

2022 confirmed as UK's hottest year

AFP, London
The UK's average temperature exceeded 10 degrees Celsius (50 Fahrenheit) last year for the first time since records began -- a once-in-500 years event without man-made climate change.

The Met Office yesterday confirmed that 2022 was the country's hottest year on record with an average temperature of 10.03 degrees Celsius.

Since records began in 1884, the 10 warmest years have occurred from 2003, the meteorological service said, confirming trends reported elsewhere in Europe this winter.

Nikos Christidis, climate attribution scientist for the Met Office, said it studied current temperatures compared to models shorn of the impact of human climate influence. By the end of the century, without steeper cuts to carbon emissions, "a UK average temperature of 10 degrees Celsius could occur almost every year", Christidis added.

The Met Office report was released ahead of a broader study on January 10 by Copernicus, the European Union's planetary observation programme, into EU and global weather patterns last year.

Earth has warmed more than 1.1 degrees Celsius since the late 19th century, with roughly half of that increase occurring in the past 30 years, the World Meteorological Organization said in a report in November.



Pedestrians look at the destroyed Russian military vehicles at an open air exhibition of destroyed Russian equipment in Kyiv, Ukraine. PHOTO: AFP

ROW OVER MEGHAN
William knocked Harry to floor: report

REUTERS, London



Britain's Prince Harry says in his much-awaited memoir that older brother and heir to the throne Prince William knocked him to the floor during a 2019 argument over Harry's American wife Meghan, the Guardian newspaper reported on Wednesday.

The altercation between the brothers, the sons of King Charles, is detailed in Harry's book "Spare" which is due to be published on Jan. 10, said the Guardian, stating it had obtained a leaked copy despite stringent security.

According to the Guardian's account, the 2019 sibling brawl took place at Harry's London home after William called Meghan "difficult", "rude" and "abrasive", which Harry said sounded like "the press narrative" about his wife.

"He grabbed me by the collar, ripping my necklace, and he knocked me to the floor," Harry wrote, according to the paper.

"I landed on the dog's bowl, which cracked under my back, the pieces cutting into me. I lay there for a moment, dazed, then got to my feet and told him to get out."

William then challenged his younger brother to hit back but Harry refused. William later returned to the scene, "looking regretful, and apologised", Harry wrote, according to the extract, with his brother asking him not to tell Meghan that he had "attacked" him.

US HOUSE SPEAKER SHOWDOWN
Deadlock deepens
McCarthy fails for second day to win vote

AFP, Washington

The US House of Representatives had to adjourn until yesterday (Thursday) as bitter infighting within the Republican ranks continues to paralyze the chamber and prevent the election of a new speaker.

Conservative hardliners have spurred former president Donald Trump's pick Kevin McCarthy, who they accuse of being too moderate, making the 2023 speakership race the first in a century to require multiple rounds of voting.

Despite six ballots over two days, McCarthy has failed to secure the 218 votes needed for the speakership, the third most powerful role in US politics after the presidency and vice presidency.

Without a speaker, the chamber is unable to swear in members, start filling committees, tackle legislation or open any of the investigations they have promised into President Joe Biden.

Unable to break the stalemate, the House abruptly adjourned until noon on Thursday, allowing Republicans a few

precious hours to regroup and settle on a new strategy before going back into the fray.

Roughly 20 Republicans have blocked the California congressman's path to the gavel until he capitulates to their agenda, leaving the party unable to capitalize so far on the slim majority it secured in November's mid-term elections.

McCarthy, a member of the Republican leadership for more than a decade, has already agreed to many of the group's demands, but opposition to his candidacy from within his own party has only seemed to harden.

Biden called the Republican failure to elect a speaker "embarrassing for the country," and said the "rest of the world" was closely watching.

McCarthy's supporters have grown increasingly frustrated by the political standoff, especially as no credible competitor has emerged.

McCarthy dragged his party back to a 222-212 House majority in last year's mid-terms after four years in the wilderness.

16-year-old Palestinian killed in WB

AFP, Nablus

The Israeli army killed a Palestinian boy yesterday in the West Bank city of Nablus, the Palestinian health ministry said, where armed clashes broke out between militants and Israeli forces.

The health ministry announced "Amer Abu Zeitoun, 16, was killed by a bullet in the head fired by the occupation (Israeli) soldiers during the aggression on Nablus at dawn today".

Israel's military said "armed suspects fired towards the soldiers, who responded with live fire" during an operation to arrest two people.

In December, the UN said 2022 had been the deadliest year in the West Bank since its records began in 2005 with more than 150 Palestinians killed.

Belarus Nobel Prize winner Bialiatki goes on trial

AFP, Moscow

Jailed Nobel Prize winner Ales Bialiatki went on trial in Minsk yesterday in what supporters see as a bid to clamp down on Viasna, Belarus's top rights group which he founded. Bialiatki, who was co-awarded last year's Nobel Peace Prize, founded Viasna (Spring), the authoritarian country's most prominent rights group, in 1996. Viasna said on social media that Bialiatki and his associates Valentin Stefanovich and Vladimir Labkovich could be seen in the defendants' cage in the courtroom at the start of the hearing. Bialiatki, 60, and his associates were jailed after large-scale demonstrations against the regime in 2020, when authoritarian President Alexander Lukashenko claimed victory in elections deemed fraudulent by the international community. Bialiatki, Stefanovich and Labkovich have been in detention since July 2021. They were initially accused of tax evasion.

Iran closes French institute to protest Khamenei cartoons

AFP, Paris

Iran yesterday announced the closure of a Tehran-based French Institute for Research in protest against cartoons of the Islamic republic's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei published by French satirical weekly Charlie Hebdo. The magazine printed the caricatures in support of months of protests in Iran as part of a special edition to mark the anniversary of the deadly 2015 attack on its Paris office which left 12 people dead, including some of its best known cartoonists.

German MPs, minister to visit Taiwan

AFP, Berlin

Germany will send a high-ranking parliamentary delegation to Taiwan next week, an MP told AFP yesterday, followed by the first ministerial visit in two decades in moves certain to spark tensions with China. Deputies from the pro-business Free Democratic Party (FDP), a junior partner in Germany's coalition government, planned the trip in a sign of "solidarity" with the self-ruled democracy which China claims as part of its territory, the head of parliament's defence committee told AFP. The trip is to be followed by a visit from German Education Minister Bettina Stark-Watzinger, also of the FDP, in the spring, sources told AFP.

Job advertisement for Bangladesh Bank (বাংলাদেশ ব্যাংক) recruitment. Includes details on application process, eligibility, and contact information.