

# DAWN

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## **‘We are more than 20 years late in steps being taken for water conservation’**

ISLAMABAD: We are more than 20 years late in the steps we are taking today to conserve water. Right now, the future does not look good at all unless we start saving water, said director Regional Bureau for Science in Asia and the Pacific, Dr Shabaz Khan.

Speaking at an international workshop on Collective Community Action for Eco-Watershed Mitigation to Floods and Droughts on Tuesday, Dr Khan stressed on the need to check dams, enhancing underground storage and better crop, soil and water management. He said planting trees just for the sake of planting them will not work.

“We need to plant trees that can sustain livelihoods such as olives that give fruit and oil, to give an example,” Dr Khan said. He has assisted the Australian government in managing water for a decade.

*Pakistan saves water to last the country 35-40 days while other countries keep reserves to last 400 days, seminar told*

Federal Flood Commission Chairman Ahmed Kamal said that while the rest of the world is saving 40 glasses of water out of 100, Pakistan only saves 10.

“If we can save at least 10 to 12 more glasses of water, Pakistan might just be able to ensure food security for the future,” he said.

He said departments are still weak and cannot properly deal with natural disasters.

Participants were told said that after the 2010 floods, Pakistan lost 55 million acre feet of water to the Arabian Sea, which is equivalent to eight to 10 Tarbela-size dams.

The conference was told that Pakistan has water saved to last the country roughly 35 to 40 days when countries like Australia reserve water that can last the entire country 400 days. Speakers said the country’s defence is not as big an issue as the water crisis that Pakistan will face in the future.

Japanese Ambassador Hiroshi Inomata said his country is the most prone to natural disasters such as floods, earthquakes and tsunamis.

“Japan has experience and knowledge to pass on to Pakistan that now ranks among the countries most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change,” Mr Inomata said.

Organised by the Soil and Water Conservation Institute, Punjab in collaboration with UNESCO, the collective community action (CCA) initiative can play a vital role in mitigating damage potential and increasing coping capacity in both extremes of draught and flood by providing support to decision makers and end users such as local authorities and disaster prevention offices.

The initiative was developed in response to the massive 2010 floods in Pakistan. Other than involving communities to enable them to help themselves, early warning systems have been developed to analyse rainfall across the country and predict intensity of floods.

Under the project, several special training programmes have been designed to empower the youth to use modern technology to develop and operate advanced costly weather systems in order to end dependency on foreign assistance as well as build capacities of farmers by introducing them to advanced agriculture methods to conserve water.

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