**[Ire to come](https://www.dawn.com/news/1426738/ire-to-come)**

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FEW of Pakistan’s cities are as beautiful in the monsoons as is Islamabad. The capital is these days lush green, with wild grass and bushes sprouting out of every possible crack in the earth, tree branches heavy with water drooping over moss-covered walls, the air humming with dragonflies.

This has been a long, hot, and above all, dry summer for Islamabad and its sister city, Rawalpindi. By July, the Met Department was referring to the situation as ‘drought-like’, and the falling levels of Rawal Dam and Simly Dam, which constitute the main water supply reservoirs, had led to many areas suffering from severe water shortages.

Those living in affluent areas, the ones with the wherewithal to lower (illegal) bores into the groundwater to bolster domestic water supply, were complaining of not having enough to fulfil daily needs. For those unfortunate enough to be counted amongst the modest-incomed majority, the situation was nothing short of dire.

Fortunately, this month brought heavy rains. The parched ground soaked it up, the greenery regained some of its lustre, and city managers told the press with relief that the water scarcity problem would soon be resolved.

*Nature’s adversarial stance will only intensify.*

It has been, but beautiful mosaics can hide uglier pictures. Soon enough, it became clear that the problem lay in the aphorism of it pouring when it rains. Last week, a night of rain and thunderstorms left many urban areas inundated, particularly lower-income ones where planning and adequate drainage are in short supply. By Tuesday, the capital had recorded the heaviest rainfall — 244 millimetres — ever experienced in the month of August, with more thunderstorms round the corner.

In Rawalpindi, the Leh nullah rose to dangerous levels and then flooded. This waterway is surrounded by and encroached upon by haphazard permanent and temporary slum settlements that the state has been trying to clear up (but only just before/ during the rainy season) for so many years that ennui has set in. The newspapers carried photographs of a car having fallen into the drain, people wading through hip-height water, flooded houses and soaked goods. In Islamabad, the water level in Rawal Dam rose to 530 metres or thereabouts, just short of its maximum capacity, necessitating the opening of the facility’s spillways after a year’s closure.

The Islamabad/ Rawalpindi area is not alone in its experience of unusual weather. Parts of Lahore were inundated just a few weeks ago, the rain mixed with sewage from overflowing drains creating a toxic brew that continues to pose a serious health challenge. Meanwhile, earlier during the summer, parts of Sindh sizzled at unusually high temperatures. This comes after a winter season that saw snow in parts of the north, such as Murree, at a time when it ought to have been spring.

Taken together, these weather events are all part of the evidence increasingly stacking up that Pakistan is badly affected by climate change and global warming, leading to what ought to have been a predictable effect on crop sowing and harvesting patterns, a rationalisation and regulation of water use, and the putting in place of mitigation measures. Unsurprisingly, the warnings have gone unheeded — which implies that, in the coming months and years, nature’s adversarial stance will only intensify.

Yet if Pakistan ignored the signs of things to come, it is not alone. The world in general, the ‘civilised’ governments of developed countries, continued to do the same, even as science racked up the scores of glaciers melting, sea levels rising, the ozone layer thinning. The consequences of mankind’s hubris are, so they say, only beginning to emerge.

At the moment, parts of western Europe are in the grip of an unprecedented heatwave, leading to a sudden demand in cooling and air conditioning appliances in countries where the adversary was always the winter, not the summer.

In Australia, the most populous state of New South Wales is now entirely and officially in drought, with no end in sight. And in California, emergency teams fought as many as 17 massive fires simultaneously, including the largest-ever recorded in the state’s history. Last week, the New York Times reported that “the fire season […] has already scorched nearly three times the number of acres over the same period last year […].”

Everywhere, proof is in abundance that climate change, the acceptance or denial of which continues to be a divisive matter, is under way. Some governments have finally, belatedly, woken up, and pledges of various sorts are being made to actually and literally try to save the future. Here in Pakistan, however, we slumber on regardless. This, perhaps, will be the question posed to us by our descendants, much more than who won which election.

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