

DISASTERS UPDATE

www.nidm.net

Issue No.1462

Date: 24.6.09

TODAY'S HIGHLIGHTS

National

No link between 'El Nino' and delayed monsoon: IMD

Agencies Posted: Wednesday, Jun 24, 2009 at 1754 hrs IST

Pune:

Even as a truant monsoon raised concerns over the prospects of Kharif crop, meteorologists in Pune on Wednesday refused to give credence to the theory that the 'El Nino' impact could be the factor behind its slow progress in the country.

Still hopeful of its revival by the June end, India Meteorological Department's (IMD) Central Weather Observatory officials said the monsoon after getting stuck over Karnataka, was advancing further into southern parts of Gujarat, Kutch and Konkan.

A clearer picture on its further progress was expected to emerge on Thursday, they added.

However, the Deputy Director General (Weather Forecasting) A B Muzumdar on Wednesday sought to play down the reported 'El Nino' impact as being responsible for the tentative monsoon so far.

“This phenomenon occurs after every three to four years but it has no direct cause and effect relationship with the monsoons in India,” he said in Pune.

‘Climate change would reduce staple crop yields in South Asia’

Special Correspondent, **The Hindu**, Wednesday, Jun 24, 2009

JAIPUR: Experts have asked the South Asian countries to get ready to tackle the concerns of food security brought about by global warming and climate change.

In the next Century, climate change would reduce the staple crop yields in South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa and would have a crippling effect on the stability and quantity of food supply and purchasing power of the agricultural population, they warned, adding that the situation would get further complicated with enhanced demand for food.

“India and neighbouring countries in South Asia should take preparatory steps to face such challenges,” said former Member of the Planning Commission in New Delhi, Anwarul Hoda.

Mr. Hoda, also India's former chief negotiator at the WTO, was addressing a seminar here on “Future challenges of the international trade regime from South Asian perspectives” organised by CUTS International, an NGO engaged in research and advocacy on trade and regulatory issues. Mr. Hoda explained that climate change posed an imminent threat to food security, especially in

the tropical regions, manifested by reduced crop yields. In addition, peaking oil supply and increasing demand for energy had forced diversion of arable land to production of bio-fuel, leading to soaring foodgrain prices. While the international trade regime might offer partial solutions to food insecurity, governments should take domestic initiatives for mitigation of damages made by climate change, he said.

CUTS International Secretary-General Pradeep S. Mehta said that policies aimed at adaptation were as important as measures for mitigation in combating climate change. A book titled 'Reflections on Global Partnership for Development: Reality and Potential' was also released. Meteorological evidence indicates that temperatures would increase in India by 2-4 degrees by 2050 and the number of rainy days in a year would come down by 15 or more. CUTS International Research Director Siddhartha Mitra said the rise in temperatures would bring down India's wheat yield by 10 to 40 per cent by 2050.

First swine flu case in Chandigarh

Agencies Posted: Wednesday, Jun 24, 2009 at 1306 hrs IST

Chandigarh:

A young computer science student, who had recently returned from the US, has tested positive for swine flu, becoming the first person in the city to contract the virus.

The 19-year-old youth was hospitalised on June 22 immediately after returning from US on June 21, following symptoms of flu, officials said adding he has been quarantined.

The student's throat swabs have tested positive for the H1N1 virus at the National Institute of Communicable Diseases (NICD), Union Territory Nodal officer H C Gera said.

His condition is stable and he is likely to be kept in the hospital for atleast a week.

This was the first confirmed case of Swine flu in Chandigarh although more than 20 suspected cases had been reported and tested negative over the past month, Gera said.

Earlier in Punjab, nine students, including eight from a private school in Jalandhar and one from Mandi Gobindgarh who returned from an educational trip to the USA, were tested positive for flu.

Swine flu cases on rise, India's total reaches 73

IANS

 Published on **Wed, Jun 24, 2009 at 21:28** in **India** section

New Delhi/Chandigarh: Five people, including an eight-year-old boy and two teenagers, were detected on Wednesday to have been affected with swine flu. This has taken the total number of influenza A (H1N1) cases in India to 73, health officials said.

Two of the new cases are from Delhi, while one each is from Madurai, Hyderabad and Chandigarh, according to the officials.

"At least 532 persons have been tested so far. Of them, 73 are positive for influenza A(H1N1). Of these, six are indigenous cases, who got the infection from the positive cases who travelled from abroad," said an official statement.

In Delhi, a 40-year-old man and his wife tested positive for the flu. The man had travelled from the US via Germany and was accompanied by his 39-year-old wife. Both of them had developed fever, sore throat and body ache.

"They reported to the identified health facility on June 22. Their samples were given for testing and the report showed that they were infected with the virus," a health official said.

