

Climate Change Concerns and Possible Impacts of Climate Change on South Asia

South Asia is home to almost 1.5 billion people with diverse geography. The region has been bestowed with rich biodiversity, mountains, glaciers, coasts, deserts and productive plains. However, South Asia is also vulnerable to all types of climate change impacts. It is projected that climate change will bring severe changes in livelihood patterns and lives of people in South Asia. The region will have to face a range of problems and vulnerabilities. Even Maldives, coastal parts of Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Pakistan and India would be at the risk of extinction. Specific areas of concern for South Asia would be agriculture and food security, water resources, coastal sinking, loss of biodiversity and its impacts on regional security. However, the panel will specifically look into agriculture and food security, and water.

Agriculture, which is the main source of livelihood for majority of the people in South Asia, will be impacted severely. Agricultural production will decrease manifold due to increased extent and incident of pest and disease attack, soil erosion, droughts, floods and loss in productivity. “It is predicted that there would be 2.5 to 10 per cent decrease in the yield of crops in 2020s and 5 to 30 per cent decrease in 2050s from the levels of 1990s in Asia” (IPCC 2007).

According to the World Bank (2008), “Loss in productivity and production will impact food security in the region, which is already the most food insecure region with a population of 229 million people.”

Water is another area of concern for South Asia. Water resources in the region are already scarce and climate change will further complicate the situation. Glaciers are melting rapidly, monsoon pattern is changing and ground water resources are depleting very sharply. Scientists are convinced that these changes are mainly due to climate change. Water resources in South Asia are and will be disturbing the peace and security in region. Pakistan is facing problems with India on water distribution. Other countries of region e.g. Nepal, Bangladesh, etc., also have some issues with India. Climate change will further aggravate the situation in the region.

Economic and social cost of climate change would be very high in South Asia due to increasing population and dependence on natural resources.

This panel will look into the following questions:

1. What would be the impacts of climate change on South Asia in general?
2. How will climate change impact agriculture and water sectors?
3. What would be the implications of climate change on food security in the region?
4. How will climate change impact regional integration and bilateral relations?

References

IPCC 2007, *Summary for Policymakers: Climate Change 2007: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability*, Contribution of Working Group II to the Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, IPCC, Switzerland.

World Bank 2008, *World Development Report, Agriculture for Development*, Washington DC, USA.

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