

Press Release

The third edition of the India Clean Air Summit (ICAS) 2021

CSTEP's flagship event on air pollution

“Air Pollution is a National Emergency”

For Immediate Release

Bangalore, 27 August 2021: Air pollution is a serious health concern that requires urgent interventions. This was the consensus after the “India Clean Air Summit (ICAS) 2021: Clean Air for Healthy Living,” the two-day flagship event of the Center for Study of Science, Technology and Policy (CSTEP) on air pollution held virtually on 26 and 27 August 2021.

Shri Suresh Prabhu, six-time Member of Parliament, set the tone for Day 1 (26 August) with his keynote address. “Solutions are available, and change is possible. But only with dedicated and coordinated efforts can we understand the root cause of air pollution and provide citizens their inherent right—clean air,” he said.

Panel discussions at the event organised by the Centre for Air Pollution Studies at CSTEP highlighted the linkages between air pollution and Sustainable Development Goals, the health impacts of air pollution, and the role of the private sector in improving energy efficiency and air quality.

“Air pollution is a national emergency,” said Dr Arvind Kumar, Chairman, Institute of Chest Surgery; Co-Chairman, Medanta Robotic Institute; and Founder and Managing Trustee, Lung Care Foundation.

“Everybody in India is a smoker today, including newborn babies, because they are breathing in polluted air. We need more awareness on this. Only then can there be awakening and action,” he added. Dr Kumar also highlighted worldwide evidence on the linkages between the air pollution status of a place/people, COVID-19 incidence, and mortality.

Prof Vivekanand Jha, Executive Director, The George Institute for Global Health India, said that while vaccinations might control COVID, air pollution will continue to be a major threat. “Behaviour change is hard, and relying on individual behavioural changes is not going to help. Unless a systemic change is brought, we cannot hope for much to happen, with or without COVID,” he said.

Sharing her global experiences on addressing air pollution, Ms Priya Shankar, India Director, Environment and Climate Program, Bloomberg Philanthropies, said that “we have a lot of well-meaning policies in place, but we need to put stringent regulatory mechanisms and low-cost methods in place to get accurate data for devising the right kind of policies.”

Ms Shipra Misra, CEO, Delhi Research Implementation and Innovation (DRIIV) said, “the challenge in front of policymakers is to address the transboundary nature of pollution, urban and rural divides, and seasonal variations in air pollution.”

Dr Daniel Greenbaum, President of the Health Effects Institute—which publishes the “State of Global Air” report—emphasised that “there is no substitute to local data on air pollution.”

“It is the continuation of evidence building that has made the big difference in addressing air pollution,” he said. Mr Vikram Gulati, Country Head and Senior Vice President, Toyota Kirloskar Motor, said that “for a quantum leap, taxation in the area of personal mobility has to migrate to one that is linked to the socially-desirable goals of energy efficiency and impact on the environment.”

On Day 2 (27 August), experts explored some of the priority areas of intervention: indoor air pollution, occupational health hazards, and pathways for achieving clean air for Indian cities.

Shri Brijesh Kumar, IFS, Principal Secretary (Ecology & Environment), Department of Forest, Ecology and Environment; and Chairman, Karnataka State Pollution Control Board (KSPCB), delivered the keynote address.

“India's geography is very different, where 2/3rd of the year is dry, keeping the particulate matter suspended in the air longer than in other countries. Our solutions have to be specific and unique,” he said.

Prof Kalpana Balakrishnan, Director, WHO Collaborating Centre; Professor & Dean (Research), Sri Ramachandra Institute for Higher Education & Research (SRIHER), said that “we can’t compartmentalise air pollution as indoor or outdoor, especially with regard to the health impact. The information epidemiological studies provide can facilitate localised clean air action plans.”

On the issue of stubble burning, Punjab Pollution Control Board Chairman Prof Adarsh Pal Vig said we should not blame farmers for the issue. “With mechanised agriculture, they have no option. In situ solutions are needed,” he said.

Shirish Sinha, Director, Climate, Children’s Investment Fund Foundation (CIFF), India, said that “long-term solutions for air pollution require evidence to inform policies, support frameworks for governance, and build societal pressure to motivate action.”

Speaking about the National Clean Air Programme (NCAP), India’s policy to address air pollution, Prof S N Tripathi, IIT Kanpur and Member Secretary of the Steering Committee NCAP, said, “Hybrid monitoring, including sensors and satellite-based monitoring, will be included in NCAP, and within a year, we may see a rapid scaling-up of the monitoring network in the country.”

“Training programmes and eventually a training system will happen under the National Knowledge Network. These will be linked with the National Skill Development Council, generating green jobs,” he added.

The event also had expert sessions for students and researchers on conducting exposure monitoring studies and using low-cost sensors for air pollution assessment.

For further details, please click [here](#).

For a complete recording of the summit, please get in touch with us at: cpe@cstep.in

About CSTEP

Headquartered in Bengaluru, the Center for Study of Science, Technology and Policy (CSTEP) is one of India’s leading think tanks with a mission to enrich policymaking with innovative approaches using science and technology for a sustainable, secure, and inclusive society. CSTEP’s focus areas are Climate, Environment and Sustainability, Energy and Power, AI and Digital Labs, Materials and Strategic Studies, and Computational Tools.