

● POLITY

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POLITY & GOVERNANCE

Largely peaceful Phase 3 records over 64% polling

CONTEXT: At least 64.45 % of the electorate in 93 constituencies cast their votes on Tuesday in the third phase of the Lok Sabha election.

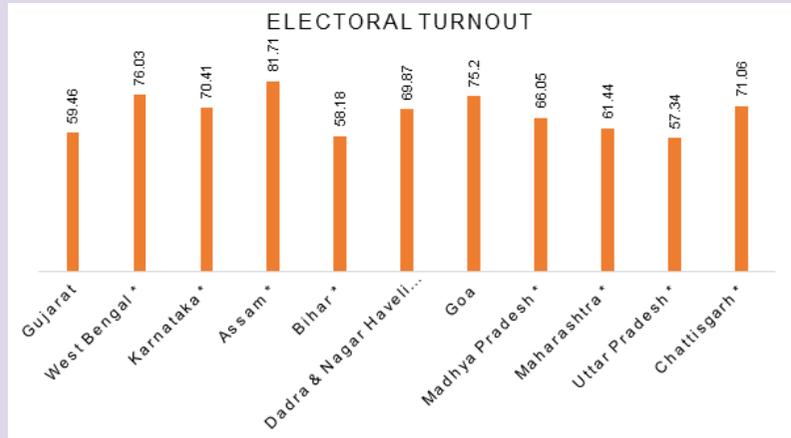
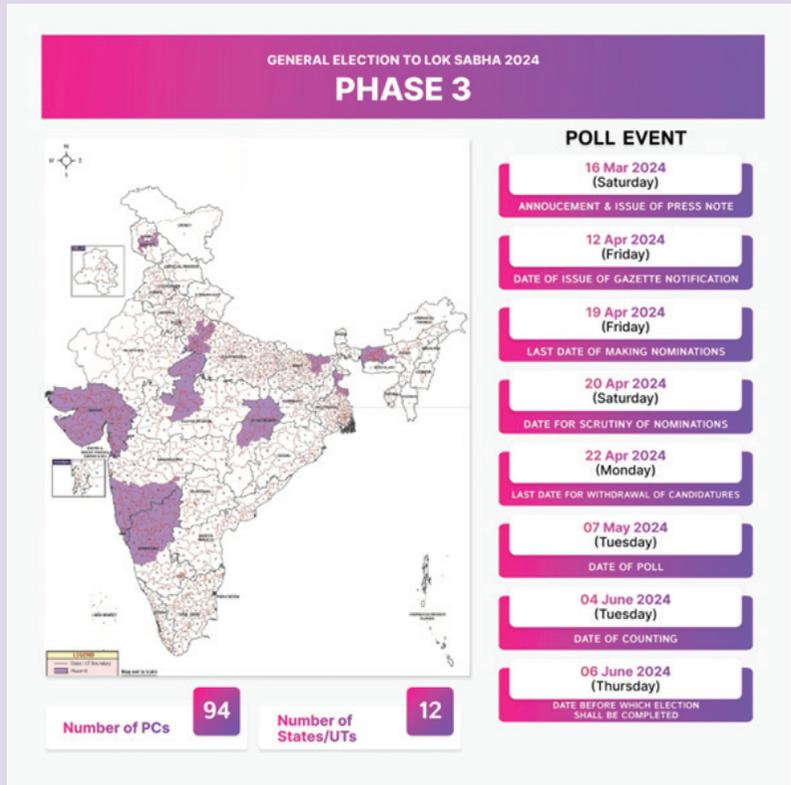


FIGURE: Column chart representation of the electoral turnout for the Phase III of the General Elections, 2024.

POLITY & GOVERNANCE

3 Independents pull out, Haryana BJP govt. in crisis

CONTEXT: The Congress demanded that Assembly election should be conducted in the State under President's Rule as the government had been reduced to a "minority" after three Independent MLAs on Tuesday withdrew their support to the BJP government in Haryana.

