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NEWS

Preserve water to combat future crunch: expert

Mrudu Naik
06 October 2010 09:11:07 Oman Time

MUSCAT: Residents of Oman have been urged to use water efficiently as the Sultanate has been classified among the countries falling below the 'water poverty line'.

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In his presentation, 'Integrated Water Management Strategy in Oman', at the Muscat Green Day Conference, Dr Saif Al Shaqsi, Director General for Water at the Ministry of Regional Municipality and Water Resources informed that annual renewable water resources stood at 1300 Mm3; of which, 70 per cent is used and the rest is lost to the sea or desert.

He said that 92 per cent of water resources is used in agriculture. The annual per capita of renewable water is 500 m3.

Explaining that water resources in Oman included natural sources (rainfall, groundwater), desalination (sea water or brackish water), virtual water, treated waste water, he said, "74 per cent is imported (virtual water), 25 per cent is natural water and 1 per cent is desalinated".

Talking about the main challenges faced, he explained it included maintaining a balance between demand and renewable water resources. He said, "It is important that we protect water resources from both pollution and depletion. It is also important to secure safe potable water supply."

Shaqsi also said that it is important to protect and maintain the water sector's infrastructure. He stressed on the need to increase the reuse of treated wastewater.

The industrial and commercial water demand should be linked to the available resources, he said.

Explaining that integrated water resource water management helps making decisions and taking action on how water should be managed, he said, the decisions and actions relate to water project planning, land development, irrigation management, flood protection measures and optimal reservoir management.

Stressing on the need for a tailor made approach for integrated water resource management in an irrigation dominated arid environment, he said there is need for fundamental improvement of water use efficiency and water quality in irrigated agriculture.

He also said there is a need for integrated water management and optimal long-term planning in a changing environment. Sustainable planning options for best climate change adaption to protect Oman's unique environment is a must, he pointed out.

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