

RECORD HEATWAVE Half of China hit by drought State Council declares \$1.45b subsidy to support rice farmers

AFP, Chongqing A crippling drought exacerbated by a record heatwave has spread across half of China and reached the normally frigid Tibetan Plateau, according to official data released ahead of more searing temperatures yesterday.

The world's second-largest economy has experienced over 70 days of heatwaves, flash floods and droughts -- phenomena that scientists say are becoming more frequent and intense due to climate change.

Southern China has recorded its longest continuous period of high temperatures since records began more than 60 years ago, the agriculture ministry said this week. Experts have said the intensity, scope and duration of the heatwave could make it one of the worst recorded in global history.



Stranded people wade through a flooded area after heavy monsoon rainfall in Rajanpur district of Punjab province in Pakistan yesterday. Figures from the national disaster agency showed yesterday that 903 people had died in the floods since June, and over 180,000 were forced to flee their rural homes.

PHOTO: AFP



A chart from the National Climate Centre showed Wednesday that swathes of southern China -- including the Tibetan Plateau -- were experiencing "severe" to "extraordinary" drought conditions.

The worst-affected area -- the Yangtze river basin, stretching from coastal Shanghai to Sichuan province in China's southwest -- is home to over 370 million people and contains several manufacturing hubs including the megacity of Chongqing.

The China Meteorological Administration predicted continued high temperatures of up to 40 degrees Celsius in Chongqing and the provinces of Sichuan and Zhejiang yesterday.

Parts of southwestern Sichuan were battered by heavy rains overnight, causing the evacuation of almost 30,000 people.

China's State Council on Wednesday announced a 10 billion yuan (\$1.45 billion) subsidy to support rice farmers experiencing drought conditions, which authorities have warned pose a "severe threat" to this year's autumn harvest.

China produces more than 95 percent of the rice, wheat and maize it consumes, but a reduced harvest could mean increased demand for imports in the world's most populous country -- putting further pressure on global supplies already strained by the conflict in Ukraine.

EU NUKE TEXT FOR REVIVAL OF 2015 PACT

Iran reviews US response

REUTERS, Dubai

Iran has received Washington's response to an EU-drafted final offer for saving Tehran's 2015 nuclear deal with major powers, Iran's foreign ministry said late on Wednesday, giving no firm indication of how close they are to narrowing remaining gaps.

After 16 months of fitful, indirect US-Iran talks, with EU officials shuttling between the sides, EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell said on August 8 the bloc had laid down a final text and expected a response within a "very, very few weeks."

"This evening Iran received the US response through the European Union. The careful review of the response has started in Tehran," Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Nasser Kanaani said.

"Iran will share its view with the EU, as the coordinator of the nuclear talks, upon completion of Tehran's review."

Iran last week responded to the EU's text with "additional views and considerations" while calling on the United States to show flexibility to resolve three remaining issues.

US State Department spokesperson Ned Price confirmed that Washington had responded to Tehran's comments on the EU text.

"Our review of those comments has now concluded. We have responded to the EU today," Price said.

Oil prices ended higher on Wednesday after a volatile trading session on concerns that

the United States will not consider additional concessions to Iran in its response to a draft agreement that would restore Tehran's nuclear deal -- and potentially the OPEC member's crude exports.

Then-US President Donald Trump reneged on the nuclear deal in 2018, saying it was too soft on Iran, and reimposed harsh sanctions on the Islamic Republic, prompting Tehran to start violating the deal's nuclear curbs a year later.

A revival of the pact appeared close in March before 11 months of indirect talks between Tehran and Washington in Vienna broke down over differences such as Iran's demand that the United States provide guarantees that no future president would exit the agreement as Trump did.

US President Joe Biden cannot provide such ironclad assurances because the deal is a political understanding rather than a legally binding treaty.

A senior US official told Reuters on Monday that Iran has dropped some of its main demands on resurrecting the deal to rein in Tehran's nuclear programme, including its insistence that international inspectors close some probes of its atomic program.

But Iran's nuclear chief, Mohammad Eslami, appeared to contradict that on Wednesday, saying the probes should be closed "before the implementation day" if the 2015 nuclear deal is revived.



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Facing 'pressure' from all sides Says UN rights chief on release of Xinjiang report

REUTERS, Geneva

The UN human rights chief said yesterday that she is still aiming to release a long-anticipated report on China's treatment of its Uyghur minority in Xinjiang by the end of her four-year mandate next week amid "tremendous pressure" from all sides.

But the lack of a firm commitment by former Chilean President Michelle Bachelet in her final press conference stoked further criticism from civil society groups who have accused her of being too soft on China since a May visit.

The report has been in the works for three years and promised for months but has not been published for unclear reasons.

"We are trying very hard to do what I promised," Bachelet said, referring to a pledge to release the report before the end of her term on August 31.

Asked to elaborate on why it has not been released, Bachelet said she needed time to integrate new information from her visit and to review input on the report's contents from China.

Rights groups accuse Beijing of abuses against Uyghurs, a mainly Muslim ethnic minority that numbers around 10 million in the western region of Xinjiang, including the mass use of forced labour in internment camps. The US has accused China of genocide. China has vigorously denied the allegations.

Sophie Richardson, China director of Human Rights Watch, said Bachelet's response was "woefully inadequate" given the scale of abuses. Michele Taylor, US ambassador on human rights in Geneva, called for the report's release.

Request for Expressions of Interest (Firm) International Convention Centre, Dhaka, Bangladesh Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh Ministry/Division : Local Government Division. Agency : Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC). Procuring entity name : Project Director, International Convention Centre. Procuring entity code : Not applicable. Procuring entity district : Dhaka. Expression of Interest for : Consulting Firm. Selection of EOI Ref. No. : 46.207.000.12.05.182.2022-01 Date : 23 August, 2022 KEY INFORMATION Procurement method : QCBS, ICB. FUNDING INFORMATION Budget and source of funds : Own fund of DSCC. PARTICULAR INFORMATION Project name : Design of International Convention Centre (Fifty (50)-Storied Skyscraper) at Kamrangirchar, Dhaka, Bangladesh. EOI closing date and time : 31 October, 2022 BST 12:00pm. INFORMATION FOR APPLICANT Brief description of assignment : Planning, Design of Fifty (50)-Storied Tower having International Convention Centre (Convention Centre with capacity of 5000 Persons, 3000 Persons and 1000 persons, Seminar Rooms, Multipurpose Hall), Exhibition Halls, 5 Star Hotel, Office Space, Commercial space, Shopping Mall, Condominium, Eateries space (Restaurants, Cafe & Food Courts), Cineplex, Amphitheater, Banquette hall, Observation Deck, Parking facilities at Kamrangirchar to create a state-of-the-art and World Class skyscraper in Dhaka, Bangladesh. The facilities will be designed with sustainable approaches in planning and design, energy conservation, water resource management, solid waste management, efficient land use, eco-friendly building design to create cost-effective and measurable savings for the project. So that the construction will be in accordance with international best practices. Experience, resources and delivery capacity required : Proven experience of satisfactory completion of Project similar to the proposed service in at least 1 (one) number. Association with local firms is : Encouraged as joint venture or sub-consultancy or include in their payroll.