

DISASTERS UPDATE

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TODAY'S HIGHLIGHTS

National

Hills feel the heat

30 Jun 2009, 0426 hrs IST, TNN

During the dry summer, days can get hot in Pithoragarh. But like numerous other hill stations in Uttarakhand, nights remain cool and refreshing in this sprawling town close to the Nepal border. However, this summer has been different.

As day temperatures touched 38 degrees Celsius in bustling Pithoragarh located at a height of 1,650 metres, even nights became uncomfortably warm — leaving visitors on a 'cool break' to the hills tossing and turning in hotel rooms that have no ceiling fans.

Residents say forest fires around Pithoragarh have added to the heat. Completing the mid-summer nightmare is a severe water shortage. Many localities have been without water for several days at a stretch as rivers feeding the town have shrunk.

Repeat Pithoragarh's plight many times over and you get a picture of the situation across the mid-range hills of Uttarakhand. In Ranikhet, for instance, temperatures were as high as 37 degrees last week. Major water sources like the perennial Ramganga, Kosi and Gaggas have been reduced to streams. There have been squabbles over water and police have had to oversee queues in front of handpumps in the town.

Tankers have been pressed into service for supplying water to houses in Ranikhet though resorts and lodges are also cornering this supply. Under government directions, private suppliers provide tankers after seeing receipts from the jal board. They are demanding, and receiving, as much as Rs 1,200 for every consignment.

Ranikhet's famous golfing green is a burnt-out brown and more of a picnic spot for passing tourists. The hot days have kept many tourists indoors listening to DJ-driven music. Typically, Delhiwallas are seen washing down chicken tikkas with whisky under shaded terraces.

In Almora last week, the administration announced that water will be supplied to the town only every alternate day. This desperate measure came after a sharp drop in the water level of Kosi river.

Raghu Tewari, an Almora resident who runs an NGO, says that small bunds traditionally made on the Kosi by villagers to divert water for paddy sowing, have been broken by officials in a bid to make more water available to the town. "There have been accounts of fish dying due to lack of water, something unheard of earlier. Old-timers say the Ramganga, another river in the area, is just 10% of what it used to be 20-30 years ago," he said.

Informed residents say the dry spell has only added to the larger problem of changing hydrology in the hills. "While handpumps are disturbing underground water channels, the reduced forest biodiversity — especially the dominance of pine trees in many areas — as well as largescale construction are leading to perennial water sources and streams drying up," Tewari said.

The situation is just as desperate in Garhwal. At quaint Lansdowne, nestling at 1,700 metres above sea level, tourists have been complaining that they can go outdoors only early mornings and late evenings. The maximum temperature which usually hovers around 30 degrees Celsius, has been much higher this summer, say locals.

At the town's Garhwal Mandal Vikas Nigam tourist bungalow, even deluxe huts turn into cauldrons during the day. Add to this the water problem — the staff is stretched to its limits in providing running water that is procured daily from a private supplier — and it's not much of a vacation.

The only place that offers some relief is an artificial lake created by the Garhwal Rifles Regiment. It's a concrete check dam known as Bhulla Tal which has boating facilities and has become the point of convergence for all tourists.

Up from Kotdwar to Lansdowne, the river is just a trickle and defies the description given in tourism brochures. In fact, the Ramganga in Jim Corbett National Park can hardly be called a river at the moment. Its famed residents — Mahaseer fish — too have disappeared, much to the disappointment of anglers.

The 'monsoon' closure of the tiger reserve on June 16 seems to be a joke. The rains are nowhere in sight and only an overactive imagination can conjure up images of the park being flooded and roads getting cut off. In fact, the staff at various resorts around Jim Corbett says that things have never been so bad. That's a sentiment visitors across Uttarakhand seem to be echoing this summer.

