

Speech of the President of Pakistan
on the Occasion of Two-Day International Symposium on
“Creating A Water-Secure Pakistan”

The Honourable Chief Justice of Pakistan;
Honourable Judges of Supreme Court and High Courts;
Foreign Minister, Federal Minister for Water,
Secretary Water Resources and Chairman WAPDA,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and Gentleman,
Assalam-o-Alaikum !

Hazrat Abdullah ibn Amr reported that once the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him) passed by Sa'd (Allah have blessing on him) while he was performing ablution. The Prophet said, “What is this extravagance?” Sa'd said (Allah have blessing on him), “Is there extravagance with water in ablution?” The Prophet said, “Yes even if you were on the banks of a flowing river.” (Sunan Ibn Majah 425)

Ladies and Gentleman,

I feel privileged to be part of the international symposium on “Creating Water-Secure Pakistan”. Our country is endowed with mountains in the north and to the Arabian Sea in the south. Nature has been very kind in providing us all kinds of natural resources including abundance of water. We were quite sufficient in our per capita water availability during the early decades after independence. Accordingly, Tarbela and Mangla dams were built.

Pakistan’s economy is propelled mainly by the agriculture and agro-based industry. The era of 60s brought in a green revolution alongwith focussed attention to the industrial sector. We, however, in the later decades neglected the basic ingredient on which both these sources were to flourish and that ingredient is WATER! We have adopted a fragmented approach thus hampering the country’s progression. With every passing day the need to build water reservoirs is being felt more than ever. Water availability for agriculture, industry and even for household is depleting and it

is apprehended that we may become a water stressed country if remedial measures are not taken.

Today, countries around the world have developed plans to cater for their depleting and scarce water resources. Pakistan is blessed with a confluence of streams and rivers flowing through our land. We had inherited one of the best canal irrigation systems in the world. But we failed to take stock of the situation, as with the increase in population the need for water for cultivable land also increased. The canal system, however, was not expanded adequately to compensate for the new demand. This shortfall was met with ground pumping resulting in the decrease in the water table across the country especially in Balochistan.

Ladies and Gentleman,

Pakistan's water storage capacity is limited to only 30 days which is reducing with time due to sedimentation. In case the new water reservoirs are not constructed, the irrigation supplies would reduce substantially to the level which we had in 60s when there were no reservoirs. This situation would

create serious water conflicts in the society which can only be addressed by taking timely action. There is a need for building of large water reservoirs.

The other area of concern pertains to power generation which serves as a lifeline to the industrial sector of the country. There is an ever widening gap between demand and supply of power generation. This energy shortfall is seriously hampering the industrial growth, as a result, our GDP has been stunted while foreign reserves have depleted. The power generation sector is badly plagued with circular debt and one of the reasons for this is our over reliance on thermal rather than hydel means of power production. According to NEPRA`s 2015 State of Industry report, Pakistan has the potential of generating 40000 megawatts of hydropower. The need of the hour is to shift to efficient and cost effective means of power generation.

Ladies and Gentleman,

About 2 million drought ridden and impoverished residents of Tharparkar and Cholistan amplify the human side

of this problem. The area represents one of the worst hit regions of the country because of poor water management and as a result thousands of children have lost their lives. The situation in Tharparkar is a case in example of how bleak the things may become in other parts of the country in case adequate “Water Management Measures” are not adopted. In order to improve the ground water levels and recharge our Aquifers we need to build more Delay Action Dams.

Ladies and Gentleman,

“Water is life” ... And We as a Nation, Need to conserve it!

It is heartening to know, that at this crucial juncture, the Honourable Chief Justice of Pakistan has taken the initiative of establishing the “DAM FUND”. I take this opportunity to thank him on behalf of the nation for being the bastion of this noble cause. I have also come to know, that since its inception a total amount of 6.4 billion rupees (**as of 17th October, 2018**) have already been generated which speaks volumes of the enthusiasm and trust shown by our fellow countrymen.

Provision of safe drinking water is a fundamental right, as is also envisaged in the constitution. It is therefore, the responsibility of the state to provide this basic facility to every citizen of the country. During my address to the joint session of the Parliament, I categorically urged upon the legislators that *‘Construction of new water reservoirs should be amongst the top priorities of the government’*. The launch of **“Clean and Green Pakistan”** by the Prime Minister is a right step towards this objective. The Government has started dedicated efforts for water conservation and management which would require a synergised approach based on integrated water resources management principles. We need to work with the whole of the Nation approach and I am confident that with commitment, dedication and hard work we shall achieve our objectives.

Ladies and Gentleman,

Pakistan has a National Water Policy. It is now for all of us to demonstrate motivation and implement this Policy. Furthermore, in order to ensure a behavioural change a

campaign on water conservation is also required to be developed and launched.

I must also lay stress here, that our obligation to manage water is not merely limited to our national interests but it also constitutes a major component of the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations. Goal 6 of the SDGs highlights that *“Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all”*.

Ladies and Gentleman,

Besides construction of large dams as being part of the solution, the Government is cognizant of water conservation needs and its management.

I would urge the Government to adopt world best practices which include but are not limited to; building of water reservoirs and dams, planning for water conservation, water audit techniques, water pricing, enhancing the irrigation efficiency and water productivity, water reuse and recycling methods, satellite telemetry system for equitable distribution,

adoption of drip and sprinkler irrigation techniques for water conservation and management. I would also recommend to the relevant Education departments that water conservation techniques should be made part of the school curriculum so that children who are the biggest stakeholders of this country's future are made aware of proper usage of water and are made "***Water Wise***".

The above measures have become even more important in the wake of Climate Change and its impacts which have seriously affected the overall patterns of water availability. The likelihood of increasing glacier melt may cause fast depletion of natural water reserves because of global warming which stems out from pollution. Initiatives such as the Billion Tree Tsunami should be encouraged to address the environmental degradation.

Pakistan should also make efforts towards safeguarding our "Water Rights". Issue(s) pertaining to the Indus Water Treaty is one such example. This would require meticulous thinking on our part and engaging with our neighbours to avoid potential conflicts in the future. In this regard, I would urge the

foreign office and the concerned stake holders to engage in a constructive dialogue to achieve bilateral and multi-lateral agreements on trans-boundary water matters.

Ladies and Gentleman,

I would also like to take this opportunity to highlight another important point. We as a nation need to think beyond local and parochial interests. We need to think for our country above all- That is **Pakistan comes first!**

We need to build a general consensus and a feeling of mutual trust. The concerns of different stake holder should be addressed at the institutional level and also in the Parliament. IRSA Water Accord of 1991 is a good example in this regard.

Ladies and Gentleman,

Water is the cradle of life. Historically civilisations have thrived near water streams and have perished without it. We

as a Nation have to preserve Water for our present and Future Generations.

I hope that the symposium and its thematic sessions will be informative for the participants and would play important role towards creating awareness for a “Water Secure Pakistan”. The initiative being organized by “Law and Justice Commission of Pakistan” under the guidance of the Honourable Chief Justice is highly appreciated. I am optimistic that this symposium will be instrumental towards formulation of tangible solutions to create a water secure Pakistan.

May ALLAH`s blessings be with us all and may we find strength to harness and efficiently utilize precious WATER resource.

Pakistan Zindabad.