

English Essay

Environmental Degradation is The Most Lethal Enemy

Outline

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2. Ways in Which Environmental Degradation is The Most Lethal Enemy

2.1 Environmental degradation has led to rise in global temperatures

2.2 Rising global temperatures has brought the Threat of climate change into reality

2.3 Changing weather patterns have raised sea levels, making certain areas uninhabitable

2.4 Climate change has significantly increased occurrence of natural disasters

2.5

Shift in weather patterns and increased natural disasters has declined agricultural productivity, raising concerns over food security.

2.6

Deforestation has declined the ability to absorb emissions, worsening air quality, with significant health implications.

2.7

Risk of natural disasters and poor air quality has also increased psychological problems due to negative impact on mental health.

2.8

Unlivable conditions in certain areas has resulted in forced migrations.

2.9

Poor health and forced migrations have reduced productivity leading to negative economic impacts.

2.10

Serious existential crisis is posed for future generations due to impacts of environmental degradation.

3. Barriers Faced in Restricting Environment Degradation Despite its Negative Implications

3.1

Rapid population growth has caused need for livable land and

goods.

3.2 Meeting global demand has led to rapid and continuous industrialization

3.3 Neo-colonialist policies of the developed world exploit natural resources of developing world to meet global demand

3.4 Elite capture and mafias oppose programs and steps towards rehabilitation of environment.

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5. Conclusion

Unrestricted environmental degradation has resulted in incalculable consequences for the entire humanity. Sheer ignorance towards potential consequences of environmental degradation has curbed every step towards rehabilitation. Resultantly, environmental degradation has become the most lethal enemy. Rapid environmental degradation began in 1780s with the start of industrial revolution. The next major phase, which has been even more devastating, was during 1950s. Between 1950 till 2020, global population has tripled. The unprecedented surge in population has increased global demand, further fueling industrialization. To meet the growing needs of the rising population, deforestation increased, new industries were set up, and urbanization was promoted. These steps spilled global emissions and the global leadership failed to respond. At present, natural disasters have surged, air quality in certain areas is toxic, forced migration is imposed, and certain islands

face existential threat. Consequently, health, economy, and sustainable existence are all threatened. Despite, the lethal threat, no major steps to restrict the degradation are taking place. Neo-colonial practices of the developed world, elite capture, and weak international agreements are all major barriers in restricting the degradation. To reverse the implications of degradation, a coordinated approach with responsible industrialisation ~~is~~ is required.

Environmental degradation is identified as the cause of global warming. Rapid deforestation and irresponsible industrial practices have diminished the earth's capacity to counter carbon dioxide emissions. The weakened capacity to fight against the threats posed by human practices have led to global warming. The phenomenon arises when heat from the sun to the land is restricted within the atmosphere due to the presence of toxic gases. Resultantly, global temperatures have increased.

by more than 1°C since pre-industrial levels. Although the increase seems nominal, it has had adverse impacts on climate. The entire idea of climate change can be traced to the impact caused by the 1°C increase in global temperature.

Climate change, a perceived threat is now accepted as a reality. The failure to restrict global emissions has exacerbated climate change. A major discussion on climate change took place at the Rio Earth Summit in 1992. The summit led to the establishment of United Nations Framework for Climate Change (UNFCCC) in the same year. However, despite the discussions at the summit and the establishment of the UNFCCC, no major step as per requirement was taken. Consequently, climate change has become a reality ^{we} humanity has to live with.

Climate change has altered weather patterns. Increasing global temperatures have resulted in glaciers melting at an unprecedented level. As per estimates, in the past 80 years,

glaciers melting has increased sea levels to rise by 8 inches. Out of the 8 inches, 3 inches have increased in just the past 25 years. Rising sea levels threatens many areas in a serious manner. At the current rate of rising sea levels it is expected that Bangladesh would lose approximately 11% of its land by 2050, although it contributes only 0.3% to carbon emissions. Indonesia, on the other hand, is moving its capital from Jakarta as it fears that it will be submerged in water in the coming decades due to rising sea levels. Miami in the United States also faces a similar threat. The entire existence of Maldives is questioned by 2075. The threat of climate change has posed existential crisis across South Asia, East Asia, and North America, highlighting the global nature of the threat. The cause behind this remains environmental degradation.

As the glaciers melt and sea levels rise, the risk of natural disasters also increases. Moreover, altered weather patterns have

changed the occurrence of monsoon rains, which also contribute to the disasters.

The Pakistan is the area after the Arctic region having the highest glaciers, estimated at 7253. The increase in global temperatures have contributed to the melting of the glaciers leading to glacier lakes outburst floods (GLOF) in Pakistan.

