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Experts for identification, clean-up of polluted sites

Staff Reporter

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Islamabad—Environmental protection experts here at a seminar stressed for identification and cleaning of chemically polluted sites in the country. The Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) in collaboration with Blacksmith Institute-USA and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Environmental Protection Agency (EPA-KPK) held a joint two-day national workshop on “Assessment of chemically polluted sites in Pakistan.”

The national and international experts, and representatives of national and provincial Environmental Protection Agencies (EPAs) also resolved to accelerate the process of identification of such sites and concerted efforts for their cleaning up through various activities and initiatives.

The purpose of the workshop was familiarization with contaminated site assessment protocols, identification and [risk assessment](#) of contaminated sites, sites prioritization, development of National Inventory Project for contaminated sites in the country, provision of data to government, international organizations and other stakeholder, and spearhead technical and [financial](#) support.

Blacksmith Institute and SDPI have been working jointly to invent and assess contaminated sites in Pakistan since 2009.

The training was imparted by Bret [Ericson](#), [Project Manager](#), Blacksmith Institute, New York, USA and Dr. Mahmood A. Khwaja, SDPI, Islamabad.

The workshop was supported in part by the Asian Development Bank through [Regional](#) Technical Assistance.

Dr. Mahmood A. Khwaja, [Senior](#) Advisor, chemicals and sustainable industrial development, SDPI recommended strict enforcement of NEQS and SMART, levy of pollution charges, [waste](#) water discharge licensing system and treatment plan, promotion of cleaner production center, BEP&BAT and sites remediation.

Dr. Khwaja informed that out of 6634 registered industries in these states, 1228 are considered highly polluting.

“The textiles, leather, food, ceramics, steel, oil refineries and oils, pharmaceutical and chemicals industries in Lahore, Faisalabad, Sialkot, Multan, Hyderabad and Rawalpindi need immediate [attention](#) due to their adverse health and environmental effects, resulting from their industrial releases” he underscored.

He called for strict regulations for pollution control, environment protection and sound management of chemicals.

Dr. Khwaja was of the view that civil society can play positive role in chemical management by building awareness and information dissemination to stakeholder including vulnerable groups through campaigns at different levels to reduce and eliminate adverse health and environment effects of toxic chemical pollutants.

In the concluding session of the workshop, Engg. Asif Shujah Khan, former Director General, Pak. EPA, Islamabad stressed the need for further and immediate work towards hazardous wastes management, as it is one of the three priority concerned areas of Pakistan environment protection Act.

He criticized the industrial sector and said, perhaps the industry does not want to be regulated. However, its time that corporate responsibility be implemented.

Columnists

Zahid Malik
 Abdul Sattar
 Dr Jassim Taqui
 Dr S M Koreshi
 Robert Clements
 Salahuddin Haider
 Madhav Nalapat

Hazardous waste sites are like disaster areas, with surrounding population under stress and exposed to potential serious [risk to](#) public health and therefore, warrant immediate actions. He emphasized that one ounce of action is better than one ton of thoughts.

Dr. Bashir Ahmed, Director General of EPA Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa said that contaminated sites should be investigated and cleaned up in KPK and through out Pakistan as they pose serious threat to public health.

He said we have learnt this lesson from the contaminated site of Lehtrar, once home to tanning industry but now a densely populated residential area.

He informed government of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa is executing a project to check soil and ground water pollution around industrial states in KPK and this workshop has given them better understanding of work to be completed.

He expressed the hope to find the support of international community to [cleanup](#) polluted sites in the province including solid waste site of Abbottabad and the pesticide store site in Peshawar.



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