

Asia climate woes mount

Extreme heat shatters May records throughout the region

REUTERS, Singapore

Countries across Asia have been hit by another round of extreme heat that has toppled seasonal temperature records throughout the region, raising concerns about their ability to adapt to a rapidly changing climate.

After punishing heatwaves struck large parts of the continent in April, temperatures spiked again in late May, normally the start of the cooler monsoon season.

Seasonal highs were registered in China, southeast Asia and elsewhere, and experts warned that there was more to come.

"We can't say that these are events that we need to get used to, and adapt to, and mitigate against, because they are only going to get worse as climate change progresses," said Sarah Perkins-Kirkpatrick, a climate scientist with the University of New South Wales in Australia.

The heatwave in Vietnam, expected to last well into June, has already forced authorities to turn off street lights and ration electricity as air conditioning demand threatened to overwhelm the power grid.

The country recorded its highest temperature ever on May 6, at 44.1 Celsius, in Thanh Hoa province.

In China, Shanghai endured its hottest May day in more than a century on Monday. A day later, a weather station in the southeastern tech manufacturing hub of Shenzhen also set a May record of 40.2C. The heatwave is set to continue across the south for a few more days.

India, Pakistan and southeast Asia already experienced a punishing heatwave in April, causing widespread infrastructure damage and a surge in heat stroke cases. Bangladesh was also at its hottest in 50 years, while Thailand hit a record 45C.



Emergency paramedics support a woman, who recognised the bodies of her daughter and granddaughter killed during a Russian missile strike in Kyiv, Ukraine yesterday. Moscow's relentless aerial assaults on Ukraine killed three people yesterday, while shelling in western Russia injured some people and triggered evacuations.

PHOTO: REUTERS

SUDAN CONFLICT

Rockets hit Khartoum market

18 killed; US imposes new economic, visa sanctions against warring leaders

AFP, Khartoum

Shelling and aerial bombardments killed 18 civilians at a market in the capital of Sudan where fighting showed no signs of abating yesterday after the army abandoned truce talks.

For more than six weeks, Khartoum and other parts of the country have been gripped by bloody warfare between the army and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces.

The army on Wednesday blasted RSF bases in Khartoum after pulling out of the talks in the Saudi city of Jeddah, accusing its rival of violating a ceasefire that was meant to allow aid deliveries.

"Eighteen civilians were killed and 106 wounded" by army artillery fire and aerial

bombardments Wednesday on a market in southern Khartoum, a committee of human rights lawyers said.

The toll was confirmed by a neighbourhood group that organises aid, which said the situation was "catastrophic" and appealed for help from doctors and for blood donations.

The White House yesterday announced new economic and visa sanctions against Sudanese leaders responsible for breaking a ceasefire and provoking "appalling" bloodshed.

"We are following through by levying economic sanctions, imposing visa restrictions against actors who are perpetuating the violence," National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan said in a statement.

Meanwhile, the UN said yesterday more than 100,000 Sudanese refugees had fled to neighbouring Chad since the conflict in broke out, bringing the tally to more than half a million.

In both north and south Khartoum on Wednesday, troops loyal to army chief Abdel Fattah al-Burhan attacked key bases of the RSF, residents told AFP.

One witness said there was "heavy artillery fire from army camps" in the capital's north.

Another reported "artillery blasts on the RSF camp in Al-Salha" in southern Khartoum. The attacks came two days after US and Saudi mediators said the two sides had agreed to extend by five days the initial week-long truce.

Iran increasing nuke stockpile

Says UN nuclear watchdog

AFP, Vienna

Iran has significantly increased its stockpile of enriched uranium in recent months, continuing its nuclear escalation, a confidential report by the UN nuclear watchdog on Wednesday seen by AFP said. The agency, however, noted progress in its cooperation with Iran in a separate report saying it has decided to close the file on nuclear material at an undeclared site, an issue which has long exacerbated relations between the two parties. The two confidential reports come days before the board of governors of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) is due to meet to review progress in addressing the watchdog's remaining concerns. The nuclear watchdog said in its quarterly report that Iran's estimated stockpile of enriched uranium had reached more than 23 times the limit set out in the landmark 2015 accord between Tehran and world powers. As of 13 May, Iran's total enriched uranium stockpile was estimated at 4,744.5 kilograms (10,459 pounds). The limit in the 2015 deal was 202.8 kilograms. The report also said that Iran is continuing its enrichment of uranium to levels higher than the 3.67 percent limit in the deal. Efforts to revive the Iran nuclear deal – which was left in tatters by the unilateral withdrawal of the United States in 2018 – have stalled since last summer.

