

MINUTES OF MEETING

The 20th General Body Meeting of the Water Quality India Association (WQIA) was conducted on 19th August 2026 at Courtyard by Marriot, Mumbai, to review the Association's activities and progress, discuss important regulatory and industry matters, share technical and strategic insights, and identify areas for future collaboration and industry development. **Miss Namitha Christina** welcomed the Board Members, Directors, esteemed members, sponsors, guest speakers and industry colleagues to the 20th General Body Meeting of WQIA. She thanked all participants for their presence and continued support, noting that their involvement strengthens the Association and the industry. She highlighted WQIA's role in bringing together stakeholders from the drinking water purification industry, creating opportunities for knowledge sharing and collaboration, and addressing important industry and regulatory matters. She stated that the General Body Meeting was an opportunity to reflect on WQIA's activities and achievements, discuss the way forward and exchange ideas contributing to the growth of the industry. She also expressed appreciation to the sponsors and partners for their support in making the event possible.

Mr. Sunil Trivedi welcomed the gathering and initiated an introduction of the participants. He reaffirmed WQIA's mission of ensuring safe and reliable drinking water for households in India. He reviewed the Association's progress during the previous six months. Key organizational developments included relocation of the registered office to Bengaluru, progress on dedicated QR codes, and successful completion of the ISIN process with NSDL, enabling the Association's share-related transactions through demat accounts. He informed the members that the Qualified Water Professional (QWP) Level 1 certification program had been restarted, with Level 2 in the pipeline. WQIA initiatives were also showcased at exhibitions, including the EAW Water Aqua Expo.

He highlighted the GST rationalization project report being developed with support from industry leaders, with the report planned for unveiling during the second half of the program. He also mentioned collaboration with IIT Madras on a proposed star-rating program and the need to develop an implementation approach beneficial to both industry and consumers. The President highlighted the launch of WQIA Member Stories as an initiative to showcase members' innovation, success and achievements, thereby supporting member visibility, brand image and product promotion. Looking ahead, he identified education and training, expansion of certification programs for technicians and service professionals, consumer awareness, policy advocacy, engagement with BIS and CPCB, and enhancement of member value as key focus areas.

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He also mentioned discussions around a certified service directory/trust-based programs and support for pilots involving water-saving technologies and India-specific solutions. He emphasized the importance of improving consumer trust, addressing the needs of underserved households, and ensuring that WQIA contributes to a future supported by strong standards, effective regulations and united industry leadership. He thanked the sponsors and partners for their support.

Mr. Vivek Sharma, Eureka Forbes Limited explained that the Regulatory Affairs Sub-Committee was formed to track regulatory and government-policy changes affecting the industry. He stated that the committee had consolidated regulatory updates from the previous six to seven months and would circulate the presentation to members. A major focus was the Horizontal Quality Control Order (QCO) applicable to electrical appliances. He explained the significance of the removal of the words “illustrative” and “indicative” from the latest QCO, which provides clarity that products not included in the notified list are not automatically brought under the mandatory BIS requirement. He specifically mentioned products such as softeners and UV-related products in this context. He highlighted that, from 1 October, products falling under the notified categories would require the applicable ISI/BIS compliance, and imports landing after the relevant September cut-off would face BIS-related customs requirements.

Mr. Sharma also explained the Transition Facilitation QCO. Manufacturers and brands that cannot immediately meet localization requirements may prepare a phased roadmap covering investment, equipment, manufacturing-line setup, R&D and localization. Applications would be reviewed by the relevant government committee, with exemptions potentially granted for specified quantities/products for a defined period subject to performance and investment commitments. He noted that arrangements involving contract manufacturers are also provided for. He discussed relaxations concerning compressors and copper tubes for cooling products, including water coolers and water-purifier-related product portfolios, subject to the specified quantities and timelines. He also highlighted the need for greater uniformity in customs treatment of limited quantities imported for R&D, trials and other non-commercial purposes, noting that industry representations were underway. On Free Trade Agreements (FTAs), he encouraged members to examine the benefits available for exports and imports, particularly through the DPIIT portal using relevant HSN codes. GCC/Oman, UK and EU-related opportunities were mentioned as areas requiring attention. He further discussed plastic waste, e-waste and EPR compliance. He noted that the common EPR portal is live, while the plastic-waste component continued to face operational challenges.

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He also mentioned ongoing CPCB-level discussions concerning EPR pricing and the emerging non-ferrous EPR requirements, including possible relevance to pumps used in RO systems.

