

SUMMARY of the Article “Beyond environmental policy,” Umar Farooq, Dawn, February 26th, 2024

Pakistan is urged to redefine its approach to the environment, moving beyond a passive recipient of international aid to an active steward of its natural legacy. Despite contributing less than one percent to global greenhouse gas emissions, the country faces severe climate-related challenges, leading to environmental disasters. Recent climate-induced calamities caused significant human and economic losses. Pakistan's heavy reliance on international climate aid, often limited to small grants, proves insufficient. The article emphasizes the need for a comprehensive land use policy to address environmental challenges, covering agriculture, nature conservation, industrial practices, and housing strategies. Proposed shifts include sustainable agricultural practices, nature conservation and restoration, green industrial strategies, and sustainable urban planning to ensure a more sustainable and resilient future.

Easy/Short SUMMARY:

Pakistan needs to change its approach to the environment, becoming an active steward rather than relying on international aid. Despite contributing minimally to global greenhouse gas emissions, the country faces severe climate-related challenges, resulting in disasters and economic losses. The article advocates for a comprehensive land use policy, including sustainable agriculture, nature conservation, green industries, and sustainable urban planning, to ensure a more resilient and sustainable future.

SOLUTIONS of The Problem:

Sustainable Agricultural Practices

Shift from traditional agricultural methods to sustainable practices like efficient water use, organic farming, and crop diversification to rehabilitate the land, conserve water, and enhance biodiversity.

Nature Conservation and Restoration

Strategically focus on restoring and conserving natural habitats such as forests, wetlands, and grasslands to address biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation.

Green Industrial Strategies

Implement green conditionalities in the industrial sector, promoting sustainable practices, reducing emissions, improving waste management, and adopting eco-friendly technologies.

Sustainable Urban Planning

Prioritize sustainable urban planning, including vertical expansion, efficient land use, sustainable transport systems, and integration of green spaces within urban areas to counter urban heat island effects and threats to food security.

Policy and Mindset Shift

Initiate a fundamental shift in the prevailing mindset and policy framework, embracing a comprehensive land use policy that holistically addresses agriculture, conservation, industry, and housing.

Reducing Reliance on Fossil Fuels

Encourage industries to shift away from fossil fuels for energy, reducing air pollution and carbon emissions.

Strict Regulation of Industrial Growth

Implement strict regulations on industrial growth to prevent environmental degradation through pollution, habitat loss, and increased emissions.

Vertical Expansion in Housing

Promote vertical expansion in housing to efficiently use land, prevent conversion of fertile lands into residential areas, and counter the urban heat island effect.

Efficient Water Management

Address water scarcity by adopting efficient water management practices in agriculture and discouraging water-intensive crops through policy measures.

Integrated Green Spaces

Integrate green spaces within urban planning to enhance biodiversity, mitigate climate impacts, and improve the quality of life for residents.

IMPORTANT Facts and Figures Given in the Article:

- Pakistan, contributing less than one percent to global greenhouse gas emissions, faces severe climate-related challenges leading to alarming environmental disasters.
- Recent climate-induced disasters in Pakistan, including a heatwave and floods, caused over 1,700 deaths, displaced more than eight million people, and resulted in over \$30 billion in damages and economic losses.
- The combined risks of climate-related events, environmental degradation, and air pollution could reduce Pakistan's GDP by 18pc to 20pc by 2050.
- Agriculture, responsible for over 50pc of GHG emissions, faces challenges of land degradation, water scarcity, and biodiversity loss.
- Per capita water availability in Pakistan declined to 1,017 cubic meters per person in 2021, below the threshold for water scarcity.
- Forests cover merely 5.7pc of Pakistan's total land, facing rapid decline due to commercial logging and increased demand for resources.



- Unregulated industrial growth and urban expansion have historically led to environmental degradation through pollution, habitat loss, and increased carbon emissions.
- The industrial sector, relying on fossil fuels, contributes significantly to air pollution in Pakistan.
- Horizontal urban expansion, particularly unregulated housing developments, threatens food security by converting fertile lands into residential areas.
- Lahore, Pakistan's second-largest city, faces hazardous smog levels annually, impacting residents' health and quality of life.

