

## Govt efforts in water management bearing fruit: Saif-ud-din Soz

### Minister says India's water vitality rests in its villages

The **Union Minister for Water Resources Prof. Saif-ud-din Soz** today assured that though figures relating to per capita water availability in India may seem alarming - it has come down from 5,100 m<sup>3</sup> in 1951 to 1,700 m<sup>3</sup> today - such is not the case considering India's size and large population. "There is a silent movement in progress in the country in the field of water management," he said, "and farmers are responding to the efforts that have been launched by the government."

Prof. Soz was speaking at the opening of the "Indian Danish Water Ways", jointly organized by the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), the Trade Council of Denmark-India, the Embassy of Denmark in India, and the Water Training and Consulting (WTC) in New Delhi today.

The Minister cited examples from across the country where prudent practices have turned the fortunes of villagers. "I visited Hiware Bazar (a village in Maharashtra's Marathwada district) with just 400 mm of annual rainfall. Villagers by their own efforts created a system of canals, ear-marked grazing land and collected rain water. Today, there is a spectacular change in the fortunes of the villagers and their economic status has risen," he informed.

He said that with a large population, poverty and illiteracy, India will always face a greater challenge than smaller, developed nations like Denmark. But, he said, "India has taken some exemplary steps in the areas of recharging ground water and rain harvesting." Pointing out that "groundwater should be treated like a safe deposit in a bank, and only the accrued dividend should be used," he said, "We have formed a National Advisory Council consisting of leading experts to advise us on groundwater recharging." It has recommended setting up of 5,000 centres in the country where scientists can interact with the farmers, and advise them on topics like better irrigation options and seed technology, he added.

The Minister said by 2040 India would need 400 million tons of food grains for the estimated population of 1.6 billion people. All this food would need to be produced in India, and irrigation is key to achieving this, and the Ministry has regulated against the use of flood irrigation in India. While India's part of the story was hardly known to the world, India welcomed the opportunity to share ideas and experiences with Denmark.

Earlier, **Mr Troels Lund Poulsen, Denmark's Minister for the Environment**, spoke about Danish success in water management that "combined economic growth with environment protection." Observing that India is recording high economic growth in recent years, Mr. Poulsen said that "rapid development leads to increase in demand for water, and that calls for a need to go in for wastewater treatment." In this regard, he said, "there is a need for business partners to link and it is crucial to push the technological cooperation forward." He pointed out that "our environmental policies have in many ways increased the competitiveness of Danish companies," adding, "Danish environmental technological companies are strong and competent providers of the solutions to the demands of India." To substantiate this point he said the water consumption in Denmark had come down by 30% over the last 30 years, and the groundwater is such a high quality that it one could drink it even without any treatment.

Informing that he had come from attending a Global Ministerial Environment Forum held in Kenya earlier this week, he expressed satisfaction that "I found it very encouraging that a wide number of ministers saw the economic crisis as an opportunity to change production and consumption patterns, and not as a threat to environmental protection."

In his address ***Ambassador of Denmark, Mr Ole Lonsmann Poulsen***, said that “there is no argument against cost of environment protection in the middle and long term.” He said that “Denmark has a truly unique record and expertise in environment protection and is good at combining business opportunities with practical and sustainable practices.” Preservation of the environment was as critical as socio-economic growth. He called for the India and Denmark to work together in this endeavour to protect the environment.

***Mr Phiroz Adi Vandrevala, Executive Director & Head, Global Corporate Affairs, Tata Consultancy Services***, in his welcome address traced the long history of trade links between the two countries and said that “there is immense potential in furthering bilateral ties between India and Denmark as there is a synergy of cultural links between the two nations.” In this regard, he pointed out that Pandit Nehru had visited Denmark in 1957, and today Denmark is the 24<sup>th</sup> largest investor in India ahead of nations like Russia.

The programme was attended by over 100 representatives from industry, government and research institutions of India besides the 25 counterpart representatives from Denmark. The inaugural session was followed by technical presentations by each of the seven top Danish companies, and a business-to-business meet.

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