**The looming water crisis**

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Water scarcity is a growing concern across the globe, affecting millions of people every day. With a rapidly growing population and increasing demands for water resources, many countries are facing a critical shortage of water.

Pakistan is one such country that is currently facing a water crisis, which has significant implications for its people and its economy. A report by UN-Water and Unesco has stated that ‘scarcity is becoming endemic’.

Globally, two billion people (26 per cent of the population) do not have safe drinking water and 3.6 billion (46 per cent) lack access to safely managed sanitation, according to the report which was published by Unesco on behalf of UN-Water and released at the UN 2023 Water Conference in New York.

One of the countries most affected by this global water crisis is Pakistan with a population of over 220 million people. The country is heavily reliant on agriculture, which accounts for about 19 per cent of its GDP and employs over 40 per cent of its workforce.

Agriculture in Pakistan is primarily dependent on irrigation from the Indus River, which flows through the country from the Himalayas. The river is one of the largest in the world, and its basin is home to over 215 million people.

Despite the importance of the Indus to Pakistan's economy and people, the country is facing a severe water crisis. The situation has been worsened by climate change, deforestation, population growth, and poor water management practices. The water crisis in Pakistan is multifaceted, and its impacts are far-reaching.

One of the most significant impacts of the water crisis in Pakistan is on access to clean drinking water. According to a report by the UNDP, over 60 per cent of Pakistan's population lacks access to safe drinking water. This is a significant challenge that has serious health implications, particularly for children, who are most vulnerable to water-borne diseases such as cholera and typhoid fever.

In addition to the health implications of the water crisis, it is also affecting the country's agriculture sector, which is the backbone of its economy. The agriculture sector in Pakistan is heavily reliant on irrigation from the Indus River, which is now under pressure due to water scarcity. As a result, many farmers are unable to get enough water for their crops, leading to lower yields, food insecurity, and economic losses. This has serious implications not only for Pakistan but also for the global food market, given that the country is one of the largest producers and exporters of cotton, rice, and wheat.

The water crisis in Pakistan is also affecting the country's energy sector. Pakistan generates a significant portion of its electricity from hydroelectric power plants that rely on water from the Indus River. However, with water scarcity, the energy sector is also facing significant challenges, with many power plants operating below capacity or shutting down altogether. This has led to power outages and energy shortages, which have serious implications for the country's economy and people.

The water crisis in Pakistan is further exacerbated by poor water management practices, corruption, and mismanagement of water resources. The country lacks a comprehensive water policy, and there is no effective governance framework in place to manage its water resources. This has led to the overexploitation of water resources, with many areas experiencing groundwater depletion and contamination.

One of the most critical steps that the government can take is to invest in new technologies and infrastructure to improve water supply and management. For example, the government can invest in new desalination plants to convert seawater into freshwater or invest in drip irrigation technologies to reduce water wastage in agriculture.

Additionally, the government can invest in new water storage facilities such as dams and reservoirs to ensure a more reliable supply of water. With a greater focus on conservation and sustainability, with efforts to reduce water wastage and promote water-efficient practices in agriculture and other industries.

The water crisis in Pakistan is just one example of the global water scarcity issue, which affects many countries across the world. It is estimated that by 2025, over half of the world's population will face water shortages, with many regions already experiencing severe water stress. As such, it is essential for the international community to come together and take collective action to address this critical issue.

In conclusion, the water crisis in Pakistan is a significant challenge that requires urgent action. It is a complex issue that requires a comprehensive approach, including investment in new technologies, better water management practices, and effective governance. While the situation in Pakistan is concerning, it also serves as a reminder of the urgent need to address the global water scarcity issue, which affects millions of people worldwide.

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