

PAKISTAN OBSERVER

EYES & EARS OF PAKISTAN WIDELY READ & TRUSTED DAILY

Sunday, September 22, 2013, Ziqaad 15, 1434 AH

<http://pakobserver.net/detailnews.asp?id=218949>

Where water is gold

Sunday, September 22, 2013 - SOME rare good news has offset the usual grim predictions about the planet's dwindling natural resources. Kenya, one of Africa's most important countries, has uncovered a potentially huge new water source. Now comes the challenge of managing it fairly and transparently. The discovery, announced last week by Kenya and the United Nations, involves five aquifers in impoverished Turkana County that could mean a more secure future for the country as a whole. Of Kenya's 41 million people, an estimated 17 million lack access to safe drinking water and 28 million are without adequate sanitation. The new underground sources, estimated to hold at least 66 trillion gallons, could be used for drinking, irrigating crops and watering livestock.

The project shows what can be done when responsible authorities work together. Identifying the aquifers was a joint effort of the Kenyan government and Unesco, with financial support from Japan, a major donor of international development assistance. Advanced satellite equipment and expertise from Radar Technologies International helped provide technical breakthroughs. Radar Technologies, a natural resources exploration concern, has confirmed two of the five aquifers through drilling, but further exploration at the other three sites is needed before experts can determine more precisely how much water exists and what it will take to extract it. Kenya's task is to figure out, with United Nations help, how to protect these supplies and tap them in ways that ensure they last for generations. Management needs to be fair and open, with clear limits on how much water can be extracted, how often and by whom. This may not be easy in a country with a history of corruption, and where the president and deputy president are facing trial by the International Criminal Court for crimes

against humanity stemming from the 2007 presidential election.

Water scarcity is a huge problem globally, fueling competition among states, regions and tribes and sometimes leading to bloodshed. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development has estimated that by 2030 nearly half the world's population will live in areas with severe water stress. Kenya's remarkable good fortune is a ray of hope in this otherwise gloomy picture.

million are without adequate sanitation. The new underground sources, estimated to hold at least 66 trillion gallons, could be used for drinking, irrigating crops and watering livestock.

The project shows what can be done when responsible authorities work together. Identifying the aquifers was a joint effort of the Kenyan government and Unesco, with financial support from Japan, a major donor of international development assistance. Advanced satellite equipment and expertise from Radar Technologies International helped provide technical breakthroughs. Radar Technologies, a natural resources exploration concern, has confirmed two of the five aquifers through drilling, but further exploration at the other three sites is needed before experts can determine more precisely how much water exists and what it will take to extract it. Kenya's task is to figure out, with United Nations help, how to protect these supplies and tap them in ways that ensure they last for generations. Management needs to be fair and open, with clear limits on how much water can be extracted, how often and by whom.