

Scientists predict more floods, droughts

AP, Budapest

Scientists predicted Thursday that climate change in coming decades will cause more flooding in the Northern Hemisphere and droughts in some southern and arid zones.

In addition, they said that some areas around the Mediterranean, parts of southern Africa, northeastern Brazil and the western US region will likely suffer water shortages.

Rajendra Pachauri, the chief UN climate scientist, said at the end of a meeting in Budapest that the rising frequency and intensity of floods and droughts could lead to a food crisis.

"We may see a decline in agriculture production," said Pachauri, who is also chairman of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, which shared last year's Nobel Peace Prize with former Vice President Al Gore.

An IPCC report presented at the meeting said the decline of water quantity and quality would lead to shortages of water for drinking and agriculture.

Millions of Africans could be afflicted by such water problems by 2020, unless action is taken to mitigate climate change, experts said.

While the proportion of heavy rainfalls will very likely increase, so will the areas simultaneously affected by extreme droughts.

One of the co-authors of the IPCC report said water issues would be one of the main problems of climate change.

"Everybody pretty much agrees that water is central to the way climate change is going to affect ecosystems and every human being," said Kathleen Miller, a scientist at the National Centre for Atmospheric Research in Boulder, Colorado.

Bush ties Iran, al-Qaeda among 'greatest threats'

AFP, Washington

US President George W. Bush on Thursday lumped Iran with the al-Qaeda terrorist group as "two of the greatest threats to America in this new century" and said both hoped for a US defeat in Iraq.

Bush, whose warning came in a speech defending the war, coupled the rhetorical blast with a clear warning that he would not hesitate to use force if the Islamic republic targets US interests in its strife-torn neighbourhood.

"Iraq is the convergence point for two of the greatest threats to

America in this new century: al-Qaeda and Iran," said Bush, who accuses Tehran of backing Iraqi militias hostile to US forces and of covertly seeking nuclear weapons.

"If we succeed in Iraq after all that al-Qaeda and Iran have invested there, it would be a historic blow to the global terrorist movement and a severe setback for Iran," he said.

It was far from the first time that the deeply unpopular US president has dramatically described Iraq as the front line against Tehran and Osama bin Laden's terrorist network as he works to revive anemic US support for the war.

NEWS ANALYSIS

Nepal endorses peace amid tough challenges

AFP, Kathmandu

Crucial polls in Nepal that had been plagued by pre-election violence have passed off smoothly, but analysts warn it is too early to declare peace has truly broken out in the Himalayan nation.

The election Thursday saw a strong turnout, a sign that voters wanted to give their resounding backing to efforts to turn the page on a decade-long Maoist revolt.

It was also a major achievement for the Maoists: in the run-up to the polls they were under fire for bullying voters, but polling day passed off surprisingly peacefully with only sporadic violence reported.

"I congratulate the people of Nepal, who have demonstrated their commitment to democracy by turning out in large numbers to vote," said Ian Martin, the head of the United Nations' peace mission in Nepal.

"Election day was conducted by and large in a peaceful and orderly manner," he said. In all three people died in isolated incidents on polling day, far lower than feared.

When the full results emerge over the coming weeks, Nepal will have a new 601-seat assembly that will tear up the country's past status as a Hindu monarchy and rewrite a new constitution from scratch.

But analysts say this process -- from the counting of ballots to the eventual expected sacking of unpopular King Gyanendra -- will be no easy ride for a country that has a history of political instability.

Holding the constituent assembly election was a big chal-

lenge, but the ones ahead are bigger," cautioned Sudheer Sharma, editor of the weekly news magazine Nepal.

The key, he said, was for Nepal's two biggest mainstream parties and the Maoists -- the once bitter foes who signed a peace pact in 2006 -- to see through their often awkward marriage of convenience.

"All the parties have their own road maps. If the harmony between the big three parties breaks, it will be a huge hurdle," Sharma said, referring to the Nepali Congress, the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist) and the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist).

Strains could start to show shortly after the votes have been counted, said Rhoderick Chalmers, Nepal's country director for the Brussels-based International Crisis Group.

"The very first challenge will be to get to the end of the counting process and have the major parties accept the results," said Chalmers, echoing UN concerns.

This could be toughest for the Maoists, who have to reconcile rival factions within the party -- those ready for realpolitik and those still married to the revolutionary dogma that fuelled their "people's war."

If that dichotomy is resolved, the new Constituent Assembly will then have to grapple with what to do with the king.

"It is not really specified what is meant by 'implementing' a republic. Some individuals or small parties might try to shift the goalposts and reopen the question of

whether the monarchy should be abolished," Chalmers said.

The king, who ascended to the throne in 2001 after much-loved former King Birendra and most of his family were massacred by a drunk-and-drugged crown prince, has become widely unpopular.

But he can still count on support from sections of the army and Hindu fundamentalists who see him as an incarnation of a Hindu god.

Even if he does get the boot, some prominent politicians say keeping some kind of symbolic monarch would be a useful way of preserving the neutrality of Nepal -- a country sandwiched between competing Asian giants India and China.

