

PRESS RELEASE

Recycling needs to be recognised as an industry in India E-waste management serves nature as well as the nation, say experts

Mumbai, July 27, 2016: With the Environment ministry notifying the new E-Waste Management Rules, 2016 that will bring the producers under Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR), along with targets and requirements to collect e waste, experts feel that time has come to take the second big step – infuse capital and recognise recycling as an industry. Technology and financial incentives would encourage entrepreneurs entering this field.

The experts were speaking at a seminar organised jointly by the World Trade Centre Mumbai and Ekonnnect Knowledge Foundation on ‘Managing E-waste – Challenges and Opportunities’ at the WTC complex in Mumbai.

E-waste is increasing at a rate of 30% per annum, which is a big concern and at present, more than 90 per cent of E-waste is managed by the informal sector – ie *kabadiwallas*. “The 2016 rules are very comprehensive and it addresses some of the loopholes in the 2011 act by introducing robust compliance, audit and monitoring mechanism. The 2016 act also brought in Compact Fluorescent Lamp (CFL) and other electronic products under its ambit,” informed Dr. Prasad Modak, Executive President, Environmental Management Centre LLP and Director Ekonnnect Knowledge Foundation. “E-waste is rising due to changes in our lifestyle, everyone is using multiple electronic gadgets now. The target for 2020 will be to collect 70 per cent of E-waste, which is a big challenge and needs push from all stakeholders,” added Dr Modak.

The new rules make the manufacturer responsible to collect e-waste generated during the manufacture of any electrical and electronic equipment and channelise it for recycling or disposal and seek authorisation from State Pollution Control Boards (SPCBs). “We have been rating companies on EPR in terms of collection centres, buy back systems, awareness programmes and the results have been disappointing. Even the SPCBs do not mention E-waste rules on their website. We had no option but to move to court on this,” pointed out Satish Sinha, Associate Director, Toxics Links.

Sinha lamented the fact that reputed MNCs are following EPR rules in Europe but do not want to do the same in India. “They want an escape route in India because our regulatory framework is not in place. There is no incentive to compliance. Also, unless the cost of implementation is built in the regulatory framework, the system would not work,” Sinha added.

Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), India’s biggest IT company, is known for its first mover advantage by formulating E-waste disposal policy in 2008. “We are implementing it in several countries we work where the framework does not exist. Our procurement is largely green. We have huge size of old products like computers phased out annually, which are given to charitable organisations, which we keep track,” explained Dr. Aniruddha Agnihotri, Head, Environmental Sustainability, Health and Safety, TCS.

TCS' internal IT team has the mandate of EPR and also has a transparent process to identify and work with recyclers. "We have a bidding process, destruction certificates are obtained from vendors on data and are maintained at locations. We also do surprise inspections at our recyclers," added Agnihotri.

Recycling is all about transforming, transport and technology and it is time we look at it as a business opportunity. "There is no monetary support to the recyclers, no one wants to pay best prices and still everyone wants European facilities," opined B K Soni, CMD, EcoReco. Soni stated that skilling up is the only way forward and EcoReco has now signed up with National Skill Development Corporation of India (NSDC) to train 300,000 *kabbadiwallas* over three years. This will improve their health. Also, we would install eco-bins at spiritual and educational centres to increase collection," he added.

India must take cue from the network of Producer Responsibility Organisations (PROs) from Switzerland, which manages the finances of the entire recycling system and are funded by the producers. "PROs audit the recyclers. The Swiss model has shown way of creating technical standards in E-waste. They create awareness, are IT-driven and smartly run organisations with a lean employee model," informed Dr. Deepali Sinha Khetriwal, MD, Sofies India.

The system of advance recycling fee on new products provides the sustainable financial model in the Swiss PROs. "The result is that the Swiss have the second highest per capita collection rate in Europe (16.10 kg per individual). This robust system has demonstrated success and then led to legislative action. India must learn from this," explained Khetriwal.

Capt. Somesh Batra, Vice chairman, World Trade Centre Mumbai stated that the 2016 E-Waste rules are very comprehensive and it is time that EPR is taken seriously. "India is producing very high quantity of E-Waste and it is time for us to act under the new framework or else we are inviting a major health and environmental hazard. This seminar would also guide youngsters on the entrepreneurship opportunities in the E-Waste sector."



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