The floods in Pakistan have led to displaced populations, infrastructure destruction amounting to \$30bn, and loss of thousands of lives. In 2021 the Global Climate Risk Index placed Pakistan among the top 5 countries at risk from climate change based on natural disasters occurrence rates during 2000-2019.

The surge in natural disaster occurrences can be traced to climate change which is caused due to global warming which is a direct consequence of environmental degradation. The degradation has also reduced the ability of countries to combat or restrict the damage of these natural disasters as well.

Shifts in weather patterns and the continuous occurrence of

Natural disasters has reduced the availability and productivity of arable land. The impacts of environmental degradation have directly led to risk of food security, especially within the developing world. Countries like Pakistan are dependent on agriculture for survival and economically agrarian economies. Unusual patterns of monsoon rain and regular occurrence of floods has reduced Pakistan's agriculture productivity. The country has a population of over 200 mn and needs high agriculture productivity for survival. However, environmental degradation has increased food security risks in the country.

The practice of uncontrolled and unrestricted deforestation has reduced the earth's ability to absorb emissions. Rapid urbanisation under the pretence of development has led to toxic air quality levels. Countries in South Asia like Pakistan and India have witnessed a serious decline in their air quality due to environmental degradation. In Pakistan, the Province of Punjab

has topped the charts with cities having the highest pollution rates. The city of Lahore which is the smallest district by area in Punjab but has the highest population, has continuously ranked as the world's most polluted city. As per a Swiss Air Quality Monitor, IQ Air, the normal Air Quality Index is between 30-100. However, in October 2016, Lahore surpassed the 1,000 mark.

Similarly, New Delhi in India ranks 2nd at 500. These AQI's indicate levels of pollutants which have serious health implications like lung cancer and asthma. These conditions are man-made, occurring due to irresponsible environmental degradation.

The continuous occurrence of natural disasters and living within the most polluted areas has negatively contributed towards mental health.

A study conducted by Stanford found a correlation between poor environment and psychological problems. Countries with poor environment have higher rates of depression and anxiety among the populace. People

Living within disaster-prone areas are mostly anxious about the occurrence of natural disasters.

At the same time, people living within high pollution areas are always anxiously monitoring AQI and have restricted mobility.

Displaced populations in disaster struck areas and immobile people within Punjab,

Pakistan due to smart lockdowns, are more susceptible to psychological problems. Studies on internally displaced population (IDPs) and

those living under lockdowns during Covid-19, exhibited higher rates of depression and anxiety.

Although, those people were faced with problems for a limited time; the situation faced by victims of environmental degradation

are long-term, and will exhibit far more aggravated psychological problems occurrence.

Risks posed by environmental degradation have made certain areas uninhabitable, leading to forced migration.

Floods in Jharkhand, caused hundreds of thousand people to migrate from their hometowns in India. A similar situation is being

considered in Osaka, Japan which is expected to be wiped out by sea-level rise.

Moreover, inter-city migration from Jakarta, Indonesia is also taking

place due to similar risks. Forced migration will become a more common practice post-2050, considering the rate of degradation taking place at present. These situations exemplify the extent of danger posed by environmental degradation, impacting existence, economic conditions and social dynamics, thus earning it the right title of being a lethal enemy.

The impact of poor health of a population and forced migrations cause unproductivity to increase. An unhealthy and unproductive population within a country facing food security risks, has grave economic consequences. Environmental degradation in the long-term, reduces human resource capability of a nation. Consequently, such nations find it difficult to achieve economic growth and sustainability. Moreover, natural disasters directly has economic

costs attached. As per research, The global losses incurred due to natural disasters stood at \$280bn. The World Bank estimates that Climate Change could decrease global income by 19% in the next 25 years. The decline of 19% of global income over a period of 25 years amounts to \$35 trillion. This indicates a direct correlation between environmental degradation and economic loss.

At present we are facing negative consequences of environmental degradation which by some researchers were estimated in the 1990s. Today the assumptions and estimations across all domains of life for the next 50 years are even more pessimistic and dangerous. The lethal enemy has proven to be a serious threat which poses grave existential crisis for future generations.

Provided the declining air quality, occurrence of natural disasters, and shrinkage of economy due to environmental degradation, the sustainability of the planet for future generation is questionable.

Despite the negative implications of environmental degradation, the pace of destruction has not slowed down. Restricting environmental degradation faces serious structural barriers. The most dangerous barrier is the pace of population growth. The world population has tripled between 1950-2020. The current growth rate stands at 0.87% and the world population is expected to grow by 1.3 times till 2075. Increase in population at this pace further strains available resources, which are limited by nature. To meet the needs of the growing population, further degradation is expected. Deforestation for increase in livable land, surge in wastage levels, newer industrial installations, and increase in emissions are expected with the current population growth. More problematic fact is that the highest level of population growth is expected in areas which are already at highest climate risks, e.g. India, Pakistan, and Indonesia. Environmental degradation cannot practically be reversed until population growth is

Restricted.

