



Improper management of e-waste irks engineers

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ LUCKNOW

A two-day-long national seminar on electronic waste concluded at the Institution of Engineers here on Sunday. It dealt with the various aspects of the growing challenge of electronic waste. In about a dozen presentations during the seminar the speakers rued the fact that this menace was not being taken seriously enough, partly because the public was unaware about it. In the inaugural session, DK Srivastava, joint director of the Council of Science and Technology, said that solid waste disposal was a complex problem and the issue of e-waste, in particular, had to be tackled through research and application of technology. In his keynote address, Ravi Bhargava highlighted the dangers from inappropriate disposal of such waste. He said that a single mobile battery was capable of polluting 6,000 litres of water and added that the people would have to take the issue seriously.

Harshita Mehta and Sourabh from organisations dealing with e-waste described the poor status of its recycling. Sourabh said that the waste from computers and its peripherals contained not only toxic elements like lead and arsenic but also precious metals like gold and silver. In the final technical session, Anurag Prasad from Amity University reviewed the causes, generation and scientific management of e-waste. He said tens of millions of e-waste was being generated all over the world annually. "The shipping of old material to developing countries was only transferring the problem and not solving it. The ever-



increasing manufacture, marketing and consequent disposal of computers, mobile phones and televisions had aggravated the problem manifold and will continue to do so in coming years. This also exposes the rag-pickers, scrap dealers and dismantlers to serious health hazards, including toxic fumes and acidic vapours, he said.

He hoped that the application of nano technology may reduce the toxic component of e-waste. Convener of the seminar SV Pandey, an environmental specialist, dealt with the statutory aspects of e-waste disposal. He said that the industries were expected to enhance their recycling capacity with the passage of time. The e-waste problem, he added, was a red category problem now. A known environmentalist, Ravi Bhargava, said that there were enough laws but the problem was of implementing them properly.

Prof Bharat Raj Singh of SMS College, also chairman of the Institution of Engineers, UP Chapter, while presenting the global status of e-waste, said that awareness of the problem would lead to solutions. In his well-illustrated lecture he showed how the handlers of e-

waste were exposed to unhygienic and unsafe conditions.

Scientist CM Nautiyal said that to enhance the value of such seminars, engineers and scientists should come up with innovative ways of tackling the problem or with new designs or plans or equipment. He said that most of the time we did not come up with a fresh idea, exposing a novel angle or even interpreting the existing data in a new way. He felt that the buy back option may be provided to the consumer so that a centralised disposal could take place. This cost could be included in the price of the electronic item. Engineer NC Mittal was of the view that start-ups for recycling work may be a good option. "Such plants can be set up in the rural areas and can also help in improving the dismal unemployment situation," he added.

Prof Jamal Nusrat opined that the centres for recycling should be identified and set up in each city. Chairperson of the session VB Singh summed up the proceedings while honorary secretary RK Trivedi presented mementos to the speakers. The seminar was sponsored by the UP Council of Science and Technology.