

Environment

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Environmental pollution in Pakistan

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Environmental pollution is a term that refers to all the ways by which people pollute their surroundings. People make air dirty with gases and smoke, poison the water with chemicals, and damage the soil with fertilizers and pesticides. People also pollute their surroundings in various other ways. For example, they ruin natural beauty by scattering rubbish and litter on the land and in the water. They operate machines and motor vehicles that fill the air with disturbing noise. Nearly everyone causes environmental pollution.

Environmental pollution is one of the most serious problems facing humanity today. It causes global warming, destruction of the ozone layer, and other potentially disastrous processes. Air, water, and soil --- all harmed by pollution --- are necessary for the survival of living things. Badly polluted air can cause illness, and even death. Polluted water kills fish and other marine life. Pollution of soil reduces the amount of land available for growing food. Environmental pollution also brings ugliness to our beautiful world.

Environmental pollution is a serious problem facing all nations of the world today. In Pakistan the rapid urban and industrial growth has resulted in vast quantities of potentially hazardous waste products being released into the atmosphere very day. Like all other developing societies, the great majority of people in Pakistan have been somewhat reluctant to accept, or have simply failed to recognize the limitations of the cleansing properties of the environment.

The consequence has been that air pollution has affected the health and well being of people, particularly in the major cities and urban centres of the country, and has also caused widespread damage to vegetation, crops, wildlife, materials, buildings and climate, and scarce natural resources needed for long-term sustainable development.

The environment, explained Einstein, "is everything that isn't me". It is the whole natural system on which we depend the air we breathe, the earth which feeds us, the rivers and seas which give us water, the atmosphere around our planet makes life possible, and all the living things which share it with us. It is so vast but few of us give it much thought.

Yet it is limited. We have only one Earth and we may be destroying it. In fact, we are disrupting the environment in two main ways. Firstly, we are using it up-turning and denuding forests and fields into deserts and cities, destroying tens of

thousands of species of wildlife and plants, pulling and breaking down natural resources of minerals and fuel so fast that we are beginning to run short. Secondly, we are putting things into the environment, which shouldn't be there, making it a more dangerous place to live in.

In fact rapid growth of population, unplanned urbanization, demands for higher living standards, widespread access to the necessities of modern life, ruthless deforestation, water logging, salinity and desertification of agricultural lands, scarcity of new cultivable land and fresh water, negative effects of soil erosion, profit-oriented commercialism and technological advancements are the major factors which have contributed to pollution and environmental crisis in the country.

At the time of independence, Pakistan had no industrial base. The rapid growth and development in modernization, urbanization and industrialization took place from the 1950s to the 1960s but very little attention was paid to the environmental issues which were bound to arise due to the processes of social change with the result that high levels of effluents and emissions per unit of production were generated.

Due to massive growth in the textile industry with increasingly growing use of bleaching, dying and printing material, the explosive expansion of the tanning industry with its vast volume such as chromium, etc. the haphazard growth of sugar mills in the proximity of thickly populated areas and extensive use of caustic soda, hydrochloric acid soda and quick lime have created serious pollution problems in the country. Besides, the cement factories are also releasing particles of the silica in the air causing cancer to all those people who live adjacent to such factories.

Due to inadequate industrial and municipal waste disposal, lack of water treatment facilities and sewerage systems for solid and hazardous wastes, severe air pollution caused by uncontrolled industrial and vehicular emissions and the pressures on the quality and quantity of water supplies will definitely undermine the development process. Therefore, without adequate environmental protection all development activities will be severely undermined. It is now an established fact that environmental degradation has three damaging effects. It not only harms the human health but also reduces economic productivity and thus leads to the loss of basic amenities.

If the present trend continues the country in the near future will be more crowded, more polluted, less stable ecologically and more vulnerable to disruption than the country we now live in.

It is now sufficiently clear that we cannot live without creating pollution even if it is only the smoke from the stove in a house. But we can do a great deal to reduce it. First, we can ask the questions. What chemicals are we using and are they worth it? Are conditions at home or work places really safe, or is someone taking shortcuts? What pollutants are particularly dangerous to small children? What is the local factory emitting into the river and the air? What is finding its way on to the local rubbish dump? If something is wrong the affected can join up with others to put pressure on industry or government.

Pollution also reminds us that humanity is interdependent in many ways. The crisp packet which somebody drops becomes someone else's problem: so does the sewage a city flushes untreated into a river: the mercury a factory dumps in the lake, river or sea; the acids a power station puffs into the air. The fate of the climate of oceans will not only be determining the future of our country but of all humanity.

The governments all over the world tend to think in the short term the immediate crisis, the next election. Pollution acts slowly -- lakes take years to die and cancer can take decades to grow. Politicians in our country also think that we won't vote for them if they offer us a cleaner environment rather than a higher standard of living. There are no votes in sewage, they think. However, there can be no two opinions about the fact that the enlightened voters in our country would readily consider switching their vote to a main party that committed itself to wasting less natural resources.

Pollution is also linked to our lifestyles. If we want goods we can enjoy for a while and then throw away, industry will produce more for us, taking shortcuts to keep the prices down. Are we ready to pay for clean air and water? Do we really want a society where things last? Do we judge ourselves and each other by what we have or by what we are like? Of course we need money to survive and possessions to enjoy but how much is enough?

People's perception of environmental problems has improved, said the United Nations Environmental Programme. 'It is less clear that many groups have adopted their lifestyles in response.' Whose problem is pollution someone else's or our own?