

Common Infrastructure for Environmental Protection

Maharashtra State has population of 96 million with 43% people living in urban area. The state is highly industrialised. 25% of the State GDP is contributed by the agriculture sector. On the other side we have 136 lakh hectares (ha) of land suffering from degradation. 70.6% land of the State today is waste land. Drought prone blocks increased from 95 to 220 and Post harvest losses in agriculture are as high as 25 to 30%. Is this not an alarm bell? Yes, it is. Time bound action plans based on ecological conservation and engineering are required to be taken up systematically over a period of time for environment protection.

The 'Command and Control' based approach for enforcement of environmental regulations in last three decades has failed. Economic implications of environmental impacts are in terms of annual loss of soil cover 775 million tonnes corresponding to Rs. 3040 crores annually. Cost of inaction is thus high. Something has to be done soon and time is of the essence. Solutions need to consider environmental protection, improved environmental compliance as well as improved competitiveness of agriculture, business and industry.

The proactive approach for promotion of Common Infrastructure for Environmental Protection (CIEP) helps in improved environmental compliance and environmental protection. CIEP can also include resource conservation, recovery and sharing facilities to bring in competitiveness, Recycling treated effluents at CETPs, Recycling resources like metals for electroplaters, Rainwater harvesting structures, Common heat and power units.

Regional Disaster Management centers capable of handling natural calamities and chemical accidents, Civil Defense



Dr. Dilip B. Boralkar,
Former Member Secretary
of Maharashtra Pollution
Control Board

training and Emergency response infrastructure should also be included. Regional Environmental Monitoring networks for Networking and Sharing of environmental monitoring stations, Common database and data management facilities and Common Environmental Training Centers are few other examples of CIEP.

Characteristics of Individual (private) Infrastructure Projects for Environmental Protection are institutional complexity, technology challenges, relatively long project devel-

opment and implementation cycles, long gestation period, limited access to long term funding, need for innovative structuring, etc. Therefore creation of an enabling framework and programmatic approach is necessary for CIEP.

Why promote Common Environmental Infrastructure: Lack of adequate environmental infrastructure is a key impediment to improved environmental compliance of SMEs and small ULBs. Creation of CIEP can enhance industrial competitiveness especially in the context of requirements of international trade. This will lead to protection of environment and conservation of natural resources.

Why Maharashtra should take a lead: Maharashtra is one of the leading states with more than 20 Common Effluent Treatment Plants (CETPs) to cater for clusters of SMEs. India's First Integrated Common Hazardous Waste Treatment and Disposal Facility on a Public-Private-Partnership model was set up in Maharashtra in 2003. Maharashtra should retain the leadership by establishing a separate state owned body corporate for development and promotion of Projects under CIEP.