

## **Pachauri's warning on water scarcity** ***“Will create global security concerns”***



Water scarcity as a result of climate change will create far-reaching global security concerns, Nobel laureate and chairman of the 'Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change' Rajendra K Pachauri has warned. "At one level the world's water is like the world's wealth. Globally, there is more than enough to go round. The problem is that some countries get a lot more than others," said Pachauri, co-recipient of the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize.

"With 31 per cent of global freshwater resources, Latin America has 12 times more water per person than South Asia. Some places, such as Brazil and Canada, get far more water than they can use; others, such as countries in the Middle East, get much less than they need." And the effects of a warmer world will likely include changes in water availability. "Up to 1.2 billion people in Asia, 250 million Africans and 81 million Latin Americans will be exposed to increased water stress by 2020," Pachauri told the 2009 Nobel Conference at Gustavus Adolphus College in St Peter, Minnesota, according to a statement.

Water shortages have an enormous impact on human health, including malnutrition, pathogen or chemical loading, infectious disease from water contamination, and uncontrolled water reuse. "Due to the very large number of people that may be affected, food and water scarcity may be the most important health consequences of climate change," Pachauri said.

When communities fight over water resources, there's a great danger for a disruption of peace and security. "That water scarcity plays a role in creating the preconditions of desperation and discontent is undeniable," he said. "Competition for water from the river Jordan was a major cause of the 1967 war. India has been in dispute with Pakistan over the Indus and with Bangladesh over the Ganges.

"Over 260 river basins are shared by two or more countries," he said. "As the resource is becoming scarce, tensions among different users may intensify, both at the national and international level. In the absence of strong institutions and agreements, changes within a basin can lead to trans-boundary tensions." Societies so far have been able to adapt to changes in weather and climate - via crop diversification, irrigation, disaster risk management, and insurance - but climate change might go beyond what our traditional coping mechanisms can handle, Pachauri suggested.

Even societies with "high adaptive capacity" are vulnerable to climate change, variability and extremes, he says, citing examples of the 2003 heat wave that took the lives of many elderly in European cities and 2005's Hurricane Katrina. "A technological society has two choices," Pachauri said. "It can wait until catastrophic failures expose systemic deficiencies, distortion and self-deceptions, or the culture can provide social checks and balances to correct for systemic distortion prior to catastrophic failures. Global emissions of greenhouse gases will have to decline by 2015. If we can achieve that, we may be able to avoid the worst effects of climate change". (IANS 7 October 2009).