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Point for discussion this month

Importance of Dams in the development of a nation.

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Dear Readers,

Lakes are very beautiful creation of God! And they are also an integral part of our Ecosystem. Whenever we see such a lake full of good quality water and surrounded by mountains and greenery as this lake at Toranmal, a remote hill station in north Maharashtra, our mind gets fresh and we can shed all our tensions in this temple of God Nature!

In last month there was a one day conference on restoration of Powai Lake in Thane Dist. This was jointly organised by the Indian Association of Aquatic Biologist (IAAB) and Maharashtra State Angling Association. A Field station was inaugurated by Dr. M.S. Kodarkar of IAAB. The efforts of MSAA in restoring the lake are very remarkable.

Whenever we see ancient pictures of our villages, towns, we can easily point out the decreasing size of our fresh water resources. This might be due to encroachment, infrastructural development or stopping of rejuvenation of the water body from catchment area. Any Nation can not achieve its goal of development with such a declining graph of increasing population and decreasing fresh water resources.

Are we going to introduce serene rivers and lakes through pictures only to our next generation? How many more generations will survive on this Earth with blocked veins of nature?

And this the need of World Water Day celebrated on 22nd March. Let it stimulate every one for sustainable action to make this planet inhabitable!

Thanking You,
Chief editor.

Article

Reforms in Institutional Mechanisms for the Control of River and Lake Pollution

India's National Environmental Policy of 2006 notes a curious observation that the pollution is rising because of the system failures. The statement might be relating to the governing system which owns the resources of the land in its command.

It opens a Pandora's box with many more questions such as is there enough awareness of protecting and conserving natural resources for the citizens of country as national wealth at all levels of governing machinery?

Are the procedure, codes, acts, rules, standards, plans and actions aligned with the set national norms of economy, health and quality of environment for all? If they are there then why the pollution of rivers and lakes are getting worst day by day? (Keep apart ground water for time being) Is there need to control yesterday's and today's pollution of rivers and lakes of India for tomorrow's sustained growth, development, economy and generation?

Taking a from the NEP2006 statement, the reforms can be suggested by evaluating the existing system on the basis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to achieve the goal of sustained economic growth with environment quality (SEGEQ) to be Ecofriendly Developed Nation (EFDN) in stipulated period of time. It's a need of the hour due to changing climate and its imminent huge impacts on global processes and economy in near future.

The cleanliness, care and action for environment quality is the key to individual's own health. But when it comes to community health and waste management, the concern institutions who gather the money for services in the form of Taxes fail miserably to deliver the goods as expected. That's why the wastes keep piling up in the immediate environment of urban individuals who suffers health set back due to ineffectivity of the community service providing institutions. So, there is urgent need to orient the services of urban local bodies towards the betterment of environmental quality and just infrastructural developments based on civil

engineering principles.

The administration and Politicians of urban local bodies need to sit together and ponder on restoration of urban environmental quality which is supposed to be their utmost priority. If they are unable to decide anything due to dynamicity of environmental processes in the cities, they should take help of wise, qualified, experienced professionals who understand the long term impacts of remedial measures by paying them sufficiently before seeking their advice. It is very difficult for the urban local bodies and government agencies which try to harvest "valuable advice" at no cost. That's why the planning and action plans are not fully available for the governing agencies and the piecemeal actions never yield the result as desired.

A recent report of Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) on drinking water mission highlights many issues such as action plans based on incomprehensible analysis, work initiation on adhoc basis without a clear and structured approach, funding and spending money on "need basis" etc. CAG is the agency which conducts the performance audit of government schemes. It observes that targets are based on numerical and politicized demands rather than habitation-wise analysis. This implies that there is gross system failure at all levels of project. From concept to commissioning and fail to yield desired effects or results. It can be further extended that there is a need to revolutionize, reform the systems which conceive, plan, execute the project at community, regional and national scales.

The examples of system failure are aplenty and widespread. Some of them are listed as below- release of funds for unapproved projects (Jammu and Kashmir), use of water testing lab as guest house (Raipur), Inability to use grants/funds (Jharkhand/Chhattisgarh), contravention of guidelines (Maharashtra), diversion / misuse of funds (Uttarakhand/ Arunachal Pradesh), no use of test kits (Uttar Pradesh), improper identification of water sources (West Bengal)----- . There are also numerous examples in other sectors like city wastewater treatment schemes, river action plans, air and traffic control city plans etc. etc.

There is urgent need to reform the institutional mechanism to improve the

quality of environmental resources available for economic progress and health of society. Presently the regulating authorities like Pollution Control Boards to maintain the purity of resources have restricted their functionalities to the Consent(permission) management and to some extent to monitoring of water bodies or air in urbanized environment. There are many more mandated functions as per the acts enacted in last three decades. The implementation approach is 'Policing' and not the "serving", hence the result achieved is not more than 10% as expected, Rivers and lakes keep receiving waste matters.

