

How Pakistan should manage the equitable distribution of resources among different ethnic regions to address the historical grievances and promote developments across the country?

1) Introduction :-

The issue of equitable resource division is often quoted as the leading cause of tensions between various ethnic regions of Pakistan. For decades, this issue has fueled regional divides and national integration challenges. If done right and in an equitable manner, resources distribution can help ~~so~~ redress historical grievances of various ethnic regions of Pakistan. This can include giving increased share to locals in federally held enterprises. Increasing developmental budget for aggrieved ethnicities will also help. Inclusion in policy making, governmental setup and national progress can promote development across the entire country on the principle of equity.

2) A look at grievances of various ethnicities across Pakistan :-

Issues of resource divisions demand

soon after independence and have snowballed over the decade to their current state.

"A psychology of looting and disregard of rule of law took hold of ruling coterie in Pakistan early on.... Individual citizens with little to no influence had to settle for whatever was left over."

— Ayesha Jalal in *The Struggle for Pakistan*

Pashtuns

Political and economic marginalization and water distribution issues

Baloch & Brahvi

Issues on indigenous resource control, economic neglect, and provincial autonomy

Harara

Resource control and political representation

IOJK

Saraiki

Lack of Development

Political Autonomy

Sindhis

Muhajirs

Disenfranchisement and Resource Control

↑ Pakistani Ethnicities and Their Grievances

3) Steps to Ensure Equitable Resource Division Among All Ethnicities:-

The process to

change resource divisions ~~process~~ to make them equitable will not be smooth sailing one nor will it be quick; however, the following steps can make slow change to correct historical grievances of these ethnicities.

a) Harmonize Mining Regulations Between Center and Provinces

Control of revenues of natural resource mining is a big issue in Pakistan. Ethnic groups often complain that their indigenous resources are being mined to fuel development in other areas of the country. The government needs to ensure that any mining deal that is concluded take local ethnic communities on board. A recent case in point is The Balochistan Minerals and Mining Act 2025, which needs to be amended in favor of locals of the province.

b) Increase Local Share in Federally Operated Enterprises

Another great way to ensure equitable division of resources between ethnicities is increasing the set share of local ethnic groups in federally operated enterprises in the locality. A case in point is the control of coal mined in Thar region. Sindhis have long advocated for increasing their share in mining

Projects.

c) Renew NFC Award

7th NFC award was the last successful award that got approval from all major ethnic groups in every province of Pakistan. Since then 8th, 9th and 10th NFC awards have failed to reach consensus. The country needs to reach a consensus on 11th NFC award to address the grievances of ethnicities in Pakistan.

d) Relocate Developmental Projects Equitably

Ethnic minorities in each province often complain that most developmental projects get funded in or near the provincial capital while the rest of the province faces marginalization and underdevelopment. This is especially true for Sindh and Punjab provinces. Relocation of developmental projects should be done to promote equitable development.

e) Launch Tailored Human Development Project for Each Ethnic Group

Launching human development projects like vocational training, educational scholarships and tech awareness is yet another way to address the grievances of marginalized ethnicities. According to

UNDP (2025), human development index in South Punjab is 15 times lower than central Punjab.

f) Ensure Equitable Water Distribution

Water is another important resource that ethnic groups in provinces have been clashing over for decades. 90 to 95% of productivity in agricultural areas in Pakistan depend on canal water and every province needs its due share to sustain this productivity. In the face of climate change and increasing provincial demands for water resources, government needs to reevaluate this distribution.

g) Political Representation Should Reflect Demographic Realities

Equal representation of all ethnic and linguistic groups in government can lead to equitable access to resources for all. As long as some ethnic minorities fail to get due representation, the issue of resource division will persist. Commenting on this issue, Ayesha Jalal says: "In the absence of democratic politics... the grievances of non-punjab provinces and linguistic groups grew."

This trend will continue unless we reverse that.

h) Local Governments Should Control Local Budgets

Devolution of power and resources is yet another way to ensure providence

of resources to all ethnic and linguistic groups on the basis of equity.

4) How will these steps address historical grievances and promote development:-

The steps highlighted above can ensure redressal of historical grievances and promote equal development by :-

a) Adding Stakes of Ethnic Groups in Development

Including all ethnic groups in developmental process will help solve ethnic tensions and issues of insurgency that exist today.

b) Achieving consensus over projects is important for national development. For long projects like Diamer Basha Dam have faced resistance from ethnic groups. Equitable resource division can help achieve consensus for such projects.

c) Bridging Developmental Gaps that Exist Today

Resource division of this sort will help bridge the gaps in development that have marked the country for decades.

5) Conclusion -

The grievances of ethnic groups in Pakistan are often cited as an important issue that hinders national unity and prevent equitable development. A number of social, political and economic policy changes can help help reverse this trend, and allow all ethnicities to become partner in development of Pakistan.