

July likely to be warmest month on record
Says Nasa climate expert

AFP, Washington

July 2023 will probably be the world's hottest month in "hundreds, if not thousands, of years," top Nasa climatologist Gavin Schmidt said Thursday.

This month has already seen daily records shattered according to tools run by the European Union and the University of Maine, which combine ground and satellite data into models to generate preliminary estimates.

Though they differ slightly from one another, the trend of extreme heat is unmistakable and will likely be reflected in the more robust monthly reports issued later by US agencies, said Schmidt in a Nasa briefing with reporters.

"We are seeing unprecedented changes all over the world -- the heat waves that we're seeing in the US in Europe and in China are demolishing records, left, right and center," he added.

What's more, the effects cannot be attributed solely to the El Nino weather pattern, which "has really only just emerged."

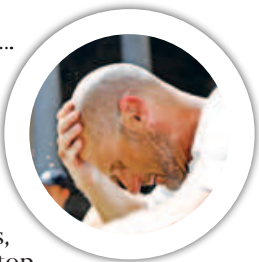
Though El Nino is playing a small role, "what we're seeing is the overall warmth, pretty much everywhere, particularly in the oceans. We've been seeing record-breaking sea surface temperatures, even outside of the tropics, for many months now.

"And we will anticipate that is going to continue, and the reason why we think that's going to continue, is because we continue to put greenhouse gasses into the atmosphere."

What is happening right now is increasing the chances that 2023 will be the hottest year on record, which Schmidt currently assigned a "50-50 chance" based on his calculations, though he said other scientists had placed it as high as 80 percent.

"But we anticipate that 2024 will be an even warmer year, because we're going to be starting off with that El Nino event that's building now, and that will peak towards the end of this year."

Schmidt's warnings come as the world has been buffeted by fires and dire health warnings in the past week, in addition to broken temperature records.



Women burn the house of one of the men accused of parading two women naked in front of a mob during ongoing ethnic violence in India's northeastern Manipur state, at Wangjing Awang Leika village of Thoubal District some 26 Km from Manipur's capital Imphal yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

ENERGY, POWER, PORT PROJECTS

India, Sri Lanka agree to boost ties

REUTERS, New Delhi

India and Sri Lanka said yesterday that they had agreed to improve economic ties by increasing cooperation in renewable energy and studying the feasibility of building an oil pipeline and a land bridge between the two countries.

New Delhi will also help develop a port and an economic hub at Trincomalee, a city on Sri Lanka's northeastern coast.

The announcements were made by the leaders of the two countries as Sri Lankan President Ranil Wickremesinghe held talks with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi in New Delhi last morning.

India's support of nearly USD four billion between January and July last year was critical for Sri Lanka after it almost ran out of dollars and sank into a financial crisis that left it struggling to fund essential imports including fuel and medicine.

Modi said yesterday that the two leaders "adopted a vision document for our Economic Partnership" to strengthen maritime, air, energy and people-to-people connectivity, to accelerate mutual cooperation in tourism, power, trade, higher education, and skill development.

Modi also said the two sides would work quickly to connect their electricity grids and study the feasibility of building a petroleum pipeline and a land bridge between the countries, which are about 50 km (31 miles) apart at one point.



The projects to connect the power grids through undersea cables and the oil pipeline are expected to cost around USD four billion in total, according to officials on both sides. Few details were released on the agreements on renewables.

Wickremesinghe said that "constructing a multi-product petroleum pipeline from the southern part of India to Sri Lanka will ensure an affordable and reliable supply of energy to Sri Lanka."

The two countries also will soon restart

negotiations on a more expansive trade deal known as the Economic and Technological Cooperation Agreement.

Wickremesinghe also said that he had updated Modi about the reform measures being taken by his government to resolve the island's financial crisis, and expressed appreciation for the support provided by India for the "most challenging period in modern history".

Sri Lanka defaulted on its foreign debt last May and India is part of a common platform established with Japan and other Paris Club members to help the island restructure its debt.

India remains a key creditor to the island with \$1.9 billion in outstanding debt.

While New Delhi has traditionally had strong ties with its southern neighbour, the small island nation has become a jousting ground between India and China due to its strategic location in the Indian Ocean.

The two-day visit to New Delhi is Wickremesinghe's first since he took over as the president a year ago after his predecessor was forced out of office following widespread protests against the economic crisis.

MANIPUR SEXUAL ASSAULT
Suspects' homes on ablaze

AFP, New Delhi

Furious women set fire to the houses of two Indian men accused of parading two women naked in a state where months of ethnic clashes have left at least 120 dead, images showed yesterday.

A clip went viral Wednesday showing two women reported to be from the Kuki tribal group walking naked along a street while being jeered at and harassed by a mob reportedly from the Meitei community.

Violence erupted in the northeastern state of Manipur between the mainly Christian Kuki and the predominantly Hindu Meitei in May over job quotas and land rights, and intermittent clashes have continued since.

