

ENVIRONMENTAL POLICIES AND MEDIA REPORTING IN PAKISTAN

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INTRODUCTION

Pakistan is yet another country where consciousness about the environment came late and where numerous problems impede the rapid adjustment needed for hazard-free surroundings. The major problem being the effective implementation of the policies adopted so far, Pakistan is confronted with dangers of environmental degradation and depletion of resources on one hand and the growth of population with the rate of 3.01 per cent on the other. Being the ninth most populous country in the world, Pakistan has been able to sustain more than four fold increase in population during this century. How the expected 143 million will be living here by the year 2000 is not totally unimaginable as the catastrophic signs have already begun to cast their shadows. The official national Report (NATREP) which has been prepared for the coming UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), says the country faces the specific problems of high population growth, low literacy, widespread poverty, urbanisation and environmentally hostile industrialisation, meaning thereby that threats to the environment was limited to hostile industrialization only (Muhammad Ilyas, 1991). Many would challenge this instance with the view that environmental degradation is growing on because available legislations and rules are not being implemented.

Apart from the Environment Protection Ordinance 1983, there are some 85 environment related legislations in force in the country. According to the break-up, 36 of these 85 laws belong to land use, 5 to vegetation, 18 to wildlife, one to energy and soils, 14 to water and 11 miscellaneous ("Pakistan's Environment", 1989). In addition to these legislations, article 191 of the Constitution gives every citizen a right to protect his/her environment. Pakistan Penal Code (PPC) too has provisions for punitive action against unlawful exploitation or negligence amounting to environmental degradation. In spite of this battery of legislations, rules and provisions, the threat to the environment is getting more and more pronounced by every passing day.

There are, however, some positive signs for change. For example, provincial wings of the Environmental Protection Agency have been established and a coordination network has begun to emerge. The Draft of National Conservation Strategy has been submitted for approval of the federal cabinet. This document would provide the guideline on multidimensional problems of environment.

The level of consciousness about the environment is certainly better now among the educated urbanites. One indication to this effect is the increasing numbers of NGO's in cities.

There are some expectations, therefore, that the future might not be as bleak as it otherwise looks to be.

The Situation

It is not easy to summarize the whole environmental situation in a brief paper. However, a few points would indicate what is happening.

1. In spite of having one of the lowest forest cover (5% of total land area), deforestation is taking place at the rate of one per cent per annum, desertification has affected 60% of the land, soil erosion 1.2 million ha and waterlogging 2 million ha. (Khawar Mumtaz, 1989).
2. Air pollution in the big cities like Karachi has reached to an alarming high level. School children in Saddar (central Karachi) have been found to be with 330 ppb of lead in their blood. (The European Community recommends maximum limit of 200 ppb). The total Suspended Particulates (TSP) allowable by US Ambient Air Quality Standards for winter and summer should not exceed 260 micrograms. In Karachi the average is 311 micrograms (Iqbal Ali, 1991). About 1813 tonnes of carbon monoxide gas is produced per day by cars, trucks, buses and rickshaws. This is about 80 per cent of the total pollutants emitted (Iqbal Ali, 1991). The number of cars and buses etc. is increasing rapidly.
3. Because of the ecological damage and disbalance, three species of the mammals are already extinct while eleven are near extinction. Twenty species of birds and five of reptiles are endangered (Manzoor Ahmad, 1988).
4. The death of mangrove forest in the coastal area of Karachi seems to be imminent in 15 to 20 years as fresh water is not available to them for two to three months every year (Manzoor Ahmad, 1988).
5. Blind use of pesticides in Pakistan has been multiplied five times from 905 tonnes in 1981 to nearly 5000 tonnes in 1991 at the cost of 3.5 billion rupees. In some cases, one of the most lethal pesticide endrine has been used causing deaths. Pakistani market today is flooded with nearly 300 brands of pesticides (Muhammad Ilyas, 1991).
6. There are no effluent discharge standards, therefore wastes are generally discharged without minding the environment. In only one case, it was found that 40% of the residents of Qasur district use contaminated water due to the regular discharge from 120 tanneries into the canal which is the principal source of water. These residents suffer from diarrhoea, gastro-enterities etc. (Parvez Hasan, 1991).

