

Met Office forecasts hot weather during daytime until Monday

Authorities in Karachi have started preparing for long and hot summer ahead after weather pundits warned of an increase in the city's temperature from Friday (today), saying that mercury might soar to as high as 39 degrees Celsius on Saturday and Sunday due to the expected halt in sea breeze and change in the wind direction.

"We are expecting a slight increase in the temperature from Friday due to the change in wind direction and suspension of sea breeze, which may result in daytime temperature of up to 39 degrees Celsius on Saturday, Sunday and maybe Monday", said Sardar Sarfraz, director Met Office Karachi, while speaking to The News on Thursday.

Residents of Karachi have been experiencing a pleasant weather of late but it may unfortunately not last long as officials of the Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) believe that the upcoming month of April would be very warm, which would be followed by the hottest months of May and June.

The Met Office director said hot and dry winds from the north-westerly direction or from the plains of the country would turn the weather in Karachi hot in the daytime; however, the evenings would be relatively pleasant due to the resumption of sea breeze.

Sarfraz said the PMD had not issued any alert to the authorities as the department was not expecting any heatwave in the coming days. He, however, said that they would continue observing the situation and if required, would alert the authorities to take precautionary measures.

In the meantime, the PMD has decided to reactivate its 'Heat Wave Early Warning Centre – Karachi' from April 1 to forewarn people and authorities of any abnormal increase in the temperature or heatwave-like conditions. The Met Office had formed the centre after the deadly heat wave of June 2015 that had killed hundreds of people in Karachi in a few days.

Environmentalists believe Karachi would continue to experience back-to-back heatwaves due to its rapid vertical and horizontal expansion, diminishing vegetation cover and massive tree cutting, and growing carbon emissions from vehicles as well as industries in and around the city.

Despite strong concerns raised by city planners and environmentalists, authorities in Karachi have allowed constructions of multi-storey buildings, which according to the environmentalists, add to the urban heat island effect, resulting in a continuous increase in the average temperatures of Karachi compared to its surroundings.

Similarly, the city is in dire need of effective plantation drive as thousands of conocarpus trees that were planted in the city during earlier regimes have been felled during the last one year after they were termed harmful for the environment. With less trees, the city seems at present a jungle of concrete with less than one per cent plantation on the ground.

Heatstroke camps

Taking the lead in providing relief to the people, the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation (KMC) has directed its health department to prepare a contingency plan in case of heatwaves and asked all the heads of the KMC-run hospitals to appoint focal persons who would be responsible for making arrangements in case of emergency.

“On directives from the mayor, we have asked our hospitals to be prepared for any heatwave like situation and prepare contingency plans. We would ensure that people are provided first aid in case of heatstroke so that no loss of life could take place in the days ahead,” said Dr Birbal Genani, senior director health and medical services KMC, while talking to media persons on Thursday.

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