

PRESS RELEASE

‘We need to look beyond stubble burning to improve air quality’

For Immediate Release

Chandigarh: 09 December 2021

“We need to go beyond the stubble burning issue and include road dust, and emissions from municipal waste, industries, and burning of plastic while dealing with air pollution,” said Shri Rana Gurjeet Singh, Cabinet Minister, Government for Punjab. He was speaking at ‘Vision: Clean Skies for Punjab’, organised by the Center for Study of Science, Technology and Policy (CSTEP), one of India’s leading think tanks in Chandigarh.

“Comprehensive solutions to deal with air pollution are the need of the hour. To make this happen, government departments have to align their vision,” he said.

Given the large agricultural yield of Punjab, immediate measures are needed to tackle the problem of stubble burning. “We will be able to convince farmers to stop burning stubble only if we present them with alternative solutions. Industry, agricultural universities, pollution control boards, and the government need to work together to find holistic solutions to manage the issue,” he said.

Speaking at the event, Mr Krunesh Garg, Member Secretary, Punjab State Pollution Control Board observed that stubble should not be treated as a problem but rather as an opportunity to make fuel or fertilisers. This could help farmers financially while contributing to better air quality, he said.

Meanwhile, Dr Kamal Kumar Garg, Municipal Commissioner, Mohali, stressed the need for incorporating environmental safety in the manifesto of all political parties.

Numerous reports recently have highlighted Punjab’s deteriorating air quality. While most discussions centre around the issue of stubble burning in winter, citizens of Punjab are affected by poor air quality levels throughout the year.

The State of India’s Environment 2021 reported as many as 41,900 deaths in Punjab due to air quality issues in the state. In 2018, Punjab featured among the top four states with maximum cities that failed to meet India’s national air quality standards. It is in this context that CSTEP organised the event to find practical solutions to improve the air quality in the state.

Speaking at the event, Dr. Jai Asundi, Executive Director, CSTEP said, “The primary objective of this discussion is to understand all the causes and impacts of air pollution in

Punjab, identify practical challenges in policy implementation, expedite the development of sustainable solutions, and build the technological capacity of state departments.”

Dr. Pratima Singh, Lead of the Centre for Air Pollution Studies at CSTEP said, “The issue of air pollution in Punjab receives a lot of attention during the winter months because of stubble burning which affects neighbouring states such as Delhi. But many factors contribute to Punjab’s air pollution. Through these discussions, we hope to initiate a deeper conversation on these factors and through scientific assessments and by engaging with local communities, we will prepare a comprehensive and strategic plan for improving the state’s air quality.”

For more details on the event, please mail 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 areas of focus are Climate, Environment and Sustainability; Energy and Power; AI and Digital Labs; Materials and Strategic Studies, and Computational Tools.