Environmental Policies

Among the significant environmental legislations which Pakistan could inherit at the time of its inception in 1947, were the Provisions of Penal Code (Hunting) 1860, Canal and Drainage Act 1873, Criminal Procedure Code 1896, Wild Birds and Animals Protection Act 1912 and the Forest Act 1927. It took almost a quarter of a century (from

1947 to 1972) for the government to create an Environment and Urban Affairs Division with the Ministry of Housing and Works. The Division, however, paved the way and facilitated the promulgation of the country's major legislation related to environment known as Environment Protection Ordinance 1983. This legislation covered almost all fields of the environment and provided for the formulation of two separate bodies namely the Pakistan Environment Protection Council (PEPC) and Pakistan Environmental Protection Agency (PEPA). The Council, with the President as its Chairman has been entrusted to provide policy guidance and the Agency (PEPA), with a director general as its head, would administer the ordinance and the guidance provided by the Council. Under the EPO 1983, both the Council and the Agency were constituted in February 1984.

The Council is to ensure the enforcement of the Ordinance, approve a National Environmental Policy, incorporate environmental considerations into development plans and policies, prepare and enforce national environment quality standards and to promote research in the field of environment. The Agency on the other hand has been entrusted to prepare a National Environment Policy, publish an annual profile of the state of environment, provide coordination, advice and assistance to the bodies working for environmental upgradation, and to help educate the public on environmental matters.

The *World Bank Identification Report 1989* noted the progress in implementing the Ordinance (1983) as 'slow'. The same has been the case with other legislations. However, the one field, where implementation of policy has been somewhat better is the scrutiny of pesticides. Established to enforce the Pesticides Ordinance (1971) and Pesticide Rules (1973), Federal Pesticide Laboratory had approved 182 pesticides for sale up to 1989.

National Conservation Strategy

With the help of IUCN, preparation of a National Conservation Strategy (NCS) is complete now. The federal cabinet is to approve it in the coming few months. A detailed and bulky document, the NCS is going to be a hallmark after the promulgation of the Environmental Protection Ordinance 1983. (Dawn, 1991).

Prepared with financial assistance from CIDA and with technical guidance from IUCN, the National Conservation Strategy embraces all facets of environmental protection including economic policies and their impact on natural resource base. It suggests to undertake comprehensive plans to arrest the galloping rate of population.

Spread on over three hundred pages, the National Conservation Strategy (NCS) is going to be the mainstay of the government's environmental policy in future. This document is divided into three parts namely Pakistan and the environment, Elements of National Strategy, and Implementational arrangements. The detailed and well documented thirteen chapters of the strategy describe three objectives.

1. Conservation of natural resources
2. Sustainable development and
3. Improved efficiency in the use and management of resources.

It also lays down three operating principles which embody the methods and approaches to achieve the objectives. The three operating principles are.

1. Achieve greater public partnership in development and management.
2. Merge environment and economics in decision making, and
3. Focus on durable improvements in the quality of life.

The objectives and the operating principles successfully convey a feeling that the NCS has been prepared with an eye to implementation so that a community spirit for some kind of conservation ethic is restored. The strategy goes deep into the past and present of environmental problems and suggests specific practical steps with a time frame for the implementation of these programmes.

The tightly structured action agenda set for, in chapter 10 for example, attempts to foresee the possible situation upto the year 2075 and describes the expected outputs and inputs to the year 2001.

