



PRESS RELEASE

Coca-Cola and TERI University Focus On Building Experts for Sustainable Water Resource Management and Cleaning of Indian Rivers

- *Coca-Cola Department of Water Studies begins Year One with 21 students; Organizes a High Level Dialogue on Sustainable Water Resource Management & Cleaning of Indian Rivers*
- *Hon'ble Minister for Water Resources, Sushri Uma Bharti was the keynote speaker*

New Delhi, October 7: Cleaning Indian rivers has been a major issue that our country has been grappling with for many years. Despite cleaning of rivers being a major agenda for the Government, there is a significant decline in water quality - arising from growing population, increasing urbanization and industrial growth, which needs to be tackled with expertise.

Against this background and with an aim to address the foremost challenges in water resource management, Coca-Cola and TERI University organized a High Level Dialogue on the theme "Cleaning of India's Rivers - Design of Participatory Approaches". The half-day symposium brought together key stakeholders to deliberate on a collaborative approach in the area of cleaning Indian rivers. Hon'ble Union Minister of Water Resources, Ms. Uma Bharti, was present at the

occasion, along with Dr R K Pachauri, Director General, The Energy and Research Institute (TERI), Dr Leena Shrivastava, Vice Chancellor of TERI University and Mr Venkatesh Kini, President, Coca-Cola India and South West Asia.

Delivering the keynote address, **Sushri Uma Bharti, Hon'ble Union Minister for Water Resources** said “We need to analyze why rivers, that were unpolluted for thousands of years, have suddenly become severely polluted during the past 40-50 years. Today, even animals cannot take a dip in the waters. We need a judicious mix of knowledge from global and national best practices to clean up our rivers, as it has happened in Sabarmati, Thames and the Rhine. The most important task is to ensure minimum biological flow of the river. Even treated water should not be allowed to flow into the river.

She further added, “We need a participatory approach from various stakeholders, including industries, to make cleaning the Ganga a success. The industry needs to realize that if rivers die, the industries would die too. It is easy to dwell on the problems, but difficult to come up with solutions, or even to know where to start.”

Dr R K Pachauri, Chancellor, TERI University and Director-General, TERI, said: “India’s rivers are polluted to an extent that does not allow any life to survive in them. The result is not only widespread economic loss, but also the spread of disease on account of pollutants, toxic waste and disease carrying organisms being transported by our rivers. For this reason the Government of India is placing great emphasis on cleaning of the country’s rivers. However, success in this regard would involve not merely action by the Government, but the involvement of all stakeholders, ensuring participatory action by all.”

Speaking on the occasion, **Mr Venkatesh Kini, President, Coca-Cola India and South West Asia**, said, The National Water Policy states that the lack of adequate trained personnel for scientific planning, utilizing modern techniques and analytical capabilities incorporating information technology constrains good water management. It is here that the Coca-Cola Department of Water Studies can help the Government’s plans on holistic water management. Also, as we move towards making India the growth engine of Asia and bring about well-rounded development, we will need some very innovative approaches to water management. This

will include efficiency in water usage projects as also ways to provide access to clean water at low costs and with minimum wastage. We are hoping that this department will generate enough intellectual capital to cater to the needs of a modern India”

Speaking at the Dialogue, **Dr Leena Srivastava, Vice Chancellor, TERI University**, said: “TERI University is preparing its students to provide systemic solutions to the critical sustainability challenges that we face today. We have spent an enormous amount of time and resources in trying to clean our rivers unsuccessfully. While large-scale, centralised technological solutions are undoubtedly important, they are obviously not sufficient to deal with a complex river system – avoidance has to be invested in as much as treatment and decentralised solutions have to be part of the package of measures. And for this, we need proper policies, regulations and incentives to engage people in both water conservation and protection.”

The Dialogue marked the formal beginning of The Coca-Cola Department of Water Studies with 21 students joining the various courses in the first year.

Water benchmarks

The Coca-Cola Foundation, Coca-Cola India and TERI University have collaborated to launch the Coca-Cola Department of Regional Water Studies for Master’s level programme on Water Science and Governance. The Department aims to develop a globally competitive cadre of young water management professionals, scientifically manage water resources in the country with the help of research, development and new technologies, as well as build capability for various stakeholders who can influence policy and implement research effectively. Focused towards addressing the challenges of water management in the country and the need for multi-disciplinary solution to achieve a long-lasting and agreeable outcome, the program will examine water issues in an interdisciplinary framework, bringing in cultural, educational and scientific factors as well as religious, ethical, social, political, legal, institutional and economic dimensions towards a better, holistic approach to water management.

The High-Level Dialogue held today is the first in a series of upcoming interactive seminars, which will be hosted by the newly-formed Coca-Cola Department of Regional Water Studies. Eminent experts on rivers

discussed various facets of the problem linked to institutional issues, inadequate waste management, infrastructure and services, lack of financial incentives, poor environmental monitoring and regulation. The delegates who participated at the Dialogue, included decision-makers, representatives from academic institutes and multinational organizations, policy-makers and representatives from Non-Governmental Organizations. The event served as a platform to discuss challenges, strategies and opportunities for cleaning of rivers for sustainable water management.

Findings of River Study

Students from TERI University presented an analysis of the evaluation and quality restoration plan for river Yamuna. The study focuses on linkages between public perception of water quality, the associated risk perception and their willingness to participate in water management projects.

The recommendations include:

- Declaration of the river quality, post river action plans is important
- Development of water quality surveillance according to the restoration plan and technological requirement
- Entire NCR must be seweraged to the extent possible to ensure near “zero” discharge in the river. This can be done by upgrading the existing STPs, rehabilitating exiting sewers and laying new ones.
- Any excess sewage entering directly into the river must be tapped and treated by establishing alternative drainage systems like canals or *bandha* (a kind of retaining wall or dam extending from a few meters below the riverbed to the river’s flood level) on either or both sides of the river to dispose the entire wastewater without lowering the Dissolved Oxygen (DO) levels in the river.
- River front development needs to be looked upon as both an economically-viable and environmental-friendly solution to promote the concept of “Green City”.
- Flow augmentation via impounding the river to use the water stored during the monsoon period and released during the dry periods.

- The recycle and reuse of treated wastewater is also one of the main opportunities, by which water can be used for irrigation, horticulture, and industrial purposes. It can also be used for cooling the towers in power stations etc.
- Diffusing pollution via urban and agricultural runoff can be minimized by establishing rainwater harvesting units within the city and sustainable urban drainage systems (SuDs).