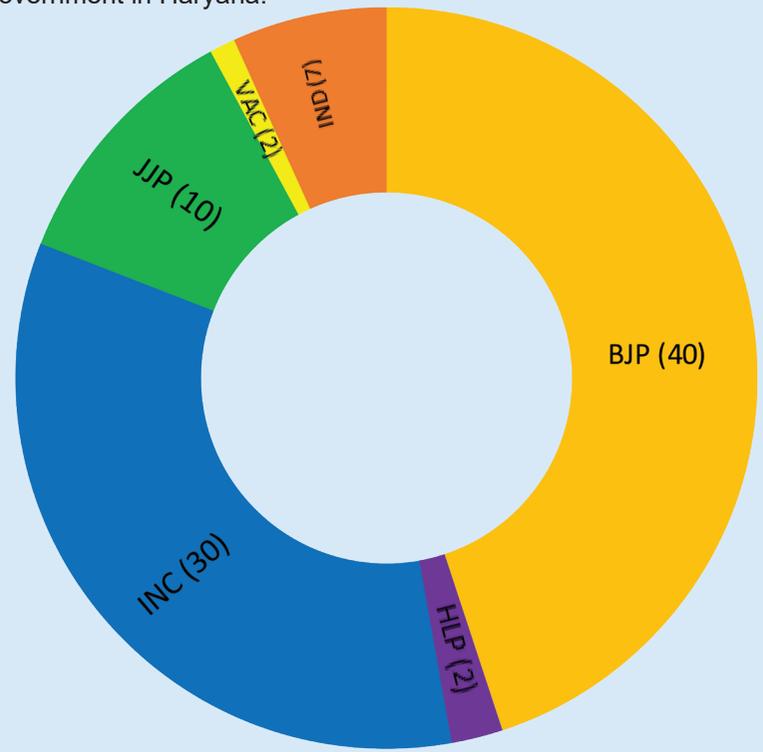


FIGURE: Pie chart representation of seats won by political parties to the Haryana State Legislative Assembly.

The BJP Government, which has the support of two other Independents and Haryana Lokhit Party (HLP) MLA Gopal Kanda, falls short of two seats to the majority mark in the 90-member Assembly which has a current strength of 88.

The Opposition Congress has 30 MLAs, the Jannayak Janta Party (JJP) 10, and the Indian National Lok Dal (INLD) one. The three Independent MLAs extended their support to the Congress.

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INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Israeli tanks roll into Rafah, seize vital border crossing with Egypt

CONTEXT: Israel seized control of Gaza's vital Rafah border crossing into Egypt on Tuesday brushing aside warnings from close allies and moved into the southern city even as ceasefire negotiations with Hamas is going on.



The UN warned of a potential collapse of the flow of aid to Palestinians from the closure of Rafah and the other main crossing into Gaza, Kerem Shalom, at a time when the northern part of the enclave is already experiencing "full-blown famine".

The Israeli foray overnight came after hours of whiplash in the Israel-Hamas war, with the militant group on Monday saying it accepted an Egyptian-Qatari mediated cease-fire proposal. Israel, however, insisted the deal did not meet its core demands. The high-stakes diplomatic moves and military brinkmanship left a glimmer of hope alive — if only barely — for a deal to bring at least a pause in the war, which as it marked its seven-month point on Tuesday, has killed more than 34,700 Palestinians, and has devastated the Gaza Strip.

The looming operation threatens to widen a rift between Israel and its main backer, the United States, which says it is concerned over the fate of around 1.3 million Palestinians crammed into the city. U.S. President Joe Biden warned Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu again on Monday against launching an invasion of the city after Israel ordered 1,00,000 Palestinians to evacuate from parts of Rafah.

Rafah's Palestinian families fled in a steady stream out of Rafah's eastern neighbourhoods on foot or in vehicles and donkey carts piled with mattresses and supplies. Children watched as parents disassembled tents in the sprawling camps that have filled Rafah for months to move to their next destination.

INTERNAL SECURITY

Militant Basit Dar killed, say J&K police

CONTEXT: A 'commander' of the Resistance Front and an operative were killed in a two-day anti-militancy operation in south Kashmir's Kulgam on Tuesday. Basit Dar, an 'A' category militant of the TRF and was involved in more than 18 cases.

Dar had been active in Srinagar joined the TRF, believed to be an off-shoot of the Lashkar-e-Taiba, in 2021. Police have "ample evidence about the involvement of Dar in hatching a conspiracy and planning attacks on the members of minorities and civilians, besides the police personnel". The militants were trapped during an operation in Redwani Payeen of the Kulgam district on Monday afternoon.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Xu Feihong to take over as China's new Ambassador to India

CONTEXT: Chinese President Xi Jinping has appointed senior diplomat Xu Feihong as the new Ambassador to India after an unusually long delay of 18 months amid frozen relations between the two countries over the eastern Ladakh military stand-off.

The Chinese Foreign Ministry has announced that Mr. Xu, who previously served as Ambassador to Afghanistan and Romania, has been appointed as China's new ambassador to India. Aged 60, Mr. Xu is expected to arrive in New Delhi shortly to assume his new role. He will replace veteran Chinese diplomat Sun Weidong, who concluded his term in India in October 2022. Mr. Sun, who previously served as China's ambassador to Pakistan, currently holds the position of Vice-Foreign Minister responsible for overseeing China's policy towards South Asia.

Military stand-off

Mr. Xu's appointment coincides with the ongoing Lok Sabha elections comes amid protracted military and diplomatic negotiations between Beijing and New Delhi to resolve the prolonged military stand-off. Relations between the two countries were frozen except for trade ever since the eastern Ladakh border stand-off erupted on May 5, 2020, following a violent clash in the Pangong Tso (lake) area. The eastern Ladakh stand-off has resulted in a freeze of bilateral ties. The two sides have so far held 21 rounds of corps commanders-level talks to resolve the stand-off.

