

GLACIER DECLARED DENGEROUS IN GILGIT BALTISTAN

36 Glacial Lakes in G-B unsafe

GILGIT: Thirty-six glacial lakes in various valleys of Gilgit-Baltistan have been declared dangerous, and seven of them pose the most threat to the people, said the Met Office chief on Tuesday.

The Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) head was on an official visit to G-B, where flash floods triggered by monsoon rains and melting glaciers have wreaked havoc on the infrastructure in various valleys, causing losses of billions of rupees.

"These lakes carry the risk of outburst," said PMD Director General Dr Ghulam Rasool, "and if that happens, it could cause severe damage to lives and properties."

He was addressing a workshop titled 'Disaster awareness and the role of the media', which was organised for Gilgit-based journalists by Focus Humanitarian Assistance (FOCUS), an international group of agencies for provision of emergency relief. Around two dozen journalists from the print and electronic media attended the event. The Pakistan Meteorological Department has declared 36 out of 3,044 glacial lakes most dangerous in Karakoram, Himalayan and Hindukush ranges in the northern part of the country.








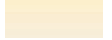

Addressing the inaugural ceremony of early warning system for glacial outburst in Bagrote valley of Gilgit-Baltistan, Dr Ghulam Rasool, the director general of PMD, said there were more than 7,000 glaciers and 3,044 glacial lakes in Gilgit-Baltistan and Chitral valleys. "Out of them 36 lakes are vulnerable to outburst," he added. The ceremony was attended by local elders, environmental experts and government officials.

Dr Ghulam Rasool said that melting of glaciers was increased due to climate change. As a result, glacial lakes became dangerous for inhabitants of nearby areas, he added. He said that an early warning system was also installed in Chitral. He said that although impacts of extreme climatic changes affected the whole world yet it was apprehended that the coastal and mountainous areas would be more vulnerable to random glaciers melting and catastrophic floods in downstream areas.

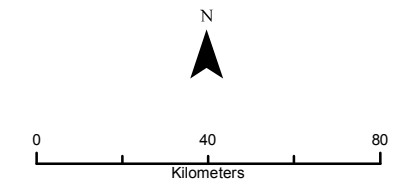
"Pakistan Metrological Department has initially installed an early warning system in GilgitBaltistan. In the next phase a sub-office of meteorological department will be established in the area so that the local communities can be saved from the effects of glacial lakes and glacial lake outburst floods disasters," said Dr Ghulam Rasool. Speaking on the occasion, former federal minister Nisar Memon said Gilgit-Baltistan was highly vulnerable to the effects of climate change. He said that communities needed to be aware about taking preventive measures to cope with disasters. The former minister said the early warning system would help the local people to save themselves from the disaster of glacial outburst.

According to ICIMOD estimates Pakistan is home to around 5218 glaciers with a total area of 15040 sq km and in addition around 2420 glacial lakes are also identified. Karakorum Range has the greatest share in hosting much of the glaciated ice where almost 37% of the region is under the glaciers

Legend

-  Peak
-  Lake
-  Stream
-  River
-  Glacier
-  Crop Land
-  Shrub Area
-  Baresoil/Rock
-  Gilgit Baltistan Boundary

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 Global Land Cover: Glacier, Baresoil, Tree Covered Area, Crop Land
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