

THE BENGAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY
POWER FOR INDIA – CLEAN AND SMART

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SPEAKING NOTE

- Rapid economic growth in recent years has brought many benefits to India; but the growth and economic benefits have come at a cost to the environment, exposing the population to serious challenges like resource scarcity, water and air pollution.
- According to the Environmental Performance Index (EPI), 2014, India ranks 155th out of 178 countries on overall environment quality and almost last on air quality. According to the EPI, India's environment quality is far below other BRICS countries.
- Another survey by WHO finds that 13 of the 20 most polluted cities of the world is in India.
- A recent World Bank study claims that environmental degradation costed India US\$80 billion per year, about 5.7 percent of its economy in 2009.
- Reflecting the size and diversity of India, environmental risks in the country are wide ranging and are driven by both prosperity and poverty. Rapid industrialisation has required aggressive extractive mining and overdependence on natural resources. On the other hand, prevalent poverty in the country has compelled the poor to overuse the limited resources available to them, creating a downward spiral of impoverishment and environmental degradation.
- But does prosperity and economic/social development have to come at the price of environmental degradation? As India progresses along its projected growth trajectory, and if it continues with the business as usual approach, environmental sustainability would be the next major challenge.
- India needs to value its natural resources to ensure an environmentally sustainable future. Many studies claim that a low-polluting and resource efficient growth trajectory is desired and possible at a very low cost in terms of GDP.
- The recent revision in Indian renewable energy targets clearly indicates that governments certainly recognise the need and opportunities, and have prioritised clean energy development. However, last mile connectivity is

still a missing link in the policy sphere. The existing policies in this regard are not enough or let me say not properly implemented, to address these concerns adequately. Thus, substantial population of India has no access to electricity.

- While India's overall policy focus should be on meeting basic needs and escalating growth, it needs to connect the consumers with the policy making process in order to get the desired results.
- In the recent study of CUTS, conducted in five states (Delhi, Haryana, Karnataka, Rajasthan and Maharashtra) of India. We found that consumer awareness for regulatory mechanism is very low. Thus, even after the legislative progression for consumer participation in the electricity sector, the consumer's voice is imperceptible.
- Thus, CSO's can play a vital role in bridging the gap between consumers and policymakers. They can act as a pressure group influencing government bodies for relevant policies and regulatory environment and also work towards creating better awareness among the consumers to demand for favourable policies.