

# Pneumonia: Country yet to get vaccine

BY OUR CORRESPONDENT

BENGALURU

**Jan. 22:** About four lakh children under the age of five in the country die of pneumonia every year. But the government is yet to make Hib (Haemophilus influenzae type B) and Pneumococcal immunisation universal.

Indian Academy of Pediatrics had made recommendations in April 2008 in this regard. But they are yet to be implemented.

While immunisation is

universal in about 90 per cent countries, India is yet to take the step.

Addressing a press conference here on Thursday, Dr Maturam Santhosam, Professor, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, said pneumonia kills over 2 million children across the world and one out of five children in India with the country accounting for 40 per cent of the cases.

Dr Alagiriswamy Parthasarathy, former president, Indian Academy of Pediatrics, pointed out that

together, pneumococcus and Hib account for half of all pneumonia deaths in India. Thirty per cent of the children who suffer Hib Meningitis are likely to suffer major disabilities. About 50 per cent of pneumonia deaths can be prevented with immunisation.

The problem is usually misdiagnosed as common cold and delay in appropriate treatment leads to complications and sometimes fatality, said Dr Mahesh Babu, paediatrician, Manipal Hospital.