The strategy deals with almost all issues of environmental upgradation like (1) conservation of soil and water resources (2) utilization of cultivable wastes (3) sustaining all kinds of agriculture (4) promotion of ecologically compatible cropping system (5) control over waterlogging and salinity (6) protecting forests (7) increasing forest resources (8) restoration of range lands (9) commercial livestock production (10) increasing irrigation efficiencies (11) rehabilitation of irrigation system (12) increasing marine coastal resources (13) maximizing fish yield (14) developing inland fisheries (15) conserving and increasing wildlife utilization (16) minimizing mineral wastages (17) controlling water and air pollution (18) better use of the mix of energy sources (19) management of industrial and other wastes and (20) safeguarding cultural heritage.

The strategy suggests specific and detailed action to be taken for the achievement in the above mentioned fields.

The NCS suggests to increase the gross national investment for the upgrading of environment from the current 4% to 8% by 2001. The proposed investments plan for 1992-2001 period is as follows:

	Rs. in billions
1. Maintaining soils in cropland	28.0
2. Increasing irrigation efficiency	18.5
3. Protecting watersheds	10.8
4. Supporting forestry	5.8
5. Restoring range lands and improving wastelands	2.6
6. Protecting water bodies and sustaining fisheries	1.3
7. Conserving biodiversity	1.0
8. Increasing energy efficiency	21.5

9. Developing and deploying renewables	6.3
10. Preventing / abating pollution	22.0
11. Managing urban wastes	13.5
12. Supporting institution for common resources	3.0
13. Integrating population and environment programmes, and	14.0
14. Preserving the cultural heritage	2.4
Total	150.7

If the proposed investment might be an indication, the three most attended to environmental problems for the next ten years in Pakistan would be the maintenance of soils, increase in energy efficiency and prevention of urban pollution.

According to the NCS, 59% of the additional investment of 90 billion is expected to come from private sector.

In its chapter 5, the NCS also undertakes to enumerate some of the reasons of the present level of degradation of the environment. These include non-availability of the tools of implementation, impracticality of hard social legislation, punitive (non-participatory) character of the law, small fines not linked to pollution and corruption in enforcement, pressures of poverty, lack of awareness, lack of respect for the law, lack of political commitment and lack of campaigns beyond the law.

Although, the NCS looks to be complete, it does not, however, lay down any specific procedure for the formulation of national standards. At some places, it does mention some standards which are being used in other countries of the world. But these criteria may be quite unsuitable to be implemented in today's Pakistan where mismanagement of the environment is considered a far less important issue.

Major Reasons of Degradation

In spite of there being so many laws, and rules in force, degradation of environment, and depletion of resources is continuing at a disturbing speed. One has to wonder and feel disgruntled that life in future is certain to be more difficult and problematic than now. Among the principal reasons of the present state of affairs, the following may be enumerated.

1. Awareness about the phenomena of the environment is limited to a very small circle of activists in the large cities only. Due to utmost poverty and widespread illiteracy, people at large do not understand that the environmental impoverishment is harming and is to harm more to everyone of them.

2. The legislations and rules, promulgated so far by the government, have not been effectively implemented. Commercial enticements on the part of government functionaries and bribery on the part of money minded exploiters is on increase. The rising rate of deforestation, is one significant indication that the degradation of the environment is becoming more and more alarming.
3. The Pakistani media is almost indifferent to matters related to environment. The television, the radio and the Press do not pay regular attention to the environment and casual coverage fails to have any formidable impact.

With limited awareness, apathy of the media and half-hearted attempts to implement the rules on part of the government, even the present bad situation is worsening every day.

Media Reporting

Reporting of the environmental issues is meagre in Pakistan. Media in Pakistan is owned by the government as well as by the private sector. The television, the radio and the chain of National Press Trust newspapers are in the public sector. Of these the television and the radio, which might be a principal source of information and guidance for the 70 per cent illiterate masses, seldom cover environment. Pakistan Television and Radio Pakistan have no regular programme on the environment. In the daily news bulletin of PTV, for example, environment does not figure even once a month. Occasionally, however, a brief film report is telecast on air or water pollution, deforestation, sanitation and decline in the population of wildlife. Such casual coverage could not translate into consciousness about healthy surroundings. The same is true for Radio Pakistan and the newspapers owned by the government.

