

## Press Release

India Clean Air Summit #ICAS2024

Bengaluru, 31 August 2024

**Heading 1. Uttar Pradesh's top environmental officer recommends a revamp of the National Clean Air Programme**

**Heading 2. Mainstreaming the fight against household air pollution**

**Heading 3. 'Cylinder vali didi': Bhalswa's guardian against household air pollution**

## Heading 1. Uttar Pradesh's top environmental officer recommends a revamp of the National Clean Air Programme

### Key takeaways

- NCAP 2.0 needs to have a regional 'airshed approach' instead of a city-centric one
- Inclusion of PM<sub>2.5</sub> and black carbon in NCAP is necessary
- There is a need to break down silos between air pollution and climate change policies
- Black carbon is not currently regulated or monitored as a criteria pollutant
- Public understanding of air quality and climate is closely tied to local experiences and microclimates

Speaking at the India Clean Air Summit (ICAS) 2024, organised by the Center for Study of Science, Technology and Policy (CSTEP) in Bengaluru, Shri Ashish Tiwari, IFS, Secretary, Environment, Forest and Climate Change Department, Government of Uttar Pradesh, strongly recommended a revamp of India's clean air policy, the National Clean Air Programme (NCAP). He said that NCAP 2.0 should move away from its city-centric approach to a larger region and have an 'airshed approach'.

India's first national policy to combat air pollution has been drawing flak for its city-centric approach and for prioritising non-attainment cities, leaving out large portions of the country.

Shri Ashish Tiwari said that an airshed approach would not only expand the scope of India's clean air action and make it more effective but also allow the harmonising of clean air and climate action policies.



*Shri Ashish Tiwari, IFS, Secretary, Environment, Forest and Climate Change Department, Government of Uttar Pradesh, speaking at ICAS 2024*

A regional focus on air pollution will help address short-lived climate pollutants, such as black carbon and other invisible pollutants, from sources such as agriculture (urea and nitrogen) and heavy-duty vehicles.

‘With a carefully planned and conscious effort, a good synergy will evolve to maximise the impact of the effort’, he said.

Ms Anumita Roychowdhury, Executive Director, Research and Advocacy, Centre for Science and Environment, one of the panellists at ICAS 2024, said that it is clear that a mature narrative has already started to evolve in the policy landscape incorporating both air pollution and climate change. The two issues have been in silos for a long time, but science tells us that we need to break out of this silo.



*Ms Anumita Roychowdhury, Executive Director, Research and Advocacy, Centre for Science and Environment at ICAS 2024*

'Science is telling us that there are some subsets of particulate matter such as black carbon that have much more warming potential than CO<sub>2</sub>. Moreover, when they settle on snow and glaciers, they melt and result in a water security threat. They also affect cloud formation and interfere with rainfall patterns', she said.

Black carbon is an air pollutant that is emitted through the incomplete combustion of fossil fuels, biomass, and waste and is widely known for its harmful effects on health, climate, and environment. CSTEP, in collaboration with the Clean Air Fund, launched a [policy brief](#) titled 'The Case for Action on Black Carbon' during COP28.

Currently, it is not considered a criteria pollutant, and therefore, neither the World Health Organization (WHO) nor others regulate or have a monitoring strategy or standards for it. 'Because it is [considered] a subset of particulate matter, the assumption is that if you have a strategy in place to control particulate pollution, then it will also reduce black carbon. Therefore, the focus has been on source-specific emissions'.

She added that from a climate change perspective, black carbon is not included in the basket of pollutants that United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) deals with and in global negotiations. However, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has assessed the warming potential of black carbon and what we need to do about it.

During the same discussion, Ms Aarti Khosla, Founder and Director, Climate Trends, brought the people's perspective to the table by talking about how air quality and climate goals are linked. 'When you ask people on what is air quality bringing as the biggest change? I think they see their microclimate, what is around them. And when you ask people also about climate and the lived experience of climate, they mostly talk about their microclimate. So, the fact that both air quality as well as climate, when it comes down to public understanding, is about how it's impacting their microclimate is really a peek into how people think. If it affects their quality of life, it affects their day to day. (If) there is better transport, there is less pollution, and there are clearer skies, they just relate it to better climate', she described.



*Ms Aarti Khosla, Founder and Director, Climate Trends*

## Heading 2. Mainstreaming the fight against household air pollution

### Key takeaways

- Cognitive defects, including reduced IQ, are linked to household air pollution
- LPG use reduces pollutants and improves health outcomes
- Financial barriers hinder widespread adoption of LPG for cooking
- Existing programmes like PMUY can help scale LPG adoption effectively

B-roll video for TV and digital news desks:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4xaA\\_snm9ql&feature=youtu.be](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4xaA_snm9ql&feature=youtu.be)

The India Clean Air Summit (ICAS) 2024, organised by the Center for Study of Science, Technology and Policy (CSTEP) in Bengaluru, concluded with a call to action to reduce household air pollution.