Heat claims 59 lives in Punjab, Haryana in a month

30 Jun 2009, 0420 hrs IST, **TNN**

NEW DELHI: With monsoons yet to hit the region and relentless sun beating down mercilessly on the plains, 57 people have succumbed in the last one month to the searing heat wave sweeping across Punjab and Haryana.

The toll is the highest recorded in recent memory. Two more died of heat stroke in Jalandhar on Monday.

Health officials admit that the toll could be higher since there may be cases which have gone unreported.

India negotiating emission targets and not UN's Framework Convention: Jairam Ramesh

Tuesday, June 30, 2009, PIB Press Release

India is not negotiating or re-negotiating United Nation's Framework of Convention, but is negotiating emission targets. Briefing the media here today about India's approach to Climate Change, Minister of State for Environment and Forests, Shri Jairam Ramesh said India has no

role in building Green House Gases (GHGs). Clearing the misconception about (GHG) emissions, Mr. Ramesh said that India is the third largest country in GHG emission volume after the US and China but the climate change is a result of the cumulative impact of GHG in the planetary atmosphere. This accumulated GHG is mainly the result of carbon-based industrial activity in developed countries over the past two centuries. UNFCCC does not require developing countries to take on any commitments on reducing their GHG emissions, despite this India will not allow its per capita GHG emission to exceed the average per capita emissions of the developed countries. The Minister explained, this effectively puts a cap on our emission, which will be lower if our developed country partners choose to be more ambitious in reducing their own emissions.

Making this more clear the Minister said India can not be described as a so called “major emitter”. India’s per capital CO₂ emission are currently only 1.1 tonnes, when compared to over 20 tonnes for the US and in excess of 10 tonnes for most OECD countries. The Minister added that the US and China account for over 16% each of the total global emissions, while India trails with just 4%, despite its very large population and rapid growing economy. Thus, India is way down in international ranking.

Talking about major climatic variability which India faces today, Shri Ramesh pointed out that we have already observed warming of 0.40 C from 1901-2000 and receding glaciers in Himalayas at accelerating pace. This also can be due to natural processes, he added. Other expected changes are increase in rainfall by 15-40 %, more warming over land, maximum in North India, relatively greater warming in winter and post monsoon seasons and increase in mean temperature by 30 C to 60 C.

Shri Ramesh emphatically said that we must stop looking at climate change issue as an international issue, we must look at it as a domestic and local issue .It is related to land productivity, food security and energy conservation. He said we might have political differences with our neighbors including Pakistan but on climate change we, all SAARC countries, are together and speak with the same concern.

Highlighting India’s position on Climate Change, the Minister affirmed quoting Prime Minister’s statement that India’s per capita emission levels will never exceed that of the per capita emission level of developed countries. India cannot and will not take emission reduction targets because poverty eradication and social and economic development are first and over-riding priorities. He further said that each human being has equal right to global atmospheric resources. Common but differentiated responsibility is the basis for all climate change actions, he added. Throwing light on India’s primary focus, Environment Minister said that India’s primary focus is on “adaptation” and not “mitigation”. He made it clear that mitigation can be accepted in few areas. Only those nationally Appropriate Mitigation actions (NAMs) can be subject to international monitoring, reporting and verification that are enabled and supported by international finance and technology transfer. He also explained that India wants a comprehensive approach to Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation (REDD) and advocates REDD that includes conservation, afforestation and sustainable management of forests. Shri Ramesh announced with pride that 227 scientists and 98 institutions, Univercities, IITs, CSIRs etc are involved in National Programme on Climate Change. He informed that India advocates collaborative research in future low-carbon technology and access to intellectual property rights (IPRs) as global public goods.

Referring to some issues of concern, Shri Ramesh said differentiation amongst developing countries sought to be introduced by alternative multilateral forums and parallel bilateral negotiations. Ambiguity in responsibility for finance and technology transfer, sectoral approaches

to mitigation actions outside Bali, move to limit scope of Clean development Mechanism (CDM), impose trade penalties on countries that do not accept limits on global warming pollution are other issues of concern. Referring to this trade penalty Bill passed by US House of Representatives before the US Senate proposes to impose trade penalties, Shri Jairam said India will not accept any legally binding emission Reduction target as it will jeopardize our energy conservation, agricultural and food security, transport etc.