Among the non government newspapers, English dailies and monthlies provide some coverage to the issues about environment. But even this coverage is no more than eyewash. Country's largest English daily *Dawn* could not afford more than 0.89 per cent of its space during first fortnight of December 1991. The content analysis, for this period revealed that many areas like desertification and disposal of industrial wastes does not get any mention at all. Yet, the coverage of the environment is comparatively better in *Dawn* than other newspapers of the country.

English periodicals like the weekly *Mag* and monthlies like *Herald* and *Newsline*, publish some material about environment almost in every issue. Overall, this coverage is better in the English Press, which cannot educate the masses but can win over and motivate/activate a highly placed decision maker somewhere.

The Urdu Press, which is a good source of information and guidance for the masses, does not cover the environment quite often. The country's largest and widely circulated daily *Jang* gave only 0.04 per cent of its space to environment from 1st to 15th December 1991. Obsessed with politics and current affairs, Urdu newspapers and periodicals believe that environmental problems are beyond the comprehension of their readers.

A chat with the city reporters in the Karachi Press Club, revealed that in most of the dailies, environment is not on the list of regular assignments. In most of the cases, one reporter is assigned the beat of education, science and technology. Usually, this reporter is expected to cover the environment at will. There are some reporters, who are

interested in this field on a personal basis. They do file stories which are published only briefly.

Since environmental upgradation is not a matter of preference for many in Pakistan, media in general downplay or overlook what may be crucially significant. The majority of media practitioners may be as unaware of the issues concerning environment as the decision-maker bureaucrats are. And those few reporters/communicators, who try to disseminate some information, usually impart in keeping themselves neutral. They do not try to share information due to lack of training. With training and rising the level of motivation, media practitioners can be transformed into catalysts. As suggested by the NCS, if a Pakistan Federation of Environmental Journalists (PFEJ) is encouraged and radio is instructed to play the lead role, media reporting on environment may be greatly fortified to help change the present disturbing state of affairs.

Environment Related Legislations in Pakistan

Land Use: Legislation Urban/Rural

1. The Easements Act (No. V), 1882, Law of Easements and Licenses.
2. Transfer of Property Act, 1882.
3. The Land Acquisition Act, 1894.
4. Government Grants Act (No. XV), 1895.
5. Punjab Tenancy Act (XVII), 1887.
6. Government Tenants (Punjab) Act, 1893.
7. The Punjab Land Preservation Act (No. II), 1900.
8. The Colonization of Government Lands (Punjab) Act (No. V), 1912.
9. The N.W.F. Tenancy Act (No. XXV), 1950.
10. The Punjab Betterment Charges and Acreage Rate Act, 1952.
11. West Pakistan Land Reform Rules, 1959.
12. West Pakistan Land Reforms Regulation, 1959, M.L.R. No. 64.
13. Consolidation of Holdings Ordinance (No. VI), 1960.
14. West Pakistan Land Reforms (Ejectment of Tenants to Provide for Buildings) Rules, 1961.
15. Grant of Land (Guddu Barrage Area) Rules, 1964.
16. Islamabad (Preservation of Landscape) Ordinance, 1966.
17. Land Revenue Act, 1967, Rules 1968, Assessment Rules, 1968.
18. Pat Feeder Canal (Control and prevention of alienation of land) Ordinance (No. IX), 1967.
19. West Pakistan Land Revenue (Conferment of Rights of Ownship) Rules, 1969.
20. The K.D.A. Zoning Regulations, 1972.
21. Land Reforms Regulation, 1972 (Repeals 1959 Regulation).
22. Sind Land Reforms Rules, 1972.
23. Land Reforms Regulation Sind (Amendment) Act, 1972.
24. Land Reforms Regulation Sind (Second Amendment) Act, 1972.
25. The Punjab Land Reforms Rules, 1972.
26. Punjab Land Reforms Rules, 1972 (Amendments).
27. Land Reforms (Amendment) Act, 1973.

