

2007 predicted to be warmest year

REUTERS, London

This year is set to be the hottest on record worldwide due to global warming and the El Nino weather phenomenon, Britain's Meteorological Office said yesterday.

The Met Office said the combination of factors would likely push average temperatures this year above the record set in 1998. 2006 is set to be the sixth warmest on record globally.

"This new information represents another warning that climate change is happening around the world," said Met Office scientist Katie Hopkins.

The world's 10 warmest years have all occurred since 1994 in a temperature record dating back a century and a half, according to the United Nations' weather agency.

Britain's Met Office makes a global forecast every January with the University of East Anglia, and said it expected the world's average temperature to be 0.54 degrees Celsius above the 1961-1990 long-term average of 14.0 degrees.

There is a 60 percent probability that 2007 will be as warm or warmer than the current warmest year, 1998, which itself was 0.52 degrees above the long-term average it is said in a statement.

Most scientists agree that temperatures will rise by between two and six degrees Celsius this century due mainly to carbon emissions from burning fossil fuels for power and transport.

24 more die as cold

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doubled as the demand is high, correspondents report.

The poor visibility due to thick fog disrupted movement of vehicles and river vessels across the country. The vehicles were seen to ply with their foglights on.

The day labourers, especially in the northern region, are passing days amid great anxiety as most of them could not go out for work in the fields due to the heavy fog and cold spell.

Zahedul of Tajhat under the Sadar upazila, who remained jobless for the last two days as his master did not engage him in the field due to the foul weather, told our Rangpur correspondent that his family members will have to starve if the weather condition does not improve very soon.

Akter of Mominpur under the Sadar upazila of Rangpur said he went out in the town in search of work but no one showed interest to engage him in work in such weather.

Yesterday's lowest temperature, 7.2 degree Celsius, was recorded in Jessor and Chaudanga while the highest 25 degree Celsius in Cox's Bazar. The capital experienced lowest 10.5 degree and highest 18.1-degree Celsius temperature.

Polls sans grand

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Ruhul said, "No one has the right to violate the constitution," adding, "If required, the constitution will be amended after consulting with the major parties."

"Political parties are responsible for the current political crisis. So they will have to find out a solution through mutual understanding," the adviser added.

When asked whether the advisers will resign given the current situation, Ruhul said, "Relinquishing duties means ignoring. I am not that kind of person."

The adviser warned that the government would confront efforts to resist the election saying, "The army will be on patrol during the grand alliance's blockade programmes on January 7 and 8. Stern action will be taken as per law against people trying to obstruct traffic."

Adviser Shoeb Ahmed reiterated his view that the nation has been plunged into a crisis, but denied the impression that the caretaker government is inert.

"It is not true that we are not doing anything. We will have to approach both parties to settle the issue," Shoeb said.

However, he did not specify how they would approach the parties. "We will have to decide on the approach at the advisers' council meeting," he said.

"You will see the action required for a solution in due time. You will have to wait a little while," Shoeb added.

Adviser Fazlul Haque said he did not agree with the view of a legal expert, who said the constitutional provision to hold the elections within 90 days is 'directive,' not 'mandatory.'

Iran makes more feedstock for nuke fuel

REUTERS, Tehran

They say this will cause melting at the polar ice caps, sea levels to rise and weather patterns to change bringing floods, famines and violent storms, putting millions of lives at risk.

Former World Bank chief economist Nicholas Stern said in October that urgent action on global warming was vital and that delay would multiply the cost by up to 20 times.

The Kyoto Protocol is the only global action plan to curb carbon emissions, but it expires in 2012, is rejected by the world's biggest polluter -- the United States -- and does not bind booming economies like China and India.

The Met Office said the established moderate El Nino, a phenomenon in the tropical Pacific blamed for disrupting weather patterns, would continue for the first few months of 2007.

It noted that as there was a time lag between El Nino and its full effect on surface temperatures, its influence would therefore be felt well into the year.

It will coincide with what environmentalists say will be a very busy year for climate diplomacy.

Germany, which has an active climate change agenda, has taken over the six-month rotating presidency of the European Union and the year-long presidency of the Group of Eight industrialized nations.

Backed by Britain, which has pushed climate change high up the world agenda, pressure is building for the G8 summit in Germany in early June to set out a framework for discussions to take global action beyond Kyoto.

The met office's long ranged forecast for January said another one or more spells of moderate to severe cold wave might hit in two weeks, especially in the northern region.

The met office also warned that the winter crops like potato and wheat will be affected in absence of rains and crop fields will require irrigation.

The country may experience moderate to thick fog over the river basin and in the northern region of the country.

In reply to a question, she said, "We will be looking at how all stakeholders in the political and election process deal with the current situation."

"Our hope is a resolution can be found which will be acceptable to all," said Sarah.

A core team of the EOM arrived here on December 17 to evaluate the pre-election situation and is expected to make recommendations to the EU Headquarters in Brussels on the need for sending observers to monitor the January 22 parliamentary polls.

The election schedule could have been extended if it was directed."

Fazlul said since they do not possess 'Aladdin's lamp' they couldn't bring all parties to the polls.

But he skirted around questions regarding the voter list, saying, "We have learnt from different countries that their voter lists also contain errors. Ours is not an exception to this rule, so we do not see anything wrong in our voter list."

Adviser Shafiqul Haque Chowdhury said the council of advisers have to find out new and innovative ways to see if the polls schedule can be extended.

CA silent

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Wednesday night held a meeting of the advisory committee on law and order held to face the political agitation including the countrywide blockade. The meeting decided to use army, if necessary, to foil the agitation.

The meeting also discussed the next course of action if the political parties enforce more agitation. But the CA did not initiate any discussion on resolving the political crisis and holding the election with the participation of all political parties.