Growing global demand and the rise in consumerism under the capitalist economic global order, requires further industrialisation. Rise in production leads to further natural resources exploitation and increases global emissions. Resultantly, agreement and promises made at the Paris Climate Agreement (2015) have not been kept. Pakistan which has ranked as the 5th most at risk country from climate change has submitted an expected 300% emission increase to the Paris Climate Agreement committee due to its ambition of increasing industrialisation. Similarly, other nations controlled their emissions to an extent between 2015-2018 but have reached pre-2015 levels by 2019. The reason behind the inability to restrict further degradation is because of growing global demand and the need to fulfill the need to achieve higher trade volumes in a globalised world operating under the capitalist economic model.

The further damaging

aspect which acts as a strong barrier in reducing environmental degradation is the neo-colonialist policies of the developed world. Countries which are developed like U.S, UK, and France have a more aware and educated population which demands lower carbon foot print and pro-environment policy making. However, at the same time the developed world aims to maintain its economic power and meet the global and national demand. Thus, under the model of Multinational Companies (MNCs) the developed world have setup their industrial units in the developing world which disregard environmental regulation standards. Wallstein, a political thinker, explains this phenomenon under his world system theory. He states that the developed world (core countries) are exploiting the underdeveloped world (periphery countries) utilizing the neo-colonial model. The core exploit natural resources of the periphery countries and contribute to their environmental degradation. The periphery countries have thus become the most impacted

countries by the degradation but lack
clout to restrict the negative implications.

Moreover, industries and
degradation are conducted by nations
which have captured the system, and
impact policymaking due to their self-interest.
The elite which control majority
industries restrict policymaking which
is environment friendly because it
diminishes relative profitability. The
elite capture along with nations ensure
the policymaking blockage and act as
a major barrier towards limiting
degradation. Examples of this are
observed across the developed and the
developing world. In U.S, Donald
Trump, a businessman become the
45th President of U.S. Trump took
certain steps which were ~~against~~
not environment friendly to satisfy the
business elite of U.S. Similarly, unsustainable
and environmentally damaging mining
practices are common in Pakistan
and Afghanistan. The governments of
both countries fail to oppose the
practices due to their own self-interest.

The failure of effective

and binding international agreements have promises to be only symbolic. The pledge to combat degradation has been made at multiple occasions at the Conference of Parties (COP) but has failed to materialise. Similarly, unilateral withdrawal from international agreements and non-ratification is common and conducted by nations with highest global emissions. Under Donald Trump, U.S. withdrew from The Paris Agreement (COP21) calling it as "draconian". Non-compliance from nations such as China and Russia is commonly observed. The weak international agreements restrict ability to reduce degradation.

Limiting environmental degradation is essential and requires a collaborative and coordinated approach. Nations need to ensure awareness among their population. An educated and aware population would be in a better position to understand the implications of environmental degradation. This would allow advocacy groups to emerge which would demand a pro-environment stance by their government. Moreover,

Majority nations today are democracies and thus have participatory governance and policymaking structure. Remnants of pro-environment policymaking by an aware nation would automatically be reflected in policies across the nation.

An example of growing awareness is Broom Pollution. Due to rapid decline in Air quality along with rising occurrences of natural disasters, the citizens have demanded strict environmental policy making. Consequently, the parliament passed the 26th Amendment in the Constitution adding an Article which makes clean environment, a fundamental right. Such awareness and lawmaking should be adopted across nations.

Ensuring environmental rehabilitation requires strict actions against irresponsible industries and exploitative mafias. Laws with severe punishments should be passed to ensure such institutions are held accountable, under the law and their actions are transparently checked.

Increased international

action, consensus, and contribution is essential to limit degradation and move towards rehabilitation. The largest emitters should contribute proportionally to world climate financing to protect compromised regions. Agreements which are focused on the environment should be more assertive and binding in nature to ensure compliance provided the importance and significance of the issue.

Environmental degradation is indeed the most lethal enemy in the contemporary world. It has impacted existence, sustainable life, economy, health and risks providing a compromised future to the next generation. The discussion of its impacts is no mere intellectual discussion anymore but rather a gruesome reality which would dictate the future. Battling the barriers embedded in the global structure through a coordinate and collaborative approach is essential for reversal and rehabilitation. Environmental degradation is not a sole action and the implications are also not restricted to a certain region. It should be treated as a

global issue and evolved at an international level as an enemy which threatens the entire humanity. Although the impacts have been severe, it is still reversible and could be rehabilitated. Through proper strategic approach with global collaboration and democratic advocacy the journey toward battling the lethal enemy could be initiated.