The Chief Guest and WQIA office bearers were invited to the dais for the ceremonial lighting of the lamp. The audiovisual team was requested to play the Ganesh Vandana. Members were then requested to rise for the National Anthem.

Shri Suresh Prabhu, former Union Cabinet Minister, addressed the members virtually. He congratulated WQIA and its members for their work in ensuring access to good-quality drinking water. He emphasized the strong connection between water quality and public health, noting the significant burden of water-borne diseases in India. He described companies working in water purification as important contributors to public health and referred to them as “health guardians” of society. He stressed that water is unique because there is no practical substitute for it at the required scale. He distinguished between water quantity and quality and stated that public policy must address both. He observed that government program aimed at increasing water access must also consider whether adequate water resources and quality are available. A key point of his address was that, until the government can guarantee suitable-quality tap water, the government should encourage and support responsible water-purification companies that help provide safe drinking water at the point of consumption. He compared this with the role of the power grid and argued that public policy should similarly support industry initiatives that address gaps in public infrastructure. He offered his continued support to WQIA and its members and congratulated the Association for its contribution to society.

Dr. Suresh Redhu introduced Chief Guest Dr. Vijay Mhetar, CEO of Aditya Birla Science and Technology Company, highlighting his extensive R&D leadership, material-science experience, innovation track record, patents and academic background.

Dr. Vijay Mhetar presented an outside-in perspective on the water industry and discussed India’s water challenges, including the imbalance between population and available water resources, water stress, groundwater concerns, pollution and the uneven distribution of rainfall. He explained that water is not only an environmental issue but also an economic and social issue. He highlighted the dependence of economic activity on water and the wider social consequences of inadequate access to water, including impacts on education and hygiene. He described Aditya Birla Group’s water-sustainability initiatives, including efforts to reduce consumption, reuse water and harvest water.

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However, he emphasized that incremental improvements alone may not be sufficient and that India requires step-change innovation. A major theme of his presentation was the role of material science in enabling breakthrough technologies. Using the evolution of reverse osmosis as an example, he explained how innovations in membranes and materials enabled practical high-flux water treatment. He discussed the importance of identifying suitable first applications for new materials. Successful material innovations often begin with smaller, simpler and fault-tolerant applications before scaling into larger markets. He explained that trying to justify a new material only through a very large initial market can create a mismatch with the way material innovations are commercialized.

Dr. Mhetar also presented a promising block-copolymer material with water-transport properties, salt rejection, chemical resistance and antimicrobial characteristics. He explained that the material has nano-scale channels and potential for water-treatment applications. He noted that chemistry can be modified and optimized for specific requirements, with flux and salt rejection being key parameters. During the interaction, members discussed whether such a material could address RO challenges such as energy consumption and water recovery. Dr. Mhetar indicated potential particularly in the nanofiltration area and suggested that the material should be explored further. A member asked how the Indian membrane industry could initiate research on the copolymer. Dr. Mhetar stated that companies in India may have capabilities to synthesize the material, while other companies understand its application. He offered that Aditya Birla Science and Technology Company could help facilitate collaboration between companies with material-synthesis capability and companies capable of developing applications. The session concluded with discussion around potential collaboration, including opportunities to explore the material for water treatment and membrane applications.

A short tea break was announced. Members were requested to return to the meeting area for the next presentation. The first lucky draw was conducted, with Dr. Vijay participating in the draw.

Mr. Ajay Shroff introduces Keynote Speaker, Mr. Ajay Popat, a distinguished water industry professional with over 46 years of experience across water and wastewater treatment, process separation technologies, specialty chemicals and polymers. With over three decades of leadership at Ion Exchange (India) Ltd., Ajay has made significant contributions to the growth and development of the water industry. He currently serves as a Senior Advisor to Ion Exchange, mentors' startups, and holds key leadership positions with ASSOCHAM and CII.

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Mr. Ajay Popat delivered a keynote presentation focused on the changing water-purification market and the increasing importance of sustainability, customer experience, technology and consumer trust. The discussion highlighted predictive analysis and improved membrane life, energy efficiency, sustainability, plastic footprint, energy consumption and product life-cycle reporting. It was noted that consumers are increasingly looking for clear answers regarding product performance, sustainability and overall value. The presentation emphasized that standards are increasingly becoming a competitive advantage rather than merely a compliance requirement. It also highlighted opportunities beyond the household market, including institutional applications.