Giving India's contribution to Climate Change negotiations, Shri Ramesh said we are actively involved with G77 and China to evolve common position on negotiations. We have made 9 submissions to UNFCCC on finance, technology, forestry and other areas. We have worked with China, Brazil, South Africa and 33 other countries to present a joint proposal for emission reduction targets by Annex1 countries in second commitment period.

Talking about efforts of 8 National Missions, the Minister said that they are in different phases of operation. Besides this, other 24 critical initiatives are in the anvil for which detailed plans and an institutional framework is being prepared.

H1N1 flu: vigil stepped up

Tuesday, Jun 30, 2009, **The Hindu**
Special Correspondent

More doctors posted to airports; information centres opened

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM: The Health Department has intensified vigil at airports, railway stations and ports to detect cases of influenza A (H1N1), Director of Health Services K. Shylaja has said.

Dr. Shylaja and Health Secretary Vishwas Mehta told presspersons here on Monday that three passengers who reached Nedumbassery airport in the morning were suspected to be infected. Samples of their naso pharyngeal swab had been sent to the National Institute of Communicable Diseases (NICD) for confirmation. The results would be available within a day. There was no need for any panic, they said.

Since the time precautionary measures were put in place to prevent the spread of the flu, 4,42,519 persons had reached the State through the three international airports till June 26. Nearly 1,15,070 passengers came from places where the fever had been reported. As many as 3,67,054 persons were examined and 38 put in quarantine. Their naso pharyngeal swab was sent to the NICD for confirmation. Except six persons, all others tested negative.

Considering the arrival of more flights at night, more doctors had been posted on duty. Information centres too had been opened at airports, railway stations and ports.

They said hospitals were getting a number of calls to know the details of the medicines given to the infected patients.

However, these have not been released in the market on the directions of the World Health Organisation as these can be administered only to those who have tested positive. An awareness drive has been launched to prevent the spread of the disease, they said.

A(H1N1) cases touch 104, surveillance up

Aarti Dhar, Tuesday, Jun 30, 2009, **The Hindu**

NEW DELHI: With the number of A (H1N1) influenza cases touching 104, the Centre on Monday strengthened surveillance across the country.

Sixteen additional laboratories for testing swine flu will become functional on July 1, four thermal scanners will be installed shortly and inbound passengers will be asked to fill a voluntary health screening form on board.

Health and Family Welfare Minister Ghulam Nabi Azad told journalists here that announcements would be made on flights appealing to passengers to come forward for a check-up at the airports in case of any flu-like symptoms.

After receiving 50,000 bottles of Tamiflu for children, donated by Hetero Drugs, Mr. Azad said the government had procured the seed for manufacturing the A (H1N1) vaccine from the World Health Organisation and had given “test licences” to manufacture it to three companies — Serum Institute, Panacea Biotech and Bharat Biotech.

Reassuring the people that the situation was well under control, Mr. Azad said 61 of the 104 positive cases had been discharged after treatment. He added that 95 patients had “imported” the influenza and transmission within the country was confined to families of those affected.

The Minister said four thermal scanners that would help detect people with high temperatures, would arrive shortly in India. He pointed out that 25 lakh passengers had been screened so far at 22 international airports, checkpoints and ports.

“Sixteen laboratories will become functional with infrastructure, equipment and manpower from July 1. That will help in early detection. Two hundred ventilators have been procured that would be shortly sent to [the] Central and State government hospitals. The State Rapid Response Teams have been trained by the National Rapid Response Team and I have written to the Chief Ministers and the Health Ministers to train similar teams at the district levels also,” Mr. Azad said.

