‘Ensuring growth is done in a sustainable manner’

Q&A The Uttar Pradesh Pollution Control Board (UPPCB) uses artificial intelligence (AI) and other modern technologies to balance the state’s economic growth with ecological concerns. UPPCB Chairman **Ravindra Pratap Singh**, in an interview with **Virendra Singh Rawat** in Lucknow, spoke about the board’s work. Edited excerpts:.

What does the UPPCB do?

■ The UPPCB is mandated to prevent, control and reduce pollution while ensuring sustainable development. The Board plays a central regulatory, monitoring and enforcement role across Uttar Pradesh. It issues Consent to Establish and Consent to Operate to industry, common waste management facilities and other related activities under the provisions of Water and Air Act. As UP is growing fast, we have reformed our mechanism of operation for Ease of Doing Business and reducing compliance burden. Our process, from application to the issuance of certificate, is a non-human interactive online portal-based system which can be done from anywhere.

Uttar Pradesh is targeting to become a $1 trillion economy by 2030. This would be possible only with a greater pace of industrial growth. Since, pollution is a part of industry, how does UPPCB propose to curb concomitant emissions?

■ To achieve the goal of making Uttar Pradesh a $1 trillion economy by 2030 as envisioned by Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, while limiting industrial pollution, UPPCB is expanding the coverage of OCEMS (Online Continuous Emission Monitoring Systems) and web-camera based surveillance for major air and water polluting industries, ensuring real-time transparency and quick enforcement action. Automated alerts, AI-based analysis, and remote monitoring tools will support better compliance and rapid detection of violations.

Industries are encouraged to adopt cleaner fuels and technologies such as PNG, biomass pellets, energy efficient boilers, ESPs, bag filters and wet scrubbers. Water intensive units are being guided towards Zero Liquid Discharge and improved wastewater recycling. New and existing industrial zones will promote shared pollution control systems like Common Effluent Treatment Plants (CETPs/ETPs), green buffers, continuous ambient monitoring and environmentally compatible layout planning.

UPPCB is strengthening compliance through strict regulatory actions. Simultaneously, a push towards circular economy practices, including e-waste, plastic and C&D waste recycling, biomedical waste management and industrial byproduct utilisation, will reduce environmental load. With a combination of data driven monitoring, clean technology adoption, stricter enforcement, waste management frameworks and climate-conscious planning, UPPCB aims to ensure that the state’s industrial expansion proceeds in a sustainable and responsible manner, enabling economic growth and without compromising environmental health.

UP is a hub of leather tanneries and leather goods, which have a carbon footprint. What is the way forward for that industry?

■ Uttar Pradesh is a national centre for leather tanneries and leather goods manufacturing, especially Kanpur, Unnao and Agra. This sector generates large-scale employment and contributes significantly to exports. However, tanning processes, chemical-intensive effluent, fugitive emissions and energy consumption together contribute to a sizable carbon and pollution footprint. The way forward is not to restrict the industry, but to enable a cleaner, more efficient and globally compliant transformation.

UPPCB’s focus must be on technology-led modernisation of tanneries. Deployment of chrome recovery units, reverse osmosis (RO) systems, multiple effect evaporators (MEE), and biological treatment prior to CETP inflow, along with a gradual transition toward zero liquid discharge (ZLD), will reduce water pollution and chrome contamination.

Environmental and pollution board clearances are often cited among the most tedious industrial and manufacturing processes. Your comments.

■ We have detailed classification of industries based on their manufacturing process. Based on their pollution index industries are classified into Red, Orange, Green and White categories. Our process is investment friendly and non-human interactive procedure where the required clearances can be obtained through an online portal which is integrated to the single window system of the government of Uttar Pradesh .

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