

Schools closed, warnings issued as Asia swelters in extreme heat wave

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A man showers with a hose during hot weather in Manila on April 28, 2024.

South and Southeast Asia braced for more extreme heat on Sunday as authorities across the region issued health warnings and residents fled to parks and air-conditioned malls for relief.

A wave of exceptionally hot weather has blasted the region over the past week, sending the mercury as high as 45 degrees Celsius (113 degrees Fahrenheit) and forcing thousands of schools to tell students to stay home.

The Philippines announced on Sunday the suspension of in-person classes at all [public schools](#) for two days after a record-shattering day of heat in the capital Manila.

In Thailand, where at least 30 people have died of heatstroke so far this year, the meteorological department warned of "[severe conditions](#)" after temperatures in a northern province exceeded 44.1C (111.4F) on Saturday.

And in Cambodia, Myanmar, Vietnam, India and Bangladesh, forecasters warned that temperatures could exceed 40C in the coming days as people endured searing heat and stifling humidity.

"I dare not go out in the daytime. I am worried we would get heatstroke," said a 39-year-old cashier in Myanmar's Yangon who gave her name as San Yin.

She said she has been going to a park with her husband and four-year-old son at night to escape the heat of their fourth-floor apartment.



A vendor stands under a tree during hot weather in Manila. The Philippines has suspended in-person classes in all public schools for two days because of the extreme heat.

"This is the only spot we can stay to avoid the heat in our neighborhood," she said.

Global temperatures hit record highs last year, and the United Nations weather and climate agency said Tuesday that Asia was warming at a particularly rapid pace.

Extensive scientific research has found climate change is causing [heat waves](#) to become longer, more frequent and more intense.

No relief

Myanmar has recorded temperatures that are 3-4C higher than the April average, its weather monitor said last week.

And on Sunday, the national forecaster predicted temperatures in the central city of Mandalay could rise to 43C.

The ministry of water and meteorology in Cambodia warned that temperatures could also hit 43C in some parts of the country in the week ahead, while the [health ministry](#) advised people to monitor their health "during hot weather related to climate change".



People gather at a jetty in Yangon in Myanmar, which has experienced higher-

than-average April temperatures.

Temperatures in Vietnam were also forecast to remain high during a five-day national holiday, with forecasts as high as 41C in the north.

Forecasters there said it would remain intensely hot until the end of April, with cooler conditions expected in May.

India's weather department said Saturday that severe heat wave conditions would continue through the weekend in several states, with temperatures soaring to 44C in some locations.

"I have never experienced this heat before," Ananth Nadiger, a 37-year-old advertising professional, told AFP from Bengaluru.

"It's very unpleasant and it takes the energy out of you."

The world's biggest democracy is in the middle of a six-week general election that saw millions of voters queue up in searing temperatures on Friday.

India's election commission said it had formed a task force to review the impact of heat waves and humidity before each round of voting.



A worker carries air coolers in Hyderabad, with Indian forecasters saying a severe heatwave would continue through the weekend.

And in Bangladesh, millions of students returned to schools that had been closed due to extreme temperatures, even though its weather bureau said Sunday the heat wave would continue for at least the next three days.

"I went to the school with my 13-year-old daughter. She was happy her school was open. But I was tense," said Lucky Begum, whose daughter is enrolled at a state-run school in Dhaka.

"The heat is too much," she told AFP. "She already got heat rashes from sweating. I hope she does not get sick."

School closures

The suspension of in-person classes in the Philippines came after Manila witnessed its highest temperature ever recorded, with jeepney drivers also planning a nationwide strike on Monday and Tuesday.

The temperature in the capital hit a record 38.8C (101.8F) on Saturday, with the heat index reaching 45C, data from the state weather forecaster showed.



Students returned to school in Bangladesh after classes were suspended because of a lingering heatwave.

The heat index measures what a temperature feels like, taking into account humidity.

Many schools in the Philippines have no air-conditioning, leaving students to swelter in crowded, poorly ventilated classrooms.

The hot weather persisted on Sunday, with many flocking to air-conditioned shopping malls and swimming pools for relief.

"This is the hottest I've ever experienced here," said Nancy Bautista, 65, whose resort in Cavite province near Manila was fully booked.

"Many of our guests are friends and families. They swim in the pool to fight the heat."

March, April and May are typically the hottest and driest months of the year in the region but this year's conditions have been exacerbated by the El Niño weather phenomenon.

"All places in the country, not necessarily just Metro Manila, are expected to have hotter temperatures until the second week of May," Glaiza Escullar of the state weather forecaster told AFP.



A man douses himself with water during a heat wave in Manila.



People rest in the shade in a park during hot weather in Manila.

Camiling municipality in Tarlac province, north of Manila, recorded a temperature of 40.3C (104.5F) on Saturday—the highest in the Philippines this year.

As the mercury rose, Gerise Reyes, 31, planned to take her two-year-old daughter to a shopping mall near Manila.

"It's hot here at home. This is the hottest I've ever experienced, especially between 10:00 am and 4:00 pm," she said.

"We need a free aircon to cut our electricity bill."

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