

Multiple environmental challenges face Bahrain



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Ever since oil was discovered in Bahrain in 1932, the country has witnessed rapid economic growth and development mainly due to the processing of crude oil and exporting the refined products across the world. The oil powered economic activity also attracted migrant population to the extent that eventually 48 per cent of the population comprised of migrants. The population growth coupled with migration over the years has put tremendous pressure on the natural resources of Bahrain leaving the Kingdom to face multiple environmental challenges.

The oil led prosperity had a flip side too as the fertile land of the nation and the ground water table quality bore the brunt as their condition deteriorated rapidly. Bahrain's groundwater currently suffers from degradation in quantity and quality from over-extraction, seawater invasion apart from oil spills. This increased the dependence on sea water desalination to supplement the domestic water supply, as a result nearly 60 per cent of the nation's water supply is desalinated. Desalination plants pose a threat to the environment in major manner. The seawater used contains high quantities of boron and bromide. The process used to desalinate removes calcium and other essential minerals. The salt leftover from desalination goes into the ocean increasing the salinity of the water. The increased salinity causes harm to the environment especially to the marine life.

For any nation the state of urban facilities is symbolic of its progress. The presence of excellent sewage and sanitation infrastructure is the bedrock of any modern city.

Bahrain's sanitation infrastructure is one of the most thorough systems as the nation adopted a well-planned sewage system as early as 1970 and ensured that 98 per cent of the population connected to a central sewage network. But this sewage system is now outdated and inadequate in the face of growing population and though Bahrain is combating this inadequacy by adding new treatment plants and expanding existing ones, the shortfall is becoming more apparent by the day. Bahrain is countering the same by setting up multiple deep gravity sewer projects to cover large areas of the country. This will address the growing need for effective sanitation facilities so that the ambient environment is not compromised.

Along with efficient sewage systems, the challenges arising from scarcity of freshwater resources is also creating additional problems. Bahrain contains the lowest endowments of freshwater resources in the world, which affects its freshwater availability. Bahrain's average annual rainfall hovers around 80 mm and its evapotranspiration hovers around 1850 mm. There are no rivers, continuously flowing streams or lakes. The country obtains groundwater from the lateral underflow of the Dammam aquifer. Freshwater share among Bahrain's populace

is in decline. The share went from 525 m3 per year in 1970 to m3 per year in 2001 placing the country's freshwater share less than the 500 m3 per year capita water poverty line. These levels are likely to further decline and even halve due to the country's continual population increase.

Adding to the environmental woes of the nation, Bahrain generates above 1.2 million tonnes of solid waste per year making the country one of the world's leading per capita solid waste generators. Estimates determine that daily garbage production exceeds 4,500 tons. Waste accumulation increases

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es at a rapid pace which eventually impacts the quality of air, soil and groundwater in Bahrain. Bahrain's government launched recycling initiatives, a waste-to-energy (WTE) project and a public awareness campaign in response to combat waste accumulation, this is expected to stem the rising waste problem but unless the WTE initiative keeps pace with the waste generation, the nation may experience irreversible environmental damage.

As each nation fights its own battle against environmental challenges, Bahrain too is besieged by a multitude of problems and is fighting tooth and nail. The efforts of the government have been successful in holding the problems from assuming a severe form, but as conditions keep getting worse the government must ensure dynamic measures that are apace with the problems. Be it afforestation measures or increasing the number of urban water bodies, each proactive step will go a long way in ensuring that the rising temperatures are kept in check and ground water level is sufficiently replenished. The role of the common man is also an essential component in successfully meeting the environmental challenges and addressing them. In order to ensure the same a superior level of public awareness needs to be created which can provide the much needed impetus to the government initiatives to conserve the environment.

Environmental challenges are normal but how Bahrain will respond to them will decide the state and safety of its environment.



TOP 4 TWEETS

01



COVID-19 vaccinations are up and cases and hospitalizations are down, but let me be clear: now is not the time to relax.

@POTUS

02



The George Floyd Justice in Policing Act represents an important step towards ensuring more accountability and transparency in policing. I join @POTUS in encouraging Congress to pass this legislation and get it to the President's desk.

@VP

03



According to a new UN report the national targets (NDC) made so far put us on a path to achieve only a 1% reduction of greenhouse gases by 2030. I'll repeat that: 1%. Our leaders are failing mankind completely. And media is letting them get away with it.