He said the Civil Aviation Ministry had been asked to issue voluntary disclosure forms on board and also make arrangements for special announcements on the flights to seek passengers’ cooperation in identifying suspects.

He said he had also received a reply from External Affairs Minister S.M. Krishna saying he had asked the Indian missions abroad to impress upon their governments to insist on a screening of outbound passengers.

Update on Influenza A(H1N1) as on 30th June, 2009

Tuesday, June 30, 2009, PIB Press Release

World Health Organization has reported 70893 laboratory confirmed cases of influenza A/H1N1 infection from 116 countries as on 29th June 2009. There have been 311 deaths.

Health screening of passengers coming from affected countries is continuing in 22 International airports. 48,718 passengers have been screened on 29.6.2009 of which 32,972 passengers were from affected countries. 224 doctors and 112 paramedics are manning 77 counters at these airports. A cumulative total of 26,33,121 passengers have been screened.

Five new cases are reported today: Bangalore (2), Mumbai (2) and Delhi (1). The two cases in Bangalore are a 38 year old female and her 12 year old female child. Both of them had travelled from New Jersey, USA to Bangalore by Air India Flight AI 144 reaching Bangalore on 25th June 2009. The mother had reported with symptoms of fever and generalized body-ache on 29th June 2009 to the health facility where she got admitted. The child had reported to the same facility with sore-throat.

In Mumbai, one of the cases is a 30 year old male who travelled from London transiting Doha reaching Mumbai [Qatar Airlines QR 200] on 28th June 2009. Since he was having fever, dry cough and running nose he reported at the identified health facility. The other case is a 28 year old male who travelled from Chile transiting Santiago, Johannesburg reaching Mumbai [SA/284] on 29th June 2009. Since he was having fever and cough for 4 days, he was detected in the airport and admitted in the identified health facility.

The case in Delhi is a 55 year old male who had travelled from Sydney to New Delhi [Singapore Airlines SQ 408] reached Delhi on 26th June 2009. He reported at the health facility with symptoms of fever with sore throat on 29th June 2009.

The indigenous positive case [66 year old female] at Delhi, covered in earlier reports, is stable.

739 persons have been tested so far of which 109 are positive for Influenza A H1N1 [Swine]. 211 out of the 739 persons have been identified through entry screening, twenty seven through contact tracing and the rest were self reported.

Of the 109 positive cases, 70 have been discharged. Rest of them remains admitted to the identified health facility.

The situation is being monitored.

International

10 killed as freight train derails in Italy

Tuesday, June 30, 2009 : 1045 Hrs

ROME (AP): A rail car filled with liquefied natural gas exploded when a freight train derailed in the middle of a small Italian town, setting off an inferno that killed at least 10 people and injured 50 others, officials said Tuesday.

The rear of the train plowed into a residential neighborhood just outside the rail station in the Tuscan seaside town of Viareggio, and the resulting explosion collapsed at least two buildings and set fire to a vast area.

Seven people, including a child, were killed at home by the collapses or the fire, said Raffaele Gargiulo, a police spokesman in the nearby city of Lucca, which is in charge of the smaller town of Viareggio.

Two drivers who were on the road alongside the tracks when the train derailed were killed. The 10th victim, a young man, died in the hospital, Gargiulo said.

“The condition of the bodies is such that it will be very difficult to identify them,” he said.

Lucca's top government official, Prefect Carmelo Aronica, told Italy's RAI state TV that at least 50 people were injured, 35 of whom were hospitalized with severe burns. The ANSA news agency reported that three children were pulled alive from the rubble of their collapsed home shortly before daybreak Tuesday.

Videos uploaded on YouTube showed a huge plume of fire and smoke towering above Viareggio's low houses. Images from the scene showed an inferno raging in the night, consuming buildings and cars, while the sound of sirens and explosions pierced the air.

“It's an impressive scene, there are dozens and dozens of cars hit by the shock wave and collapsed houses,” said firefighters spokesman Luca Cari.

