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India inaugurates world's only 2nd such lab for testing & calibration of air pollution equipment, will curb dependence on imported machines

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NEW DELHI: Taking, in what it called, an important step towards environmental governance and reducing dependence on foreign certification systems, India has set up the world's second National Environmental Standard Laboratory here at the CSIR–National Physical Laboratory (NPL) that will develop requisite testing and calibration facilities for air pollution monitoring equipment in the country.

Currently, most of the instruments used in India for air pollution monitoring are imported. These imported instruments, however, come with production certification from international agencies based on the environmental conditions of the certificate issuing countries.

Since environmental conditions of those countries are very different from the conditions prevalent in India, it affects the quality of measurements by the instrument operating for a long time in Indian conditions, CSIR scientists explained. At present, only the UK has such a laboratory.

The National Environmental Standard Laboratory, inaugurated by Union science & technology minister Jitendra Singh on 80th Foundation Day celebrations of CSIR–NPL on Monday, will now not only deal with the anomaly arising out of different environmental conditions but also help in manufacturing of standardised monitoring equipment.

Domestic production of such instruments will eventually end India's dependence on import and make it an exporting nation of such equipment to third world countries. The global market value of air pollution monitoring systems is, currently, estimated at \$3,997 million.

In addition, Singh also inaugurated the National Primary Standard Facility for Solar Cell Calibration, bringing India among a select group of global leaders in photovoltaic measurement standards. Both these facilities will enhance trust in data and drive investment in pollution monitoring and renewable energy.

Describing the National Environmental Standard Laboratory as a "critical step towards strengthening India's environmental governance framework", Singh said that reliable, India-specific calibration and certification of air pollution monitoring systems was long overdue and would now enable transparent, traceable, and accurate environmental data.

The facility will support regulatory bodies, industries, and startups by ensuring that monitoring instruments are tested under Indian climatic conditions. It will thus improve policy enforcement of various schemes including the National Clean Air Programme (NCAP).

Terming the facility for Solar Cell Calibration (Solar Energy Complex) a "future-ready facility", Singh said it would reduce India's dependence on foreign certification agencies, save foreign exchange, shorten turnaround time for calibration, and enhance investor confidence in the country's rapidly expanding solar sector.