

A.T.E. Huber offers time-tested wastewater treatment solutions

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Renowned for a number of years for its eco-friendly and sustainable solutions, A.T.E. recently tied up with HUBER SE, Germany, a global leader in water, wastewater and sludge treatment, to form **A.T.E. Huber Envirotech (AHET)**. The purpose of the joint venture? To provide innovative technologies for wastewater treatment, recycle and zero liquid discharge for industrial and municipal wastewater and sludge management systems. We catch up with **Bhushan Zarapkar, Director - Operations, AHET** and **Franz Heindl, Director of International Sales, HUBER SE**.

What are the unique features of the products and technological expertise that A.T.E. Huber Envirotech offers for the Indian textile market?

Bhushan Zarapkar (BZ): With India's fresh water sources depleting fast, we firmly believe that wastewater is our best source of water. Recycling wastewater using modern treatment technologies will go a long way towards alleviating the current scarcity of water. Our comprehensive and cost-effective wastewater treatment and recycling solutions are the result of continuous process development. A.T.E.'s AAA® technology is a proven solution for treatment textile wastewaters that enhances biological treatment efficiency and minimises sludge generation. Contrary to conventional wastewater treatment processes, AAA® reduces both chemical

consumption and sludge generation, while maintaining consistency in the treated effluent quality. In addition to AAA®, A.T.E.'s state-of-the-art SUFRO and MEE technologies enable wastewater recycle and ZLD for textile wastewater treatment.

Franz Heindl (FH): Both A.T.E. and HUBER have long years of experience in wastewater treatment, recycling and sludge management. HUBER is one of the world's leading manufacturers of sustainable and eco-friendly wastewater treatment solutions – we have more than 40,000 installations in 60 countries. With this joint venture, we have brought cutting edge solid-liquid separation, membrane filtration, and sludge management technologies to India. Specifically, our products for the textile industry include sludge thickening, dewatering, solar drying, and membrane bio-reactors.

Wastewater management is in its infancy in India now, but showing signs of picking up fast. What are some of the main motivators that are pushing this trend today?

BZ: Increasing municipal and industrial activities have resulted in a significant increase in wastewater generation. Due to increasing consumption, there is now a dearth of water for industrial processes itself, which is one of the driving forces in the changing economics of wastewater treatment.

Other prime movers are governmental regulations



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and the prohibitive costs of non-compliance, which can present a significant business risk. These factors, combined with a growing social awareness about effective wastewater treatment are making businesses more attentive and on the lookout for sustainable wastewater treatment solutions.

FH: Some estimates say that about 70 per cent of India's surface water may be contaminated in some form or other, making it unfit for human use. One of the main driving factors that is accelerating the adoption of wastewater treatment technologies is the increasing and widespread awareness among government, businesses, as well as people about the precariousness of the situation. Not only are industries today a significant consumer of water, they also produce wastewater, which worsens the water situation. The good news is that today's high efficiency wastewater management technologies, like those provided by A.T.E. HUBER, are more than up to the task of treating industrial and municipal wastewaters. With our experience, we believe that our solutions will help mitigate the water scarcity and wastewater disposal crises.

Can you share briefly a case study where saving of water and

other recycling benefits have helped in saving money and curbing wastage?

BZ: There are several success stories that we can talk at length about, out of the 300+ wastewater treatment projects executed by us so far. Every textile company which has opted for our AAA® technology has saved on chemical consumption and sludge handling and disposal costs. A textile major where we have installed a solar sludge dryer has virtually eliminated their sludge disposal cost. There are many such environmentally and economically positive cases we can share from other industry segments as well.

Your company talks of using enzymes and micronutrients, which has a sound base in ecology. Can you throw some light on this?

BZ: One of the most challenging parts of running an ETP is making sure that it is performing optimally. Optimal performance does not only depend on the myriad electro-mechanical operations that occur in modern wastewater treatment plants, but also on the biotechnological processes. Enzymes and micronutrients which maintain biological health are therefore essential for optimum performance.

Our value-added products in the form of enzymes and micronutrients are useful in improving biodegradation efficiency. These compounds and additives help operators keep the bio-systems healthy. Not only do these enzymes and micronutrients accelerate biological treatment, they also reduce operating costs.

Do you think the Governments (State & Central) should extend more sops to encourage wastewater treatment and recycling? If so, what are your suggestions and wish-list?

BZ: Today, we have nearly one-fifth of the world's population, with access to only 4 per cent of the world's water resources. India is set to become the world's third largest economy by 2030. This necessarily means that we need to invest in wastewater treatment and recycle infrastructure. While the wastewater management issues that India is facing are serious, they are not insurmountable. Achieving water sustainability can be done through a mix of incentives, policy structures, and regulations. This will encourage various stakeholders to recycle and reuse wastewater. One of the silver linings in this scenario is that new wastewater treatment technologies need not be developed. It is simply a matter of accelerating the adoption of proven, high efficiency technologies, which can be done with the right push from the government. Probably appropriate pricing of water, once basic needs are met, especially if drawn from ground water, could be an extremely effective first step.



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- Bhushan Zarapkar, Director – Operations



FH: While India is poised to play a major role in the global community of nations, it is imperative that it optimally make use of all its natural resources. Looking at human and agricultural water need in India, recycling and reusing of treated wastewater is inevitable if India want to achieve desired industrial growth. First, the government must formulate an action plan and set out a schedule to carry out various changes. The policy and action plan must take into account the larger, long-term

goals of the nation. These goals must be practical and achievable, while involving businesses, people from local communities, and other stakeholders. This will ensure buy-in from all ends. Then, the government can study the reasons why some past schemes may not have worked. After that, they can work out the right incentives to encourage actions as per the nation's goals.

Is the technology transfer to A.T.E. HUBER an ongoing process? What other vision does the company have for the future in terms of expansion in these areas?

BZ: Some of the HUBER products are already manufactured here in India. We plan to increase this number steadily.

In addition to "Make in India", A.T.E. firmly believes we must also "Invent in India". Our research and development has always been focused on developing and continuously improving our products and solutions. These products and solutions are developed by Indians, for India, and perfected for the rest of the world. Our efforts are focused on providing technologies that have a reduced environmental impact and lifecycle costs while having improved wastewater treatment efficiency.

FH: We are confident that most of the HUBER products can be manufactured here in India. We are studying the market closely to see which of our technologies can be quickly adopted here for the benefit of customers.

How much is the contribution to Make in India in the process flow of A.T.E. HUBER Envirotech?

BZ: As India grows, so will its need for new infrastructure and new ways and means to improve wastewater management. By joining hands with HUBER, A.T.E. can provide a comprehensive suite of wastewater management solutions for the municipal and industrial sector. In fact, HUBER expects our domestic business to be the third largest after Europe and America, together with China. We'll try to make as many of these solutions in India as is practical and efficient, given the supply chain and other factors.

FH: There's no doubt that there are challenges in India as far as wastewater management is concerned. However, we see a number of opportunities in such challenges. By tying up with A.T.E., we have increased our presence in India and Bangladesh as well. With India projected to become one of the strongest economies in the next decade, the rapid growth of the country will make it necessary for new approaches and products in wastewater management. A.T.E. HUBER Envirotech will be able to serve India with a comprehensive suite of wastewater treatment technologies, and cater to the wastewater and recycling needs of the country.