The emergence of footage of the women's humiliation -- which happened in May -- triggered outrage across the country, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi saying it had "shamed India".

Seven killed in Bhutan floods

REUTERS, Kathmandu

At least seven people were killed and 16 others missing in Bhutan after flash floods and landslides triggered by heavy rains washed away a section of a small hydroelectric plant on Thursday, local media reported.

Rescue and search teams have rushed to the area, authorities said. Prime Minister Lotay Tshering has arrived at the site and is taking stock of the situation and guiding rescue and search operation, his office said.

A section of the 32 MW Yungichhu Hydro Power Project in a remote area in the east of the country was washed away, but the main part was not hit, the Bhutanese newspaper said in a Twitter post without elaborating.

State broadcaster BBS said seven bodies have been recovered so far and another 16 were missing. Five of the seven killed have been identified, authorities said without giving details.

DRUG WAR PROBE

Philippines 'done talking' with ICC

AFP, Manila

The Philippines will no longer deal with the International Criminal Court, President Ferdinand Marcos said yesterday, after The Hague-based tribunal rejected Manila's appeal to stop a probe into a deadly drug war.

Thousands of people have been killed in the anti-narcotics campaign started by former president Rodrigo Duterte in 2016 and continued under Marcos.

"We're done talking with the ICC," Marcos told reporters during a visit to the southern island of Mindanao, according to an official transcript.

"The alleged crimes are here in the Philippines, the victims are Filipino, so why go to The Hague? It should be here," he said.

Tigresses aim

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pull off a win in the series opener despite posting 152 runs. A lack of application from the batters was yet again exposed in the following match, where Bangladesh were bundled out for 120 in reply to India's 228 for eight.

Fargana Hoque Pinky remained the only Bangladesh batter to make an impression in the two games. Apart from her, there were hardly any contributions from the batters.

The team management, however, is hoping for a strong comeback and see the batters rectify their mistakes from the previous games. If Bangladesh are able to win the series, it will surely be a turning point for women's cricket in the country.

Bowling, on the hand, has been the strength for Bangladesh. Pacer Marufa Akter, who picked up four wickets in the first game, along with Sanjida Akter, Rabeya Khan, Sultana Khatun and others offer a lot of variety for the hosts.

All things considered, given how Harmanpreet Kaur and company, comprising the likes of Jemimah Rodrigues and vice-captain Smrity Mandhana, have brilliantly showcased their talents in recent times, the Tigresses will have to play at full potential to stun the visitors in today's high-stakes encounter.

BNP blames govt

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quality hospitals. The city corporation must also provide financial assistance to low-income dengue patients.

"The government should provide free dengue testing at all government hospitals. They should also subsidize dengue testing at private hospitals to be affordable for everyone."

As for long-term measures, the leaders said, among other initiatives, the government must come up with "an effective mosquito control action plan ... in coordination with experts."

Jubo League man killed

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Rubel sustained severe wounds on his head, arms, back, and legs.

Family members took him to Islami Bank Hospital in Kakrail. From there, he was rushed to the National Institute of Traumatology and Orthopaedics Rehabilitation where doctors declared him dead.

The body was later sent to the morgue of Dhaka Medical College for autopsy and in the afternoon the body was handed over to the family after post-mortem.

The victim's wife in the case statement mentioned that Rubel's killing was planned.

She said Rubel had a rivalry with many as he was involved with Chhatra League and was a candidate for the post of Jubo League's ward 12

They'll get passports

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receive national identity cards later.

A seven-member delegation led by Abdullah visited Saudi Arabia from May 5 to May 10 to resolve the problem.

This correspondent contacted Divisional Commissioner of Rangpur Habibur Rahman and Additional Director General of Department of Immigration and Passports Selina Banu who were delegation members, but they refused to comment.

Armed man tries

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of different agencies like BSF and others. He wanted to meet the Chief Minister. This is a serious issue. We are trying to find out what was his actual purpose," Goyal said.

The vehicle was also seized.

The man was talking incoherently, he added.

The incident happened hours before the Trinamool Congress chief was scheduled to leave her Kalighat residence to reach the 'Martyr's Day' rally venue in the central part of the city.

unit.

Besides, he had enmity with many others over different cases, reads the case statement.

Rubel's brother in law Mamun Ahmed Siddique said the killing was political.

Hayatul Islam Khan, deputy commissioner of Motijheel division of Dhaka Metropolitan Police told reporters after visiting the spot that after analysing CCTV footage it seemed that it was a planned murder.

"We have made good progress in the investigation which I do not want to reveal right now for the sake of investigation," he said.

He also assured that in a short time, they will be able to arrest the criminals involved with the killing.

Foreigners

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the Panchayet election in India's West Bengal but they start screaming about any petty incident here in Bangladesh," he said, adding that the remarks of the foreigners are tantamount to interference into Bangladesh's internal affairs which is not supported by the Geneva Convention.

