

Mr. Subhash Sethi, Chairman, SPML Infra

By **Projects Today** - February 1, 2020



“This year’s Union Budget has elements needed to boost our economy while providing stimulus to the infrastructure sector including drinking water supply, irrigation, renewable energy, power generation, airport, railways, among others. The Rs 3.6 lakh crore (\$5 trillion) allocation for Jal Jeevan Mission to provide safe piped drinking water to rural India will certainly be a boon for rural population who often suffers from diseases borne out of contaminated water. Large scale infrastructure development is needed to make this mission a reality of making clean drinking water available to masses along with sustainable infrastructure for treating and reusing generated wastewater in both urban and rural areas. The announcement of putting in place comprehensive measures for 100 water-stressed districts is in line with the finding by Niti Aayog’s water report suggesting that nearly 600 million people in India are likely to face extreme water stress and 21 major cities of the country will be facing zero groundwater levels this year. Unless

drastic measures are not taken up now and a budget allocation is not properly utilised, critical issues facing the water sector in India will not be resolved.

“The Rs 2.83 lakh crore (\$4 trillion) allocations towards agriculture, irrigation and rural development will help in better crop production that will translate into enhanced economic activities in rural heartland. The Rs 12,300 crore (\$1.7 billion) allocations for Swachh Bharat Mission for the year will help the mission going forward with India’s sanitation goals.

“Rs 20,000 crore (\$2.8 billion) allocations for the renewable energy sector will help India in reducing carbon emissions as per our commitment under the Paris Agreement on climate change. Solar energy generation will be boosted by setting up solar power capacity alongside rail tracks as India is having the fourth largest rail network in the world. The concept of prepaid energy meters to save on losses being incurred by distribution utilities may get sorted out with replacement of conventional energy meters with prepaid ‘smart meters’ in the next three years as announced by the Finance Minister.

“The announcement to strengthen the framework related to contracts act is a good initiative as thousands of contract claims and arbitration cases are pending for realisation for a very long period.

“I feel that the measures announced for infrastructure development, easing of norms, tax benefits along with other plans will prove beneficial in the long run towards creating \$5 trillion economy in the next five years.”