All the rivers and lakes in the urbanised areas need full attention like patients in the ICU/ICU. But the concern authorities are failing to systemize the actions with stipulated time schedule and goals to restore the quality of water bodies. So, take any city you will find most of the water bodies in urban watershed are polluted and can not be used unless the quality is restored. It seems that government authorities invoke the 'ownership' of resources only when royalty has to be amassed with gross ignorance of the responsibility of maintaining them clean and free of contamination. This is nothing but the exploitation of environmental resources contrary to the theme of NEP2006 which states that livelihood should be through conservation of environment and not the exploitation.

The institutional mechanism for improving environmental health has to be based on the basis of principles of medical profession and services. There will be state run institutions which will take up environmental health projects, implement them with demonstrable results and the cost will be recovered from the polluting ULB. This will be Government to Government 'Boot/Boo' business operations for the betterment of environment for the citizens. Some of the projects can be outsourced to private sector with assured returns to maintain the systems to give desired outputs uninterruptedly.

At the same time the Government or Private 'Environmental Health Hospitals' can seek the help of expert environmental professionals in planning, designing waste treatment processes, monitoring vital parameters of processes, trouble shooting and improved energy efficiency in waste

management.

It seems that restoration of quality of water, air, soil, control and recycling of wastes are burdensome for the existing Administration system of the country. Like IAS, IPS, IFS, one more national service cadre- Indian Technical Services (ITS) can be developed to cater the needs of huge projects like interlinking of rivers, hydropower etc. So that decision making process shall not be paralysed at any stage of project conception to commissioning. ITS will ease the pressure of development from all other cadre services and set the pace of equitable development for all without compromising the purity of environment. One must remember that individual professionals' wisdom should not be harvested free of cost by any government sector or private sector institution.

Then only, reforms of institutional mechanism will be successful for the control of lake and river pollution.

- Sandeep Joshi

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Newsviews

Methane Everywhere!

Dr. Ivan Lima, scientists from Brazil's National Institute for Space Research, has published a new study about the methane gas produced by large dams. They have used a theoretical model to demonstrate that global large dams annually release about 104 million metric tons of methane to the atmosphere through reservoir surfaces, turbines and spillways.

Methane is a principal component of natural gas. It is about 21 times more powerful at warming the atmosphere than the most abundant greenhouse gas, carbon dioxide.

Dr. Lima said, 'If this huge amount of methane produced by existing tropical dams can be used to generate electricity, we can avoid building new dams with their associated human and environmental costs.' Executive Director of International Rivers Network Mr. McCully said, "Lima's calculations imply that the World's 52,000 large dams contribute more than four percent of the total warming impact of human activities.

Prashant

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Activity Report

1. SERI's Pride!

There was one proud moment for SERI when Hon. Shri. Sanjay Khandare, Member Secretary MPCB, Mumbai, released the Book, 'Environment Management - for Professionals, Businesses and Industries' written by Shri. Sandeep Joshi of SERI.

This programme was held in the National Conference on 'Advances in Pollution Control Technology' organised by Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Marathwda University, Aurangabad in collaboration with MPCB, Mumbai with due thanks to the organizers - Dr. Satish Patil and Dr. Satish Mokashe.



The occasion was graced by Hon. Vice Chancellor Nagnath Kottapalle. Author Sandeep Joshi (4th from right) is flanked by Hon. Kottapalle Sir (left) and Mr. Sanjay Khandare (right).

Sandeep Joshi, Environment Technologist was invited by organisers to deliver keynote address on Ecotechnologies for domestic and industrial pollution. In his hour long speech, he emphasized on use of affordable technologies which require minimum electricity and operational costs.



On the dais Mr. Nandosekar, PSO, MPCB, Dr. Wagh, Dr. Yeradu, TNPCB and Dr. Satish Patil were present.

2. Workshop on Urban Wetlands

This was organized by Enviro - Vigil, Thane in association with Indian Association of Aquatic biologists on 2nd Feb. 2008 - a wetland day. Dr. M. S. Kodarkar presented his marvellous talk on necessities of restoring quality of wetlands with numerous examples and ecosystem approach. Mr. Sandeep Joshi attended the programme and emphasized that cultural pollution due to Ganesh idol immersion should be taken up once all the water bodies are restored from their present status due to sewage and industrial pollution.

3. Seminar on Environmental Status, Economics and Management Options of Urban Wetlands

Sunita Enviro's Dr. Pramod Salaskar in association with Indian Association of Aquatic Biologists and Maharashtra State Angling Association on 3rd Feb. 2008 organised seminar on environmental status, economics and management options of urban wetlands with special reference to Powai Lake. Dr. M. S. Kodarkar was chief guest of the programme. Mrs. Sayali Joshi, CEO of SERI and Sandeep Joshi, Environment Technologist attended the seminar and discussed the water quality of Powai Lake.

Eternal Words

From Book "Environment and Business" by Alasdair Blair and David Hitchcock (2001; Publisher Routledge, London)

"The Yellowstone, Yosemite, Sequoia etc. Nature's sublime wonderlands, the admiration and joy of the world. Nevertheless, like anything else worthwhile, they have always been subject to attack by despoiling gain seekers and mischief makers of every degree from Satan to Senators, eagerly trying to make everything immediately and selfishly commercial with schemes designed in smug - smiling philanthropy, industriously and sham piously crying 'conservation, conservation, panutilization', that man and beast may be fed and the dear Nation made great."

- John Muir (1912)

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