

World Water Day: Power outages and water scarcity increasing in western Uttar Pradesh

World Water Day was observed by Neer Foundation, The Institution of Engineers (India), India Water Partnership and India Water Portal at the Meerut Chambers of Commerce on 22nd March, 2014. The theme of this year “energy-water nexus” resonated with the audience in the western Uttar Pradesh district considering that the conflict between water and energy users in agriculture and industry has heightened here in the last few years.

C P Gupta, Chairman of The Institution of Engineers (India), Meerut said that “water and energy are closely interconnected and choices made in one sector affects the other, positively or negatively”. Uttar Pradesh is grappling with an acute power as well as water crisis. Gupta stressed that the flat rate that farmers are charged for power leaves them no incentive for adopting water conservation practices.



This he felt was leading to a crisis in western Uttar Pradesh as farmers continue indiscriminate pumping of water for irrigation purposes. The Government should move to a slab rate for groundwater extraction in agriculture, he stated. This point did not find favour with farmers who were present in large numbers in the audience. They felt that rationalizing power tariffs for agriculture will not work

considering the poor returns to farmers in agriculture at present. Rationalizing the mindset of the urban political class, which is so alienated from rural realities, is necessary.

Anil Joshi, HESCO, Dehradun lamented the disappearance of water bodies in the district. They used to act as an important water buffer and used to recharge the groundwater. He blamed the present form of development which instead of making the villages self reliant by promoting the local economy is destroying the self organized means by which the community managed resources like water.



Avadh Pal Singh, a farmer from Meerut pointed out the need to conserve water so it would be available for posterity.

Raman Tyagi, Neer Foundation spoke about the neglect of water bodies in Meerut by the state as well as the community. Due to this neglect, most of these water bodies are choked up with waste or plastic.

Massive water resources are needed to produce energy – be it thermal, hydel or nuclear, said Amita Bhaduri, India Water Portal. In fact contrary to popular belief nuclear energy is highly water intensive. In neighbouring Haryana a massive amount of water that was irrigating around a lakh acres is being diverted for a nuclear power plant at Fatehabad. This will be the first project in the world to have such a restricted source of water. Generally, nuclear power plants being water guzzling in nature are located near the sea or rivers, she said. The water will not be enough even for normal operation and reactor cooling, what if an accident takes place?



The Global Water Partnership's Strategy for 2020 was launched at the meeting. Veena Khanduri, India Water Partnership underlined the need for bringing all stakeholders in the water sector under a platform. The sharing that would result will help provide solutions and related good practices. Diverse constituencies could be brought together and

consensus built over divisive issues, she said.