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A month ago, one of the water experts in Pakistan warned that the "most dreaded water scarcity ever" has at last hit the country. The warning came not too soon and the surprise if any is that the warning has come too late.

Unlike India, Pakistan is solely dependent on the Indus Water system and instead of meeting the water shortage, all that the Pakistan leaders at all scientific and political levels were doing was to do "India Bashing" as if India is responsible for the acute water shortage.

Increasing urbanisation, climate change, population explosion, indiscriminate usage of ground water particularly in Punjab and wastage of water in agricultural operations have all contributed to the shortage of water. Instead, India is being blamed day in and out for all the ills relating to water scarcity in Pakistan.

Even one simple fact that Pakistan which can store up to 40 percent of its water for leaner days has built in capacity of storing only 7 percent of water so far, shows its lackadaisical approach towards water problems and yet India is being described as the villain in stealing the waters of the three western rivers of the Indus under the Indus Water Treaty of 1960!

The Federal Planning Development and Reforms Minister Ahsan Iqbal said on 20th March this year that Pakistan was not getting 10 million acres feet of water, its due share due to water shortage by India.

Surely the Minister must have been aware of the division of waters of the Indus River System under the Indus Water Treaty of 1960, envisages the division of the system with the three western rivers, Indus, Jhelum and Chenab going fully to Pakistan with the three eastern

rivers- the Sutlej, Ravi and Beas going over to India for full utilization. For the western rivers India is allowed to construct run of the river projects for power generation and a limited quantity for agricultural and other purposes. No where in the Pakistan press is there any mention that India is not fully utilizing the western waters allowed to be used for agricultural purposes and used downstream by the agriculturists of Pakistan and instead there is an unanimous uproar that India is "stealing the waters."

The Indus water treaty which has withstood the tests of times, in times of war and near war never envisaged any division of scarcity or any generous "give and take" of waters at times of crisis between the two countries. It is not therefore clear how the Pakistan Minister could come to the conclusion that Pakistan is entitled to 10 million acres of water from India. It is not like the water pacts in other river systems where the waters are equitably shared between the riparian countries both during the surplus and lean seasons. The Indus water treaty is unique and given the relationship between the two countries then and even now there could have been no better division of the river waters between the two countries India and Pakistan. Hence any call to revise the treaty as is heard sometimes now would only create more complications and difficulties in managing and utilising the waters of the system between the two countries.?

The Minister's statement mentioned in the beginning of this paper was made in a "Water Summit 2014" convened by the Ministry of Planning, Development and Reforms of Pakistan in collaboration with the Ministry of Water, Ministry of Inter provincial coordination and Minister of National Food security and research for formulating the country's first National Water Policy.

It is good that Pakistan has finally woken up to the serious water crisis that was looming large in the last few years. The Minister gave some interesting statistics to highlight the impending crisis. He referred to Pakistan having 5650 cubic metre per person in 1947 and now reduced to 964 cubic metres per person now. Pakistan's production per unit of water is said to be one of the lowest in the world!

Perhaps the most important and doable statement he made during the meeting was that the forum that was convened should find ways to make water "an instrument of cooperation instead of one of contention between India and Pakistan."

I had in my earlier papers always suggested that the Indus Water Treaty should be implemented both in letter and spirit and that any differences or call it disputes should be settled between the two countries bilaterally. This spirit of cooperation has been missing all along. The Indian side has the perception that Pakistan's objections on the projects constructed in India on the western rivers in accordance with the treaty have been mainly to delay the projects and nothing else.

All along, Pakistan has been approaching the Treaty at the technical level with implementation to the letter and not the spirit of the treaty. This has only pushed Pakistan into greater scarcity than was envisaged. Pakistan went for a neutral referee in the case of Baglihar Project and to the ICJ in the case of Kishenganga Project and lost both the cases. Pakistan will be ill advised to go for a Review in the ICJ over the Kishenganga project.

In going through the various articles in Pakistan media on the water crisis, the general opinion appears to veer around the view that the Indus Water Treaty should be seen and implemented in both "letter and spirit." This approach should be welcome.

Recently, Dr. Murtaza Mughal, President of PEW(Pakistan Economy Watch) made a strident observation that the "issue of water aggression (of India!) cannot be resolved through enhanced trade or negotiations." Perhaps this is also in line with Pakistan now dragging its feet on giving India 'the most favoured nation' status in bilateral trade. If this kind of hostile approach is displayed how can Pakistan expect India to follow the spirit of the Indus Treaty and allow more water for Pakistan at times of scarcity? How can the spirit and not the letter of the treaty be acceptable to India when the issue is also being "franchised" to jihadi groups like LET?

The Forum on the "Water Summit" should have considered these points. It is learnt that many foreign representatives were present in the meeting though none from India appears to have been invited!

There is no alternative to the Indus Water Treaty and one wishes that both sides look at the treaty both in "letter and spirit".

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