Prof Ravindra Khaiwal, Community Medicine and School of Public Health, PGIMER, highlighted the disproportionate focus on outdoor air pollution

and indoor air pollution in the country. He believes that because people are fixated on outdoor air pollution and its sources, indoor air pollution and its harmful effects do not receive sufficient attention.

He also shed light on the effect of household air pollution on cognition. 'From our work in Punjab, we related how exposure to household air pollution could lead to cognitive defects. Basically, the IQ levels could be compromised by four units', he said. Prof Khaiwal also suggested that simple interventions such as cooking in well-ventilated areas, avoiding cooking with wet fuel, and reducing cooking frequency to two times per day could reduce household air pollution.

Prof Kalpana Balakrishnan, Director, WHO Collaborating Center for Occupational and Environmental Health, highlighted that until recently, we did not know much about the health effects of household air pollution. 'In our early days, we didn't have quite enough measurements of household air pollution because we couldn't monitor all the complex cocktails that are emitted', she said. Lack of measurements necessitated the use of secondary indicators, such as the type of primary fuel or the type of cookstove, as the alternate indicator for the quantitative measure of PM<sub>2.5</sub>, black carbon, or carbon monoxide. 'It's now very important to recognise that we actually have data on quantitative measures of pretty much every single one of these pollutants', she added.

Prof Balakrishnan also presented her case for the need to transition to LPG by citing numerous studies. Evidence suggests that using LPG reduces exposures and is associated with improved health outcomes, but the major barrier to adoption is money.

She concluded her talk with a note of optimism, stating that 'If we can look at HAP (household air pollution) mitigation via LPG at scale, this is perhaps the best possible way for India to be on the path towards meeting ambient air quality guidelines through an existing government programme that is already halfway completed. The access part to PMUY is already completed. All we have to do is find the money through whatever means that our best brains and economists can put together. I can't think of a better case for getting the benefits to the most vulnerable among us'.

### Heading 3. ‘Cylinder vali didi’: Bhalswa’s guardian against household air pollution

Ms Rama, formerly an ASHA worker and currently working with ASAR Social Impact Pvt Ltd, has successfully helped 130 households in Bhalswa register for the Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY), among which 91 have already been allotted their LPG connections.

As part of a panel on ‘Air Quality Champions’ at the India Clean Air Summit (ICAS) 2024, organised by the Center for Study of Science, Technology and Policy (CSTEP) in Bengaluru, Ms Rama described her journey of empowering people in a neighbourhood called Bhalswa in Northwest Delhi. In the locality mainly inhabited by waste pickers, who struggle to afford basic necessities, she noticed the rampant use of *chulhas* (cooking stove) in most households and the resulting pollution and its health impacts, mainly on the women, children, and elderly.



Ms Rama (ASAR Social Impact Pvt Ltd) speaking at ICAS 2024

She shared her experiences of working with these marginalised communities to help replace their *chulhas* with LPG for cleaner cooking.

She has also helped conduct various safety sessions in the area to create awareness on the safe usage of LPG cylinders. She has also facilitated the provision of 5 kg cylinders to people who are unable to afford the 14 kg ones.

Talking about her success with helping the 91 households avail the benefits of the PMUY scheme, she noted that her work has just begun and

said 'अब जब मैं area में जाती हूँ, तो लोग मुझे "सिलेंडर वाली दीदी" के नाम से जानते हैं | तो ये मेरे लिए बहुत बड़े Proud की बात है | पर मेरा सफर अभी खत्म नहीं हुआ है क्योंकि भलस्वा डेयरी एक बहुत बड़ी community है, और बहुत से लोगो तक मैं अभी पहुंच नहीं पाई हूँ | मैं इस नंबर और इस डेटा को और बढ़ाना चाहती हूँ |'

As ICAS 2024 concludes, we are inspired by the collective power of individuals, organisations, and communities coming together to combat air pollution and create positive change.

## Media Contact

For more details and interviews, please write to us at [cpe@cstep.in](mailto:cpe@cstep.in) or call Pratah Jain (9910837663), Communication Manager (Media), CSTEP.

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**About CSTEP:** [CSTEP](#) is a not-for-profit research organisation with a mission to enrich policymaking with innovative approaches using science and technology for a sustainable, secure, and inclusive society. Our interdisciplinary research encompasses diverse fields such as energy, urban development, climate, and air pollution.

**About ICAS:** Since its inception in 2019, the [India Clean Air Summit](#) (ICAS) has emerged as a platform for the community working on improving air quality in India, including government, academia, civil society organisations, and citizens, to collaborate and discuss important issues around air pollution.