

Doctors treat hundreds of victims of heatstroke in Pakistan after heat wave hits the country

May 23 2024, by Munir Ahmed



A doctor checks a child, who is suffering from gastroenteritis due to hot weather, at a hospital in Hyderabad, Pakistan, Thursday, May 23, 2024. Doctors were treating hundreds of victims of heatstroke at various hospitals across Pakistan on Thursday after an intense spell of the heat wave began in the country, and the mercury rose to above normal due to climate change, officials said. Credit: AP Photo/Pervez Masih

Doctors treated hundreds of victims of heatstroke at hospitals across Pakistan on Thursday after an intense heat wave sent temperatures above normal levels due to climate change, officials said.

Temperatures soared as high as 49 degrees Celsius (120 degrees Fahrenheit) the previous day in Mohenjo Daro. The city, known for its archaeological sites, is in southern Sindh province, which was badly hit by climate-induced monsoon rains and devastating floods in 2022. The heat wave is forecast to continue for at least a week.

Authorities have urged people to stay indoors, hydrate and avoid unnecessary travel. But laborers say they don't have a choice because they need to work to feed their families.

"Pakistan is the fifth most vulnerable country to the impact of climate change. We have witnessed above normal rains, floods," Rubina Khursheed Alam, the prime minister's coordinator on climate, said at a news conference in the capital, Islamabad.

Barakullah Khan, a civil defense official, asked people not to place cooking gas cylinders in open areas as a safety measure. He warned those living near fields that snakes and scorpions could enter homes and storage places in search of cooler places.

This month, temperatures are likely to soar to 55 C (131 F), weather forecasters said.



Volunteers provide lime sugar water to people at a camp set up to prevent heat stroke on a hot summer day, in Karachi, Pakistan, Thursday, May 23, 2024. Doctors were treating hundreds of victims of heatstroke at various hospitals across Pakistan on Thursday after an intense spell of the heat wave began in the country, and the mercury rose to above normal due to climate change, officials said. Credit: AP Photo/Fareed Khan

Doctors say they treated hundreds of patients in the eastern city of Lahore, while scores of people were brought to hospitals in Hyderabad, Larkana and Jacobabad districts in the southern Sindh province.

"The situation has been getting worse since yesterday, when people affected by heat started coming to hospitals in the Punjab province," said Ghulam Farid, a senior health official. Pakistan has set up

emergency response centers at hospitals to treat patients affected by the heat.

The state-run ambulance service is now carrying bottled water and ice to provide emergency treatment to victims of the heat, health officials said.

The United Nations children's agency appealed for children to be protected from the heat.

"UNICEF is deeply concerned about the health and safety of babies and young children as debilitating heat wave conditions take hold in several countries," said Sanjay Wijesekera, UNICEF regional director for South Asia. He said the increasing temperatures across the region could put millions of children's health at risk if they are not protected and hydrated.

Heatstroke is a serious illness that occurs when one's body temperature rises too quickly, potentially causing some to fall unconscious. Severe heatstroke can cause disability or death.



Children, who are suffering from gastroenteritis due to hot weather, receive treatment at a hospital in Hyderabad, Pakistan, Thursday, May 23, 2024. Doctors were treating hundreds of victims of heatstroke at various hospitals across Pakistan on Thursday after an intense spell of the heatwave began in the country, and the mercury rose to above normal due to climate change, officials said. Credit: AP Photo/Pervez Masih

This year, Pakistan recorded its wettest April since 1961, with more than double the usual monthly rainfall. Last month's heavy rains killed scores of people while destroyed property and farmland.

Daytime temperatures are soaring 8 degrees Celsius (46 degrees Fahrenheit) above May's temperatures, raising fears of flooding in the northwest because of glacial melting.

The 2022 floods caused extensive damage in Sindh and Baluchistan provinces, as 1,739 people were killed across the country.

Currently, Pakistan's southwest and northwestern areas are also experiencing the heat wave.

Authorities have shut schools for a week in Punjab. In the city of Lahore people were seen swimming in the roadside canals. Pakistan says despite contributing less than 1% to carbon emissions, it is bearing the brunt of global climate disasters.

Alam said recent erratic changes in weather patterns were the result of man-made climate change.

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