

Delhi temperature hits highest ever in India: weather bureau

May 29 2024, by Bhuvan BAGGA



A vendor with an umbrella over his head talks on mobile phone as he wipes his face with a cloth on a hot summer day in Varanasi on May 27.

Temperatures in India's capital soared to a national record-high of 52.3 degrees Celsius (126.1 Fahrenheit) on Wednesday, figures from the

government's weather bureau showed, as it warned of dangerous heat levels in the sprawling megacity.

The India Meteorological Department (IMD), which reported "severe heat-wave conditions", published the temperature automatically on its website after it was recorded by a station in the Delhi suburb of Mungeshpur on Wednesday afternoon.

However, IMD meteorologist Soma Sen Roy cautioned that officers were "checking out" whether the station had recorded it correctly.

The recording not only broke the landmark 50C measurement for the first time ever in the city, but smashed the previous national record in the desert of Rajasthan by more than one degree Celsius.

The IMD has issued a red alert health notice for Delhi, which has an estimated population of more than 30 million people.

The alert warns there is a "very high likelihood of developing heat illness and heat stroke in all ages", with "extreme care needed for vulnerable people".

As people sought relief from the scorching temperatures, the electricity grid groaned under a record peak power demand of 8,302 megawatts, according to official data.

Delhi city authorities on Wednesday also warned of dire water shortages and ordered teams to clamp down on wastage.



Women shelter from the sun as they walk along a street on a hot summer day in India's city of Varanasi.

'Waiting for the monsoon'

The temperature was more than 11 degrees higher than expected on the second day of intense record-breaking heat.

The previous national record was 51C, set in 2016 in the region of Phalodi on the edge of Rajasthan's Thar Desert.

India is no stranger to searing summer temperatures but years of scientific research have found climate change is causing heat waves to become longer, more frequent and more intense.

People on the streets of Delhi said there was little they could do to avoid the heat.

"Everyone wants to stay indoors," said snack-seller Roop Ram, 57, adding he struggled to sell his savoury fritters.

Ram, who lives with his wife and two sons in a cramped house, said they had a small fan but that did little to cool them down.

They were counting down until the rainy season arrives in July.



Boys sit beneath a makeshift canopy along a street on a hot summer day in New Delhi.

"I am not sure what else we can do to cope," he said. "We are just waiting for the monsoon."

Rani, 60, who uses only one name, travels by bus for two hours each morning to sell jewellery to tourists at a makeshift street stall.

"It is definitely hotter, but there is nothing we can do about it," she said, gulping water from a bottle she brought from home.

"I try to refill the bottle from anyone around."

'Water scarcity'

New Delhi authorities have also warned of the risk of water shortages as the capital swelters in headache-inducing heat.

Delhi Water Minister Atishi, who only uses one name, said supplies had been halved in many areas to boost flow to "water-deficient areas".

Atishi on Wednesday ordered state authorities to "immediately deploy 200 teams" to crack down on construction sites or commercial properties using domestic pipes to stem a "serious wastage of water".



Children run behind a truck spraying water along a street on a hot summer day in New Delhi on Tuesday.

Delhi relies almost entirely on water from neighboring Haryana and Uttar Pradesh, both farming states with huge water demands.

The highly polluted Yamuna river, a tributary of the Ganges, runs through Delhi but its flow is hugely reduced during the summer months.

Neighboring Pakistan has also sweltered through a week-long heat wave, which peaked at 53C (127.4F) on Sunday in Mohenjo Daro in rural Sindh province.

Pakistan's meteorological office said it expected temperatures to subside

from Wednesday but warned further heat waves were coming in June.

It comes as Pakistan hashes out a new deal with the International Monetary Fund that is believed to focus heavily on an energy supply crisis that has left parts of the country facing up to 15 hours of load-shedding a day.

At the same time, India's West Bengal state and the northeastern state of Mizoram are recovering after a cyclone hit India and Bangladesh on Sunday, killing at least 65 people.

Bangladesh's Meteorological Department said the cyclone was "one of the longest in the country's history", blaming climate change for the shift.

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