The eight-year-old boy, who came from the US via Mumbai, reached Madurai on June 13. His family reported his case to the health facility on June 18.

The fourth case is from Chandigarh where a 19-year-old youth was found to be infected with the flu. He had also travelled from the US and reached New Delhi June 20.

"He travelled by road to Gurdaspur. He developed fever, cough on June 22 and reported to the health facility at Chandigarh," the official said.

The boy studies computer science in California and had come to spend his holidays at his home in Punjab.

"The patient was admitted to the government hospital in Sector 16 of Chandigarh on Monday with a complaint of high fever, running nose and sore throat. Seeing his travel history, we admitted him here in an isolated ward and sent his throat swab samples to NICD (National Institute of Communicable Diseases) in New Delhi," union territory nodal officer for swine flu, HC Gera, told IANS in Chandigarh.

"We got the confirmation from NICD on late Tuesday evening that he has tested positive. Our team of doctors is observing him and his condition is stable. There is no need to panic and we are fully equipped to deal with the situation," he added.

"More than a dozen cases of suspected swine flu came to Chandigarh hospitals in the last few weeks but this is the first positive case," Gera said.

Seven members of the boy's family too have been quarantined.

"The condition of the family members is normal and they have not shown any symptoms of swine flu till now. However, we would monitor them for the next few days as a precautionary measure," Gera said.

The fifth case was reported from Hyderabad where a 15-year-old girl, who had come from Hong Kong via Singapore and reached the city on June 19, developed complaints of sore throat, running nose and fever. She was admitted to an identified city hospital on June 22. Her report confirmed on Wednesday she was infected with the flu.

Officials in Delhi said a 64-year-old woman, who was admitted to a hospital in the capital after her condition deteriorated, is now in a stable condition.

The woman had contracted the flu from her son. She was put on ventilator after her condition worsened as she also suffered from chronic respiratory illness.

Of the 73 cases in the country, seven have got the virus through human contact, the officials said.

Of these 73 cases, 43 have been discharged and the rest remain admitted to the identified health facility, they said.

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), at least 55,867 laboratory confirmed cases of influenza A(H1N1) infection have been reported from 108 countries. There have been 238 deaths worldwide, mostly from Mexico and the US.

Heatwave: schools to reopen on June 29

Staff Reporter, **The Hindu**, Wednesday, Jun 24, 2009

'Other holidays may be used to complete courses if need be'

Second time that the vacation has been extended

Members of High Court Bar Association decide not to attend court in view of heat

BHUBANESWAR: With temperature continuing to soar, the Orissa Government has extended summer vacation for educational institutes for the second time in a fortnight.

Now educational institutes will remain closed till June 28 and will open on June 29. In a notification, State School and Mass Education Secretary Vandana Kumari Jena said, "the prevailing heat wave is likely to continue for some days more. Exposure to heat wave condition by the students may adversely affect them."

The extension of vacation would be applicable to schools functioning under School and Mass Educations and privately managed schools including public schools and English Medium schools under different management.

As duration of summer vacation has become lengthier than its normal period, the education department said steps might be taken to use other holidays including Sundays, Puja vacation and X-Mas holidays to complete the courses of studies if necessary.

Schools were supposed to open on June 16. Subsequently, keeping in mind sweltering heat the vacation was extended till June 24. Even earlier the State Government had ordered early summer vacation nearly 10 days ahead of the scheduled date. However, teachers and non-teaching staffs worked till April 30.

Meanwhile, members of Orissa High Court Bar Association decided not to attend daily court duty in view of shooting temperature.

"We have moved a proposal to full court seeking extension of vacation by three days. But the full court rejected our application. In view of unprecedented heat wave condition, we called our general body meeting where it was decided that members would remain absent till June 26," said Kali Prasad Mishra, secretary of Orissa High Court Bar Association.

Mr. Mishra said they were joined by members of Cuttack District Bar Association and Cuttack Criminal Court Lawyers' Association. "Since June 27 and 28 are regular holidays, a general body meeting has been convened on June 29 when we will decide whether to extend the vacation or to attend court," he said.

Life miserable

Meanwhile, rise in mercury level has made life miserable in most parts of the State. Industrial town of Jharsuguda turned into virtual cauldron with highest temperature soaring beyond 46 degree Celsius on Tuesday. There was no respite from sweltering heat either as minimum temperature level was recorded at 32.2 degree Celsius. Talcher, another industrial town, was also burning at 45 degree Celsius.

At 12 major weather observation points, temperature crossed beyond 40 degree Celsius. The capital city recorded 44.6 degree Celsius, the highest temperature for the second consecutive day.