The 14-car train carrying the liquefied gas was traveling from the northern city of La Spezia to Pisa. The train derailed just before midnight Monday shortly after passing through Viareggio's train station, Gargiulo said.

The train's two engineers were only lightly injured and were questioned in the hospital, saying they felt an impact some 650 feet (200 meters) outside the station, shortly before the rear of the train flew off the tracks, Gargiulo said. He told The Associated Press by telephone that the incident may have been caused by damage to the tracks or a problem with the train's braking system.

Firefighters chief Antonio Gambardella told RAI that the blaze was being contained but there was still the risk that the other gas tanks would explode. Hazardous materials teams specialized in dealing with nuclear, biological and chemical threats were being brought in to help.

Some 300 firefighters were battling flames while digging through the rubble of collapsed or burnt homes looking for casualties, Gambardella said, adding that there could be more victims.

Weather disasters may rise: top weather experts

Tuesday, June 30, 2009 : 0940 Hrs

BEIJING (**Xinhua**): The nation is bracing for a higher risk of more extreme weather as a trend toward increasing weather-related disasters has been recorded since the 1990s, top weather experts have said.

"Extreme weather will be more frequent in the future due to the instability of the atmosphere, and global warming might be the indirect cause," He Lifu, the top weather forecaster at the China Meteorological Administration (CMA), was cited by Tuesday's China Daily as saying.

The CMA responded to 16 emergencies last year to address weather-related disasters, the most since 1949.

Statistics from the Ministry of Civil Affairs suggest extreme weather caused an annual economic loss of over 176.2 billion yuan (25 billion U.S. dollars) on average in the 1990s. But the figure rose to an annual average of 244 billion yuan between 2004 and last year.

The State Flood Control and Drought Relief Headquarters has warned in a statement that "drought has become more frequent, causing more crop failures in the country" since the 1990s.

Zhang Jiatuan, director of the drought relief division at the State Flood Control and Drought Relief Headquarters, said grain loss caused by drought has averaged 37.28 million tonnes each year since 2000, almost twice that for the 1980s.

Moderate earthquake hits southwest China

30 Jun 2009, 0845 hrs IST, **AP**

BEIJING: A magnitude-5.6 [earthquake](#) rattled Sichuan province in southwest China early Tuesday but no injuries were reported.

The quake's epicentre was 25 miles (40 kilometre) from Mianzhu, a city in one of the areas hardest hit by last year's devastating magnitude-7.9 temblor, a notice on the China Earthquake Administration Web site said.

The May 12, 2008, disaster left almost 90,000 people dead or missing and 5 million homeless. Three houses collapsed in one township under Mianzhu, and telecommunications were cut in one other town.

The earthquake could be felt in the provincial capital of Chengdu, 50 miles (80 kilometre) from the quake's epicentre, it said.

A Chinese government report said last week that problems ranging from a shortage of bank loans to lingering mental health issues were hampering recovery from last year's quake.

Moroccan woman is Spain's first swine flu death

30 Jun 2009, 1511 hrs IST, **AFP**

MADRID: A 20-year-old Moroccan woman has died at a Madrid hospital, becoming Spain's first swine flu fatality, the Gregorio Maranon hospital announced on Tuesday.

The woman, who suffered from asthma, died at dawn of a respiratory illness provoked by the A(H1N1) flu, said a health ministry statement. The woman, who was seven-months pregnant when she arrived at the hospital, had been receiving treatment for several days.

When her condition deteriorated Monday, [doctors](#) carried out a Caesarean delivery of the baby, who was in good health and unaffected by the virus, said the ministry statement.

"Health minister Trinidad Jimenz will give a press conference to announce the death of the young woman," said a hospital spokeswoman.

According to the latest health ministry figures, issued on Tuesday, 717 people have been infected with the A(H1N1) virus in Spain since it first appeared.

