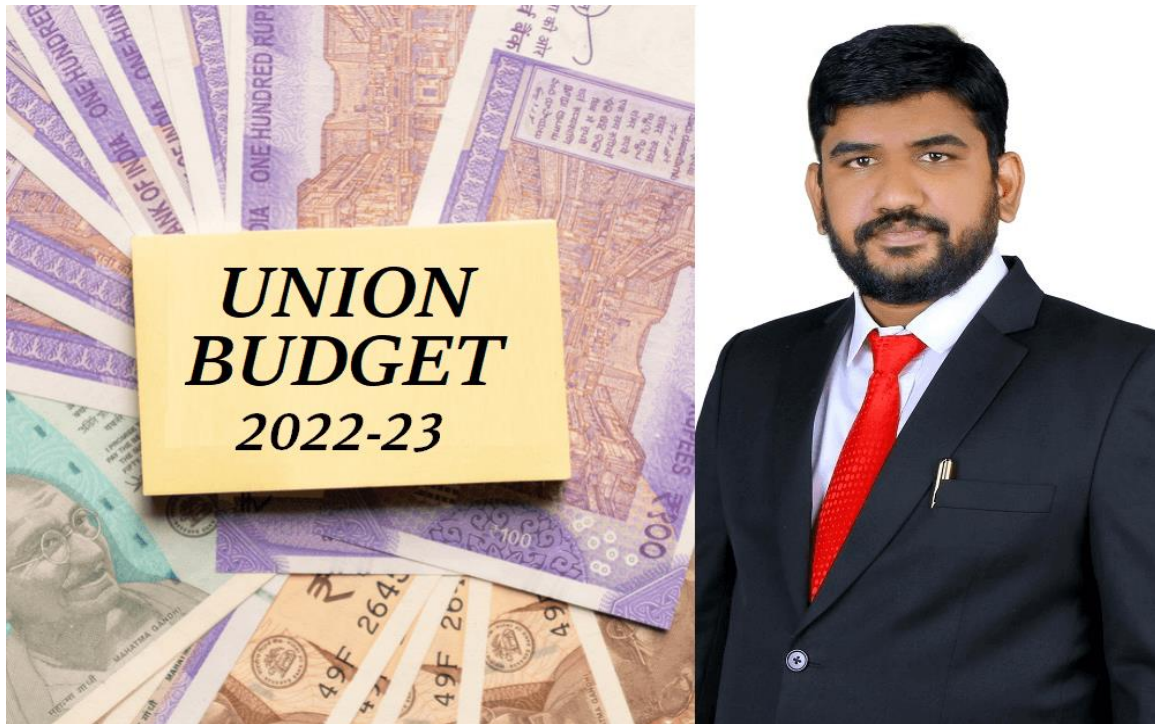


India's Union Budget 2022-23, Expectations: Water Priorities and Skill Development – Abdul Rahman Mohammed, Sahara Industry

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Sahara Industry



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India: World's economy revolves around the availability of water. Whether it is for the human life system or economic activities, water is primarily required for everything. Access to safe water for drinking is very challenging and in many parts of India, women and young girls are forced to spend lots of time and energy every day carrying water to their homes.

A recent study by National Statistical Office found that the major source of drinking water for the household was a hand pump in the rural areas. About 42.9% of the households in the rural areas used hand pumps as the principal source of drinking water. It essentially means these many people are drinking untreated and often

unsafe water risking their health and safety. Water pollution has become a major concern for India as it affects millions of people across the country.

The growing population in India has increased the demand for water and historically our accepted solution has been on the supply side. The quality concern has been ignored resulting in most of our water resources becoming polluted and not fit for any kind of consumption.

The deterioration in water quality with increasing contamination is a big challenge. The contamination encompasses everything from sewage entering into the drinking water to the endless municipal and industrial waste pouring directly into water sources. Almost 70% of wastewater, containing anything from human waste to industrial discharges goes untreated directly into major rivers around the country which also feed millions of people with drinking water.

The range of potential pollutants is enormous, threatening human health and the ecological system, and their impacts are widespread. Apart from the surface water, even the groundwater resources are highly polluted due to excessive extraction that further increases salinity. For years, the water quality monitoring involved manually taking samples or being limited to sensors and analyzers that are powered and installed at a limited number of fixed assets.

For clean drinking water, a robust treatment system and constant monitoring of raw and treated water are essential. Clean drinking water being fundamental to human survival, the water treatment facilities need to be made available at optimum quality at an economically affordable cost. The current GST on water treatment equipment, filtration system, and related products are collected at 18% which is high considering the purpose for which these are manufactured, purchased, and utilized.



As the Union Budget is being prepared to be presented by the Hon'ble Finance Minister of India in a few days' time, it urges the Government of India to consider the following important points with adequate policy measures:

- The GST of water treatment equipment and chemical be reduced to 12% or lower as safe water is an essential element for human survival.
- Currently, the majority of water treatment system is being imported from China, which also has quality concession. The Government must take adequate steps to counter these imports and support make in India local manufacturers.
- There should be guidelines to provide subsidies to encourage decentralized and community-based Sewage Treatment Plants to be installed in housing societies and large apartments which will help in preventing major contamination in groundwater. It will also support water reuse for non-potable purposes while unclogging the drainage system as well.
- The Government of India should introduce dedicated courses in skill development for people to learn about repairing/assembling water treatment and RO plants with quality and standard under the "SKILL INDIA" campaign. It will help create employment and provide skilled personnel in the water industry.

Despite large investments in creating water infrastructure, we lag behind other countries in water quality management. Creating infrastructure has been considered a solution earlier, but now we have to synchronize our policy and planning to address the water scarcity challenges, safe drinking water from the source to tap, water resources sustainability for industrial and economic growth, groundwater management, improvement, and innovation in water use, reuse and recycle practices, adoption of modern and relevant technologies and goals for urban and rural sustainable water supply and wastewater management system among others.

Sahara Industry, a leading name in water treatment solution provider in India has been advocating for better quality safe water for the people. The ISO 9001:2015 company has executed water and wastewater projects in the length and breadth of India contributed immensely by making water safe for drinking, industrial and institutional purposes.