

DISASTER MANAGEMENT IN PAKISTAN

INTRODUCTION

Cataclysmic events like floods, earthquakes, droughts, cyclones and hurricanes etc. have played a vital role in the evolution of the Earth to its present shape. With the advent of mankind on this planet these natural phenomena have come to disrupt day to day life of people and to undo their achievements. In an attempt to assume greater control of Earth the man has further compounded the situation and introduced man-made disasters like civil strifes, gas leakages etc. besides accelerating environmental degradation. But at the same time man has always tried to manage and mitigate the effects of natural as well as man-made disasters. The same is true of Pakistan.

2. Pakistan is located in South Asia where seasonal rainfall periodicity is a prevalent feature and incidences of both abnormal surpluses and deficits of rainfall are regular occurrences. The average rainfall recorded during monsoon is 200 mm. Pakistan is spread over an area of 888,000 sq.km with a population of 120 million. The temperature in the country varies from 6°C in January to 49°C in June. Pakistan is composed of a varied geographic pattern having the second highest peak in the world with major mountainous ranges of the Himalayas, the Karakoram and the Hindukush in the north and a vast hostile desert in the south. While floods occur quite frequently resulting in widespread damages, droughts in desert regions cause considerable concern and misery. However, Pakistan is lucky that it did not have to face many earthquakes of severe intensity.

3. As stated elsewhere the areas constituting Pakistan are prone to a variety of disasters like floods, droughts, earthquakes, landslides, avalanches and cloudbursts etc. While devastating earthquakes are a rare phenomenon, floods occur quite frequently and cause widespread damage too. Disaster management has therefore remained an important discipline in Pakistan.