

**SPEECH BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA, SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE
AT THE INAUGURAL FUNCTION OF THE INDIA WATER WEEK**

Vigyan Bhavan, New Delhi: 08-04-2013

1. I am delighted to join you for the inauguration of the India Water Week 2013 being organized by the Ministry of Water Resources. It is a privilege to be a part of this august gathering comprising renowned public figures, policy makers, experts and professionals.
2. The theme for this year, “Efficient Water Management - Challenges and Opportunities”, holds significance in today’s context. The severe drought in some parts of our country, particularly Maharashtra, is a matter of grave concern. The increasing occurrence of droughts and floods in India has underlined the need to find solutions to improve the management of water resources.
3. Ladies and Gentlemen, our endowment of water resource is disproportionately less than our population. India is home to 17 per cent of the world population but possess only 4 per cent of its renewable water resource.

4. Due to population expansion, increasing urbanization and the necessity of high economic growth through rapid industrialization, availability of water resource is conspicuous by its competing demands. The per capita availability of water has reduced significantly from 1,816 cubic meter in 2001 to 1,545 cubic meter in 2011.
5. The available water must be managed judiciously to meet the twin burden of population growth and economic development. Conservation, balanced distribution and reclamation of used water are essential cogs in the wheel of water management.
6. Ladies and Gentlemen, the influence of climate change on water system is known to all. Various studies have indicated the adverse impact of climate change on the hydrologic cycle leading to variations in precipitation. This has often resulted in occurrence of flood in some areas and drought in others. Climate change also has the potential to affect ground water by reducing its table and quality.

7. As part of the National Action Plan on Climate Change, the National Water Mission was launched in 2011 with the objectives of water conservation, minimization of wastage and equitable distribution. I urge all stakeholders to work towards its success.
8. Our efforts must be directed at mitigating the regional imbalance in water availability. Equitable allocation of water across the country could be made possible by inter-basin water transfer. But for that, the environmental and socio-economic impact should be studied before such an initiative is envisaged.
9. We must also strive to achieve equity in the allocation of water between urban and rural areas. This would negate the potential for any social conflict. Our cities and industrial townships should devise measures for minimal waste of water. Losses due to transportation and leakage should be minimized by developing sources of water in close proximity to the point of demand.
10. Water conservation should be accorded the high priority that it deserves. I am happy to note that the Birth Anniversary of our

former Prime Minister, Late Shrimati Indira Gandhi, was also observed as the Water Conservation Day last year. This is a good initiative.

11. Ladies and Gentlemen, we must contain the decreasing ground water level by resorting to improved water use technology and better management of aquifers. We must strengthen our data base on the quantum and quality of ground water so that our policy interventions have much greater chance of success.
12. Rain water harvesting should be popularized by dovetailing existing rural development schemes like Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee scheme. Our initiatives at integrated watershed development should be aimed at increasing the soil moisture, reducing the sediment yield and improving land and water productivity.
13. Usable water is a scarce commodity today. Hence, the pricing mechanism should not only reflect the cost but also act as an incentive for saving and disincentive for wastage. All points of water supply, especially in the urban areas, should be metered to boost conservation and ensure recovery of user charge.

14. The role of water users associations should be strengthened by giving them adequate powers for collection of water charges and management of the water distribution system. Water Regulatory Authorities could be envisaged in every state for tariff fixation to increase transparency in the management of water use.

15. Ladies and Gentlemen, our country's agriculture is a big demand centre for water. The total irrigation potential that stands created at the end of the Eleventh Five Year Plan period is close to 94 million hectare. Water management in this sector is therefore crucial for overall sustainability of our water resource.

16. The 3 R strategy of *reduce*, *recycle* and *reuse* must find application in our farmlands. Our irrigation system should encourage judicious use of water. Micro irrigation techniques like drip and sprinkler, and adoption of cropping pattern suited to natural resource endowments should mark our approach to water-saving in agriculture.

17. Studies have brought out the positive linkage between the level of economic development and adequacy of water-related infrastructure such as water supply, sanitation, wastewater treatment for majority of urban populace and planned use of wastewater. Across different geographies, use of wastewater has been an old practice.

18. Wastewater treatment technology has developed due to the significant contribution of scientific and engineering fields. This has led to the growing use of wastewater in agriculture worldwide. However, in terms of area irrigated by untreated wastewater, India ranks third in the world. There is therefore a need to upscale our efforts at recycling and reuse of wastewater. I am hopeful of the slogan “More Crop and Income per Drop of Water” becoming a reality soon.

19. Ladies and Gentlemen, our citizens should have access to safe drinking water, whose benefit in terms of human health has been well documented. As per a study, investment in water and sanitation infrastructure can reduce child mortality across countries by an average of 25 deaths per 1,000 child births.

20. The provision of safe drinking water has become a serious development initiative around the globe. From 76 per cent in 1990, the proportion of global population with safe drinking water source has increased to 89 per cent in 2010. The number of people benefitted has increased over this period by 2 billion, of which our country accounts for more than one fourth. But there is still a significant portion of humanity who remains denied of access to this basic necessity.

21. The reach of the poor to safe drinking water can be enhanced by developing mid-market technologies that can deliver affordable water treatment devices. Micro finance institutions can be engaged to acquire devices and encourage shared access to safe drinking water.

22. Many of our rural areas are bereft of basic water infrastructure requiring women to spend a considerable amount of time and energy in collection of water, thereby depriving them from pursuing income generating activities. Spreading the network of water infrastructure to all underserved areas would therefore be an exercise in rural rejuvenation.

23. Ladies and Gentlemen, our strategies geared to better management of water resource should seek the active involvement of the community. The conviction of the end user is not only a necessity for successful implementation but should be a development objective in itself.

24. I am hopeful that the India Water Week 2013 would be able to provide meaningful solutions and guide our approach to water management. I also expect the Water Expo 2013 to showcase exciting technological possibilities for sustaining this vital natural resource.

25. I congratulate the Ministry of Water Resources for taking this timely initiative. I also applaud the other Ministries, particularly Agriculture, Environment and Forests, and Drinking Water and Sanitation, for extending their partnership. I wish you all success in conducting this event.

Thank you.

Jai Hind.