@GretaThunberg

04



We are nowhere near the level of ambition needed to meet the #ParisAgreement goals. Nationally Determined Contributions of major emitters must set more ambitious targets for 2030. Long-term commitments must be matched by immediate actions that people & planet desperately need.

@antonioGuterres

Disclaimer: (Views expressed by columnists are personal and need not necessarily reflect our editorial stances)

Thousands march in Armenia to demand PM's resignation



Opposition demonstrators rally in Republic Square in Yerevan, Armenia
AFP | Yerevan

Several thousand opposition supporters marched through the capital of Armenia yesterday to demand Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's resignation over his handling of last year's war with Azerbaijan which many see as a national humiliation.

Columns of people angry with the prime minister flooded the streets of central Yerevan, waving Armenian flags and chanting anti-government slogans, hours before a planned meeting with the ex-Soviet country's president.

Former Prime Minister Vazgen Manukyan, who has been put forward by the opposition to replace Pashinyan, called on all Armenians to join the protest.

"The people must take to the street and express their will so that we can avoid bloodshed and turmoil," he said at the rally.

"Either we get rid of them," Manukyan said, referring to Pashinyan and his allies who control parliament, "or we will lose Armenia."

The small South Caucasus nation plunged Thursday into a fresh political crisis as Pashinyan defied calls to resign,

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FORMER PRIME MINISTER VAZGEN MANUKYAN

accused the military of an attempted coup and rallied some 20,000 supporters in Yerevan.

But the opposition gathered some 10,000 of its own supporters, who erected barricades and set up tents and stoves outside the parliament building and vowed to hold round-the-clock demonstrations.

The crisis spilled into a second day after Pashinyan's critics spent the night, then blocked streets near the parliament building in preparation for yesterday's rally.

The march led them to the presidency and then to the prime minister's residence, ahead of a meeting with President Armen Sarkisian at 15:40 local time (1140 GMT).

Gunmen girls in

Police confirm the

● **Bandits carried out third mass kidnapping students in three mont**

AFP | Kano, Nigeria

Gunmen raided a school in northwestern Nigeria overnight, abducting students, local authorities said yesterday, raising fears that the country had been hit by another mass kidnapping.

The suspected armed band attacked the Government Girls Secondary School in Jangebe Zamfara state, kidnapping unknown number of students from dormitories.

In the initial aftermath, teachers said several hundred girls were unaccounted for.

"It is true, gunmen... kidnapped students," Sulaim Tunau Anka, the state information commissioner, confirmed.

"They went to the school vehicles. They forced some of the girls to trek."

The security forces are tracking the criminals, he added.

Heavily-armed criminal gangs known locally as "bandits" in northwest and central Nigeria have stepped up attacks in recent years, kidnapping for ransom, raping and pillaging.

Just last week, 42 people were taken by a gang from a boarding school in nearby Niger state.

In December, more than 3

Multiple deaths in Haiti prison break, including jail director

AP | Croix-Des-Bouquets

A prison director was among at least eight people killed after several inmates tried to escape from a prison in Haiti's capital, a police officer and witnesses said.

The incident occurred in northeast Port-au-Prince at the Croix-des-Bouquets Civil Prison, which was built by Canada in 2012 and is known for a 2014 breakout in which more than 300 inmates escaped.

Residents in the area who declined to be identified out of concern for their safety said that they observed a group of heavily armed men start shooting at prison guards before the inmates began to flee.

Gunshots could still be heard from within the prison several hours after the shooting began.

The police officer who confirmed the killing of the prison director, and declined to be identified because he was not authorized to speak to the media, said authorities were preparing to raid the prison and described the inmates as armed and dangerous.



Students rush past the bodies of inmates outside the Croix-des-Bouquets Civil Prison

YOU KNOW WHAT

In 2014, more than 300 inmates successfully escaped the high-security prison, which was built with Canadian funding and opened in 2012

At the time of the 2014 breakout, the prison held 899 inmates, some 130 over its capacity.

During Thursday's incident, one escapee, 37-year-old Jhon Hippolyte, was shot in the back. He said that he was serving a sentence for murder and was in the infirmary when he noticed everybody running and decided to join them.

AP journalists saw the bodies of at least seven men along streets near the prison. They had been shot. Their identities were not immediately available,