 of the 50 cities with the most toxic air were in India.
- New Delhi was found to be the most polluted capital city in the world for the fourth consecutive year.

What will be the economic impact of pollution?

- Deaths due to pollution have led to economic losses totalling $4.6 trillion in 2019. This is equivalent to 6.2% of global economic output.
- In East Asia and the Pacific losses due to air pollution are equivalent to 9·3% of GDP. In South Asia it is 10·3% of GDP.
- This is calculated by considering the output lost when a person dies prematurely.
- When a fatality occurs before the average age of death in a population, it is termed as a premature death. In India, the average life expectancy at birth in 2019 was 69.5 years for men and 72 years for women. It came down to 67.5 years and 69.8 years, respectively, in 2020.
- In India, economic losses due to modern forms of pollution like ambient particulate matter air pollution, and lead exposure have increased between 2000 and 2019. It is approximately 1% of GDP.

How to prevent pollution-related deaths?

- Affected countries should focus their resources on addressing the key issues in modern pollution namely air pollution, lead pollution, and chemical pollution.
- A massive rapid transition to wind and solar energy will reduce ambient air pollution in addition to slowing down climate change.
- Better monitoring, better reporting and stronger government systems regulating industries and automobiles must be enforced.

Reference

1. https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/india-pollution-lancet-analysis-report-premature-deaths-explained/article65429956.ece?homepage=true

