

Sub-committee to address mangrove concerns

Staff Report

ISLAMABAD: The National Assembly Standing Committee on Environment on Monday formed a sub-committee and recommended that 10 million acres feet (MAF) water should be released Kotri downstream for the safety of mangrove from the disastrous impact of seawater intrusion in the area.

The sub-committee was formed during a meeting of the National Assembly Standing Committee on Environment held with member of the National Assembly Raja Asad in the chair. Marvi Memon of the Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid (PML-Q) will chair the sub-committee, whereas its other members are Palwasha Khan and Yasmeen Rehman of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) and Tayyab Hussain of the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM). This four-member sub-committee will look into issues such as decrease in mangrove' area, which has reduced from 26,000 to 2,600 square kilometres. The sub-committee will take up the issue of decrease in freshwater and reduction in silt deposit causing damage to mangrove. The committee would ensure that 10 MAF water as per Water Accord 1991 was given to the Indus Delta downstream Kotri. The Indus River System Authority (IRSA) will also give a report to the committee on the same issue.

Preservation of mangrove wood and by-products, which is used by locals for timber, fuel wood, fishing poles, honey, fodder, sea food, grazing is also among the issues the sub-committee will look into. It was observed that agriculture, oil, industrial pollution along Korangi Creek was causing damage to mangrove. In this regard, the sub-committee will ensure waste coming from industry is pre-treated at source before entering area/sea and increase sewerage treatment plants. The Sindh Environment Protection Agency (EPA) will give the committee report on functionality of treatment plants and regulations being followed. Oil pollution entering mangrove will be curtailed by adopting strict monitoring and disaster management policy. The sub-committee will recommend the government to carry out environmental impact assessment surveys on mangrove preservation on regular basis and be published. The government will be asked to increase cooperation between the forest department and local community to preserve mangrove.