

Round Table Meet on Mass Communication



Dr V.K. Saraswat, Member, NITI Ayog (India's premier thinktank and policymaking body) said that he was optimistic new technologies like Augmented Reality, Animation and Gaming were emerging to take forward science communication. He was chairing the final summing-up session of the 'Round Table Meet on Mass Communication' organised by CSIR-National Institute of Science Communication and Information Resources (CSIR-NISCAIR) in collaboration with the National Institute of Ocean Technology (NIOT), Chennai. He said that these technologies would also make the work of taking science to the people much easier.



Dr V.K. Saraswat, Member, NITI Ayog being welcomed by Dr Manoj Kumar Patairiya, Director, CSIR-NISCAIR

The 'Round Table Meet on Mass Communication' was organised as part of the Third India International Science Festival (IISF) during 13-16 October 2017 at the Anna University in Chennai, Tamil Nadu.

Inaugurating the Round Table Meet, Dr Narender K. Sehgal, Former Adviser, Govt. of India and winner of the prestigious Kalinga Prize said, "A scientifically literate person should internalise the method of science, should know a minimum of science & technology, and should be ready to learn a new thing every day. These are the three components of scientific literacy."



Dignitaries releasing the theme book of the Round Table Meet on Mass Communication. From left: Dr Manoj Kumar Patariya, Director, CSIR-NISCAIR; Prof. Shambhu Nath Singh, Director, School of Journalism and New Media Studies, IGNOU, New Delhi; Dr Narender K. Sehgal, UNESCO, Kalinga Prize Winner; Prof. Kamal Kant Dwivedi, Vice Chancellor, ITM University, Gwalior; Dr Satheesh Shenoy, Director, National Institute of Ocean Technology (NIOT); Shri A. Jayakumar, Secretary General, Vibha and Dr Dhilsha Rajappan, Chief Scientist, National Institute of Ocean Technology (NIOT)

In his inaugural address, Dr Sehgal further emphasised integration of all media for effective communication by qualified science communicators.

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 Patairiya, 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 Sheno, 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.

There were four components to the ‘Round Table Meet on Mass Communication’ — Panel Discussion on *Why science coverage in mass media is abysmally low?*, two parallel Scientific Sessions on the topic ‘Trends in Science Communication’, a special for PhD scholars on the nuances of transforming technical and specialized scientific content into popular news and features, and a final Round Table Meet & Discussion.

In the Panel Discussion *Why science coverage in mass media is abysmally low?*, 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. He also said that journalists and scientists need to come together for effective communication of science and technology to the public. There were no rules, he said, that prevent a scientist working in the laboratory to talk about his work to a journalist.

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.

In the two parallel Scientific Sessions on 'Trends in Science Communication', papers were presented on varied topics such as weather and climate communication, science communication in Indian languages, filling the gap between theory and practice, training and employment in science communication, gatekeeping S&T information in newspapers, 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 chaired by Dr Sai Baba of the National Institute of Advanced Studies, Bengaluru science communicators like Dr C.M. Nautiyal, former scientist from the Birbal Sahni Institute of Palaeobotany, Prof. Muthuswamy Balasubramanyam, Dean of Research Studies, Madras Diabetes Research Foundation, Chennai and Mr Hasan Jawaid Khan, Editor, *Science Reporter*, CSIR-NISCAIR gave an insight into the techniques and nuances of transforming research papers into popular science articles.

Dr Pradip Srivastava, former scientist from the CSIR-Central Drug Research Institute, Lucknow, gave an interesting and exciting presentation on the use of cartoons to convey messages pertaining to complex scientific topics and issues.



Dr V.K. Saraswat, Member, NITI Aayog (left) and Dr Manoj Kumar Patairiya, Director, CSIR-NISCAIR during the summing-up session

Dr Manoj Kumar Patairiya, Director, CSIR-NISCAIR while summing up the deliberations during the two days of the 'Round Table Meet on Mass Communication' 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.

The 'Round Table Meet on Mass Communication', which was organised for the first time as part of the IISF 2017, saw enthusiastic participation from many regions of the country including the northeast and even the Andamans. The participants included students, researchers, science administrators, science communicators and journalists.