"We hope that those activist diplomats do not interfere in our internal affairs in future," the foreign minister said.

"Our police never obstruct any demonstration... When BNP damages public and private properties, it becomes the police's responsibility to protect those [assets]. It's the duty of the government. Have you seen how police torture in England? And Amnesty International now speaks! You have seen how police kill by strangling in America. Our police are very tolerant. One or two cases could be different. But they follow the rules," Momen said

He asked the country's newsmen not to care too much about foreigners and instead to find out what police did in their countries.

Hilsa production growth rate declining

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declining trend in year-on-year growth rate and the scarcity of hilsa even in June-July this year, when there should have been plenty of it, has raised some eyebrows.

The Department of Fisheries (DoF) took up a Tk 246 crore "Hilsa Development and Management Project" in 2019 to increase hilsa production.

Taking the 2018-19 fiscal year as the base, when hilsa production was 5.33 lakh tonnes, the DoF aimed to increase the annual production to 6.2 lakh tonnes, or by 16 percent in four years.

However, in three years it has achieved a 6.34 percent growth, which is less than half the target.

The year-on-year growth rate was 3.3 percent in FY 2019-20 and 2.68 percent in 2020-21. The growth rate slid further to a negligible 0.25 percent in 2021-22. The DoF is yet to release the FY 2022-23 data.

A senior scientific officer of BFRI said that in 2021 around 58,800 tonnes of hilsa was destroyed due to illegal catching of jatka.

"Assuming the unit price at Tk 1,000 per kg, the country lost around Tk 5,880 crore," he said

The BFRI found the figure after a survey at 10 landing stations, including Mahipur and Khepupara of Patuakhali, Patharghata of Barguna, and Monpura and Daulatkhan of Bhola.

He noted that brood hilsa trying to enter rivers from sea to lay eggs also find it hard to escape the 3,000 to 4,000-feet long gillnet that fishermen lay one after another, leaving a gap of 100-200 yards.

"Such obstacles prevent many brood hilsa from ever getting a chance to lay eggs in their lifecycle. And it is one of the main reasons behind low catch of big hilsa in the river," Alam said.

He also blamed less rainfall and navigability problems for the low

catch.

LAX MONITORING

People involved with hilsa business pointed fingers at a section of law enforcers. They said no government measures would be fruitful as long as the protectors keep working like predators.

"In exchange for bribes, some dishonest police officers allow fishermen to use gillnets and catch fish during the ban period," said Manik Mia Dewan, general secretary of Bangladesh Awami Matsyajibi League's unit in Chandpur, one of the largest hilsa hubs.

A fisherman in Chandpur, employed as a guard against illegal fishing during bans, alleged that river police collect Tk 30,000 to Tk 50,000 from each boat to catch fish during the ban.

"River police also take bribes to allow fisherman to use banned gillnet round the year," said the guard who has been fishing for over 20 years.

Moksed, another fisherman-cum-guard in Patuakhali, said some unscrupulous fishermen use gillnet to catch jatka and other small fish in small rivers and canals from late afternoon till dawn to avoid arrest.

"I prepared two boats in the last two years and incurred a loss of about Tk 6-7 lakh. This year, I have prepared only one boat to avoid further loss," said Manik, a fisherman since 1982.

Preferring to be unnamed, a senior upazila fisheries officer of Chandpur said they were aware of the illegal activities.

"It is often discussed in the district coordination meetings. We're told that actions are taken against the persons responsible. But it continues nevertheless," he said.

Tofazzel Hossain, Assistant Superintendent of Police of River Police of Chandpur, said they take departmental actions whenever they receive allegations against their

officers.

ALTERNATIVE LIVELIHOODS SCHEME

To protect brood hilsa and jatka during the ban periods, the DoF created alternative employment opportunities for 30,000 affected fishermen families and distributed 10,000 authorised nets across the country.

Some fishermen are appointed as guards for a monthly pay of Tk 10,000 to monitor illegal fishing and inform local fisheries offices. They also motivate fellow fishermen not to catch fish during the ban period.

Others got cows to raise and remain productive during the ban period to make up for their loss.

Zia Haider Chaudhury, Project Director of the Hilsa Development and Management Project, admitted their slow progress, but attributed it to slow release of funds.

"We would be able to spend 50 percent of the budget by the end of the project tenure. We're looking to extend the project tenure by one year," he said.

Business as usual

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the Australian retailers and Bangladeshi manufacturers which are contributing to diversify the industry and product range in Australia.

Ayres added that labour rights, trade union and sustainability are important factors for Australian businesses and the government to engage with foreign partners.

He expressed interest to explore ways to take forward the Trade and Investment Framework Arrangement signed in 2021 between Bangladesh and Australia to the next level.

An 11-member delegation, led by BGMEA President Faruque, is visiting Australia and held the Bangladesh Apparel Summit in Melbourne with the support of the High Commission on 18 July.