

# 'Set goals for sustainable development'

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AN INTEGRATED approach with focus on social well-being, greater availability of data and mitigation of industrial development's effect on environment were the suggestions made by a three-member panel at a seminar yesterday.

According to the experts, sustainable development depends on successfully managing and combining environmental, economic, human and social goals.

The panel was participating in the one-day seminar, entitled 'Sustainable development in Qatar: issue and challenges', organised by the General Secretariat for Development Planning (GSDP) in co-operation with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

Assistant professor of Biology at Weill Cornell Medical College in Qatar, Renee Richer, began with her presentation on 'issues and challenges'.

"The sustainable development of Qatar ultimately depends on the complete integration of environmental, economic and social goals for the country as natural capital of non-renewable resources is transformed into human capital for future wealth creation," Richer said. One way to build human capital, according to her, was equipping the people with skills and training among others.

Richer also pointed out other indicators of measuring sustainability such as happiness and well-being of the people, rather than the usual measuring of GDP.

"Qatar has the opportunity to take a lead role in the field of sustainable development by aggressively implementing a comprehensive plan for the development of the country," she added.

These opportunities include strictly managed natural areas, innovative industrial development and urban design, promotion of research and product design while giving the country an advantage of being the "first mover".

Director of Censuses, Household Surveys and Statistical Methods Department at the Qatar Statistics Authority, Naser Saleh al-Mahdi, in his presentation on 'data challenges' emphasised on the lack of availability of data experts.

"We suffer from the lack of human capacity. Additionally, there is no cadre of Qatar experts," al-Mahdi said.

According to him, there is also a scarcity of experts collecting data and measuring indicators, especially for environment, besides the fact that mechanisms are not available in Arabic language. "In the absence of the vital data, it is necessary to engage the private sector and make available the information," he said.

Giving incentives to private sector with the data gathering and making it part of the curricula were some of the other suggestions by the expert.

Manager, Health, Safety and Environment Department at the Qatar Technical Inspection Company, Salman Rashid spoke last on the sustainable environmental development in Qatar.

"Almost all Arab countries that ranked high in the HDR (yearly Human Development Report by UNDP) were placed at the bottom of the environmental sustainability indicators (ESI) in a recent study," Rashid said.

In the report "Qatar falls second after Kuwait in the region in 'dumping of municipal water' indicator which is estimated at 1.3/kg per resident per day," he maintained.

"The population growth has risen in the country by 101% during the 1986-2004 and by 88% during 2004-08; the monthly expenditure of Qatari families on fuel reached QR1,064 and that means 58 tonnes of emission per year," he added, giving figures.

This, according to Rashid, will put a strain on efforts to conserve water resources, ecological sustainability and he suggested adoption of new tools of environment management, emissions reduction, atmosphere pollution and diseases, desertification and other.

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