

The Long March

A Peoples Long March against dams on the Indus River, organized by the Pakistan Fisherfolk Forum, earned widespread support and solidarity from the fishing and peasant community of Sindh

The Sindh Peoples Long March was a massive public action that involved a 16-day walk of over 200 km from a small fishing village in the Indus River Delta region and culminated at the Governor House, Sindh, in Karachi. The long march, which started on 10 October 2018 and ended on 25 October 2018, was organized by Pakistan Fisherfolk Forum (PFF) and got widespread support and solidarity from the fishing and peasant community of Sindh, civil society organizations (CSOs) and the media.

The Long March demanded that the federal government and Supreme Court of Pakistan (SCP) cancel the construction of any dam on the Indus River as the rampant construction of dams and barrages on the river had led to sea erosion and saline intrusion which was destroying coastal cities and districts.

forming the Indus delta. The tail-end farmers and other communities of Sindh were facing tremendous difficulties due to the unavailability of water.

The Long March manifesto aimed to: oppose all dams on the Indus River, including the Kalabagh and Basha dams; restore the natural flow of the Indus River; help the Indus River reach its final destination; and prevent future dams and diversions on the Indus River.

The Indus River, also locally called Sindhu, is one of the longest rivers in Asia. Originating in the Tibetan Plateau, the final destination of the river is the River Indus Delta in district Thatta of Sindh, the southern province of Pakistan. It is the longest river and the national river of Pakistan. The river has historically been important to many cultures of the region. The Indus River came into the knowledge of the West early in the Classical Period, when King Darius of Persia sent his Greek subject Scylax of Caryanda to explore the river, circa 515 BC. The Indus is one of the few rivers in the world to exhibit a tidal bore.

The Indus River Delta forms where the Indus River flows into the Arabian Sea, in the Southern Sindh province of Pakistan. The delta covers an area of about 41,440 sq km (16,000 sq miles), and is approximately 210 km (130 mi) across where it meets the sea.

Since the 1940s, the delta has received less water as a result of large-scale irrigation works capturing large amounts of the Indus water before it reaches the delta. The result has been catastrophic for both the environment and the local population.

Experts, along with the provincial government of Sindh, agree on the fact that a freshwater flow of 30 million acre-foot (MAF) is needed for the survival of

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The PFF wanted to make the authorities realize that Sindh, being in the lower riparian area, had suffered the most following the destruction of the Indus River and the Indus Delta due to stoppage of freshwater flow that had been majorly caused by dams and barrages built previously. Moreover, all international and national laws prohibit construction of any mega-dams on the Indus River system without the consent of lower riparian communities.

Rejecting the Kalabagh dam completely, the Long March highlighted that dams on the Indus River were destroying Sindh villages and cities

*This article is by **Roshan Ali Bhatti** (bhattiroshano@gmail.com), Manager, Monitoring and Evaluation, Pakistan Fisherfolk Forum (PFF), Pakistan*



Sindh Peoples Long March 2018 against all dams on River Indus in Pakistan. The natural flow of water and fertile sediments from the Indus River into the delta has been impeded due to the construction of dams and barrages along the river

the Indus River Delta. Above all, 10 MAF of freshwater flow was agreed upon by the Pakistan state in an infamous accord known as the Water Apportionment Accord of 1991. But the accord had also remained null and void up until now. According to the Institute of Oceanography, there is a 1.3 mm sea level rise annually, and 3,500,000 acres of land of the Indus River Delta have been destroyed by sea intrusion.

Before the development of an irrigation system on the Indus River, the entire flow passed through Sindh's plains to the Arabian Sea, culminating into 17 branches called creeks and forming the seventh largest delta of the world. An annual flow of over 180 MAF, carrying a silt load of about 440 mn tonnes, passes through the Indus into the Arabian Sea.

Until the 1980s, mangrove forests of the delta covered an area of 600,000 ha (1,500,000 acres) and could be found along the entire 240-km coastline. But the mangrove area has since reduced to 86,000 ha.

The natural flow of water and fertile sediments from the Indus River into the delta had been impeded due to the construction of dams and barrages along the river. The reduction of freshwater due to the dams also increases salinity, making the waters of the delta unsuitable for the freshwater species. In case of the Indus dolphin, the damming of the river has isolated

the delta dolphin population from those dolphins upstream. The Indus delta has shrunk by 92 per cent since 1833. In light of these threats, the Indus Delta was designated a Ramsar site in 2002.

A few months back, a pro-dam campaign was launched. Some influential leaders are collecting donations for the construction of the Basha Dam on the Indus River and also talk approvingly about the construction of the controversial Kala Bagh Dam.

Previously, three barrages on the Indus – the Guddu barrage, the Sukkur Barrage and the Kotri barrage – along with the Kala Bagh Barrage, the Chasma Barrage and the Taunsa Barrage had been built on the Indus River. The Tarbela Dam is also on the Indus River.

Such rampant construction of dams and barrages on the river has caused widespread sea erosion and saline intrusion, which, in turn, has destroyed coastal cities and districts. It is to stop this continuing destruction that the PFF and CSOs have banded together to petition the Federal Government and the Supreme Court of Pakistan to put an end to such ill-conceived “development” projects.

For more

<http://pff.org.pk/>
Pakistan Fisherfolk Forum (PFF)

<https://dc.icsf.net/en/component/dnews/article/detail/12455-Pakistan--A-200.html>
A 200 kilometer journey on foot against Dams on River Indus, Sindh Peoples Long March, October 10-25, 2018

<https://dc.icsf.net/en/component/dnews/article/detail/10494-Pakistan--Indus.html>
Indus River Canyon declared second Marine Protected Area of Pakistan

<https://dc.icsf.net/en/component/dnews/article/detail/12265-Pakistan--Disru.html>
Disruptive marine weather lowers catch for small-scale fishermen

<https://www.icsf.net/images/what%20is%20new%20page/Inland%20Fisheries%20policy%20note%20by%20ICSF.pdf>
Governance of water and freshwater fish production systems in India: Is there need for a national policy to protect fishers and fishworkers?: Draft for Comments - by ICSF