

New station to monitor pollutants at high altitude

By Dinesh C Sharma

New Delhi, March 16 (India Science Wire): The pollution levels in the hills are negligible compared to mega cities like Delhi or Mumbai, but air quality monitoring in higher altitudes can help in improving pollution watch in the plains.

The air in higher altitudes is pristine and data collected about various pollutants there can serve as reference for precise measurement of air quality elsewhere. Keeping this in mind, the New Delhi-based National Physical Laboratory (NPL) has established the Continuous Ambient Air Monitoring Station (CAAMS) at Palampur in Himachal Pradesh. The station, to be formally opened on Friday, is located in the campus of Institute of Himalayan Bioresource Technology. This station will be remotely operated from NPL in Delhi.



“The atmospheric monitoring in Palampur at an altitude of 1391 meters will generate data about atmospheric trace pollutants and their properties, and help us generate background parameters related to atmospheric pollutants including Particulate Matter and ozone,” Dr R K Kotnala, team leader of Environmental Sciences and Biomedical Metrology Division at NPL, told *India Science Wire*.

Data from the station will help in quality assurance and quality control of atmospheric monitoring in the country. At present, air quality parameters are mostly measured in industrial and residential areas for ascertaining their compliance with the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS). The data for air quality of pristine atmosphere is not available. “We need to establish mechanisms for certification of different equipment and methodologies used for monitoring air parameters as no such mechanism is available in the country and Indian manufacturers have to use data from agencies like US-EPA,” added Dr D K Aswal, director, NPL.

Due to lack of reference data for pollutants, air quality data being gathered is often of poor quality. NPL, being the custodian of all national standards of measurements, is now engaged in developing standards for greenhouse gases and ambient air quality to provide traceability and calibration services to various user organizations in the country.

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