

## **Met Office not expecting record heatwave this year**

### **Highlights**

- It is premature to say that the current year will be warmest in the history of Pakistan: PMD
- No scientific data is available at the moment to corroborate the claim, says official
- Met Office expecting mercury to rise up to 38 to 40 degrees in April

Rejecting rumours that the current year will be the warmest in the known human history, the Pakistan Meteorological Department said on Monday that there is no scientific evidence available so far that can corroborate these claims and that 2019 will be as warm as the past four years.

“It is premature to say that the current year will be warmest in the history of Pakistan, as no such scientific data is available at the moment,” Karachi Met Office chief Abdur Rasheed told The News.

“There is, however, consensus that this year will be as warm as the past four years, but we are not expecting any unprecedented heatwaves in the current year.” Hundreds in Karachi had died in June 2015 due to a week-long heatwave that struck the city during Ramazan, while power outages and a lack of water also contributed to the agony of the people.

All of this forced the Met Office to establish a heatwave early warning system in the metropolis to keep an eye out for heatwaves so they could warn the people in advance. Experts say that it was the urban heat island effect that resulted in the high number of deaths in the 2015 heatwave when the city was deprived of sea breeze because of the development of a low pressure area in the Arabian Sea.

This, they say, caused warm winds to be trapped in the city for several days, thus keeping the temperature as high as 46 degrees Celsius, with a “real feel” of 52 to 55 degrees due to high humidity in the air.

They say that massive construction activities, rapid deforestation, and emissions from vehicles and chimneys of industries are also resulting in the increase in Karachi’s temperature, adding that the city now needs trees instead of concrete structures if people here want to save themselves from deadly heatwaves.

The Met Office said that the city’s heatwave early warning centre will start working from April 1 and continue to issue weather and heat-related advisories until October 31, with prior forecasts of heatwaves and warmer days.

“As far as temperature forecasts in the coming months are concerned, we are expecting the mercury to rise up to 38 to 40 degrees in April, but we are expecting May and June to be very warm months,” said Rasheed.

He said that the temperature can rise over 40 degrees in May and June, adding that their heatwave early warning centre will be in close coordination with other institutions as well as the people through the media and their website.

‘Can’t rule out heatwave’

Former Met Office chief Dr Ghulam Rasool claimed that the possibility of a deadly heatwave in Karachi during May or June cannot be ruled out because of the urban heat island effect, diminishing vegetation and the construction of massive, unplanned concrete structures across the city.

“Heatwaves as deadly as the one experienced in June 2015 cannot be ruled out this year, but at the moment, the people and the authorities are more alert and a 2015-like situation can be averted with better coordination, awareness and preparedness.”

He said that 2016 was the warmest year in our history, followed by 2015, 2017 and 2018, adding that 2019 can be the warmest year in the known human history, as carbon emissions are on the rise with every passing day and are the main contributing factor in the global temperature increase.

“I believe that the people and the authorities should remain alert in the summer season, while efforts should be made to increase vegetation cover in Karachi and to lower carbon emissions so the effects of urban heat island can be mitigated.”

M. Waqar Bhatti