

Partnerships Key to Sustainable Growth: Teri Chief

Large-scale adoption of technology central to reducing, reusing & recycling waste: Mathur

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New Delhi: India must develop partnerships that involve stakeholders to ensure its efforts to push economic growth do not result in higher air & water pollution and increased waste generation, say experts.

They say the government must make resilience its cornerstone for its plans to develop infrastructure and housing, expand manufacturing, increase farm incomes and agricultural productivity to deliver on inclusive and sustainable growth.

"Broadly, there are three components of resilience. First, it is the ability of people to overcome adverse impacts due to climate change and macroeconomic shocks. Second, the economy must become more resource-efficient. Third, it must focus on minimising waste and/or reusing it," said Ajay Mathur, director general of The Energy and Resources Institute (Teri), a New Delhi-based think-tank.

Creating partnerships across stakeholders such as government, business and science is the focus of the World Sustainable Development Summit being organised by Teri here this week.

At the heart of improving resilience is the idea of reduce, reuse and recycle. There is a fair amount recycling already taking place in India. But the challenge is to improve the quality of these efforts, Mathur said.

Almost 100% of the paper in our homes that becomes waste is sold to a recycler. He sells the paper to a large-scale collector, who sells it to someone making second-grade paper. This is sold to a paper mill that makes third-grade paper. This is the reason there is little paper in our landfills. Mathur said that is the good news.

However, effectively first-grade paper is converted into third-grade paper. That is not resource-efficient. "The challenge is to improve the quality of recycled paper. And in the process how do we ensure that waste in the production process doesn't end up in the water system, and how to reduce the amount of energy used in the process of re-pulping the paper," he said.



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Ensuring large-scale adoption of technology is central to addressing these issues. "The technology exists. But the reason why adoption is not happening is price. So what we have is a price scale challenge," Mathur said.

Large paper mills are already addressing the issue of effluents. Rather than discharging it into water bodies, these mills are using it as a resource for co-firing boilers. This effort needs to be done for small-scale units as well. "It can be done but you have to reconfigure the engineering," Mathur said.

This exercise requires acknowledging the ecosystem in which SMEs operate. "Local manufacturers are mostly one-man shows. He is the CEO, CFO and CTO, or at best a small operation. Unless you provide him with a solution that works, he will not adopt any of these resource-efficient options or technologies. This is simply because he does not have the resource to google or seek out solutions that already exist," Mathur said.

Mathur, who as head of the Bureau of Energy Efficiency, oversaw the large scale adoption of LED bulbs, said partnerships are the new tool available to policy-makers to ensure resilient growth.