

## **Union Minister Birender Singh launches 'India Sanitation Coalition'**

***Triggering behavioral change in mindset of communities is the key to achieve 100% open-defecation free India, says Minister***

**NEW DELHI, 25 June 2015. Mr. Birender Singh, Minister for Drinking Water & Sanitation, today formally launched the 'India Sanitation Coalition'** formed under the aegis of FICCI. He also launched logo, website and brochure of the 'Coalition' at an event in New Delhi. Ms. Vijaylaxmi Joshi, Secretary, Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation and Ms Naina Lal Kidwai, Past President, FICCI AND Chairman FICCI Water Mission were also present.

The vision of the Coalition is to enable and support an ecosystem for sustainable sanitation through a partnership mode.

The India Sanitation Coalition was initiated in 2013 by a group of people from different organizations engaged in the sanitation space. The Coalition today includes 51 organizations and several individual experts. It has been established to bring organizations and individuals together on a common platform to find sustainable solutions for sanitation. The Coalition aims to add immense value to the Government's 'Swachh Bharat Mission'.

The Coalition has received immense support from eminent personalities like Mr. Birender Singh; Ms. Vijaylaxmi Joshi, Secretary, Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation; Mr. M Prasad, Secretary, Ministry of Urban Development; Mr. Arvind Panagariya, Vice Chairman, Niti Aayog of India; Mr. Bill Gates, Co-founder of Microsoft; Mr. Ratan Tata, Chairman Emeritus, Tata Sons; Mr. Piyush Pandey, Executive Chairman & National Creative Director, Ogilvy; Mr. Narayan Murthy, Chairman of the Board, Infosys and many more, in the form of encouraging messages, which have been mentioned in the brochure.

On the occasion, Mr. Singh said that providing environmentally-safe sanitation to millions of people is a significant challenge. The task is doubly difficult in India where the introduction of new technologies can challenge people's traditions and beliefs. It has been realized that triggering behavioral change in the mindset of communities is the key to solving the problem of open defecation. To achieve the goal of Swachh Bharat by 2019, he said that there is a need for national movement on sanitation. This should not only be a government program but a people's movement.

Mr. Singh said that corporate contributions to the sanitation sector can yield rich dividends for them in terms of a healthier workforce besides generating goodwill for them and demand for their products. He added that his Ministry has issued guidelines to facilitate the participation of corporates in sanitation works. States have been given the flexibility to use these guidelines as a base to develop their own procedure to attract/receive and utilize CSR funds.

Mr. Singh said that the Coalition would provide a good platform to the stakeholders to not only deliberate but also deliver some successful models of CSR action in sanitation sector that could in turn help achieve the goal of Swachh Bharat.

In her Special Address, **Ms. Vijaylaxmi Joshi, Secretary, Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation**, urged corporates to step up their efforts to make the sanitation program a success. She suggested that corporates should partner with the government in creating awareness campaigns to initiate a change in the mindset of people. Ms. Joshi added that the private sector could fund defunct and ineligible toilets in the country.

Underling the areas of cooperation, she said that corporates could help by way of providing training and skill

development to the much-needed masons and plumbers required for sanitation. Ms. Joshi recommended the setting up of Rural Sanitary Marts in line with the one present in West Bengal, to make sanitary materials available to rural people at a reasonable cost.

Highlighting the efforts of her Ministry, she said that the Corporate Facilitation Desk will be operational from July 1 for corporates and a webpage would be soon available to corporates to showcase their work done in the area of sanitation. She added that the Ministry had empanelled NGOs working in rural areas for the clean India campaign and corporates could collaborate with them to reach the hinterland of the country. Ms. Joshi also stated that NRIs have shown a keen interest to make India a cleaner place to live, hence, the Coalition should look towards engaging NRIs as well in their program.

In his theme presentation **Mr. Rashid K Kidwai, Coordinator, India Sanitation Coalition**, said that four Task Forces have been established with cross-sector representation namely, Advocacy, Branding, and Communication; Identification and Dissemination of Best Practices; Partnerships and Collaboration and Growing the Membership of the Coalition; and Engagement with Central and State Governments. He added that separate Task Forces for states would be created in time and all coalition members would be joining one or the other Task Force.

Describing the national plan of the Coalition, Mr. Kidwai said that the Coalition would aim to work with members in focused geographies in states. It would collate partners' knowledge and experience to develop proposals to states, supported by the Coalition's knowledge base. Besides, exploring partnership opportunities both internally and externally, the Coalition looks forward to strengthen systems to enhance fund flow management; optimize resources; introduce much-needed linkages in planning and communication; enhance stakeholders engagement; and establish platforms to connect funders and implementers.

**Ms. Naina Lal Kidwai, Chairman, FICCI Water Mission, and Past President, FICCI**, said that to achieve the objective of '100 per cent Open Defecation Free status', the power of communities and the power of students to create the peer to peer pressure and influence will muster a much larger force. Therefore, the focus of community involvement and engaging schools and communities at various levels will be extremely important.

Ms. Kidwai said that aspects of building partnerships, skill development, community involvement, peer to peer influence and advocacy are the threads that the Coalition will knot together. All Coalition partners are doing excellent work in their sphere of influence that can serve as a strong foundation for newer initiatives on sanitation. She added that the Coalition would be happy to support the Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation, and other Ministries driving the agenda on sanitation, in building momentum, filling the gaps, galvanizing support, and being a change agent.

In his vote of thanks **Dr. A Didar Singh, Secretary General, FICCI**, said that the India Sanitation Coalition and FICCI would support and assist the government's objectives as set out for the Swachh Bharat Mission and facilitate the activities of the government.