

SCI-TECH

Climate change clouds hover over Pakistan

By Our Staff Reporter

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LAHORE: Participants in a seminar on the World Environment Day said signs of climate change had begun to look ominous for Pakistan.

Titled 'Your planet needs you—unite to combat climate change', the seminar was organised by the Institution of Engineers and the Punjab Environment Protection Department at a local hotel on Friday. The speakers expressed fear that after some years, water shortage would increase in Pakistan, which would affect human beings, forests, crops and the whole biodiversity chain.

EPD Director-General Dr Shugufta Shahjehan said more than 100 nations of the world are observing the World Environment Day. She said indiscriminate use of fossil fuels, housing and industrial sectors were adding carbon dioxide at the rate of 0.5 per cent annually.

She said the desire for leisure and needs for social and economic development had forced people to involve in activities that gave rise to accumulation of carbon content in the atmosphere.

The deleterious impacts of this practice had been witnessed in the form of greenhouse effect, global warming and climate change which manifested themselves in excessive flooding, frequent and violent storms, drought, melting glaciers, changes in rainfall pattern, loss of biodiversity, and calamities like tsunamis, hurricanes and earthquakes, she said.

Wapda's ex-chairman Tariq Hameed, who was the chief guest, said the exhausts from vehicles, power generation plants and other greenhouse gases had caused the earth's average temperature to rise by about 0.7 degree centigrade the world over. Unless steps are taken to reduce these greenhouse gas emissions, he said, the world's average temperature was likely to increase by two degrees centigrade over the next 30 to 50 years.

After this stage, irreversible processes may take place. An example of such an undesirable process is the melting of the floating ice sheets of the arctic, which can cause sea level rise affecting coastal communities and ecosystems and disrupt global weather patterns.

He said change in lifestyle could bring about a positive change in the environment. Instead of using gas cylinders for heating water now affordable solar water heaters are available; a hundred gallon capacity solar water heater can be purchased for about Rs20,000, he added.

'It is important to realise that about 20 per cent of global greenhouse gases have been emitted due to the burning and destruction of forests. This can be reduced effectively with the reduced emission of such gases. Such a reduction would help in conserving forests and restoration of degraded forests would help absorb carbon dioxide from the air.'

Institution of Engineers Pakistan President Aftab Islam Agha said the economic and financial turmoil sweeping the globe is a true wake-up call, sounding an alarm about the need to improve upon old patterns of growth and make transition to a new era of greener, cleaner development. The world also needs a 'Green New Deal' focused on investing in renewable sources of energy, eco-friendly infrastructure and energy efficiency.

He said: 'If we invest even part of the substantial new economic stimulus packages in the green economy, we can turn today's crisis into tomorrow's sustainable growth.'

He said with warmer weathers some hurricanes will be more severe and winds are expected to blow stronger. It is also possible that wind patterns may shift; extreme cold periods may be experienced as well.

EPD Deputy Director Amir Farooq gave a presentation on 'Ozone formation in urban areas of Lahore, an effect of climate change' in the technical session of the seminar.

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