

April temperatures in Bangladesh hottest on record

May 1 2024, by Shafiqul ALAM



A vehicle of the Dhaka North City Corporation sprays water along a busy road to lower the temperature amidst a heat wave.

Bangladesh's weather bureau said Wednesday that last month was the hottest April on record, with the South Asian nation and much of the

region still enduring a suffocating heat wave.

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

The punishing heat last month prompted Bangladesh's government to close schools across the country, keeping an estimated 32 million students at home.

"This year the heat wave covered around 80 percent of the country. We've not seen such unbroken and expansive heat waves before," Bangladesh Meteorological Department senior forecaster Muhammad Abul Kalam Mallik told AFP.

He said last month was the hottest April in Bangladesh since records began in 1948 "in terms of hot days and area coverage in the country".

Weather stations around Bangladesh this year recorded average daily maximum temperatures between two and eight degrees hotter than the 33.2-degree-Celsius (91.8-degree-Fahrenheit) average daily high for April over a 30-year period to 2010, he added.

Health department spokesman Selim Raihan told AFP the government had confirmed at least 11 heatstroke-related deaths in the past 10 days.

Rains are expected to bring some relief to Bangladesh from Thursday after a week of sweltering temperatures, with Dhaka recording several days over 40C.



A rickshaw puller rests amid severe heat wave in the Bangladeshi capital Dhaka.

Mallik said the severity of the heat had been worsened by the absence of the usual pre-monsoon April thunderstorms, which normally cool the country ahead of summer.

"Bangladesh gets an average of 130.2 millimeters of rain in April. But this April we got an average of one millimeter of rain," he said.

Mallik said the bureau was checking data to confirm whether this year also marked record low rainfalls for April.

Schools in Bangladesh will remain closed until Sunday.

The government ordered classrooms reopened last weekend, but a top Bangladeshi court directed them to shut again on Monday after taking into consideration reports that several teachers had died in the heat wave.

'Life has become unbearable'

Thousands gathered at mosques and in open fields around the Muslim-majority nation last week to pray for rain.

"Life has become unbearable due to lack of rains," Muhammad Abu Yusuf, an Islamic cleric who led one such service, told AFP last week.



Thousands gathered at mosques and in open fields around Bangladesh to pray for rain.

"Poor people are suffering immensely."

Mahfuzur Rahman, the owner of a cigarette stall in one of the capital Dhaka's largest wholesale markets, also said the past week had been "unbearable".

"Some days were so hot that it felt like my head was spinning. I can't concentrate and I feel drowsy. But I have to sell enough to make at least some money," he told AFP.

"I don't know why it is happening. Maybe we have tortured the earth. Maybe we have sinned."

Large swathes of South and Southeast Asia are sweltering through a heat wave that has topped temperature records from Myanmar to the Philippines, with the El Niño phenomenon also driving this year's exceptionally warm weather.

Weather bureaus in Cambodia, Myanmar, Vietnam and India have all forecast temperatures above 40C (104F).

The months preceding the region's monsoon, or rainy season, are usually hot, but temperatures this year are well above average in many countries.

Asia is also warming faster than the global average, according to the UN's World Meteorological Organization.

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