

Ravindra Kumar Verma

Chairman, Central Electricity Authority

Ravindra Kumar Verma, chairman, Central Electricity Authority (CEA), has industry experience of over 38 years. He began his career as a power system planner with the CEA in 1981, later moving to grid operations where, in 1987, he designed and operated a system in the load despatch centre at the Northern Regional Electricity Board.

For the next 14 years, he was involved in managing supply to the entire northern India. It was a challenging assignment that forced him to find new reserves of stamina. Huge shortages of power meant that he and his team were firefighting all the time. He used to spend consecutive nights in the control room and worked in shifts for 10 years. Then, for the next four years, he worked as executive engineer, operations, and again had to work like a machine.

He rose up the ranks and worked in distribution for a while. Distribution, Verma notes, is a very important segment because it has direct interface with the consumer and, since it collects revenue from the consumer, it drives the entire power sector. Unfortunately, distribution had been neglected for a long time.

In 2001, Verma became director, in 2014 chief engineer and then in 2016, principal chief engineer, a member as well as chairman. His work spans a large range. He led the inter-ministerial central team constituted with the states for preparing state-specific documents for providing 24x7 power for all. He is chairman of the technical committee of the National Smart Grid Mission set up to evaluate DPRs and finalise benchmark costs. Verma has also been instrumental in finalising the functional requirements of advanced metering infrastructure, including the technical specifications of single-phase and three-phase whole current smart meters. Alongside this very high-level work, he is equally concerned about providing connections to the last villages that are still in darkness.

Verma graduated as an electrical engineer from the Delhi College of Engineering, following which he passed the Combined Engineering Services Examination conducted by UPSC for the prestigious Central



Power Engineering Services in 1979. On the personal front, Verma says that he likes to spend time with his family, which comprises his wife and their sons, who are both engineers. He enjoys watching movies and walking, when time permits. He calls himself a firm believer in God and says his belief that it is God, not us, who is doing everything, is growing stronger by the day. ▀

Subhash Sethi

Chairman, SPML Infra Limited

With over three and a half decades of experience in infrastructure engineering and development, Subhash Sethi is the chairman of SPML Infra Limited.

Sethi started his entrepreneurial journey with a small water pumps business in north-east India at a time when the development of water assets in the country was undertaken solely by the government and



only component procurement was outsourced to private agencies. From the very beginning, Sethi was a firm believer in the project execution capability of an incentivised private sector and viewed the ideal role of the government to be restricted to that of a long-term planning and monitoring agency. Based on such beliefs, he has led and built SPML Infra into a multifaceted conglomerate today.

Foreseeing an imminent water crisis, Sethi has guided the firm towards identifying opportunities for recycling and reusing wastewater for potable purposes. With a passion for technological advancement, he has created global alliances to bring novel treatment technologies to the country. Over the years, through dialogue with the government, Sethi has been instrumental in the adoption of the engineering, procurement and construction (EPC) model in the execution of water, sewage and power projects. SPML Infra has taken up a wide array of EPC projects, which also focus on operation and maintenance of the constructed assets.

Though the company's core focus area has been water and wastewater infrastructure creation, Sethi has strategically diversified its operations to other verticals such as smart cities, urban infrastructure, power transmission and distribution, and renewable energy. While the company continues to grow by leaps and bounds, Sethi remains grounded in the belief of hard and quality work.

He also plays a leading role in several national councils and committees focused on sustainable infrastructure development. Among these, he serves as chairman of the Expert Committee on Infrastructure and Smart Cities of the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), Eastern Region; director of the Kolkata chapter of the International Project Management Association; and as a steering committee member of CII's Urbanization and Future Cities Council. He has also been honoured with several accolades, such as the Infrastructure Person of the Year 2017 at the Construction Week India Awards, ICME's Award for Management 1994 and the Melvin Jones Award. ▀