

**Address of
Shri Vincent H. Pala
Union Minister of State for Water Resources
Government of India
at India Business Forum
during Singapore International Water Week
on
1st July 2010**

Prof. Dhoble, Hon'ble Minister of Water Resources and Sanitation, Government of Maharashtra,

Mr. Sanjeev Chadha, Chairman,

Distinguished Participants,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am very happy to be with you at this session of the India Business Forum being organized during the Singapore International Water Week. The theme of this session "Catalyzing Water Investment in India" is quite relevant in view of the increasing importance and urgency for taking up necessary measure in respect of sustainable development and efficient management of water resources not only in India but throughout the world and particularly in case of developing and underdeveloped countries.

I need not emphasize the importance of water in our life. Water affects our day to day activities in many ways. Water is essential for survival of not only the human being but also for animals, plants and as a matter of fact the whole of environment around us.

Water is an important vehicle for development and consequently has an economic value. Water has a very strong social dimension. In India as also in many parts of the world, water constitutes an important component of our religious rites. Perhaps, it is in this background that all earlier civilizations have grown along the river banks. It remains a fact that water is central to all developmental activities and this is more so in case of agricultural based society like India.

The growing population coupled with industrialization and urbanization has resulted in increase in the demand of water for various uses namely, drinking water, irrigation, industries and for sustaining the ecology.

The earlier perception that water is available in plenty does not hold good any more. Scarcity value of fresh water is well known. Further, two serious challenges are that of food security and impact of climate change on water resources. We are fully aware that the development of water resources projects and efficient use of water plays a crucial role in food production.

We have to efficiently manage the precious water resources to ensure availability of safe drinking water for all the citizens and to assure food security. Another important challenge relates to impact of climate change. We are fully aware of the climate change and its effect on water. Almost all the studies point towards a definite impact on the hydrologic cycle which could result in intensification of the temporal and spatial variation in the availability of water resources. This issue needs to be addressed in all seriousness.

In India, we have launched National Action Plan on Climate Change which envisages institutionalization of eight national missions including a “National Water Mission”. The main objectives of “National Water Mission” are conservation of water, minimizing wastage and ensuring its more equitable distribution both across and within States through integrated water resources management.

Water related issues are relatively complex. As I mentioned earlier, on one hand water is, undoubtedly, an important vehicle for development and on the other hand, it has social dimensions. We have to strike a proper balance in addressing the issues. Water related issues can be effectively addressed when all sections of the society join hands. We can derive optimum benefits from the most precious gift of the nature i.e., water and also ensure the benefits for our future generation through mutual cooperation.

All sections of the society, namely Government agencies, Panchayati Raj Institutions, Users, Non-Governmental Organisations, Academia and also the private sector have to play their role in this endeavor.

In India, we have made considerable development in water resources sector. There has been significant all round achievements in respect of creation of irrigation potential, in providing safe drinking water to our people, particularly the people in rural and remote areas, in meeting the industrial water demands, and in addressing the environmental issues.

Similarly considerable progress has been made in respect of flood management. However, a lot more remains to be achieved. Further, due emphasis is to be laid on adoption of better management practices to ensure the physical as well as financial sustainability of the facilities created for utilization of water resources.

However, I may mention that the future developments are more challenging, in view of both the hydrological features and topographical constraints. **Shri Umesh Narayan Panjiar, Secretary, Ministry of Water Resources will** discuss various aspects in his address and therefore, I would not go in to the details. However, I would like to mention that we have to address the challenges in the water sector jointly. We need local and distributed water resources infrastructure.

We have to achieve the objectives of meeting the demand for clean water for domestic purpose, developing sustainable infrastructure for irrigation, and ensuring water supplies for consumptive and non-consumptive uses for various categories of industries. While doing so, we have to ensure that the environmental issues are adequately addressed.

The National Water Policy gives due importance to the management of the water resources with active participation and involvement of the stakeholders at all levels – planning, development as well as management. It states that management of the water resources for diverse uses should incorporate a participatory approach; by involving not only the various governmental agencies but also the users and other stakeholders, in an effective and decisive manner, in various aspects of planning, design, development and management of the water resources schemes.

The National Water Policy also encourages private sector participation on planning, development and management of water resources projects for diverse uses, wherever feasible. I am confident that private sector participation may help in introducing innovative ideas, generating financial resources and introducing corporate management and improving service efficiency and accountability to users. At the same time, I would also urge the private sector to

keep in mind that providing services in water sector should be considered as service to humanity. Therefore, the private sector should come forward to fulfill their corporate social responsibility.

I would like to close my address by quoting the statement of the Secretary General, United Nation. He said. ***“As the global economy grows, so will its thirst. This is not an issue of rich or poor, north or south. All regions are experiencing the problem of water stress. There is still enough water for all of us – but only so long as we keep it clean, use it more wisely and share it fairly. Governments must engage and lead, and the private sector also has a role to play in this effort.”***

Thank you. Jai Hind

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