



Imran warns of food crisis if dams are not built

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KARACHI: In his maiden visit to the metropolis after winning the July 25 general elections, Prime Minister Imran Khan on Sunday warned that if urgent measures were not taken for construction of dams, Pakistan could face acute water shortage, disturbing its food security beyond 2025.

Mr Khan, who had received a briefing on law and order and attended a fundraiser for dams at Governor House in the evening besides other engagements during his daylong visit after laying a wreath at the Quaid's mausoleum, also vowed to address the issues being faced by Afghan refugees and the Bengali families which had relocated here more than four decades back.

"When those who were born and grew up in Pakistan don't get jobs for want of identity cards, they indulge in crimes," the prime minister said. The people from Bangladesh and Afghanistan who had been living in Pakistan for more than 40 years would be issued national identity cards and passports, he added.

PM vows to resolve identity issue of Afghans, Bengalis living in Karachi for decades

In his address at the fundraising dinner for the construction of dams in presence of President Dr Arif Alvi, Sindh Governor Imran Ismail, Finance Minister Asad Umar and others, Mr Khan highlighted the importance of water storage for irrigation. He said the government was striving for the construction of Diamer-Bhasha and Mohmand dams in its five-year term, but made it clear that this could not be achieved without generous donations from the general public, especially expatriates, as the government did not have financial resources.

Claiming to be the biggest fundraiser in the country's history, Mr Khan said he would strive for raising up to Rs30 billion funds every year. He said if the government succeeded in raising the required funds, the construction of the dams would be completed within five years.

Unless the whole nation was mobilised for the purpose, it would be too late for the future generations, he said and regretted that past rulers had put the water issue on the backburner and focused on short-term goals for political mileage.

The prime minister said Pakistan had only two major dams as compared to 84,000 in China and 5,000 in India. Due to lack of storage capacity, Mr Khan said, 80 per cent of river water went to waste within a period of two and a half months. About the water scarcity threatening the country, he said if urgent measures were not taken, Pakistan could face acute water shortage, disturbing its food security in 2025. The per capita water availability had already gone down to 1,000 cubic metres, he added.

Imran Khan said unlike the 1960s when hydropower units had been set up for electricity generation, imported oil was used to run power plants in the 1990s under short-term projects.

He thanked Chief Justice of Pakistan Mian Saqib Nisar on behalf of the nation for launching a campaign for the construction of dams. He announced that the federal government would fully support the Sindh government in its efforts for revival of economic activities and maintenance of law and order in Karachi.

"Karachi is the financial capital of the country, but ruling political forces in the past did not own the problems the city had been facing," he said. Water and waste disposal issues were huge challenges, he added.

He announced a new master plan for Karachi as well as some development projects for the metropolis, including installation of a desalination plant and a recycling plant in Korangi, upgrade of Northern Bypass, restoration of Karachi Circular Railway, cleanliness and plantation projects to turn Karachi green.

Expressing gratitude to the people of Karachi for the mandate given to the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf, PM Khan said he used to say that Karachi was the city of PTI but people didn't believe him then. There was time, people used to fear coming out of their houses, he recalled, adding that law and order was finally restored. He was

convinced that Karachi was the city of educated people as countrywide political movements used to be launched from Sindh.

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