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- PHOTOGALLERY VIDEOS WEBINARS UPCOMING EVENTS

Home > People > Ajay Popat

Celebrating 25 Years of PowerLine



Ajay Popat

President, Ion Exchange (India) Limited

🕒 December 18, 2019



Ajay Popat has almost four decades of experience in strategy, business and organisation development, working with companies such as Resins & Plastics Limited (then a subsidiary of Asian Paints), Pidilite Industries and Ion Exchange (India) Limited. He has been associated with Ion Exchange since 1994 and has led several initiatives, developing and commercialising proprietary, advanced and sustainable

technologies for water purification and separation.

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Since renewables are expected to play a key role in the sector, his company is working with power utilities on technologies that can combine solid organic waste and wastewater to generate power. The company has set up a Rs 70 million demonstration plant with a capacity to treat around 900 kg of organic kitchen waste and 2-6 cubic metres of sewage sludge on a daily basis and convert it into purified water, 20 kWh power and 1.35 tonnes of rich organic fertiliser per day.

While no new fossil fuel plant is likely to come up till 2027, the R&M of existing projects with new water technologies would be an opportunity, he explains. A notable project that Ion Exchange has executed is for NTPC, for which a 20 mld desalination plant has been set up in Vellore, Andhra Pradesh. Further, existing plants are required to achieve zero liquid discharge as per the new environment norms, and TPPs located within 50 km of sewage treatment plants are required to use sewage water. With FGD norms, the use of advanced membrane technology is also expected to go up. In addition, his company has developed several speciality chemicals, processes and products to improve hygiene and efficiency (cycle of concentration) for cooling and boiler water management. These are powered by the most advanced 24x7 (remote) monitoring, analytical and control features. These areas present significant growth prospects.

He expects Ion Exchange to grow by 30-50 per cent by the end of 2019-20. "This growth will come through investments in new geographies and exports. Besides this, we will continue to invest in manufacturing," he says.

In terms of his management style, Popat follows the "involve, innovate and inspire" mantra and believes in leading from the front. He loves to read, socialise and mentor people. Popat has an engineering degree in plastics technology from the Plastic & Rubber Institute, UK, is a Fellow of Indian Plastics Institute and has an MBA from NMIMS Institute.

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