Director of Meteorological Centre, Bhubaneswar S. C. Sahu said hot wind from northwesterly direction was making the most damage. "By 11.30 am in Bhubaneswar on Tuesday, the temperature had touched 42.6 degree Celsius. The wind speed at 8.30 am in the morning was measured at 9 km per hour and it suddenly rose to 28 km per hour by 9 am. The situation was worsening because there was no convergence point over landmass," Mr. Sahu said.

The heat wave conditions were likely to prevail over Orissa for next 24 hours, met office sources said.

Landslide kills three labourers

Staff Correspondent, **The Hindu**, Wednesday, Jun 24, 2009

Belgaum: Three labourers were killed in a landslide near Desur on Belgaum-Goa Road (NH 4A), about 20 km from here on Tuesday morning. The deceased have been identified as Shivaji Ramu Bhandangi (55), Ravalu Ramu Gouda (40) and Ilaria D'Souza (36), all residents of Belgundi village.

The landslide occurred when the victims were digging at the site for clay. MLA Sanjay Patil rushed to the spot. The police sent the bodies to the government hospital for post-mortem.

According to the police, the clay was to be used for sculpting Ganesha idols. Artisans have started making idols of Ganesha for the coming festival season.

International

Climate change, natural disasters, and internal displacement

Source: [Brookings-Bern Project on Internal Displacement](#)

Date: 24 Jun 2009

Walter Kälin, Representative of the UN Secretary-General on the Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons and Co-director, Brookings-Bern Project on Internal Displacement

Madame Chairperson of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Population, Distinguished Members of the Committee,

I welcome and encourage the Committee's initiative to take up the cause of persons who are compelled to move as a consequence of natural disasters and other environmental events. Particularly in the context of climate change, such movements of persons will be among the major challenges facing countries in the decades to come.

These concerns are well reflected in resolution 1655 (2009) "Environmentally induced migration and displacement: a 21st-century challenge" adopted by the parliamentary assembly of the Council of Europe on 30 January 2009.

An estimated 50 to 200 million people may move by the middle of the century as a result of the negative effects of climate change, either within their countries or across borders, on a permanent or temporary basis. Some of these movements are voluntary, e.g. triggered by the prospect of finding a better life in areas not affected by natural disasters and environmental degradation and can be considered as "migration" and to be part of an adaptation strategy. Arguably some of the movements have an element of coercion, including threats to life, or health, property and livelihoods. These movements are forced and commonly referred to as "displacement".

The specific needs and vulnerabilities of those moving voluntarily and those who were forcibly displaced are different and so is the normative framework for their protection. This implies a differentiated approach, which allows humanitarians and development actors to build on existing laws and response mechanisms and thereby strengthening the existing international system to better address specific needs of those affected by natural disasters and the impacts of climate change.⁽¹⁾

An all encompassing working definition of environmental migrant covering all types of movement, as proposed in resolution 1655 (2009), paragraph 24.1 might not reflect the complexities of the problem for such practical purposes, and in the current discussions on how to best address the challenge posed by global warming, it may weaken established categories of persons and existing normative framework.

The majority of those displaced by a natural disaster or the effects of climate change will remain within the border of their country of origin. However, some displacement is likely to take place across internationally recognized State borders.

Persons displaced within their country due to sudden-onset disasters or environmental degradation are internally displaced person⁽²⁾. The normative framework for their protection are the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement (Guiding Principles) which outline their specific rights inherent in and derived from international human rights and humanitarian laws. Moreover, the Guiding Principles have been recognized by the international community, including the Council of Europe⁽³⁾, as an important international framework for the protection of IDPs that is applicable to any type of internal displacement regardless of its cause.

I urge the Council of Europe and your Committee in particular to call on Member States to recognize that the persons forcibly displaced by the effects of climate change within their countries are IDPs and that their rights are covered by the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement. Member States should use the Guiding Principles as underlying principles in their emergency response and in the recovery planning.

Unlike the situation of internal displacement, there is a major legal gap for those who are forcibly displaced across an international border by a sudden onset disaster and the effects of climate change. They are unlikely to qualify as refugees, unless the government has consciously withheld or obstructed assistance in order to punish or marginalize them on one of the five grounds specified in the 1951 Convention related to the Status of Refugees. Consequently, they are not eligible for protection under existing refugee law as environmental factors causing movements across international borders are not grounds, in and of themselves, for granting refugee status under the 1951 Refugee Convention. This is why the terms "environmental refugee" and "climate refugee" have no legal basis in international refugee law and are to be avoided.(4)

Nonetheless, cross-border displacement due to natural disasters and the effects of climate change raises specific issues of responsibility for both the State of origin and host States. Both the legal status and the rights of these persons are unclear. In particular where the displaced cannot reasonably be expected to return because the State of origin is not in a position to grant protection on its territory from high and persistent risks for life or security, receiving States might have a crucial role to support the State of nationality in granting subsidiary protection to those displaced.

