

## Clean Water for All is Achievable



L-R: **Manoj Kumar**, CEO, Naandi Foundation; **Ravi Singh**, Secretary General and CEO, World Wildlife Fund India; **Deepender Hooda**, Member of Parliament, Lok Sabha (Indian National Congress); **Atul Singh**, CEO, Coca Cola India; Moderator: **Karti Sandilya**, Former Director of North America Regional Office, Asian Development Bank

If India has not been able to guarantee clean drinking water for all even after 60 years of Independence, it is because the subject is not on the priority list of mainline political agenda parties, According to **Mr Deepender Hooda, Member of Parliament, Lok Sabha (Indian National Congress)**. He was speaking at the concurrent session on 'Clean Drinking Water for All: A Distant Dream?' here today as part of the four-day Ideas India 2008 event hosted by Aspen Institute India.

Mr Hooda said that his own state of Haryana is solving the problem at village level through participatory management by involving NGOs. Observing that equity is the major issue, he said that even in cities like Delhi, 80 per cent of water goes to five per cent of people, and one fifth of the districts in the country are running dry. Effects of climate change are further going to aggravate the situation. As far as the quality goes, we are nowhere near what we should have. He said that water is a state resource and all efforts to make it a national resource have faced obstacles. Therefore, national level planning and implementation had always run into difficulties.

**Mr Manoj Kumar, CEO, Naandi Foundation**, said that besides a few, no source of water is clean in India. He suggested a decentralized model of collecting and cleaning water at the village level. His foundation is working with the Haryana government to set up a collection and treatment plant for each village. Treatment plants are not hi-tech. Reverse Osmosis (RO) or UV filtration is enough to purify water. The plants are set up through MP/MLA funds and given to panchayats who finally own them. Water is commodified, so that each can of 10 litres costs just one rupee. He said that the people are willing to pay this amount for the safety and convenience.

**Mr Atul Singh, CEO, Coca Cola India**, said that more lives are lost to unsafe drinking water than the wars and terrorism combined. He said that India's water problem is solvable. There is enough rainfall, but all of it is received in the four months during the monsoons. One problem is how to catch it. Then there is wasteful use, especially in agriculture. Saying that 85 per cent of water is used in irrigation, he saw a lot of scope for conserving water if we can extract maximum value from each drop. The industry, which uses five per cent of water, should become water neutral, that is return to the source the amount of water it has received.

**Mr Ravi Singh, Secretary General and CEO, World Wildlife Fund India**, suggested that we should manage our basins first before we talk of inter-basin transfer of water. He said that in the cities we take water for granted. Giving examples of Lucknow and Jaipur, he said that sources of water for some cities are already under threat. He said that five-year plans will not work for water. What we need is a 100-year plan and one-year implementation. The plan should also include where we want to settle our populations next when the current sources dry up, if we want to avoid the fate of the Indus Valley Civilisation.

**Mr Karti Sandiya, Former Resident Director General, Asian Development Bank, Washington, D.C.**, who moderated the session, hoped that we would be able to manage our water well and the dream of clean water for all would be realized in near future.

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