Strengthen pollution regulators, get more staff train them in tech and back up with stringent norms

Dr Sachchidand Tripathi talks about the ‘low hanging fruits’ approach to managing air pollution, wind patterns which magnify the impact of stubble burning, crop diversification and a realistic AQI assessment for Delhi. The session was moderated by Amritshah Sinha, Resident Editor, Pune

Amritshah Sinha: What is the air pollution status across cities in India? (Sachchidand Tripathi: Researcher at IIT Kanpur)

Sachchidand Tripathi: The central government has established pollution control boards in almost all the states of the country. These pollution control boards have monitored and published the pollution status of major cities. The cities with high levels of air pollution are Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai, and Hyderabad, and the concentrations of PM-10, NO2, SO2, and CO are significantly high. The major pollutants are particulate matter (PM-10, PM-2.5), nitrogen oxides, sulfur dioxide, and carbon dioxide.

Amritshah Sinha: Why have the government,��息源 or people in general not been doing anything about air pollution until now? (Sachchidand Tripathi: I am a scientist)

Sachchidand Tripathi: There are some factors that have been hindering the action against air pollution. Firstly, the government has not been giving enough importance to air pollution as a serious issue. Secondly, the public perception regarding the impact of air pollution is not strong enough. Finally, the lack of awareness among people about the health risks associated with air pollution is another factor.

Amritshah Sinha: How would you define a clean air quality index (AQI) for a city? (Sachchidand Tripathi: Atmospheric Scientist)

Sachchidand Tripathi: An AQI is a numerical index for air quality conditions. It is calculated by taking into account the concentrations of various air pollutants, such as PM, NO2, CO, and O3. The AQI ranges from 0 to 500, with 500 being the worst possible scenario. The AQI is divided into six categories: good, moderate, unhealthy for sensitive groups, unhealthy, very unhealthy, and hazardous. These categories are based on the health effects associated with different levels of air pollution.

Amritshah Sinha: What is the role of AQI in managing air pollution? (Sachchidand Tripathi: Atmospheric Scientist)

Sachchidand Tripathi: The AQI is a valuable tool for managing air pollution as it helps in identifying the levels of air pollution and taking appropriate measures to control it. It also helps in raising public awareness about the importance of clean air and the need for reducing pollution levels. The AQI is also used to assess the effectiveness of pollution control measures and to monitor the progress of air quality improvement.

Amritshah Sinha: How can we achieve a clean and healthy environment? (Sachchidand Tripathi: Atmospheric Scientist)

Sachchidand Tripathi: Achieving a clean and healthy environment requires a multi-faceted approach. This includes reducing emissions from transportation, industry, and power generation, improving waste management practices, promoting renewable energy, and increasing public awareness about the importance of clean air. It is also important to develop and implement effective air pollution control policies and regulations. In addition, the government should ensure that the health impacts of air pollution are taken into account in decision-making processes at all levels.