

Japanese agency, UNESCO to implement flood warning system

ISLAMABAD: The Japanese government and Unesco have agreed to implement a project worth \$4.05 million to improve Pakistan's flood warning and management capacity.

The chief representative of Japan International Cooperation Agency (Jica) in Pakistan, Mitsuyoshi Kawasaki, and Unesco director in Islamabad Vibeke Jensen signed an agreement to this effect here on Tuesday. Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan Kazuyuki Nakane also attended the ceremony.

It would be the second phase of a project implemented earlier by UNESCO with Japanese financial assistance. In the first phase, flood forecasting systems using satellite technology, the Integrated Flood Analysis System (Ifas) and the Runoff-Inundation (RRI) model were successfully developed for upper and lower catchments of the river Indus.

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 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 experts see the need for improving the accuracy of Ifas.

The Japanese government has decided to launch the second project in collaboration with UNESCO and the government to bring improvement to the early warning system. The project will contribute to enhancing the reliability and accuracy of Ifas and 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 at the ceremony, Kazuyuki Nakane expressed the hope that the project would contribute to protecting more lives and properties from floods in future. He reaffirmed Japan's commitment to helping Pakistan become more resilient to natural disasters.

Referring to the third "UN World Conference on Disaster Management" opening in Sendai (Japan) on March 14, he said Japan is committed to working together with international society, including Pakistan, to reduce the number of people suffering from natural disasters.

Unesco director Vibeke Jensen lauded Japan's support to building effective flood warning systems in Pakistan. The next phase of the project, she said, would be particularly helpful in extending the flood early warning models to country's eastern rivers.

Ms Jensen reaffirmed Unesco's strong commitment to continue building Pakistan's capacity in disaster forecasting and management, and mentioned the agency's role in strengthening tsunami early warning systems in the world, and in Pakistan.

Disaster management is one of the priority areas in Japan's development assistance to Pakistan. Earlier, Japan helped the government in formulating the "National Disaster Management Plan", the first comprehensive plan at the federal level to address disaster management. Japan also installed the flood forecasting and warning system in the Lai Nullah, which has contributed to reducing the number of flood victims.

Recently, Japan provided pumps and cleaning equipment to improve sewerage and drainage system in Faisalabad and is implementing a similar project in Gujranwala, which mitigates flood damages. Japan is also financing the establishment of the weather forecasting centre in Islamabad.

Source: <http://reliefweb.int/report/pakistan/japanese-agency-unesco-implement-flood-warning-system>