MCQs from the Article:

1. What percentage of global greenhouse gas emissions does Pakistan contribute?

- A. 5%
- B. 2%
- C. Less than 1%**
- D. 10%

2. How much did recent climate-induced disasters in Pakistan cost in damages and economic losses?

- A. \$10 billion
- B. \$20 billion
- C. Over \$30 billion**
- D. \$5 billion

3. What is the potential reduction in Pakistan's GDP by 2050 due to combined climate-related risks?

- A. 10%
- B. 15%
- C. 18-20%**
- D. 25%



4. Which sector is responsible for over 50% of greenhouse gas emissions in Pakistan?

- A. Industrial
- B. Transportation
- C. Agriculture**
- D. Residential

5. **What is the

per capita water availability in Pakistan as of 2021?**

- A. 1,500 cubic meters per person
- B. 800 cubic meters per person
- C. 1,017 cubic meters per person**
- D. 2,000 cubic meters per person

VOCABULARY:

1. **Predicament** (noun) (پریکامینٹ): A difficult, unpleasant, or embarrassing situation.
2. **Disparity** (noun) (دیسپارٹی): A great difference or inequality.
3. **Calamities** (noun) (کالیمنٹس): Disasters or distressing events causing significant damage, destruction, or distress.
4. **Cessation** (noun) (سے قطع): The fact or process of ending or being brought to an end.
5. **Contribute** (verb) (کنٹریبیوٹ): Give (something, especially money) in order to help achieve or provide something.
6. **Mitigate** (verb) (میتیگےٹ): Make (something bad) less severe, serious, or painful.
7. **Resilient** (adjective) (ریسیلیئنٹ): Able to withstand or recover quickly from difficult conditions.
8. **Imperative** (adjective) (ایمپیریٹیو): Of vital importance; crucial.
9. **Holistic** (adjective) (ہولسٹک): Characterized by comprehension of the parts of something as intimately interconnected and explicable only by reference to the whole.
10. **Biodiversity** (noun) (بائیوڈورسٹیٹی): The variety of plant and animal life in a particular habitat.

11. **Commercial Logging** (phrase) (کمرشل لآگنگ): The practice of cutting down trees for sale as timber or pulp.
12. **Ecological Impact** (phrase) (اکالاجکل اآمپاٹ): The effect of human activities on the environment.
13. **Vertical Expansion** (phrase) (ورٹیکل ایکسپانژن): Building upward to increase floor space and reduce land use.
14. **Urban Heat Island Effect** (phrase) (آربن ہیٹ آیلینڈ ایفیکٹ): The localized warming of urban areas due to human activities and structures.
15. **Subsidized Golf Courses** (phrase) (سبسائڈزڈ گولف کورسز): Golf courses that receive financial support or assistance from the government.

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Umar Farooq

THE time has come for Pakistan to redefine its relationship with the environment — not as a passive recipient of international aid, but as an active steward of its

own natural legacy.

Pakistan's environmental predicament is a poignant illustration of the disparity between a nation's contribution to global greenhouse gas emissions and the severity of its climate-related challenges. Despite accounting for less than one per cent of global GHG emissions, Pakistan is significantly impacted by climate change. The country has been experiencing an alarming increase in environmental disasters, such as flash floods, extended drought periods, and intense heatwaves. According to a World Bank report, the recent climate-induced disasters in Pakistan, including a heatwave and devastating floods, caused over 1,700 deaths, displaced more than eight million people, and resulted in more than \$30 billion in damages and economic losses.

The combined risks of extreme climate-related events, environmental degradation, and air pollution could reduce Pakistan's GDP by 18pc to 20pc by 2050. These occurrences highlight Pakistan's vulnerability to climate extremes and indicate the urgency for comprehensive strategies to adapt to and mitigate these effects. The reliance on international climate aid, often limited to small grants for seminars and PR campaigns, does not help much. International donors pledged over \$9bn to assist Pakistan in recovering from devastating floods last year, but unfortunately the funds never materialised.

