

# “Reduce operating costs and improve operating efficiencies”

## Improving efficiency

To be able to ride out of an economic slowdown, it is important that companies do not depend on a single market segment or geographical market for their business. Serving diverse market sectors, presence in global markets & a wide range of technologies that enable solutions rather than only products, will provide a more robust and protective business grid, should one or the other sector or market or application be restrained by the economic climate. A basic objective must also be to reduce operating costs and improve operating efficiencies. During an economic downturn, when the liquidity crunch impacts business, companies need to be careful about the selection of business and efficient management of cash flow.

Although water and wastewater treatment industry had grown during this period, the slowdown resulted in delayed decisions on many major projects, more so in the private sector as new investments were put on hold during the first half of 2009.

## Overcoming hurdles

Increasingly, more customers will be looking for an integrated package of products and services. Therefore, the industry must build the capability in providing comprehensive total water management solutions and having a bank of trained & experienced manpower to manage operation & maintenance of plants.

Currently, the industry faces a major challenge in procuring fresh water, which necessitates maximum use of wastewater through recycling. It has to develop cost-effective solutions for recycling wastewater; and also technologies, which will require less consumption of energy & chemicals. As water scarcity increases, industrial water conservation will have to go beyond restricting the usage & discharge of water and extend towards reducing demand for and dependency on water. If the private sector has to

**Rajesh Sharma** is Vice Chairman & Managing Director, Ion Exchange (India) Ltd. After joining the company in 1974, he has held a number of sales, marketing & management positions, and has extensive knowledge about the water & wastewater treatment domain. He tracks the performance of this market in an interaction with **Rakesh Rao**.



participate, tariffs for drinking water & sanitation need to be rationalised.

## New opportunities

Growing public awareness on safe drinking water & pollution, rising water scarcity, increasing regulatory & enforcement measures and increasing infrastructure initiatives & investments continue to offer opportunities for the water and wastewater treatment industry.

## Future trends

The water & wastewater treatment industry need to demonstrate the capability of 360° water management that adds value across the entire water cycle, including influent supply and conservation, through production processes to effluent treatment to recycle for zero discharge.

Another trend will be to outsource management of utilities like water to specialists, as this would help not only in optimising consumption of water but also optimising operating costs of water treatment for customers. Further, the outlook for the industry is good with increased investment by the private sector and government. The overall water and wastewater treatment market should show 18-20 per cent growth in the near future. ■