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Clean water

Editorial

MUCH has been said and written about the persistent shortage of clean drinking water in the country. However, no government seems to take note of the challenge or the fact that failure to meet this fundamental need of the population has exacted a huge toll on lives and health. A recent report published by the Pakistan Medical Association states that nearly two-thirds of 200m Pakistanis have been deprived of clean potable water, putting them at greater risk of contracting serious illnesses. Nowhere is this aspect more apparent than in the number of deaths caused by diarrhoea, which is a water-borne disease and the leading cause of mortality among infants in the country. Moreover, according to the PMA report, the incredibly poor quality of water is also responsible for 30pc of diseases and 40pc of deaths occurring in the country. The report has mentioned the 2019 XDR-typhoid outbreak in Sindh and the tenacious poliovirus that has yet to be eliminated. It is evident that these health concerns arise from bad sanitation and poor water quality.

Pakistan has the world's fourth highest consumption figures for water while its population is the fifth largest globally. Bad policies and environmentally damaging practices, such as the release of untreated industrial and domestic waste into water bodies, combined with changing rainfall patterns, have worsened water shortages in the country. Meanwhile, rapid and irregular urbanisation has exacerbated the strain on the country's water resources, to an extent where in the largest city, several localities have virtually no option but to do without running tap water for weeks on end. The IMF ranks Pakistan third in the list of nations that are suffering from acute water shortage, while other global agencies have warned that the country might run out of water altogether by 2025. The authorities need to realise the gravity of the situation and start work towards developing sustainable water supplies and better sanitation infrastructures if it wants to avoid a catastrophe that is just around the corner.

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