28. Land Reforms (Punjab Amendment) Act, 1973.
29. Land Reforms (Amendment) Act, 1974.
30. Procedure for Ejectment Suits Rules, 1974.
31. Land Reforms (Amendment) Act, 1975.
32. Lahore Development Authority Act, 1975.
33. Antiquities Act, 1975.
34. The Punjab Land Reforms Appointment of Managers of Impartible Joint Holdings Rules, 1975.
35. Board of Revenue Instructions about Colonization Operation. (Standing Order No. 67 date uncertain).
36. Punjab Special Premises (Preservation) Ordinance, 1985.

Legislation Regarding Vegetation

1. Forest Act, (No. XVI) 1927. The Forest Act (Several Notifications fall under this heading). Protection, regulate of exploitation, includes protected forests.
2. NWFP Hazara Forest Act, 1936.
3. The West Pakistan Goats (Restriction) Ordinance (XLII), 1959.
4. West Pakistan Goats Restriction Rules, 1961.
5. The Firewood and Charcoal (Restriction) Act, 1974.

Legislation Regarding Wildlife

1. The Criminal Code 1860 (outlawed killing/maiming of animals).
2. Wild Birds and Animals Protection Act, 1912.
3. Rules for the Prohibition and Regulation of fishing Burboster, Labeo Rohita, Catlacatla, Cirrhina and Mirgali than 10 inches in length. (No. 2989/5A-6541-D (f), 1954.
4. The Punjab Wild Birds and Wild Animals Protection Act (No. XIII), 1955. Punjab Wildlife (Protection, Preserve Conservation and Management) Ordinance, (No. XXI), 1972; specifically related Rules, 1973.
5. Food and Agricultural Department (No. IV(5)/17-SOA-VII-F and A/58). Rules for the Protection of Fish waters of the Shikarpur District. (Preceded by a Provisional Constitution Order, 1957).
6. The Goats (Restriction) Ordinance, (No. XLIII), 1959. Restricts the number of goats.
7. West Pakistan Wildlife Protection Ordinance, 1959.
8. Wild Life Protection Rules, 1960. Regulates hunting. (Various licence forms attached). Wild Life Protection Ordinance (No. LVI) 1959.
9. Fisheries Rules, (No. 4(107)S.O. (F and C), 1964. Licences, etc.
10. The Sind Wildlife Protection Ordinance, 1972.
11. The Punjab Wildlife (Protection, Conservation and Management) Act, 1974.
12. Baluchistan Wildlife Protection Act (No. XIX), 1974.
13. NWFP Wildlife (Protection, Preservation, Conservation and Management) Act (No. V), 1975.
14. Exclusive Fishery Zone (Regulation of Fishing) Act, 1975. Amended in 1983.
15. AJK Wildlife Act, 1975.
16. Northern Areas Act, 1976.

17. Islamabad Wildlife Ordinance 1979.
18. Export Control Order 1987/89.

Legislation Regarding Energy and Soils

1. The Electricity Act (IX), 1910 Soil Reclamation Act, (No. XXI), 1952. (Amended by Ordinance, 1964, 1965, and amended and extended by Ordinance (No. V), 1964.

