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W CURRENT WATER ISSUE WATER CRISES IN PAKISTAN

Introduction

Water is life - and in Pakistan, that life is under threat. Once our country was blessed with abundant rivers and green lands is now facing a serious water and environmental crises. In 1951, every Pakistani had 5,000 cubic meters of water available to them. Today, that figure has fallen ^{about} ~~below~~ 1000 m^3 . This crisis is not just a number - it's a daily reality for farmers, families, and future generations, deeply linked to deforestation, and poor water management.

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But behind every statistic there is a strange human story. A thirsty child. A family forced to drink contaminated water. A farmer forced & crushed by debt because of failed harvests. This crisis is not just about dams and policies - it's about lives and livelihoods. If we fail to act now, the water issue will not just be an environmental challenge - it will be a humanitarian catastrophe.

IRSA: (Indus River System Authority)

Indus River System Authority (IRSA) is a water regulatory body in Pakistan, established in 1991. The authority was established for regulating and monitoring the distribution of water resources of the Indus River system among the provinces, in accordance with provisions of the water accord. It oversees the distribution of water seasonally. It is also responsible for the records of influx and outflux of water and also the consumption of water. It also decides the new hydro-projects in the country.

Members

IRSA consists of five members, appointed by the federal government of Pakistan.

1. One member from each of the four

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3. Major Water and Green Lifelines Underway
Diamer Bhasha Dam
 provinces.

2. One member nominated by the Federal Government.

Each member is typically a technical experts in water management or irrigation and is nominated by their respective provincial or federal government.

Decision Making

Ideally, IRSA decisions are made by consensus. If consensus is not possible, a majority vote (3 out of 5) decides the outcome.

In case of any disagreement by one or two members or any provincial assembly passed any resolution against decision, then Council of Common Interest (CCI) is responsible to resolve that issue. It consists of 7 members:

1. Prime Minister of Pakistan - Chairman
2. Four Chief Ministers of provinces
3. ^{Two} ~~Three~~ members from federal cabinet nominated by PM.

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6 - Canals

(Approved by IRSA)

1. Greater Thal Canal (GTC)

River:- Indus River

Province:- Punjab (Thal region)

2. Kachhi Canal

River:- Indus River

Province:- Punjab and Balochistan (Starts in Punjab, extends into Dera Bugti, Balochistan)

3. Chashma Right Bank Canal

River:- Indus River

Provinces:- K.P.K

4. Rainee Canal

River:- Indus River

Province:- Sindh

5. Cholistan Canal

River:- Sutlej River

Province:- Punjab

6. Thar Canal

River:- Indus River

Province:- Sindh

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Cholistan Canal

This project was inaugurated in February 2025 by CM Punjab and COAS Pakistan under the Green Pakistan Initiative. The canal system was named "Mahfooz Shaheed".
Venue: Cholistan region, Punjab on Sutlej river.

* ~~Controversies and Criticisms~~

Objective

- Irrigate 1.2 million acres of barren land in Cholistan.
- Increase crops and livestock (Camels)
- Attract foreign investment from middle east and China through Special Investment and Facilitation Council.
- Sindh receives more than its share
- ^{1970-2024 27 MAF (by IRSA)} Wants agri farming by modern techniques
 - ↳ Drip-system
 - ↳ Sprinklers system
- Pakistan is facing increased decline in the agri-land on the other hand population increases.

Arguments by Sindh

- Water to Sindh declined
 - 1970-2000 → 27 MAF
 - 2000-2024 → 14 MAF
 - ~ IRSA Reports
- Need of Sindh is more because
 - ↳ To stop land incursion of Sea - 7 MAF

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- ↳ Sindh is second largest agricultural province
- ↳ Domestic demand increases due to increase in population.
- Sutlej river does not have water (~ from 2010 only one time due to flood water released by India)
- Will not be able to irrigate Cholistan.

Neutral Observer

- The agriculturation of desert is very difficult because sand particles absorb more water.
- Flood technique is failed.
- Modern agricultural system:
 - ↳ Drip
 - ↳ Sprinklers
- Not possible by canals because in these press processes pressurized water is required
- Possible on by making tanks at height which is comparatively good by using underground water.

INDUS WATER TREATY (IWT)

The Indus Water Treaty (IWT) is a water-sharing agreement between Pakistan and India. It was signed in 1960 between Pakistan's President Ayub Khan and India's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru. The World Bank acts as Mediator and International Court of Arbitration as arbitration.

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4. Division of Rivers

- The eastern rivers (Ravi, Beas, Sutlej) were given to India/Pakistan

- The Western rivers (Indus, Jhelum, Chenab) were given to Pakistan.

- India have rights to use western rivers but have conditions.

Conditions

- The need of water in Pakistan is less.

- Run of the river projects like Dams, tunneling.

- Can't divert the natural flow.

- India must ^{have to} approve the design of Dams by Pakistan.

- Pakistan have rights to appeal against Dam structure i.e. height of Project

→ Diversion of flow.

Permanent Commission

The treaty established the Permanent Indus Commission (PIC), with one commissioner from each country, to handle disputes and monitor the treaty's implementation.

Current Issue

Currently the issue is rising that the water level is decreasing regularly, as quoted by IWT, Asian Development Bank and World bank, that the flow of river decreased and also there is 50% cut each

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in Jhelum and Indus River.

India's stand

- Climate change is major responsible
- Decrease in seasonal and monsoon rainfalls.
- The temporary snow deposits also declined.

Pakistan's stand

- Pakistan accepts 50% points of India but quoted not only 2nd major reasons.
- Rainfall is 23% of total contribution
- Melting of glaciers is major contributor (67%)
- More dams being built by India e.g., Kishan Ganga dam, Baglihar, Salal, Rattle etc
- The height of dams is more e.g., Kishanganga's height is 33 feet more from actual (~ ADB, WB)
- Diverted Natural flow of Wullar lake in occupied Kashmir

Solution

- Pakistan must increase its need, utilization and storage capacity.
- Increase Dams e.g., Diamer Bhasha Dam, Kalabagh, Dasu, Kohala, Pir Mehr etc

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- Pakistan should prepare:
 - ↳ Technical Peoples
 - ↳ identify India's violations.
 - ↳ visit under-construction projects every 6 months.
- Should prepare legal experts.