

Hailing the Green Champs



Standing (L to R): A.S. Harinath, Santhosh Jayaram, Jyoti Chetal, Divya Dutta, Siddharth Singh, Ajay Nagpure, Jarnail Singh
Sitting (L to R): Kirith Parikh, O.P. Agarwal, Chandra Bhushan, K.J. Ramesh

Aditya Mukherjee

Is living in cities becoming more and more of a nightmare because of air and water pollution, and waste mismanagement? Are extreme weather events, induced by the climatic changes, putting immense pressure on cities' infrastructure, to the point of collapse? Chandra Bhushan from the Centre for Science & Environment started the roundtable by explaining that climate change is real and happening. He elaborated on this by listing the extreme weather conditions in the past month in different parts of the country. Some of them are cyclone Fani in the east coast in the beginning of May; drought in Maharashtra and Karnataka; heat wave in cities like Pune and Lucknow; and dust and thunderstorms in the western, central and northern parts of the country. He emphasized that the impacts are going to get worse as the global temperature rise inches towards 1.5°C in a few years. Cities, therefore, will not only have to address the issue of pollution and basic services like transport and housing, but will also have to cope with extreme events like extreme rainfall, flood and heat

PREPARING TO DEAL WITH RAPID URBANISATION

As a precursor to the ninth edition of the JSW–TOI Earth Care Awards (ECAs), a series of Round Table Discussions (RTDs) are being held across the country. The RTD held in Delhi was the third in the series

wave, he stressed. Bhushan was moderating the discussion, 'Managing Urbanization Issues', which was attended by experts from various fields. His co-moderator was Santhosh Jayaram from KPMG. Those who attended the seminar were Padma Bhushan Kirith Parikh, Chairman, IRADe, OP Agarwal, Chief Executive Officer, WRI India, Divya Datt, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), India, K.J. Ramesh, DGM, India Meteorological Department, RR Rashmi, Distinguished Fellow, Earth Science and Climate Change – TERI, Siddharth Singh (IAS Retd), Chairman of WICS Connect Group, Ajay Nagpure, Head, Air Pollution, WRI India, A.S. Harinath from World Bank and Jar-

nail Singh, India Director – The Climate Group.

Kirith Parikh spoke about how a city like Delhi continues to face problems like air pollution, transportation problem, road dust and fuel use. He also said how stubble burning from Punjab creates air pollution during winter in Delhi reducing the capital city to a gas chamber. According to him, in Delhi, the concept of livability has gone down. He also attributed the rise of air pollution to growing travel time which leads to more fuel use. Parikh suggested that unless public transport system is given maximum importance in the scheme of things, Delhi would continue to remain an urban nightmare.

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The RTD series is being held with the aim to discuss local climate change issues, ways to address it and share best practices to be replicated by other regions

AWARD CATEGORIES

- Leadership in urban climate action
- Community-based mitigation and adaptation in water resources, agriculture and forestry, other land use, animal husbandry and climate risk proofing
- Innovation in climate action
- GHG mitigation in large enterprises
- Leadership of women-led enterprise in climate action

OP Agarwal said that in order to deal with the challenges of urbanization, cities should have proper empowerment to decide the issue of building capacity. Talking about people-friendly transport system in urban areas, Agarwal was of the view that there can be a system of premium services which can be app based and can facilitate door to door pick and drop facilities. He also suggested that we can think in terms of 'climate smart cities' just like China which is focusing on this aspect. Then, he also spoke about the need for both affordability and quality in public transport system.

Divya Datt said that issue of governance is the fundamental factor in any modern urban city in our country. According to her, urban planning is the most devolved one in our cities these days. She stressed on the need for more autonomous bodies to deal with climatic changes. Other than that, Divya felt that there is a need for the civic authorities to disseminate information and facts

issues have everything to do with sustaining the habitat. According to him, issues like transport, managing energy transition of a city, and, last but not the least, managing the waste sustainably. Rashmi suggested that to discourage fuel use, there is a need for transition to electric mobility. Talking about managing our waste, he said it is also a cultural and behavioural issue.

A.S. Harinath opined that in order to make urban areas more livable, there is a need for paradigm shift in various areas like planning, waste management and transport. He stressed on the need of information sharing and community roles to produce more positive results.

Siddharth Singh spoke about the growing challenges to urbanization posed by people from rural areas flocking to the cities. According to him, there are people in urban areas who do not have even a decent place to live. So, they start living in slums and other illegal colonies leading to haphazard urban growth. He also said that in the coming days the demand for portable water is going to shoot up. Singh also reiterated the need to focus on public transport system in urban areas to deal with air pollution. He suggested schools should have books on climatic changes so that students are able to understand its ramifications at a young age.

Jarnail Singh felt that when it comes to climatic changes, it is all about being sensitive to this issue. He was of the view that people need

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to be proactive enough to create that continuum of action in these matters. Taking the example of Anna Hazare, who mobilized public opinion some years ago in his crusade against corruption, Singh felt that there is an urgent need to create a public platform where people can come together at the local and mohalla level to take up issues like climate changes, air pollution and other issues hampering urban growth. In other words, according to him, it will be a consensus-building exercise.

K.J. Ramesh felt that in order to deal with haphazard urban growth and its attendant problems, there is a need to identify urban infrastructure. He said that it is time we thought about introducing emergency warning systems in case of pollution and climatic changes. He was also in favour of relocating industries. He said that land use needed to be properly monitored to discourage haphazard urban growth.

Ajay Nagpure said that there is an urgent need to link air pollution and climatic changes with needs of the cities. He said that we are working in a proxy way. He regretted the fact that even today people are using biomass which leads to air pollution. Nagpure also spoke about how waste management methods vary from colonies to colonies. He said he visited several areas of Delhi where this pattern was visible. In relatively well-heeled areas people are very methodical in disposing off their waste, while in some colonies, people are quite casual in their approach to disposing off their waste. He believed that such approach should now change.

"The Earth Care Awards were instituted in 2008 and this is the ninth edition of the award. They are given in five categories to those who are working in the fields of mitigation and adaptation of climate change," said Jyoti Chetal, General Manager, JSW. KPMG in India is the Knowledge Partner for the event, Indian Chamber of Commerce is the Outreach Partner and TERI is the Technical and Learning Partner.

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through various apps to the general public about the steps being taken to deal with various problems in the city. "Accountability to the city must be there," she added.

R.R. Rashmi felt that climate