World Air Quality Report 2025

Prelims: *Current events of national and international importance | Environment*

Why in News?

India was ranked as the sixth most polluted country globally in the World Air Quality Report 2025 released by IQAir.

Global Context

- **Report Coverage -** 143 countries.
- **WHO Guideline -** Annual average PM2.5 should be ≤ 5 µg/m³.
- **Report Findings -** It highlights a severe global air pollution crisis, with 91% of surveyed countries/territories failing to meet World Health Organization (WHO) annual air quality standards.
- Only 14% of cities met the recommended PM2.5 guideline of or less.
- **Best Air Quality** - Only 13, including Iceland, Australia, Panama, Estonia, French Polynesia.
- **Global Ranking (2025) - Top 5 Most Polluted Countries** -
  - Pakistan
  - Bangladesh
  - Tajikistan
  - Chad
  - DR Congo
- **Regional Trend -** 17 of the world's 20 most polluted cities are in Central & South Asia (majority in India and Pakistan).
- **Overall Trend -** The report shows that pollution is heavily driven by industrial agriculture, fossil fuels, and wildfires.

Key Findings in India

- **Trend Pattern -** India ranked 3rd in 2023, 5th in 2024 and 6th in 2025.
- **Most polluted city in the world** - *2025 – Loni (Ghaziabad) -* PM2.5 levels exceeding the WHO guideline by over 22 times.

- **Most Polluted metropolitan cities - Begusarai (Bihar)** and **Guwahati (Assam)** emerged as two of the most polluted metropolitan areas in the world.
- **Most polluted capital-** *New Delhi.*
- **Polluted Cities in India -** 74 of the 100 most polluted cities globally were in India (2024), down from 83 in 2023.
- **Regional Shifts -** Northern Indian cities showed slight improvements due to stricter enforcement of the *NCAP (National Clean Air Programme)*.
- But, Air quality in South Indian cities like Bengaluru and Hyderabad showed a slight decline due to increased vehicular emissions and construction.
- **Key Drivers of Pollution - Transport & Industry** - Vehicular emissions remain the primary contributor in urban centers.
- **Biomass Burning -** Stubble burning in North India and the use of solid fuels for cooking in rural areas.
- **Climate Factors -** El Niño patterns in early 2025 led to stagnant air conditions in South Asia, preventing the dispersal of pollutants.
- **Dust Storms -** Increased frequency of dust storms from the Thar Desert affecting Rajasthan, Haryana, and Delhi.

References

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