

FPCCI roundtable discusses water scarcity issue

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KARACHI: The Research and Policy Division of the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) organised a roundtable on water scarcity in Pakistan at the FPCCI head office in Karachi, Islamabad office and regional office Lahore through videoconferencing, a statement said on Thursday.

The aim of the roundtable was to discuss the water scarcity in Pakistan for minimising risk and maximising benefits, it added.

Water and Power Development Authority (Wapda) Chairman Lt Gen Muzammil Hussain (Retd), in his keynote address, said that the authority being the biggest stakeholder is well aware of the water issues.

Pakistan receives 145 million acres feet of water every year, but only 14 million acres feet of water is preserved, he said, adding that due to soil gathering at the base of Tarbela and Mangla dams, the storage capacity of the dams has decreased by 35 to 40 percent. At present, the capacity of water storage is only for 30 days and 94 percent of surface and groundwater is used for agriculture in Pakistan, Lt Gen Hussain said.

The lack of governance is the main problem, as there are many anti-dam lobbies that are under control of donors, he added.

Pakistan needs concrete steps for resolving water issues such as adoption of water efficient technologies, water safety and saving system in agriculture, as Pakistan ranked 46th of the 48 countries in water efficient usage list.

In his address of welcome, Ghazanfar Bilour, president of the FPCCI, said that water scarcity presents a transnational and transboundary problem, which seriously affects agriculture and industrial sector productivity.

Pakistan has very little capacity of storage water as compared to India, China and the US, he said, adding that successful reforms in the water sector needs to be accompanied by improvements in the agricultural production techniques, recycling plants and construction of small and large dams. S M Muneer, former president of the FPCCI, said that water scarcity is a serious issue, which may dry-out Pakistan by 2025 because of over-depletion, over-exploitation and pollution of water resources.

Pakistan is blessed with one of the world's best and largest irrigation system, but it has failed to get maximum benefit from the system by utilising it efficiently.

Presently, per capita availability of water is just 1,000 cubic metres, he said, and highlighted challenges related to the global warming such as rising sea level, high temperatures, frequency of floods, high frequency of droughts and melting of glaciers, etc, but Pakistan doesn't prepare itself for these challenges.

Later it was decided to form Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry Committee on water scarcity under the head of S M Muneer who will meet and make presentation on water issue to the prime minister. The committee will make necessary recommendations to be gathered from water experts.