The example of the Amazon rainforest's contribution to its own rainfall is a striking illustration of the significant role local ecosystems play in their own environmental health. Despite its global significance, the Amazon primarily sustains its climate through its own biological processes, a concept that can be applied to Pakistan's environmental situation. The focus on seeking international climate aid and support, while beneficial, may have only a limited impact on Pakistan's environmental restoration. Pakistan's environmental health, like the Amazon's, is significantly influenced by its own conservation and sustainability practices and we need to address environmental challenges through internal efforts.

Addressing Pakistan's environmental challenges necessitates a fundamental shift from the prevailing mindset and policy framework. The need of the hour is not just an environmental policy, but a comprehensive land use policy. This policy should be multidimensional, encompassing agriculture, nature conservation and restoration, industrial practices, and housing strategies.

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The agriculture strategy in Pakistan's proposed land use policy must confront existing practices that have degraded natural capital. The agriculture sector with its distributional consequences is responsible for more than 50pc of GHG emissions. Traditional agricultural methods have led to extensive land degradation, water scarcity, and a decrease in biodiversity. The latest figure indicates that the per capita availability of water in Pakistan has declined to 1,017 cubic metres per person in 2021, significantly below the threshold for water scarcity, while rent-seeking farmers-turned-industrialists heavily lobbying for sugarcane cultivation in the south have made it worse. This has not only contributed to environmental degradation but also made sugarcane a critical part of the consumption basket, despite its intensive water usage and ecological impact. To counteract this, a shift to sustainable agricultural practices is imperative. Practices like efficient water use, organic farming, and crop diversification can rehabilitate the land, conserve water, and enhance biodiversity.

Similarly, nature conservation and restoration, is crucial. Past neglect and overexploitation of natural habitats by unsustainable timber extraction have led to a significant loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services in the country. Forests span merely 5.7pc of Pakistan's total land, with the remaining forested areas facing rapid decline. The pressures of commercial logging and the increased demand for resources such as fuel, fodder, building supplies, resin, and charcoal by the growing population have severely impacted forest ecosystems. A strategic focus on restoring and conserving natural habitats — forests, wetlands, and grasslands — is vital. Another billion-tree tsunami is badly needed.

The industrial and housing strategies also play a critical role. Historically, unregulated industrial growth and urban expansion in Pakistan have led to environmental degradation through pollution, habitat loss, and increased carbon emissions. The industrial sector, with its reliance on fossil fuels for energy, has been a major contributor to air pollution.

Vehicles, particularly those with outdated and inefficient engines, alongside industries like brick kilns and steel mills, emit a wide range of pollutants, including particulate matter (PM2.5 and PM10), nitrogen dioxide, sulphur



dioxide, and volatile organic compounds. The new industrial strategy should consist of green conditionalities and needs to promote sustainable industrial practices, focusing on reducing emissions, waste management, and eco-friendly technologies.

Horizontal urban expansion, particularly through unregulated housing developments, is mostly developed without proper registration or adherence to environmental regulations. This has threatened food security by converting fertile lands into residential areas. It also contributes to the urban heat island effect, further intensifying local climate changes. Lahore, Pakistan's second-largest city, a clear example, annually grapples with hazardous smog levels that significantly impact the health and quality of life of its residents. And our love for highway zipping through the city centres needs to end.

This is a country which is already beyond water scarcity level, unfortunately ruled by an elite that has had a never-ending affair with subsidised golf courses, which require millions of gallons of water every day. For housing, the strategy should prioritise sustainable urban planning, which includes vertical expansion, efficient land use, sustainable urban transport systems and the integration of green spaces within urban areas.

As Pakistan stands at a critical environmental crossroads, the path ahead is clear: a profound shift in policy and mindset is essential. Embracing a comprehensive land use policy that holistically addresses agriculture, conservation, industry, and housing is not just a choice, but an imperative for a sustainable future.

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Published in Dawn, February 26th, 2024