Customer experience was identified as an important competitive dimension, with connected products, diagnostics, mobile applications, customer-service systems and lifetime customer management becoming increasingly relevant. The presentation identified future directions for water purifiers including smarter purification through IoT-enabled devices, improved sustainability, higher recovery, lower cost of ownership and service, AI-enabled intelligence, stronger standards, subscription/service models and personalization. The session concluded with a call for industry leaders to invest in innovation, build consumer trust and improve sustainability, while encouraging wider participation in WQIA activities.

The **Principal Sponsor, Eureka Forbes Limited**, presented a video showcasing the company, key products, and innovative solutions in the water purification and consumer health space. The presentation highlighted Eureka Forbes' commitment to delivering reliable and advanced water and wellness solutions, while emphasizing its focus on innovation, quality, and improving access to safe and clean water.

The **Platinum Sponsor, Lexcru Water Tech Pvt. Ltd.**, also presented a video introducing the company, its expertise, products, and solutions in the water treatment industry. The presentation highlighted Lexcru Water Tech's capabilities, technological solutions, and commitment to providing efficient and sustainable water treatment solutions, while contributing to the advancement of the water industry.

Mr. Umesh Agarwal Welcomed Ms. Nandita Madhavan, the Honorable Speaker. Ms. Nandita delivered an insightful presentation on **biomimetic membranes inspired by natural aquaporins**, highlighting their potential as the next frontier in high-efficiency water purification. She explained that aquaporin proteins enable rapid and highly selective water transport across membranes. However, replicating these properties in synthetic membrane systems remains a significant challenge due to the high cost and limited durability of existing aquaporin-based membranes.

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She further discussed the work carried out by the research groups of **Prof. Nandita Madhavan and Prof. Ajay Singh Panwar** on developing synthetic aquaporin mimics. Derived from simple peptides, these systems offer a **cost-effective and scalable alternative**, while achieving highly selective water transport performance within an order of magnitude of natural aquaporins.

Dr. Sunil Dhole provided an update on an important initiative undertaken by WQIA following the previous General Body Meeting in Madras/Chennai concerning a proposed star-rating program for the water-purification industry. It was highlighted that Dr. Sunil Dhole had supported the initiative along with the IIT Madras Civil Engineering team in developing the concept. The intended outcome is to develop a framework that WQIA can take forward and propose to BIS, with the objective of supporting the industry and providing meaningful information/benefits to consumers. Members were informed that support from the wider membership would be important for taking the initiative forward.

The **Gold Sponsor, Velient Pec India Private Limited**, presented a video introducing the company, its expertise, and its range of innovative solutions in the water and wastewater treatment sector. The presentation highlighted the company's technological capabilities, industry experience, and commitment to delivering efficient, reliable, and sustainable solutions. The presentation also provided the participants with an overview of the company's contributions and role in supporting advancements in the water treatment industry.

The **EY-WQIA** report titled "Making Safe Water Affordable: A Public Health Priority" was launched and presented during the meeting. The report addresses the household water-purifier industry, the critical role of water purifiers, government initiatives, industry considerations and recommendations. The report highlights the need to address affordability, water-quality challenges and wider adoption of water purification. It also discusses the impact of GST on affordability and recommends GST rationalization for water purifiers, parts and related services. The report was positioned as an industry-focused contribution intended to support policy discussions and promote wider access to safe drinking water.

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Dr. Vivek K. N. Singh presented the Standards Committee update, with the key discussion focused on the existing BIS Standard IS 16240:2023 and its applicability to hybrid water purification systems involving RO, UV, UF and other treatment technologies.

The committee reviewed whether the existing IS 16240:2023 testing methodology adequately addresses hybrid devices that blend RO-treated water with water treated through UV, UF or other treatment blocks. The objective of the discussion was to ensure that the standard continues to protect consumer safety and maintain its intent of providing safe drinking water while also allowing scope for product innovation and minimizing water wastage. The committee discussed the need to address possible circumvention through bypass and blending mechanisms, including intelligent or software-based controls. Concerns were raised that certain devices could perform differently under laboratory test conditions compared to actual field operation. The importance of ensuring that the testing methodology evaluates the actual output and performance of the product was highlighted. A key technical concern discussed was the variation in TDS levels. While the existing testing approach considers higher TDS as a challenging condition, members noted that a significant number of Indian households have lower input TDS levels. The committee therefore discussed the need for additional testing of hybrid devices at lower TDS levels, particularly for Heavy Metal Reduction (HMR) and pesticide reduction claims.

