

3-day world moot on food security kicked off

Rawalpindi - A three-day international conference on 'Asia-Pacific Policy Dialogue on Water, Energy and Food Security for Poverty Alleviation in Dry land Regions' commenced at Pir Mehr Ali Shah Arid Agriculture University Rawalpindi (PMAS-AAUR).

The conference is organized by PMAS-AAUR in collaboration with UNESCO with the support of Japan Funds-in-Trust and Malaysia Funds-in-Trust, with an aim to provide an opportunity to policy makers, scientists, academicians, other experts and stakeholders for exploring new dimensions to increase water, food security and alleviate poverty in the resource deficient dry land regions worldwide, in Asia and the Pacific region and particularly in Pakistan.

Federal Minister for Parliamentary Affairs, Sheikh Aftab Ahmad was the chief guest at the inaugural session of the conference.

The federal minister while addressing said that government has put water, energy and food security sectors at the top of its development agenda in its 'Vision 2025'.

He also said that government is paying special attention to incomplete hydro-electric projects like Diamir Basha Dam project and others to make country self-sufficient in energy sector.

He informed that changing climatic conditions, especially the natural disastrous, resource base degradation, poverty, low education levels and high disparities in food access are major challenges for food security in Pakistan.

He was of the view that universities are a hub of research and innovation of new technologies positively impacting livelihood of the masses, protecting environment and accelerating growth. He appreciated the PMAS-AAUR efforts to cultivate resources in a beneficial manner like rainwater harvesting model, energy production from solid waste, initiatives to promote 21st century agriculture through hydroponics model, development of skills in young graduates are especially commendable.

He urged the participants of this dialogue to discuss the thematic areas and propose policy guidelines and strategies for effective use of resources to ensure water, energy and food security. He hoped that this conference will help in facilitating the integration of the newly adopted Sustainable Development Goals into national development plans of Pakistan and other countries of Asia Pacific Region.

Earlier, VC Prof Dr Rai Niaz Ahmad, in his welcome address informed the gathering that the university is dealing in diversified areas like agriculture, forestry, range management, veterinary

and animal sciences, agricultural engineering, basic, applied and social sciences along with management sciences and information technology to achieve a stipulated target of UN Agenda 2030 and Pakistan government vision 2015 to respond to the ever changing socio-economic conditions and attaining the goal of development.

The Ambassador of Malaysia appreciated efforts of UNESCO and PMAS-AAUR for holding international conference on important issues.

He said, "We have to play our role to create awareness regarding food security and other challenges so that future of new generation could be secure."

He also said that holding of such conferences are very essential as these provide an opportunity to know in depth the main issues and give a platform to the learned people to share their knowledge.

The Japan Ambassador said Japan has been providing assistance to Pakistan in various fields. "We have been providing support in clean drinking water projects. Our priorities are for the implementation of the universal agenda," he said.

Japan is putting its efforts for the quality growth, health system, education, disaster management and climate change problems.

Water and proper sewerage system, food securities are the issues of priority to be addressed into Pakistan. "We have been working for the implementation of water management skills, he added. Disaster management is one of the priority areas in Japan's development assistance to Pakistan. Japan is in process of installing flood forecasting system on Indus Water Basin."

The system has been developed by Japan, he said. Japan provided pumps and cleaning equipment to improve the sewerage and drainage system for Faisalabad, Lahore, Gujranwala and other cities, he added.

Japan funds UNESCO for strengthening flood warning system in Pakistan, the ambassador said. UNESCO Jakarta Director Dr Shahbaz Khan, in his key note address highlighted the aims and objectives of the conference and informed the gathering about available solutions and policy directions for poverty alleviation and improved livelihood in dry land regions in Asia and the Pacific region.

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