

Incorporate electronic-waste policy in sustainable growth: expert



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Jamshedpur: Any policy and legislation on electronic waste (e-waste) should be considered within the holistic model of sustainable development based on the vision of a living planet.

Delivering the inaugural address here on Thursday on ‘challenges in e-waste’ at a two-day national seminar on electronic waste (NASEW-10) organized by the National Metallurgical Laboratory (NML), Usha Dar, director, research & consultancy, World Environment Foundation (WEF), a leading London-based NGO, said any e-waste policy and legislation should be considered within the framework policies of models such as ‘Proactivate’, which go for concrete action by creating a positive mood which motivates people to understand the necessary efforts required to achieve the goal of a living planet.

‘Proactivate’, an 11-point model of growth, developed, discussed and filtered at various workshops and conferences organised by the UK-based World Council for Corporate Governance and WEF, addresses the issue of “what we can do to avert the apocalypse” by questioning the way we live and work and provides alternatives that are easy to implement.

Dar, who is in-charge of WEF’s Indian operations, said as the European Union (EU) had treated e-waste as a standalone subject and not as an integral part of sustainable development, chances of its success were limited.

Concerns relating to e-waste include the export of second-hand computers and wrongly certified ‘fit for recycling’ computers to India and other developing countries as a recent US Government Accountability Office (GAO) report on electronic waste stated that US hazardous waste regulations had not deterred exports of potentially hazardous materials and that enforcement by the country’s Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) was lacking.

Due to the large volume and lack of inexpensive processing technology, the disposal and recycling of electronic waste the country has acquired a serious dimension as, apart from posing an environmental threat, these materials are complex, have significant metal values including precious metals and are difficult to recycle in an environmentally sound manner.

Speaking on the occasion, Sukomal Ghosh, director, National Metallurgical Laboratory (NML), said the methods of disposal of e-waste in the country were still “very rudimentary” and that it badly needed a proper protocol for disposal, collection, disassembly and classification of e-waste.

NML, the director said, was presently engaged in developing a complete, indigenous and environmental friendly technology package, starting from the disassembly to processing of e-waste for recovering metals, plastics, glass, etc.

NML had in 2005 taken up an e-waste recycling research and had later, encouraged by some early findings, made an extensive research proposal to the ministry of information & technology, which was approved in 2007.

“NML has made substantial progress and gained valuable experience in the processing of e-waste through this sponsored research and development of complete technology package is now envisaged as an outcome,” said the NML director.

It has been established that over 90% recovery of metal value was possible using physical separation techniques to produce a metallurgical concentrate and development of a flowsheet for extraction of metals from this concentrate was now in progress at the NML.

While the Central Institute of Plastics Engineering & Technology, Bhubaneswar is aiding NML for recovering plastics from the e-waste, Videocon Industries Ltd has joined the research for addressing issues related to recovery of glass.

“The need of the hour is to make a consortium of researchers, recyclers, NGOs, manufacturers and all others involved with e-waste which would together work out a strategy for handling e-waste effectively towards a clean environment”, said Ghosh....

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