

AAI GOES GREEN

With its “green touch”, Airports Authority of India is turning trash into treasure

LL BUREAU

Once consigned to the bins, it's back—this time, to adorn walls, beautify table tops and even to convey some special feelings. Lavishly painted calendars, designer mats, colourful greeting cards and many such handcrafted products are being churned out from paper waste, thanks to the Airports Authority of India (AAI).

AAI, the largest airport operator in India, has set up a paper recycling unit, which is not only catering to the stationery requirements of its offices across the country, but also producing brand new decorative and utilitarian products. File covers, file folders, letter heads, visiting cards and a range of corporate gift items, all are now being produced from the paper waste that was earlier dumped, or sold by AAI's offices.

Inspired by the concept of promoting better practices for environment conservation, AAI holds the distinction of being the first PSU in India to establish

a paper recycling unit that supports the cause—G.R.O.W.—Government Recycling Office Waste. Installed at AAI's transit guest house, Vasant Kunj, New Delhi, the paper recycling unit is generating countless customised paper products and stationery items.

By serving the noble cause of environment conservation and generating livelihoods for the weaker sections, the paper recycling unit, in a way, is living up to the philosophy of AAI's Chairman, VP Agrawal, who believes in “giving back to the community where we live and work.”

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AAI set up the paper recycling plant as part of its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), having initially taken up the green initiative through its women welfare association—Kalyanmayee. Archana Agrawal, President of Kalyanmayee, pioneered this pilot project in 2009, executed it successfully, and, in 2010, handed it over to AAI. Kalyanmayee has made sincere efforts towards promoting the paper recycling unit in the past.

With its paper recycling plant, AAI has managed to win the coveted ‘Golden Peacock Eco-Innovation Award’ for the year 2012. Chief minister of New Delhi, Shiela Dixit, presented the award to the AAI Chairman for the innovative initiative of integrating the use of eco-friendly, handcrafted, recycled paper and paper products, in all AAI organisations. The Golden Peacock Eco-Innovation Award, a prestigious national award, is given every year to the most innovative and sustainable product, as



VP Agrawal, Chairman, Airports Authority of India, and Archana Agrawal, President, Kalyanmayee, receiving the Golden Peacock Eco-Innovation award for the year 2012, from Sheila Dixit, Chief Minister of Govt. of NCT Delhi



Paper cutting machine at paper recycling unit of AAI

determined by customers' satisfaction, needs and aspirations, and which is consistent with society's goal of sustainable development.

Bringing in considerable changes in the corporate culture of AAI, the paper recycling unit is also promoting and inculcating resource minimisation, thereby immensely contributing to environment conservation. A fine example of a feasible, viable and sustainable project, the paper recycling unit works on the ground of waste-to-energy systems. Energy conservation, pollution-free processing and optimum use of water are some of the USPs of the paper recycling unit. As (recycled) paper is dried in the sun, the recycling unit involves the natural drying technique, thereby saving a considerable amount of energy. With no dyes and colours used in the production of paper, the recycling



Paper creasing and stitching machine at paper recycling unit of AAI



Man at work in paper recycling unit of AAI

unit is 100 per cent environment and eco-friendly.

Moreover, the unit is also associated with water harvesting. Water used for producing recycled paper is treated and used for gardening. Even the sludge, left during the production of recycled paper, is brought into use in the form of compost. The recycling unit has the capacity to produce around 60-80 tonnes of recycled paper annually.

AAI's paper recycling plant's enormous contribution to the environment can be gauged from these statistics: A ton of recycled paper saves as many as 17 trees from being axed, 380 gallons of oil, three cubic yards of landfill space, 4,000 kilowatts of energy and 7,000 gallons of water—amounting to a-64 per cent energy

conservation, 50 per cent water conservation, and a 60-pound less of pollution.

Today, apart from recycling its old junk, AAI also recycles old paper stocks of different ministries and organisations, including the Ministry of Rural Development, Ministry of Home Affairs, and Central Industrial Security Force (CISF).

AAI's paper recycling unit also inspires and sensitises the young generation towards environment conservation. During the summer vacations, AAI organises a 10-day workshop on paper recycling for school students. Students from various schools attend the workshop and convert their old paper stocks into handcrafted products and stationery items.