Earlier, on several occasions Iajuddin remained silent without convening any meeting of the council of advisers on crucial issues. He did not also consult the advisers before taking some vital decisions, including deployment of army. In such a situation, four advisers quit the council.

"Awami League and its allies are trying to create a constitutional crisis because they do not believe in democracy," she said adding that the people have isolated those who stay away from elections.

The government should make ways for 'easy exit' for the weak factories that are heavily indebted to the banks, and which is why are not viable in the long run. After the

Cackle of the jungle

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that the number of some indicator birds, like red jungle fowls and puffed throated babbler, has increased compared to the previous years.

"We found that the number of those birds have increased by 20 percent this year. It proves that the health of the ground forest and the midlevel forest has improved," Dr Monir, who led the census team in 2005 and 2006, told The Daily Star.

"Now we want to monitor the conditions of other indicator bird species like red headed trogon, hornbill and hill myna," he added.

The last two censuses found the number of other indicator species almost the same, Dr Monir said adding that they will start the survey in next February again.

The experts see the improving forest health as a positive indication for the hoolock gibbons, the key species of the forest, as well. Petra Osterberg, a researcher from the Oxford University, recently conducted a census on this species and found that there are 59 gibbons in 16 families at Lauachhara and its adjoining forest.

According to experts, the rich biodiversity of Lauachhara includes 20 species of mammals, of which six are of non-human primates, 246 species of birds, four species of amphibians, six species of reptiles, 17 species of insects and 167 species of plants. In addition, hoolock gibbons and other species like slow lorises, barking deers, capped langurs, hooded pitas and kalij pheasants and different kinds of orchid are the main attractions of this forest.

The hoolock gibbons are treated as the world's most critical 25 mammals in 2006-2008 by the International Union of Conservation for Nature (IUCN).

Found in four countries of this region -- Bangladesh, Myanmar, China and India -- the total number of this endangered apes stands at only 700. Of them, around 300 are in Bangladesh, Prof Anwarul Islam, prominent biodiversity expert of the country, said.

"As I was abducted and taken to the deputy commissioner's (DC) office, I ran and entered the DC's office and begged for the security of myself and my family members," Rafiqul burst into tears while describing his gruesome experience to this correspondent.

"As eight out of ten candidates withdrew their nominations, I was the only obstacle for Mosharraf to be elected unopposed. His gang offered me a handsome amount of money. But when I refused to take any money and withdraw my nomination, they threatened to kill me and my family members," he added.

Later, following a written complaint, DC Shamsul Alam placed Rafiqul under safe custody at Kotwali Police Station. "I was literally a captive there as Mosharraf's thugs were roaming around just outside the police station. At around 11:30pm, I came out of the police station with police assistance and spent the night in a guesthouse without any security," alleged Rafiqul.

I requested the police administration to escort me to Muktagacha or Dhaka but they did not take necessary steps, he said alleging that the local administration still favours the former state minister.

He also complained that the election rules and the state security did not ensure his rights. "As a citizen of the country, I sought proper steps, but my rights were blatantly violated."

Mosharraf played this dirty game to be elected unopposed, said Rafiqul adding that the local administration would be responsible if any untoward incidents take place.

"I did not withdraw my candidature and I will contest the upcoming general election with the 'Helicopter' symbol," he told The Daily Star.

Independent

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The gang pressurised him to withdraw his nomination paper and threatened to kill him if he did not comply, Rafiqul told The Daily Star.

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Calling Ershad corrupt and a thief, Khaleda said although the court convicted him for corruption, the grand alliance boycotted the election only when Ershad was barred from contesting the election.

Khaleda criticised the AL-led grand alliance's blockade programme on January 7-8 and alleged that they (AL) are engaged in ruining the economy of the country and turning it into a satellite state of another country.

While seeking votes for BNP candidate Delwar Hossain Khan at a rally on the Circuit House ground, Khaleda said the January 22 election is a test for democracy and constitutional rule in Bangladesh. She alerted all saying, "Conspiracy is going on to foil the election, democracy and constitution. So cast your votes on January 22 to thwart their evil designs."

"All of their (AL-led alliance) demands were already met by the caretaker government but the grand alliance suddenly quit the election race even after filing nomination papers," because they were having problems within the party after forming the grand alliance and were only looking for an excuse to get out of the race, Khaleda explained.

"Awami League and its allies are trying to create a constitutional crisis because they do not believe in democracy," she said adding that the people have isolated those who stay away from elections.

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total relocation is over, the price of the land in Hazaribagh would definitely go up, argued Tipu, and then they would pay off the bank loans by selling the land and equipment.

Blaming bureaucratic red-tapism for the unusual delay in the relocation process, Bangladesh Tanners' Association President Harun Rashid said whereas the committee was supposed to submit its report within 90 days, it took four months to make the proposal.

According to the industrial ministry sources 60 per cent preparation for the 'leather estate' at Savar has been taken while the to-do list includes the setting up of effluent treatment plants and water treatment plants.

It is unlikely that the tannery owners' demands would be met during the caretaker government's tenure as the government is busy with making arrangements for the upcoming polls and it has very little scope for paying attention to other matters, said a high official at the industries ministry.

"We still fall short of Tk 3,000 crore and to manage the huge investment we would definitely need government support," he said.

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6 Indian cops fired for neglect over child murders

REUTERS, Lucknow

saved as well, he observed. Good news is that the number of this key species of the Lauachhara forest is growing gradually. The local tour guides and wildlife experts from the department of forest said that they have sighted a new family of hoolock gibbons at the Chautali, the adjoining forest of Lauachhara.

"The number of barking deer has also been increased recently," Shyam Devbarma, an indigenous youth working as a tour guide at the Lauachhara, said. "I can estimate their increased number by their barks and their dung," he added.

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