



# Are politicians really serious about the climate?

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**PAKISTAN may already be on the brink of an environmental disaster, but political parties seem to be in no hurry to formulate a cohesive strategy to avert it.**

Although the environment and climate change are considered national security issues, politicians are simply not ready to understand them, said Dr Muhammad Irfan Khan, an environmental scientist and professor at the International Islamic University in Islamabad, while speaking to Dawn recently.

“National security can be divided into three parts: water security, energy security and food security. Nuclear weapons cannot protect a country if it lacks water, food and energy. We have the example of the Soviet Union, which could not survive despite having a huge number of nuclear weapons,” he stated.

## *Rising temperatures will melt glaciers and cause either floods or droughts*

He said the next government needs to understand that Pakistan’s contribution to global greenhouse gases was less than one per cent, yet the country is among five to eight countries that are most vulnerable to climate change.

“We get most of our water through glaciers. We will face devastating floods in the future because of increasing temperatures that will melt the glaciers rapidly. We will face either floods or droughts in different years. If we want to save ourselves from floods, we have to build dams to store water,” Dr Khan said.

He said that no political party was ready to understand the gravity of the situation. Their focus is on roads and metro bus projects, which will further complicate the problem instead of addressing it, he added.

“Unfortunately, our political parties don’t realise that our issues cannot be addressed by ensuring military security only. They need to understand that the environment and climate change need more focus than other issues,” he said.

The PPP manifesto claims that going beyond the 2016 ratification of the Paris Agreement by Pakistan, the PPP will develop, mainstream and implement a national action plan that can fulfil international commitments and meet local needs.

The Paris Agreement is an accord within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change dealing with greenhouse gas emissions mitigation, adaptation and finance starting in 2020.

“We will do so by pushing a Pakistan Climate Change Act along with a 10-year National Strategy Action Plan for parliamentary debate and approval within the first 100 days of the government,” the manifesto states.

The PML-N manifesto said Pakistan needs a rapid and effective response to the dangers posed by climate change and environmental degradation that has occurred over the last decades. In its previous term, the PML-N prepared the first framework for the implementation of the climate change policy (2014-30), ratified the Paris Climate Agreement and became one of the handful of countries that passed a law dedicated to climate change, the Pakistan Climate Change Act 2017.

The PML-N claimed that the approval of the first water policy was another landmark achievement. In the last five years, the PML-N government has built a strong foundation to fight the menace of climate change, it said. Over the next five years, the PML-N promises to enact aggressive reforms under agreements and legal framework established during the previous tenure of the party.

Talking to Dawn, Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) Information Secretary Fawad Chaudhry said the PTI was the only political party that gave real importance to climate change during the last five years.

“We have given the concept of one-billion-tree tsunami. We have been giving priority to climate change. We have a comprehensive plan to deal with climate change,” he claimed.

*Published in Dawn, The Business and Finance Weekly, July 9th, 2018*