

# Six diseases cause 73 pc of child deaths: WHO

REUTERS, London

Six mainly preventable diseases account for 73 percent of child deaths each year, the World Health Organisation said yesterday.

Pneumonia accounts for 19 percent of the under-fives who die, followed by diarrhoea, pre-term delivery, malaria, blood infection and lack of oxygen at birth.

"New estimates show that worldwide more than seven in 10 of the 10.6 million annual deaths in children younger than 5 years are attributable to six causes, and that four communicable disease categories account for more than half of all child deaths," said Robert Black, of Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health in Baltimore.

The figures compiled by Black and his colleagues are based on data from publications and continuing studies and were published in

The Lancet medical journal.

They identified under-nutrition as an underlying cause of 53 percent of all deaths in young children.

Measles, neonatal tetanus and HIV/Aids also caused a small proportion of deaths. Most of the children who died from malaria are in Africa. Two countries, Sudan and Somalia, had the highest rates of the mosquito-borne disease.

The researchers said 42 percent of child fatalities occur in Africa and 29 percent are in the southeast Asia region.

Pneumonia, malaria, diarrhoea and measles, which are preventable with care and treatment, account for 48 percent of the child deaths.

"The new estimates of the causes of child deaths should be used to guide public-health policies and programs," Black added.

In a separate study in the journal, Dr Anita Zaidi, of Aga Khan

University in Karachi, Pakistan said rates of neonatal infections in babies born in hospitals are up to 20 times higher in developing countries than in western nations.

Infections acquired around the time of birth, due to unhygienic practices in hospitals, are a major cause of infant deaths in poor countries.

Because of the unclean conditions, babies born in some hospitals may be facing the same, or an even higher, risk of infection as babies born at home.

Zaidi and her colleagues estimate that many of the infections acquired in hospital nurseries may not be treatable with prescribed antibiotics.

"When hospitals are seen as institutions where children experience poor outcomes at great cost, people in communities in which they live are less likely to seek institutional care, even if advised," she said.



Syed Mohammad Zobaer, director general of Disaster Management Bureau, speaks at the inaugural session of a national workshop on 'Revision and finalisation of the roles and responsibilities of disaster management committee' in the city on Thursday.

# Scientists grow stem cells from nose

REUTERS, Sydney

With the help of the Catholic Church, Australian researchers have successfully grown adult stem cells harvested from the human nose, avoiding the ethical and legal problems associated with embryonic stem cells.

Australia bans creating human embryos to harvest stem cells but scientists may use embryos left over from IVF (in-vitro fertility) treatment. Stem cells harvested through other means, such as from the nose, is legal.

Head researcher Alan Mackay-Sim of Griffith University said the adult stem cells taken from inside the nose could potentially be used to grow nerve, heart, liver, kidney and muscle cells.

"We have got an adult stem cell which is accessible in everybody and we can grow lots of these cells and turn them into many other cell types," Mackay-Sim told Reuters.

"Apart from neural and brain cells, they look like they can turn into blood cells, heart muscle and to skeletal muscle," he said in an interview.

Scientists believe stem cell research could eventually lead to cures for a range of serious ailments, including Parkinson's disease and spinal cord injuries.

The Catholic Church, which views the use of embryonic stem cells as a form of destruction of human life, helped fund the research through a A\$50,000 (\$39,500) grant, which was approved by Sydney's Catholic Archbishop George Pell.

"The significance of this is manifold. This represents a significant advance and I think this will bring a great blessing for people," Pell told Reuters on Thursday.

Australian Health Minister Tony Abbott said the new nose adult stem cells avert the ethical problems surrounding embryonic stem cell research.

"It seems at least on the basis of this research that we may well be able to obtain multi-potent stem cells from adults and that we don't need to use embryos to obtain these important cells," Abbott told reporters.

# Bush faces uphill battle over immigration reform

REUTERS, Washington

President Bush's proposed overhaul of immigration laws faces diminishing prospects in a Congress already wary of his top domestic priority, revising Social Security, analysts said on Thursday.

Bush seemed to acknowledge the difficulties facing his plan to give temporary work permits to illegal immigrants, when he discussed the issue on Wednesday after meeting Mexican President Vicente Fox and Canadian Prime Minister Paul Martin.

Addressing Fox, Bush said: "Mr. President, you've got my pledge I'll continue working on it. You don't have my pledge that Congress will

act, because I'm not a member of the legislative branch."

Bush's comments amount to an admission that his reform proposals are not advancing in the Republican-controlled Congress, said Steve Camarota of the Centre for Immigration Studies, which opposes the president's plan and calls for reduced immigration.

"I think Bush now understands there isn't much support for what he wants to do. There are very powerful Republican committee heads who are not interested in pursuing it and Bush doesn't seem willing so far to expend much political capital on it," Camarota said.

The president's plan is effectively dead for this Congress, a senior

Republican Senate aide said.

"Bush can't do both immigration and Social Security reform and he has his hands full with Social Security. He's losing water on that one and he can't infuriate the grassroots of our party on immigration in the leadup to congressional mid-term elections next year," the aide said.

Bush was personally committed to the reform but might have to wait until the final two years of his term to move forward, said the aide, who asked not to be identified.

Under Bush's plan, illegal immigrants could obtain work permits for three years, renewable for another three years, to do jobs U.S. citizens did not want.