The Maoists, on the other hand, are rabidly anti-royal and see their leader Prachanda -- whose nom de guerre means "the fierce one" -- as presidential material.

Political analyst and author Khagendra Sangraula agreed that getting the new assembly to work together would be a difficult task.

"They come from such diverse backgrounds, it will be extremely hard for the 601-members to agree," he told AFP.

However, managing to make it through Thursday's polls in the first place is a solid step forward for Nepal -- a country still reeling from a war that left more than 13,000 dead, and still ranked as one of the poorest places on Earth.

"All these problems are not going to be solved in a day," Sangraula said. "But the process to solving them has been started with the constituent assembly election."



Nepali Congress supporters celebrate yesterday the election of senior party leader Prakash Man Singh to a 601-seat assembly in Kathmandu that is expected to rewrite Nepal's constitution and is likely to abolish the unpopular monarchy.

TENDER NOTICE

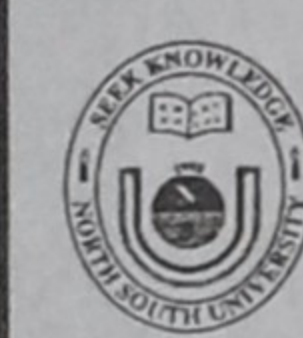
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Sealed tenders are invited from reputable contractors/suppliers for turnkey supply installation and finishing of door shutters & hardware local and/or imported of the under-construction North South University campus at Bashundhara, Dhaka. This invitation is for Technically-qualifying the suppliers/importers and accepting Bid for the scope of works, covering approximately 1800 doors.

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- 1) Attested copies of satisfactory completion certificates from the Employer for supply, installation, finishing of doors in similar projects in the last 3 years.
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Tender document shall be available from the office of the undersigned on payment of non-refundable cash of Tk.2,000 (Taka Two Thousand) from 13th April 2008, and are to be submitted by 16:30 hours on 1st May 2008. A Pre-bid meeting shall be held on 20th April 2008 at 10:30AM at the project site office in Bashundhara.



Project Director

NORTH SOUTH UNIVERSITY

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Applications are invited from General Practitioners for admission in to the session July-December 2008 of the *Certificate Course on Diabetology*.

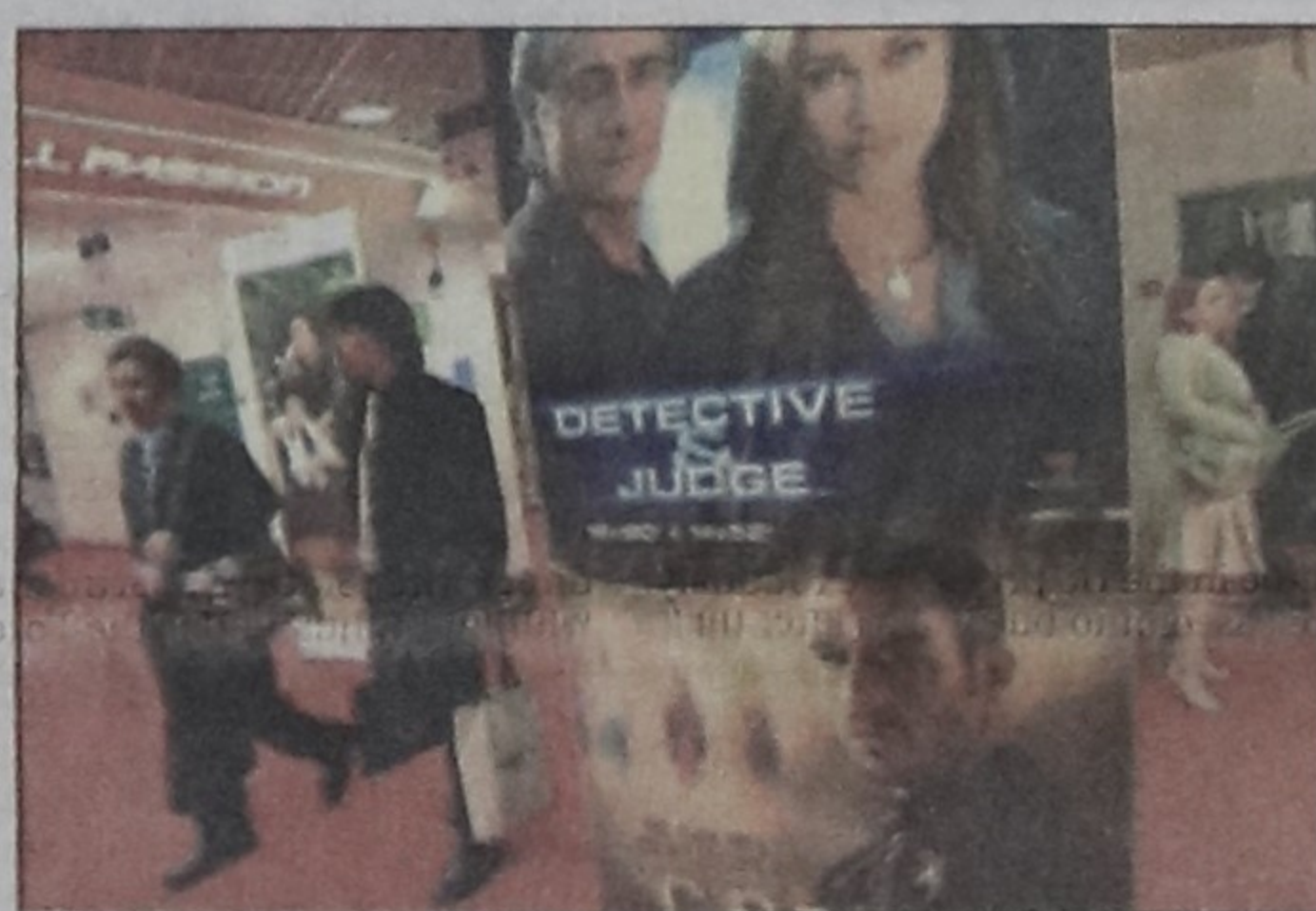
The Diabetic Association of Bangladesh with experts from the Open University, UK has introduced this 6-month course through distance learning. The standard of the course is set to create consultants on diabetology.