One other patient is being treated in a hospital in Catalonia, northwest Spain, and is in a serious condition.

Spain was the first European country to confirm a case of the A(H1N1) virus.

The latest global figures issued by the World [Health](#) Organisation on Monday gave the number of recorded swine flu cases as 70,893 worldwide, with 311 deaths, since the outbreak started in late March. But some countries are no longer keeping track of all cases recorded.

And US [health officials](#) have said that while their official figures record 27,717 cases including 127 deaths, the real figure was probably at least a million -- 50 times more than actually reported.

Botswana: Floods DREF Operation No. MDRBW001

Source: [International Federation of Red Cross And Red Crescent Societies \(IFRC\)](#)

Date: 30 Jun 2009

GLIDE no. FL-2009-000120-BWA

The International Federation's Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) is a source of un-earmarked money created by the Federation in 1985 to ensure that immediate financial support is available for Red Cross and Red Crescent response to emergencies. The DREF is a vital part of the International Federation's disaster response system and increases the ability of national societies to respond to disasters.

CHF 153,978 (USD 143,061 or EUR 101,837) has been allocated from the Federation's Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) to support the Botswana Red Cross Society (BRCS) in delivering immediate assistance to 620 families affected by floods and to replenish pre-positioned stock used by the National Society in assisting another 200 families. Unearmarked funds to repay DREF are encouraged.

Summary:

The occurrence of heavy rains in the central provinces of Botswana in June 2009 caused seven districts to flood and affected a total of 620 families or 3,100 individuals. The affected households lived in mud dwellings that collapsed in the heavy rain, leaving the families in need of emergency shelter, blankets and food. The damage assessments being undertaken by BRCS, however, may reflect an increase in the number of affected families.

Compounding the unseasonal and unexpected June rains is the unavailability of relief stock to continue relief operations due to the flash floods experienced in the north-west provinces of Botswana in March 2009. Approximately 3,789 persons were affected in the flood-ravaged Ngamiland district, located in the north-west corner of the country. BRCS responded by distributing emergency relief items from its prepositioned stock to approximately 200 families, thereby depleting its stock of readily available relief items.

This operation is expected to be implemented over three months, and will therefore be completed by 30 September 2009. A Final Report will be available three months after the end of the operation (26 December 2009).

The situation

Between 7 and 10 June 2009, heavy rains flooded the seven districts of Serowe/Palapye, Kweneng, Tutume, Boteti, North West, Mahalapye and Bobirwa in central Botswana. The Southern African Development Community (SADC) Regional Remote Sensing Unit confirms that the Department of Meteorology registered rainfall figures of more than 100mm in 24 hours in this area. The average annual rainfall for most of Botswana is less than 50mm.

Dengue claims 156 lives in Sri Lanka

Source: [Xinhua News Agency](#)

Date: 30 Jun 2009

COLOMBO, Jun 30, 2009 (Xinhua via COMTEX) -- The number of dengue deaths has risen to 156 while 13,479 cases have been reported in Sri Lanka as of Monday, health authorities said on Tuesday.

According to the latest statistics published on the official website of the Health Ministry, thirty-nine people were killed by the epidemic while 5,145 dengue patients were identified in June alone.

This represents a sharp increase as 4,156 dengue cases and 85 deaths were reported for the whole year of 2008.

In a bid to control the rapidly spreading dengue epidemic, the health authorities have decided to import a Cuban bacteria to tame the virus.

The rapidly rise in the level of the epidemic has forced the health authorities to carry out extensive public awareness campaign to eradicate the mosquito based epidemic.

Households have been warned to keep the environment free of mosquitoes. Those who allow the mosquitoes to breed by allowing stagnating water face prosecution with a special hotline being made available for public information.

The World Health Organization said some 2.5 billion people, two fifths of the world's population, are now at risk from dengue and estimated that there may be 50 million cases of dengue infection worldwide every year.

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