**Regional cooperation on climate change**

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Climate change, at the current juncture, is one of the biggest challenges and poses a bigger threat to mankind than traditional threats. The South Asia region, connected with the Himalayan peaks of Nepal, is endowed with the jewel-like islands of Sri Lanka, the peninsula of India, a fertile delta of Bangladesh, and the Maldives in the Indian Ocean bearing the brunt of climate threats.

The region’s physical landscape is exceedingly climate-prone, witnessing glacier melt, rising sea levels, coastal erosion, saline water intrusion and heat waves. Nearly 600 million people in South Asia are absolutely poor and vastly dependent on climate-sensitive sectors like agriculture, forestry and traditional fishing.

All eight members of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) are vulnerable to climate change. The region’s nearly 750 million people, approximately 50 percent population between 1990 and 2008 were severely affected by climate-related incidents resulting in 230,000 death casualties.

[Virgin Atlantic suspends services to Pakistan](https://www.nation.com.pk/14-Feb-2023/virgin-atlantic-suspends-services-to-pakistan)

Climate change, by and large, is a blessing in disguise bringing overlapping interests among the SAARC members. Regional countries are left with no option except on forming regional cooperation to cope with the formidable threats of climate change. The formation of cross-border action on climate disaster mechanisms between India and Pakistan will serve the interest of both parties. The devastation caused by the floods in 2022 compels Pakistan to form cross-border action with India.

By 2039 the region will endure losses of 215 billion dollars every year. Climate migrants could reach 40 million by 2050. Regional cooperation for South Asia is more essential than other regional countries because the region is connected by rivers, weather systems and ecosystems sharing the Himalayas, and Hindu Kush mountain ranges. SAARC’s members face rising sea levels. Climate hazards are unlikely to be stopped at national borders nor can a single country deal with the magnitude of the challenge.

[Bajwa asked me to decry Ukraine attack after Russia visit: Imran Khan](https://www.nation.com.pk/14-Feb-2023/bajwa-asked-me-to-decry-ukraine-attack-after-russia-visit-imran-khan)

Bangladesh remains a global leader in coastal resilience invested unprecedentedly in the prevention of cyclone shelters, flood control structures and embankments. By investing in a chain of coastal resilience, Dhaka remained successful in the reduction of deaths caused by cyclones and floods since 1971.

Against this backdrop, Bangladesh’s model is replicable for the regional countries. Cooperation always yields positive outcomes. To promote research and analysis in climate change, the South Asian region will head towards a win-win situation benefiting the entire region.

Air pollution is yet another untapped area providing a promising ground for regional countries to cooperate. New Delhi after Lahore is the second most polluted city. Both countries need to work accordingly. Cooperation on climate change, arguably, will erode other contentious issues in the region.

Regional countries within their borders are supposed to have environmental laws, institutions and standards. Ostensibly, it is easy to be a part of global meetings without having a better track record at home. It is a prerequisite to implementing environmental laws at home before expecting from the international community. Covid-19 has brought an essential change in the behaviour of states realizing that a fight against the pandemic could not be won singlehandedly. It requires collaboration and cooperation. Identical to a pandemic, climate change also does not have any political affiliation or nationality. It can only be solved by mutual understanding and cooperation.

[Court dismisses hedge fund’s claim on Broadsheet’s $29m Pakistan money](https://www.nation.com.pk/13-Feb-2023/court-dismisses-hedge-fund-s-claim-on-broadsheet-s-dollar-29m-pakistan-money)

The International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development ICIMOD is an essential forum for regional countries. The bona fide objectives of the ICMOD are to improve the ecosystem and livelihood of the people in the Himalayas region. The eight members of the Himalaya region such as China, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan, Sri Lanka and Myanmar founded the ICIMOD in 1983 to promote regional cooperation. ICIMOD needs to be rationalized in coping with climate challenges.

India and Pakistan, the largest countries in the region, will have to break the ice and should promote climate diplomacy for regional cooperation. Islamabad brought a well-needed change in its strategic autonomy under its National Security Policy NSP (2022-2026) focusing on climate change proving to be instrumental in regional cooperation. A coordinated information-sharing mechanism needs to be promoted in a bid to give warning systems to protect people when disaster strikes. To compare South Asia with subregions in the Asia Pacific, the former lags far behind in the mobilization of international financing. Regional countries have to make extra efforts for international financing. It is a naïve approach merely replying to international resources, every regional member has to cope within the national framework by improving national budgets.

[Adani Gulf Giants win inaugural DP World ILT20 trophy](https://www.nation.com.pk/13-Feb-2023/adani-gulf-giants-win-inaugural-dp-world-ilt20-trophy)

Security threats over the last few centuries experienced rapid changes. Security never remains static, it changes by leaps and bounds. In the contemporary world, climate change poses an existential threat to mankind, and overlooking it inadvertently will cause irreparable damage to the world. As the saying goes “we can ignore reality, but we cannot ignore the consequences of ignoring reality”. The regional countries may ignore environmental hazards but cannot ignore the consequences of ignoring the destruction caused by climate change. They have the last resort of cooperation to win the battle against climate change.