Prospectus and application form can be obtained at a cost of taka 500.00 only from the office of the Course Co-ordinator, Certificate Course on Diabetology, Distance Learning Project (DLP), Room no. 322-A, 2nd floor, BIRDEM, Ibrahim Memorial Diabetes Centre, Shahbagh Dhaka between 8 am to 3 pm. The course is currently conducted in tutorial centres at *Dhaka, Chittagong, Rajshahi, Mymensingh, Faridpur, Rangpur & Sylhet*. In future, new centres will be opened in Dinajpur, Khulna, Barisal, Bogra & other suitable places if adequate number of students is available.

Candidates can choose any of these places.

Last date of receiving application: 15 May 2008

Prof AK Azad Khan
Chairman, Distance Learning Project &
President, Diabetic Association of Bangladesh



Visitors attend the annual MIPTV trade show in Cannes, southern France. It's been a long time coming but television on the Internet appears finally to be taking off, opening up a new viewing experience for free and helping to fight online piracy.

Television on the Internet taking off for real

AFP, Cannes

It's been a long time coming but television on the Internet appears finally to be taking off, opening up a new viewing experience for free and helping to fight online piracy.

One of the newest services, Hulu, which was launched a month ago in the United States, is backed by media giant NBC Universal and Rupert Murdoch's News Corp.

The online video-on-demand (VOD) service "will let you watch your favourite programmes anytime for free", Hulu's youthful CEO Jason Kilar told a conference at the giant MIPTV audiovisual entertainment industry trade show this week.

Geared to appeal to a wide audience, Hulu, which is free but comes with short 15 to 30-second advertising spots that fund the service, offers high picture and sound quality, Kilar said.

Another service that could prove a big hit is that users can select any video content and embed it on their blog or favourite Internet sites such as a MySpace page or Facebook, where it can be shared with friends.

As well as offering Fox and NBC hits like "The Simpsons" and "Heroes", Hulu has also inked deals with about 50 leading content providers that include Sony Pictures, Warner Bros. and National Geographic. But while viewers can choose from 250 hit TV series, they cannot watch any live shows and instead are re-directed, if seeking "Grey's Anatomy" for example, to the ABC website which does have the show.

Kilar said the plan was to make Hulu available outside the US. "It can be a global service and that's our aim," he said. But this will take time as the company would need to negotiate content rights issues for each country.

In the meantime, the service looks set to meet some formidable competition from TV broadcasters.

Britain's giant state-owned BBC Corporation announced recently that it is teaming up with two of the country's leading commercial channels, ITV and Channel 4, to launch an online video joint venture around the middle of this year.

Setting aside their rivalries, the networks plan to hit back at the growing challenge posed by hugely successful Internet video-sharing sites such as YouTube, where their programmes are regularly illegally downloaded.

Several web-based TV services have been launched in the past few years. These include Joost that was set-up in 2006 by the Janus Friis and Niklas Zennstrom, creators of the illegal music file-sharing service Kazaa, as well as Babelgum, Vuze and Veoh, which is the grand old man of the pack having been set-up in 2003.

Web-based TV, which is also sometimes called Internet TV, is delivered over the open, public, global Internet using legal peer-to-peer file-sharing technology.

This differs from IPTV, which uses a private, "walled-garden" type of managed network.

Both Joost and Babelgum were launched last year but industry experts are starting to question what sort of results they and other fledgling web TV services are notching up.

These services have been criticised for not offering enough content and for incomplete TV series, and recently some have started to change track. Joost is now concentrating on partnering with major studio and TV networks. Babelgum is focusing on independent films, sport, nature and travel, and Vuze is specialising in the sci-fi and animation genres popular with young males.

"It's time to attack and not be defensive," Kilar believes. "Internet users will find the programme that they want with or without you. But if they're downloading illegally, that's not going to generate any advertising revenue for you," he pointed out.



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