Water Legislation

1. The Canal and Drainage Act (No. VIII) 1873. There are several similar and related acts, ordinance, amendment (1952, 1965, 1968, 1970).
2. The Sind Irrigation Act, 1879 (Amendment Ordinances, 1961, 1969).
3. Criminal Procedures Code (Act V), 1898). Sections 324 and 430.
4. The Punjab Minor Canals Act (No. VII) 1905.
5. The Ports Act, 1908.
6. The Inter-State Water Dispute Act, (No. 33) 1956.
7. The West Pakistan Water and Power Development Authority Act, 1958. (Similar Ordinance and Amendment Ordinances, 1958, 1964, 1967).
8. Determination of Land Revenue and Water Rate Ordinance, (No. IV), 1959. (Amended 1961).
9. The Indus Water Treaty, 1960.
10. The West Pakistan Land and Water Development Board (Authority for payment from Board Fund) Rules, 1966; Reclamation (Fee) Rules, 1965.
11. The Greater Lahore Water Supply Sewerage and Drainage, Ordinances, 1967.
12. Notification (No. 5174-68/155-CRI) National Calamities (Prevention and Relief) Rules, 1969. Extensive provisions especially in respect of flood control.
13. Ordinance (No. IV), 1969. The Kabul River Project (Control and Prevention of Speculation in Land) (Amendment) Ordinance, 1969. Further amends the Kabul River Project (Control and Prevention of Speculation in Land) Act, 1948.
14. Territorial Waters and Maritime Zones Act, 1976.

Other Legislation

1. Pakistan Penal Code 1860 (Section 268 on "public nuisance").
2. Factories Act, 1934 (Amended upto Dec. 1975).
3. Motor Vehicle Act, 1939.
4. Motor Vehicle Rules, 1940.
5. West Pakistan Hazardous Occupations (Miscellaneous) Rules, 1963.
6. West Pakistan Hazardous Occupations (Cellulose Solution Spraying) Rules, 1963.
7. West Pakistan Hazardous (Petrol Gas Generating Plant) Rules, 1963.
8. West Pakistan Hazardous Occupations (Chromium) Ruler, 1963.
9. The West Pakistan Regulation and Control of Loudspeakers and Sound Amplifiers Ordinance (III), 1985.

10. West Pakistan Motor Vehicle Ordinance, 1966.
11. Agricultural Pesticide Ordinance, 1971.
12. Pakistan Environment Protection Ordinance, 1983.

Sources

- (1) *Environmental Profile of Pakistan*, Environment and Urban Affairs Division, GOP, Islamabad, pp. 245 - 248.
- (2) Parvez Hassan. "Trends in the Region and Legislation in Pakistan", *View point*, March 12, 19, 26, 1987.

Summary of Communication Policies and Measures in Pakistan Policies:

Gear environmental communication to specific audiences, messages, and media.

Make sustainable development a national communication priority of the Government.

Mobilize forces within the conventional media and beyond to communicate greater environmental awareness and concern.

Make communication on these issues a priority in institutions dealing with conservation and environment.

Measures

Use radio as the lead medium for environmental communication at the grassroots level.

Consider regional variables such as language, traditions, and culture in all environmental communications.

Encourage celebrities and opinion makers to take up the cause of sustainable development.

Encourage the media to interact with the Government and NGOs and to undertake investigative environmental stories.

Set up information dissemination units in all Government environment and conservation institutions.

Encourage the development of NGOs committed to environmental communication, and of information units within major environmental NGOs.

Duplicate institutions like the JRC and PFEJ and increase their scope and reach to all media professionals.

Research, document, and communicate the cultural and religious bases of environmental conservation.

Environment Content in two largest Pakistani dailies (1-15 December, 1991)

DATE	DAWN (English)	JANG (Urdu)
1/12	-	-
2/12	133 cm	-
3/12	91 cm	17 cm
4/12	-	-
5/12	84 cm	4 cm
6/12	112 cm	-
7/12	86 cm	-
8/12	45 cm	-
9/12	106 cm	-
10/12	65 cm	-
11/12	34 cm	-
12/12	52 cm	-
13/12	266 cm	11.5 cm
14/12	249 cm	7 cm
15/12	72 cm	-
Total	1395 cm	39.5 cm
%	.89	.04