Different options for addressing hybrid systems were discussed. These included introducing additional testing requirements within the existing standard, adopting a tiered testing approach, removing certain tests, or developing a separate BIS standard specifically for hybrid, electronic and adaptive water purification systems. The committee also discussed practical issues such as additional laboratory testing time and cost, certification requirements, manufacturer declarations, product labelling and the need for a level playing field among manufacturers. It was suggested that manufacturers should clearly declare whether a product operates as a hybrid system, and laboratories should ensure that appropriate testing is carried out before certification of such claims.

After discussion, the committee broadly agreed that the present IS 16240:2023 testing approach does not fully address hybrid RO, UV and other blended/adaptive systems. The committee identified two important paths forward: an immediate/interim testing protocol for hybrid systems and, in the longer term, development of a separate BIS standard or dedicated protocol for hybrid/electronic/adaptive water purification systems.

The committee recommended that an interim protocol should include additional Heavy Metal Reduction and related testing at a representative low-TDS challenge level, with the working recommendation being approximately 80–120 mg/L. The committee also recommended that a dedicated standard or protocol should be developed to clearly define testing procedures, manufacturer declarations, labelling and surveillance requirements.

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It was further proposed that WQIA prepare a concise recommendation document for submission to BIS, covering both the immediate interim testing protocol and the proposed development of a dedicated standard for hybrid water purification systems. Members of the Standards Committee who were unable to attend the discussion were requested to provide their votes/comments on the options discussed.

A session on the **EPR framework, compliance requirements, and its impact on the water-purification industry** was conducted by **Ms. Ipsita Roy, A A Garg & Co.** The session covered regulatory updates related to plastic waste, e-waste, and other EPR obligations, helping members understand the evolving compliance requirements and their practical implications for companies operating in the water-purification sector.

Mr. Himanshu Budhia presented the Membership Sub-Committee update. The committee has been focusing on strengthening membership outreach, increasing member engagement and improving the visibility of WQIA member companies. The membership drive has been initiated through the Board Members using WhatsApp and social media platforms. Efforts are also being made to make the WQIA Membership WhatsApp Group more active by involving additional representatives from member companies.

The committee has initiated the collection of e-catalogues from member companies, which will be shared regularly through the WQIA WhatsApp Group to enhance the visibility of member companies and their products. The development of a WQIA E-Brochure covering the association, membership benefits, contact details and key offerings is also being taken forward to support membership promotion and outreach. A WQIA Membership Brochure has also been prepared, highlighting the association, membership benefits, key offerings and contact details. The brochure will be used as a promotional and outreach tool to create awareness among prospective members and encourage new membership.

Dr. K. Chandrasekhar presented the Education Sub-Committee update. The committee has been focusing on restarting regular educational and knowledge-sharing activities, with emphasis on online programs and the development of new training modules based on participant feedback. The committee is also working towards identifying subject matter experts from reputed organizations and industry for conducting technical sessions. Training programs are being structured according to the experience levels of participants to ensure that the content is relevant and effective for different categories of learners. The committee has planned to conduct the Qualified Water

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Professional (QWP) program every three months. The next QWP program is scheduled for **22nd 2026**, and preparations are underway for speaker finalization, content enhancement, promotion and participant registrations. An **Education Brochure** has also been prepared highlighting WQIA's educational initiatives, training program and knowledge-sharing activities. The brochure will be used to create awareness about WQIA's learning opportunities and support participation and outreach among industry professionals.

Miss Namitha Christina presented the PR & Liaison Sub-Committee update. The committee has been focusing on strengthening coordination, improving WQIA's visibility and expanding industry outreach. Discussions have been initiated on bringing the PR and Liaison functions together, while social media and other communication channels are being explored to increase engagement with existing members and prospective members. The committee has proposed the **Member Story Initiative** to highlight and showcase the achievements, expertise and contributions of WQIA member companies. The initiative is intended to improve the visibility of member companies within the industry and provide them with an opportunity to showcase their achievements and capabilities. A **30-minute introductory webinar for non-members** has also been proposed, covering areas such as the QWP program and BIS/regulatory updates. Discussions have also been initiated regarding GST-related industry concerns and industry representation. Going forward, the committee will focus on strengthening WQIA's communication, promoting member companies, expanding industry outreach and increasing participation in WQIA activities.

The **second lucky draw** was conducted as part of the program, adding an engaging and interactive element for the participants.

The program concluded with the Vote of Thanks by **Dr. Sandhya of Bhavan's Research Lab**. Appreciation was conveyed to the Chief Guest, Guest of Honour, speakers, Board Members, sponsors, members, industry partners and the organizing team for their contribution to the successful conduct of the 20th WQIA General Body Meeting.