The fundamental principle of non-refoulement, which finds expression in a large number of human rights instruments and international customary law, establishes that no person, regardless of status or conduct, may be returned in any manner whatsoever to a country where his or her life or integrity would be at risk.(5) Arguably, where return is impossible or cannot be reasonably be required from the individual, an obligation of the foreign State also exists to at least temporarily admit a person to remain. What the principle of non-refoulement lacks, however, is to provide more practical indication as to how to regulate the entry and the specific status of the displaced in the receiving country.

I therefore welcome that the Council of Europe in its resolution 1655 (2009) makes a call for subsidiary protection to those displaced across an internal border, either temporarily or permanently if return is impossible and I fully support the development of best practices or models based on the Finnish and Swedish legislation and on case law. I would also encourage this Committee to look at the US Temporary Protected Status when developing best practice. (6)

Conclusions

Let me conclude with some observations:

- There is a growing recognition of the humanitarian consequences of climate change. I'm encouraged that this notion was introduced to the current draft of the UNFCCC at the recent climate change talks in Bonn.
- While recognition is important, the challenge lies in developing consistent answers to the following questions: how can displacement due to the negative effects of climate change be prevented through mitigation, adaptation and disaster risk reduction measures? How can the capacities of the international community be strengthened to assist and protect those who are displaced by the negative effects of climate change and to find durable solutions for them? And, finally, how can the legal gaps be covered for those affected by climate change, namely those who are forced to cross an international border due to a natural disaster and the effects of climate change?
- The Council of Europe and this Committee in particular play a pioneering role in developing answers to these questions. Many of these issues are raised in the resolution 1655 (2009) and I

encourage you to press for its implementation. In doing so, the Committee should build on existing normative frameworks and categories of affected populations.

- I also encourage you to press your Governments to support these issues in the ongoing UNFCCC negotiations. The new Convention will be the cornerstone document for any major initiative related to climate change in the years to come. It is therefore of utmost importance that the humanitarian consequences of climate change, including that of migration and displacement, are integrated in this document.

Thank you for your attention.

Notes:

(1) For a further discussion of terminology issues please refer to "Change, Migration and Displacement: Who will be affected?" Working paper submitted by the informal group on Migration/Displacement and Climate Change of the IASC – 31 October 2008 to the UNFCCC Secretariat.

(2) Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, United Nations Publication E/CN.4/1998/53/Add.2, 1998: "(...), internally displaced persons are persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human –made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized State boarder."

(3) With regard to internal displacement, Council of Ministers Rec (2006)6 states. "Recommends that governments of member states be guided, when formulating their internal legislation and practice, and when faced with internal displacement, by the following principles:

1. The United Nations guiding principles and other relevant international instruments of human rights or humanitarian law apply to all internally displaced persons, including persons displaced from their homes or places of habitual residence due to natural or man-made disasters".

(4) "Change, Migration and Displacement: Who will be affected?", 31 October 2008

(5) "Forced Displacement in the context of Climate change" by UNHCR in cooperation with RSG on HR of IDPs and UNU of 19 May 2009 to the UNFCCC Secretariat

(6) For example, in 1990, the U.S. Temporary Protected Status (TPS) mechanism was enacted for those who do not meet the legal definition of refugee, but are nonetheless reluctant to return to potentially dangerous situations. Tens of thousands of Hondurans and Nicaraguans benefited from TPS in the aftermath of Hurricane Mitch in 1998. Finland would be a European example to be cited here, a country that extends complementary protection to foreign nationals who cannot return safely to their home country because of an environmental disaster. Similarly, the Swedish Aliens Act also grants protection to individuals who "are unable to return to the country of origin because of an environmental disaster" if there be no alternative of relocation to a safe area within the home state.

Mexico reports swine flu 116 deaths, 8,163 infections

Agencies Posted: Wednesday, Jun 24, 2009 at 1012 hrs IST

Washington:

Mexican officials have said that 116 people have now died from swine flu in the country where the virus was first detected in humans.

A total of 8,613 people in Mexico are thought to have contracted the A(H1N1) virus, an increase from figures contained in a press statement last week that cited 113 deaths since June 16 and 7,624 cases of infection since June 18.

The latest press release said "very few of the cases involved recent symptoms," and Mexican health officials said this was a sign that the epidemic is on the decline.

Mexico is hosting an international summit on swine flu at the coastal resort of Cancun on July 2-3.

The director general of the World Health Organization (WHO), Margaret Chan, is expected to attend with experts from around 40 countries.

Compiler
AD Kaushik