

Japan, UNESCO to implement project to strengthen flood warning system



ISLAMABAD: Charge d'affaires ad interim of Japan to Pakistan Takashi Katae and UNESCO Representative-Director Ms. Vibeke Jensen exchange signed documents

Islamabad: The government of Japan and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) will implement a project worth US \$4.05 million to further improve flood warning and management capacity of the government of Pakistan.

An agreement formalising this commitment was signed here on Tuesday in the presence of Kazuyuki Nakane, parliamentary vice-minister for foreign affairs of Japan, Takashi Katae, chargé d'affaires ad interim of Japan to Pakistan, and Mitsuyoshi Kawasaki, chief representative of JICA Pakistan Office. The agreement was signed with Vibeke Jensen, representative of UNESCO in Islamabad.

The project is the second phase of the earlier project implemented by UNESCO with the financial assistance of Japan. In the first project, flood forecasting systems using satellite technology, the Integrated Flood Analysis System (IFAS) and the Runoff-Inundation model (RRI model), have been successfully developed for the upper and lower catchment of the Indus River.

More than 39 districts are now being covered with the flood forecasting and early warning system of IFAS, and more than 53 million residents in 32 districts located in the lower Indus river basin are now served with the new flood hazard maps generated by the RRI model. However, the Eastern Rivers are yet to be covered by IFAS and the RRI model; and the accuracy of IFAS should be further increased.

The government of Japan therefore decided to conduct the second project in collaboration with UNESCO and the Pakistan for further improvement of the early warning system. This project will contribute to enhancing the reliability and accuracy of IFAS as well as expanding the coverage of IFAS and RRI model to Eastern Rivers. In addition, JICA and UNESCO plan to promote sharing of flood forecasting information among Pakistan and its neighbouring countries, especially Afghanistan.

Speaking on the occasion, Kazuyuki Nakane expressed hope that this project would contribute to protecting more lives and properties from future floods. He reaffirmed Japan's commitment to help Pakistan become more resilient to future natural disasters. Referring to the "Third UN World Conference on Disaster Management" to be held in Sendai, Japan, from March 14 to 18, 2015, he said, "We will work together with international society including Pakistan to reduce the number of people suffering from natural disasters as much as possible."

Vibeke Jensen applauded the government of Japan's support and expressed deep gratitude to the government of Japan for supporting the next phase. She mentioned UNESCO's key role in strengthening tsunami early warning systems in the world and in Pakistan.

It is pertinent to mention that the government of Japan had committed, in November 2013, that it would provide approximately US \$16 billion of public and private finance to developing countries over 2013 to 2015 to support their response to climate change. The project agreed on Tuesday forms a part of this commitment.

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