**Conserve energy**

Enem Ali Abbas

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The decision to shut down marriage halls by 10pm will not result in fewer wedding events or a revenue shortfall for wedding banquets. People still held these events when the then Punjab chief minister, Shehbaz Sharif, imposed a ban on multiple wedding meals in the province.

Such restrictions will eventually make it easier for marriage hall owners to save on electricity bills. The same goes for shopping and other economic activities. This is a shift in the right direction. The Covid-19 pandemic is a good example to explain how desperate times led to some good decisions. The stay-at-home restrictions made virtual meetings and learning possible – something we had been ignoring for decades.

This mandatory shift helped us save on boarding and lodging costs, even in the corporate world. The new normal after the pandemic proved to be beneficial immediately, and this is what we need to replicate for energy conservation. Also, this conservation drive should not be limited to electricity or gas but also extend to water and fuel conservation.

Long lines of cars parked outside various schools around noon not only add to environmental pollution but also increase the fuel import bill. Carpooling apps should be promoted and regulated at the government level, and this disastrous trend of one car per child should be discouraged at all costs.

The government should also work on automation and digitization of services. The Punjab Land Records Authority (PLRA) has already digitized most of its records. This was endorsed and regarded as a great success story for the region by the World Bank. We need to develop similar projects that minimize travelling and eliminate the requirement to appear in person to avail government services. The PLRA has introduced online Fard facility which has enabled landowners to obtain the required document without leaving their homes or offices. This not only eliminates corruption and saves time but also saves the fuel consumed to visit patwaris. Technology is the way forward for a greener and better tomorrow; we just need to adapt.

Before we emphasize on the monetary value of energy conservation, we need to understand that it is not energy-crisis management, it is actually the new world order that we must comply with. Energy conservation in all its forms is the only healthy lifestyle solution for creating sustainable societies. Therefore, an energy conservation roadmap is a move in the right direction. It is not being introduced as just another conservation campaign but is backed by research and figures to estimate the outcome.

The prime minister’s team has already made substantial progress in the gas conservation initiative. Petroleum Minister Dr Musadik Malik has already been emphasizing the use of conical baffles and other gas conservation devices through communication campaigns. The Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (Ogra) has made it mandatory for all households to have conical baffles installed in their geysers. The Sui Northern Gas Company is installing these saver cones that could help consumers save energy.

Fortunately, the petroleum division is employing outreach tools to connect with its consumer base through social media applications, including TikTok. This is an intelligent strategy to inculcate conservation habits among young people. Conservation communication through cricket stars, role models and influencers can develop relevant conservation habits.

Also, the government should engage architects and builders working on new housing societies and areas being developed to promote infrastructural designs that maximize natural light and make rooms airy. For example, the use of double-glazed windows could help the cause as they keep the room cooler during the summer and contain the heat of the room during the winter.

The government needs to promote water conservation as well. As world leaders have successfully prioritized food security as a matter of national and global security, governments and heads of states need to recall the forgotten concept of water security – a far greater problem and a global crisis affecting the developed and underdeveloped worlds. Unfortunately, Pakistan lacks a provincial narrative regarding water conservation and the reuse and safe use of water.

The federal government intends to coordinate with provincial governments for the energy-conservation drive. It must develop a similar roadmap in close coordination with provincial governments to save water. The provincial secretary for information in Balochistan, Hamza Shafqaat, has also introduced several water conservation awareness campaigns to put an end to water abuse and promote fair usage. A campaign to promote water safety from Balochistan could turn into a national action plan as this is for our generations to come.

We already have multiple conservation initiatives in place in Lahore on the directions of the water commission. Imagine how much water we could save if we cut down our shower time from 20 to 15 minutes.

Behavioural change communication and awareness campaigns can facilitate much-needed change in people’s attitude towards resource use, which can eventually prevent the water table from depleting in big and populous cities.

The writer is a freelance journalist. He has also served as media

adviser to the World Bank and Unicef-funded healthcare and tourism related projects in Punjab. He tweets @EAAgop