

Melting Glaciers

Outline : Hostility b/w Pak. and India (stuck - imp. issues unaddressed)
Climate Change → Glaciers Melting → Indus River Basin (NDMA)
Importance for Pak. India (water, agri, food security)
Impacts (water scarcity, floods, impact on agriculture food security)
Way Forward (change of approach, effective management, data sharing, joint preparedness, active role)

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Since Independence, Pakistan and India have witnessed strained ^{bilateral} relations. The Kashmir issue remained a bone of contention between the two neighbouring states. The issues of conflicting nature have over-shadowed the other important issues. Climate change is one of the issues which remained unaddressed due to political hostilities between New Delhi and Islamabad.

In climate change, ^{accelerated} melting of glaciers is a growing concern for the world community. As per Climate change experts, by the end of ^{the} century the world would lose 30 percent to 75 percent of its glaciers' ice in terms of volume. Similarly, the Indus River Basin, which is a major water source for Pakistan and India, is witnessing expedited glacial melting. The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) of Pakistan

has reported that the snow cover in Indus River Basin decreased by 23.3 percent. Moreover, the basin also lost 16 percent of its glaciers during the past five years. This increased melting of glaciers is a risk for the region. However, the hostilities between Pakistan and India are making them ignorant of the looming threat and importance of having glacial ranges.

The Indus River Basin is crucial for the people of Pakistan and India. The basin supports over 300 million citizens of the two countries. In addition to this, around 2 billion people are dependent of Indus River Basin for water, agriculture, and food security. The accelerated glaciers melting poses an existential threat to the South Asian people since Indus River Basin is at the risk. Instead of turning a blind eye to this issue, Pakistan and India should remain cognizant of the impacts of excessive glaciers melting in Indus River Basin.

Accelerated glacial melting is already having devastating impacts on Pakistan and India. The two nations are

witnessing short-living periods of water surpluses and long periods of water scarcity threats. Furthermore, the risks of floods are increasing in the region. These primary impacts of glaciers melting will cause secondary impacts on agriculture sector as well. This, in return may cause severe issues of food security in the Indo-Pak region. The gravity of the situation demands close coordination between Pakistan and India, which is largely absent.

The most significant step in the direction of resolution of this issue would be the realization of the severity of the impacts of excessive glaciers melting. Pakistan and India needs a change in approach towards climate change. The impacts of accelerated glaciers melting would not remain limited to national borders. Hence, the two countries should put political impasse on back seat and focus on efforts to resolve this issue. The three important steps in this regard could be effective management of water resources, sharing of climate data, and joint disaster management initiatives. Only then, Pakistan and India

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would be able to save themselves
from the pernicious impacts of the
increased melting of glaciers.

