

**Sindh's water woes**

UNDER the scorching sun, they marched north, from Kharo Chan to Thatta. Approximately 1,500 people traversed 140km over the course of nearly one week by foot. The marchers had a singular demand: the government should put an end to the water crisis they faced. Their lament is not new. For years, the province has struggled with acute fresh water shortages and loss of land due to soil erosion. For a country that contains a number of mighty and small rivers along its length and breadth, it is nothing short of a tragedy that a basic necessity of life cannot be accessed by all its citizens. The reasons for the current crisis are multifold: some allege mismanagement of water, or decry the increase in illegal fish farms and large-scale irrigation along the Indus. Others bring up provincial hegemony, which results in smaller provinces being neglected and not receiving their due share. Sindh, in particular, is largely dependent on the Indus to meet its water needs for drinking and agricultural purposes. It is supposed to receive 42pc of the shared water from the Indus basin, according to the Water Apportionment Accord 1991, but experts argue the figure needs to be revised as it does not take into consideration the province's current population numbers and changed landscape. Additionally, the mangroves that once protected the coastal belt from sea intrusion have been destroyed on a large scale due to increased salinity in the water, along with rapid urbanisation and industrialisation. Despite several replantation drives conducted over the past two decades, there has been a great loss of land, particularly in the areas between Ketī Bandar and Shah Bandar. According to environmentalists and farmers, much of the Indus delta has now been engulfed by horizontal sea expansion, and its economy and way of life are threatened.

Some have warned of a worsening situation in the near future, predicting large-scale climate based migration. The reality of climate change cannot be denied any longer as it threatens lives and livelihoods. Already, the province has suffered greatly and witnessed both floods and droughts. A water policy that is people-centric at its core and takes the current context of the province into mind is the need of the hour. Let's not forget that water is also a basic human right.

**Editorial**