PROPAGANDA CAMPAIGN

Saudi charges women's activist

AFP, Riyadh

Saudi Arabia has charged a women's rights activist detained since November over her social media posts with launching a "propaganda campaign", according to court documents seen by AFP on Wednesday. Manahel al-Otaibi was arrested for social media posts challenging male guardianship laws and requirements for women to wear customary body-shrouding abaya. Public prosecutors accused her of leading a "campaign to incite Saudi girls to denounce religious principles and rebel against customs and traditions of Saudi society," reads the documents. She appeared in front of judges in January and was then referred to the Specialised Criminal Court which was established in 2008 to handle terrorism-related cases but has been widely used to try political dissidents and human rights activists.

Nepal can now use

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trade in recent years and were waiting for the green signal from New Delhi.

In August 2022, Bangladesh and Nepal decided to request India to allow the export of 40-50 MW of electricity from Nepal to Bangladesh in the initial phase by utilising the high-voltage Baharampur-Bheramara cross-border power transmission link.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina also raised the issue of importing power from Nepal and Bhutan through India during her official visit to New Delhi last September.

The matter was also raised during Nepal Foreign Minister Narayan Prakash Saud's visit to Dhaka in mid-May when he urged Bangladeshi companies to invest in his country's hydropower sector.

As Nepal and Bangladesh do not share borders and India lies between the two countries, the trade needed India's approval to commence.

Experts say the Nepal-Bangladesh power trade may make a small start which, however, would be a big step towards sub-regional cooperation in the electricity sector, something both BIMSTEC and BBIN (Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal) are trying for

Ankara eager to boost ties

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during the telephonic conversation, Sheikh Hasina congratulated the Turkish president on his reelection, where the voter turnout rate was above 86 percent, reports BSS.

She expressed her happiness as the people of Turkey made the right choice, which was proved after the runoff election.

The prime minister reiterated that the people of Bangladesh would remain steadfast to stand by the brotherly people of Turkey at any time of need, as during the February 2023 earthquake.

President Erdogan also expressed his gratitude that the brotherly people of Bangladesh mentally joined the jubilant people of Turkey at his victory in the second-round election.

To this end, he thanked the people of Bangladesh and wished to further strengthen the ties between the people of the two countries.

In the end, Hasina conveyed her best wishes to Erdogan and his family members.

Meanwhile, President Mohammed Shahabuddin will visit Turkey to attend the swearing-in ceremony of President Erdogan.

"Our president will arrive in Turkey on Friday," a foreign ministry official told this correspondent yesterday

Frequent power cuts pile

blamed the shortages in power production for the frequent load shedding.

Yesterday, the two distribution companies resorted to load shedding for more than three to four hours on average across the capital and five to six hours in the other cities.

Scorching temperatures over the last four days have led to a surge in electricity demand, officials of DESCO and DPDC said.

However, enough electricity cannot be generated due to insufficient fuel, they added.

HC seeks info on Alauddin

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reportedly arrested on January 27, 1993, in connection with a case filed for killing one Selim Miah Dhali on January 25, 1993.

The district and sessions judge's court in Shariatpur on January 12, 2001, sentenced 15 accused, including Alauddin, out of 26 to life imprisonment.

Except for Alauddin, all the convicted were freed following HC orders.

But Alauddin failed to get release from jail due to failure of the authorities concerned, he said in the petition.

Lawyer Bivuti himself moved the petition while Assistant Attorney General Md Selim Azad represented the state during yesterday's hearing.

Bangladesh, Qatar sign new

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this, Bangladesh will get 12 LNG cargoes in 2026 and 24 cargoes in 2027.

Currently, Bangladesh has been importing 1.82-2.5 million MTPA of LNG since 2018 under an existing deal signed in 2017.

Addressing the function, Nasrul Hamid thanked Qatar for agreeing to supply additional LNG to Bangladesh.

"The long-term contract of the LNG supply is a comforting achievement for Bangladesh at a moment when the entire world is facing unrest regarding the energy supply," he said.

Nasrul said that this energy partnership between Bangladesh and Qatar has added a new dimension to the existing friendship between the two countries.

It was possible to sign this long-term LNG agreement quickly because of the diplomatic move from Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, he added.

He said that the supply of all kinds of energies will be ensured to maintain the economic pace.

As Bangladesh is one of the fastest growing economies, the demands for power and gas have constantly been increasing in the country, he added.

Qatar's State Minister for Energy Saad Sherida al-Kaabi said that his country is proud to be the largest LNG supplier to Bangladesh.

"Annual LNG supply of more than 3.5 million tonnes will contribute to the overall development of Bangladesh including its socio-economic status," he added.

Frequent power cuts pile misery on city residents

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PHOTO: AFP

Tunisian lawyers shout slogans against their president during a protest in Tunis, calling authorities for independence in the judicial system yesterday.