**Wake up Call from Climate Change**

[Zile Huma](https://dailytimes.com.pk/writer/zile-huma/)

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The recent incident of floods caused by the eruption of Sheshpar Glacier in Gilgit Baltistan, Pakistan is an addition to the list of climate change disasters faced by the South Asian region. The Sheshpar glacier incident in Pakistan caused a flood that destroyed the linking bridge between Gilgit and Hunza, and damaged irrigation and drinking water systems and also powerhouses. India also faced a similar situation when two glacial lakes burst out in the Indian state of Uttarakhand in 2021. The incident of Uttarakhand burst in India 2021also washed away a hydroelectric power project and 170 people got missing. United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in 2020 estimated that over 3,000 glacial lakes have formed in the Hindukush-Himalayan region, with 33 posing an imminent threat. Such incidents of Sheshpar Outburst and Uttarakhand burst are testimony to the fact that Pakistan and other South Asian countries are under the accelerated looming dangers of climate change. According to a study published in the journal Science Advances, “Climate change is “eating” the glaciers of the Himalayas, posing a grave threat to hundreds of millions of people who live downstream.” Glacier Lake Outburst Floods not only cause economic loss but also human displacements, and sea-level rise and threatens the whole ecosystem.

Similarly, the South Asian region is also witnessing the heatwaves that is another sign that our planet is under the threat of climatic change. The United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report 2022 presented a stark picture for South Asia, “predicting the region will see hotter weather, longer monsoon seasons, and increased droughts as total global warming increases by around 1.5 degrees Celsius in the next two decades.”

Pakistan and India witnessed the hottest months in March and April respectively, transforming the predictions of the report into reality. These scorching heatwaves in the South Asian region are not only melting glaciers but also impacting negatively in multiple ways. Many regions of Pakistan and India are already facing water and power shortages. The increasing demand for electricity in both India and Pakistan due to blistering heat waves is resulting in power supply disruptions. Long hours of load shedding in both countries are not only raising health issues but also alarming for the economy of both countries. Similarly, Pakistan has already been declared a water-scarce country. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has placed Pakistan in the “third” position on the list of countries facing acute water scarcity. Current extreme hot weather is worsening this situation further. People of Thatta from Sindh Province protested against water scarcity and blocked National Highway recently. Federal Minister for Climate Change Sherry Rehman reaffirmed this grave reality and said, “Our big dams are at the dead level right now, and sources of water are scarce as well as contested between riparian among the Indus and its canals. This is an all-encompassing existential crisis, and must be taken seriously.” The water shortage can prove to be disastrous for the agriculture sector and cause food insecurity. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, “As much as 84 per cent of the economic impact of drought falls on agriculture, with major impacts on food security.” The experts are already predicting to negatively impact the mangoes and cotton crops in Pakistan this year due to water scarcity.

These incidents of Glacier Lake Outburst Floods and heatwaves in the South Asian region are a wake-up call to the alarming situation caused by climate change for the whole world, to take immediate actions on an urgent basis. It is a need of the hour to Invest in our planet rather than protecting self-interest at the state level. Climate Change issues can be dealt with at three levels: global, regional, and state levels. At the global level, states are required to fulfil their commitment under the Paris agreement of the United Nations Framework Conventions (UNFCCC) to limit the global average temperature below 1.5 degrees centigrade with sincere efforts. They must take concrete steps to reach their set targets of zero carbon emissions. On a regional level such as South Asian states can create a regional organization on climate change to collaborate in form of financial help and exchange of successful and best practices and ideas. The establishment of a regional organization for climate change in South Asia will help countries collectively highlight the vulnerability of this region at the global level. Such steps will also assist in the growing economy of the South Asian region and halt the negative impacts of climate change. At the state level, we need to adopt policies that can promote renewable energy resources, increase forestation, green infrastructure, etc. We also need to educate our people about climate change impacts through education and awareness campaigns.

*The writer is a graduate of the University of Oxford on a Chevening Scholarship. She tweets @zilehumma\_1*