

New Technologies needed to solve Sanitation and Solid Waste Management issues in India : Shri Bindeshwar Pathak

Ministry of Finance

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Two day Thematic Seminar on “Water and Sanitation” concludes in Pune.

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Legendary inventor and founder of the internationally recognised

"Sulabh International", Shri Bindeshwar Pathak said that new technologies are the need of the hour to deal with the issues of sanitation and solid waste management in India.

Shri. Pathak was making his remarks as the Lead Speaker at the Valedictory Session of the two-day Thematic Seminar on 'Water and Sanitation' which concluded here today in Pune, Maharashtra. Shri Bindeshwar Pathak said, "First we have to decide about technology because 2.3 billion people have no access to water. Today number of Tier 1 cities is 498. They have sewage treatment capacity of 11553.68 MLD which is just 32% of total sewage generation. And the number is even more troubling in tier 2 cities."

Speaking further on the occasion, Shri Pathak dwelt on his invention of the two-pit pour flush toilet system which is now being further developed and promoted by the Government. He explained its various benefits in view of the diverse nature and high density of population in India.

This was the 7th Thematic Seminar in the series as a lead-up event to the 3rd Annual Meeting of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB)'s which is being hosted by India in last week of June 2018 in Mumbai. The Seminar was being organised by the Ministry of Finance, Government of India in collaboration with Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS) as Knowledge Partner in partnership with Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) and Maharashtra Chamber of Commerce Industries and Agriculture (MCCIA). The AIIB is a new Multilateral Development Bank with more than 80 member countries headquartered in Beijing. India is the second largest shareholder after China and is keen to leverage this platform to provide leadership on future infrastructure for an Asian Century and also leverage the portfolio of the AIIB to finance its selected infrastructure initiatives.

Shri S.T. Devare, Chairman, Research Advisory Council, Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS) , and Shri Deepak Mukhi , Sabyasachi Saha were present among others at the Valedictory Session on the second day here in Pune today .

During the two-day long Seminar, leading experts and academicians opined that while India was making significant strides in Water and Sanitation sector, what needed was a holistic and integrated approach as well as creating public awareness and change in their mind set to have larger public participation in sustainability of outcomes.

Earlier in the Session, Dr. Sabyasachi Saha, Assistant Professor, RIS, gave a detailed Report based on the discussions held during the two day seminar. He said, "Water and Sanitation is mother of all infrastructure. Government is taking robust measures to provide piped water to households"

Following are the Key Outcomes and Policy Recommendations of the two day Seminar on "Water and Sanitation":

User Charges for Water and Water Tariff: It has been argued that people are ready to pay for quality services and due to water scarcity and water quality issues people are in any case paying coping charges. Poor do not benefit from low user charges. They end up paying much more to vendors. So, operational cost recovery is a feasible objective. The modalities of this are being worked out. It was suggested that non-revenue water supply in cities have to be significantly reduced.

Institutional Provisions: Water is a State subject in India, which comes in the way of comprehensive national planning and programme in this sector. It was suggested that a fresh look on the subject may be necessary to effectively address issues of watershed management, and regulation.

Watershed Management and Water-intensity of Agriculture: It was pointed out that river-linking initiatives are misnomer, and the correct approach should be linking of water basins and sources of surface water for sustainable water management. It was also highlighted that due to poor understanding and planning several water scarce states end up having water intensive cropping patterns; case in point is Punjab. On the other hand as an encouraging example it was highlighted that Chhattisgarh discourages rice production during Rabi season and subsidizes wheat production.

Private Sector Participation: Interventions in these sectors and utilities in most cases are publicly funded. However, given the nature of challenges the private sector can be a source of innovation and solutions. It is generally perceived that it is difficult for the private sector to invest in water and sanitation. The range of issues includes tendering process, revenue/tariff risk and lack of focus on issues of water quality beyond flow and supply. The successful cases of PPP models in water supply from Manila and Nagpur were discussed in detail. In Nagpur sewage water is being recycled for non-potable use in the industry. It was suggested that the DBO contracts have to be effective. Right incentives for recycling and waste segregation have to be provided to tackle

the challenges of landfill. Decentralized solutions and use of technology for water supply and sanitation have been strongly advocated.

Other Highlights of the Proceedings

In terms of better management of water – water footprint assessment of the private industry could be adopted. Moreover, significant R&D is required in areas like scenario building software to inform policymakers and citizens of the implications of different patterns of water use. This would improve the response from both.

Urban areas mostly source water from water basins located at a distance. This has significant cost implications. In order to keep these basins recharged and free from contamination, interventions in terms of industrial waste management and reduction of fertilizer use have to be adopted. This has social and political implications.

Conservation of water is equally important for ecological balance and protection of species. Water wastage through modern but perceivably misguided household purification devices and bottled water supply, needs fresh examination and mitigation.

It was highlighted that 498 Class I cities in India had treatment plants with average of only 32 percent of treatment and 225 Class II cities have treatment plants with a further poor average of 8 percent of treatment of the total waste generated. To improve the situation, decentralized waste management may be promoted.

- There has been a call made to reduce food waste, plastic usage and general reduction of waste through public awareness.
- Use of bio-toilets by the Indian Railway is a best practice and a success story from India in terms of timelines and coverage. Such decentralized waste management technologies can be adopted by urban housing societies as well.
- Finally, there is a need to improve spatial data generation by use of technologies for effective planning and monitoring for water and sanitation.

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