

National Symposium on Water in Delhi Calls for Collective Action to Secure India's Water Future

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A National Symposium on Water was organised at the India International Centre (IIC), New Delhi, bringing together environmentalists, academicians, policymakers, public sector leaders, journalists and social activists to deliberate on India's growing water challenges and the need for sustainable water management.



L-R: Dr. Rajendra Singh, Vivek Avasthi, Manoj Kumar Singh, CMD BCCL, Dr. Indira Khurana at the National Symposium on Water in New Delhi

Organised by White Dolphin Media under the aegis of IndianPSU.com, the symposium focused on the theme of water conservation and sustainable use, with Coal Neer – From Waste to Wealth: Unlocking the Potential of Treated Mine Water emerging as a key area of discussion. The event highlighted how innovative water treatment solutions and community participation can play an important role in strengthening India's water security.

Renowned environmentalist and Ramon Magsaysay Awardee Dr. Rajendra Singh, popularly known as the Waterman of India, was the keynote speaker at the symposium. Addressing the gathering, he emphasised that water conservation cannot remain the responsibility of governments alone and must become a collective responsibility involving communities, institutions and citizens.

Dr. Singh highlighted the close relationship between water,

women and rivers through the message “**Neer–Naari–Nadi = Narayani**”, underlining their importance to human civilisation and sustainable development. He also spoke about the importance of community-led conservation and shared the experience of Tarun Bharat Sangh, which over nearly five decades has worked with communities across villages to develop water conservation structures and revive local water sources.

The symposium placed special emphasis on Coal Neer, an initiative of Coal India Limited aimed at treating mine water and making it available as safe drinking water for communities in and around coal mining areas. The initiative was discussed as an example of converting a potential environmental challenge into a useful resource while addressing water scarcity and supporting sustainable development in mining regions.

Indira Khurana, Chairperson of the Indian Himalayan River Basins Council (IHRBC) and Vice Chairperson of Tarun Bharat Sangh, was the Guest of Honour. She highlighted the impact of water scarcity on communities, particularly women in rural areas, and stressed the importance of efficient water management, protection of natural water bodies and stronger policy interventions for long-term water security.

The symposium featured experts from diverse fields, including Prof. Rana Pratap Singh, Senior Professor (Retd.), Department of Environmental Science, Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar University, Lucknow; Farrukh R. Khan, former Regional Director, WaterAid and Executive Member, State Ganga Mission; Dr. Avantika Singh, Assistant Professor at the University of Delhi specialising in Gender Studies, Climate Change, Adaptation and Vulnerability Studies; and Utkarsh Sinha, veteran journalist with extensive experience in governance, environmental issues and public policy.

The speakers stressed the need for integrated water management, climate resilience, sustainable use of natural resources and greater participation of local communities in water conservation. The symposium also recognised individuals for their contributions to water conservation, sustainability and leadership.

Manoj Kumar Agarwal, Chairman-cum-Managing Director of Bharat Coking Coal Limited (BCCL), received the INDIAN PSU Frontline Leadership Excellence Award for his leadership in promoting water sustainability initiatives, particularly the Coal Neer project.

Nilendu Kumar Singh, Chairman-cum-Managing Director of Central Coalfields Limited (CCL), was conferred the INDIAN PSU Dynamic Leadership Excellence Award for advancing sustainable water management practices across coal mining operations. The award was received on his behalf by Sangeeta, General Manager (Environment), CCL.

Sanjay Singh, founder of Parmarth Samaj Sevi Sansthan and widely recognised for his work in Bundelkhand, received the INDIAN PSU Water Conservation Excellence Award for his contribution to watershed development and community-led water conservation. The INDIAN PSU Aqua Genetic Award was presented to Sanjay Agarwal, General Manager, BCCL, for his contribution to conceptualising and developing the Coal Neer water treatment and purification plant.

Welcoming the participants, **Vivek Avasthi, CEO of White Dolphin Media and Editor-in-Chief of IndianPSU.com**, said the symposium was conceived as more than a one-day discussion and aimed to build a wider movement around water conservation and sustainable resource management. He emphasised the need for

continued collaboration among policymakers, public sector enterprises, environmental experts, academic institutions and civil society to develop practical and scalable solutions for India's water challenges.

The symposium concluded with a collective call for sustained efforts towards water conservation and water security, with participants emphasising that protecting India's water resources requires innovative solutions, responsible resource management and active participation from society at large.

