

Pakistan: Last decade to fix climate issues, say activists

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LAHORE: The city's smog levels reached extremely high levels on Friday, as had been forecast.

A reading of 506 AQI was recorded at 2pm. The Met department said that visibility was so bad that the minimum reading was 600 metres only, while maximum visibility was 1,200 metres, whereas in normal circumstances visibility should be up to 300 kilometres. Regarding the worsening state of the environment, a demonstration was held outside the Lahore Press Club by the Pakistan Kissan Rabita Committee (PKRC) pushing for the implementation of policies for climate justice, says a press release.

PKRC's Farooq Tariq said the year 2020 would be remembered as one of the most horrific years for humanity where people struggled to survive the impact of coronavirus.

"We are at the threshold of the most critical decade for climate action," he said.

"It may be our last chance this decade to prevent a climate catastrophe and stabilise the rise in global temperature to the safest level possible which would be below 1.5 degrees Celsius.

"The new decade should sound the alarm about the climate emergency and demand climate justice from our government and corporations."

Although Pakistan only emits a tiny portion of the global greenhouse gases, like all developing countries it is the hardest hit by extreme weather events, including droughts and floods. The farming community in Pakistan had been terribly affected by untimely rains, floods, increasing temperatures and sudden change of seasons.

Mega projects like the Orange Train and dams would not be able to reduce the intensity of negative impacts of environmental pollution, said activists.

One of the activists said that smog and toxic air turned cities in India and Pakistan into gas chambers with people developing respiratory illness. She said that the air quality index of Lahore and Faisalabad was even worse than New Delhi in neighbouring India in early November.

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