



PRESS NOTE

Round Table Meet on Mass Communication

NIOT, Chennai

Day 1, 13 October 2017

The Round Table Meet on Mass Communication was inaugurated by eminent science communicator and Kalinga Prize winner Dr. Narendra Sehgal on 13 October 2017. Dr. Sehgal emphasised integration of all media for effective communication by qualified science communicators. He identified three key components of scientific literacy. A scientifically literate person, he said, should internalise the method of science, should know a minimum of science & technology, and should be ready to learn a new thing every day.

The Round Table Meet on Mass Communication is a component of the Third India International Science Festival (IISF), which is being organized during 13-16 October 2017 at the Anna University in Chennai, Tamil Nadu by the Ministry of Science & Technology, Ministry of Earth Sciences, and Vijnana Bharati (VIBHA). The theme of the India International Science Festival is “Science for New India”. It is being coordinated by the CSIR-National Institute of Science Communication and Information Resources (CSIR-NISCAIR), New Delhi and National Institute of Ocean Technology (NIOT), Chennai.

Chairing the inaugural session Prof. Kamal Kant Dwivedi, Vice Chancellor of the ITM University, Gwalior, said, “Often good research does not find its way to people, rather bad science frequently gets shared.” That is the challenge we face in science communication, he said.

Prof. Dwivedi further went on to give a few tips for effective science communication, which included communicating global concepts with reference to Indian contexts, using modern tools for communication, and also exploring and involving the most potential groups of communicators.

Echoing similar sentiments, Shri A. Jaya Kumar, General Secretary of Vignana Bharati, said that to emerge as a world leader we have to inculcate a basic amount of scientific literacy among fellow citizens. Science and science communication should be able to prevent people from dying of diseases.

In his Welcome Address Dr. Manoj Kumar Patariya, Director, CSIR-NISCAIR, said that for effective science communication there were four prerequisites – content, medium, audience and format. He said a wide range of

media could be utilised for communicating scientific developments especially in a country as diverse as India. This included means such as traditional folk media to the most recent social media.

Dr. Patairiya also said that the content needs to be moulded according to the levels of scientific literacy prevailing in the target groups which included school students on the one hand and farmers and people from non-scientific backgrounds at the other end of the spectrum.

Dr. Shenoj, Director, NIOT said that scientists should reach out to the public and schools, and other academic institutions. He suggested translation of scientific knowledge in all local languages for effective communication to all levels – even fisherman. He said that INCOIS has already initiated communication of information in regional languages through mobiles.

Panel Discussion: *Why science coverage in mass media is abysmally low?*

Taking the argument for good science communication forward, Mr Pallava Bagla, Science Editor, NDTV, said that in keeping with the Prime Minister's repeated emphasis on instant and regular communication, scientists and science administrators need to take to social media in a big way.

Bagla was voicing his views during a Panel Discussion session on *Why science coverage in mass media is abysmally low?* There were no rules, he said, that prevent a scientist working in the laboratory to talk about his work to a journalist. Journalists and scientists need to come together for effective communication of science and technology to the public.

Talking about the need for scientists also to become good science communicators, Dr. Upendra Nath Pandey, Chief News Coordinator, *Dainik Tribune*, Chandigarh said this could especially be a boon for farmers who need to be conveyed scientific knowledge in a jargon-free language.

Giving a counter view, however, Mr Nimish Kapoor from Vigyan Prasar said that scientists could not be expected to become good science communicators because of their research-focused training.

The final session of the Round Table Meet on Mass Communication summed up the proceedings of the Round Table Meet on Mass Communication being coordinated by the CSIR-NISCAIR and NIOT, Chennai. The session was chaired by Dr. V.K. Saraswat, Member, NITI Ayog who was optimistic that new technologies were emerging to take forward science communication like Augmented Reality, Animations and Gaming. He said that these technologies will also make the work of taking science to the people much easier.

Earlier, Dr. Manoj Kumar Patairiya, Director, CSIR-NISCAIR said that participants from many regions of the country including the northeast and even the Andamans had attended the Round Table Meet organised for the first time as part of the IISF. The participants included students, researchers, science administrators, science communicators and journalists.

Dr. Patairiya said that media-savvy scientists and science savvy journalists need to be brought together on a common platform for effective science communication. He said that there was a need for government science institutions to employ trained science communication professionals. He also said that there was a need to promote research and scholarship in science communication.

Among the other sessions held today were two parallel Scientific Sessions on Trends in Science Communication that dealt with topics such as weather and climate communication, science communication in Indian languages, filling the gap between theory and practice, changing trends and changes in science communication, and new ways to enhance science communication, training and employment in science communication, gatekeeping S&T information in newspapers, and social media communication in India.

In a session devoted to discussing emerging trends in science communication, speakers discussed topics such as blogging as an interactive experience, use of social media for addressing social issues and the caution that needs to be exercised while dealing with social media.

In a special session for PhD scholars, experts gave an insight into the techniques and nuances of transforming research papers into popular science articles.

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