

Business Standard 28.07.2009

Water purification industry guns for higher standards

Praveen Bose / Chennai/ Bangalore July 28, 2009, 0:56 IST

The water purification and treatment industry in India, under siege from cheap imports of water treatment products from China, is working to set standards for the water treatment industry in the country as a safeguard against 'spurious' products. This, is being done through a certification process. Hence, for the first time the industry has put its head together to come up with a solution.

In a country like India, where water scarcity is growing by the day, there are too many issues relating to water. This has meant that there are dime a dozen firms that are trying to make the best of the situation. Now there is a clamour for proper standards.

With a membership of about 31 firms, the industry is estimated to be worth Rs 1,300 crore to Rs 1,400 crore for the domestic sector and Rs 8,000-10,000 crore in the industrial sector. The industry is trying to build a consensus on the standards for water treatment products under an umbrella body — WQA India.

WQA or Water Quality Assurance is a not-for-profit international trade association representing residential, commercial, industrial and small community water treatment industry. WQA works with organisations representing different aspects of water industry worldwide. It has over 2,400 members from 80 countries around the world.

Water has many more challenges here in India than in the West or in countries like Singapore. The standards are directly proportional to the cost of water purification. Till now, the water purification industry in India concentrated on bacterial contamination. But, what about the viruses and other parasites that water may harbour?

Hence, there has been a long-felt need for standards to ensure all purifiers meet all standards. Now there is growing awareness for the need to fine-tune biological contaminants.

“But, affordability is a factor. We need to build consensus on the minimum standards for purification,” noted an industry player. The members are presently looking to form an Indian arm of WQA in India, which will be an independent not for profit organisation which will establish standards and generally fund technologies for water purification. This is expected to cut the cost of developing technologies.

The industry has to work towards a quality which is best for India, he added. The industry has been working towards this for about a year.

According to K Chandrasekhar, manager, India Operations, WQA, “We need to evaluate the Indian conditions and come up with standards.”