According to the Chinese military, the two sides so far agreed to disengage from four points, namely the Galwan Valley, the Pangong Lake, Hot Springs, and Jianan Daban (Gogra).

India is pressing the People's Liberation Army (PLA) to disengage from the Depsang and Demchok areas, maintaining that there cannot be restoration of normalcy in its relations with China as long as the state of the borders remains abnormal.



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ECOLOGY AND ENVIRONMENT

Plastic solution

CONTEXT: The fourth round of Global Plastics Treaty to finalise a legal document by the end of 2024 with timelines to curb plastic production, eliminate its uses that create wastage, ban certain chemicals used in its production and set targets for recycling concluded inconclusively.

The Global Plastics Treaty, an ambitious initiative involving at least 175 United Nations member nations to eliminate the use of plastics, concluded its fourth round of negotiations recently.

The primary hurdles are economic. Oil producing and refining countries such as Saudi Arabia, the United States, Russia, India and Iran are reluctant about hard deadlines to eliminate plastic production. A coalition of African countries, supported by several European nations, is in favour of a year, around 2040, to ensure that a timeline for reduction is in effect.

There is also disagreement on whether contentious elements in the treaty should be decided on by a vote or consensus. India calls for availability, accessibility, affordability of alternatives including cost implications and specifying arrangements for capacity building and technical assistance, technology transfer, and financial assistance a legally binding instrument to end the plastic pollution. This language — and India is not the only proponent — is reminiscent of the principle of ‘common but differentiated responsibility’ enshrined in climate talks. Under this, countries must have a common target but those more privileged must support others and take on stricter targets themselves.

In 2022, India brought into effect the Plastic Waste Management Amendment Rules (2021) that banned 19 categories of “single-use” plastics. It, however, does not include plastic bottles — even those less than 200 ml — and multi-layered packaging boxes (as in milk cartons). Moreover, even the ban on single-use plastic items is not uniformly enforced nationally, with several outlets continuing to retail these goods.

The global distribution of the plastic pollution is unequal with Brazil, China, India and the U.S. responsible for 60% of plastic waste, according to a report by the non-profit EA Earth Action. Much like how transitioning away from fossil fuel invites its own challenges, plastic pollution cannot be ended by merely signing treaties. There needs to be much greater investment in alternative products and making them affordable before realistic targets are decided upon.

POLITY & GOVERNANCE

Rules for a new dawn for the Indian legal industry

CONTEXT: India’s tryst with globalisation began in 1991, when the country liberalised its economy. Since then, few sectors have remained as insulated from global practices as the Indian legal industry. At one level, this is understandable given the suitability of Indian qualified lawyers, or advocates, for applying Indian laws in accord with the country’s socio-economic values.

Globalisation refers to the range of forces sweeping the world, unhindered by geographical boundaries, which seek to replace protectionist tendencies with a sense of universalism and synchronisation. The broader goal is to craft an ecosystem in which actors, including lawyers, can interact with one another harmoniously and without significant constraints. It is with this spirit that the Bar Council of India had notified the “Rules for Registration and Regulation of Foreign Lawyers and Foreign Law Firms in India, 2022” in early 2023 (BCI Rules), allowing foreign lawyers to set up their offices in India for some limited purposes. Indeed, the objects and reasons of the BCI Rules consciously note that “the world is becoming a global village” and that “the legal profession in India has to rise to the occasion”.

A greater role for foreign lawyers

The the Bar Council of India has permitted registered foreign firms and lawyers to practise on transactional or corporate work (such as joint ventures, mergers and acquisitions, and intellectual property matters) on a reciprocal basis. Foreign lawyers cannot appear before Indian courts, tribunals, or statutory authorities. They are now permitted to advise and appear in international arbitration cases conducted in India, irrespective of whether foreign law may or may not be involved.

Previously, the Supreme Court of India had prohibited foreign lawyers from practising law in India in either litigation or the non-litigation side and restricted their participation in international arbitration cases to visiting India on a “fly in and fly out” basis. The BCI Rules clearly envisage a greater role for foreign lawyers, albeit in an intensely regulated framework.

Long-term benefits, but also risks

The BCI Rules may affect the immediate profitability of some Indian law firms and lawyers, the long-term benefits are expected to be immense, the reciprocity requirement can ensure that Indian lawyers receive increased access to the legal profession in foreign jurisdictions. This could enable a sustained exchange of know-how, skills, and expertise between lawyers across jurisdictions. The entry of foreign firms in India will also increase competition; thereby creating more job opportunities for Indian lawyers, fostering a better work culture and remuneration, and incentivising competing stakeholders to heighten the quality of their services. This should augur well not only for the Indian lawyer community but, equally, for also India’s emergence as an economic leader.

But, as with any liberalisation project, any optimism must be balanced against the risks that an unregulated market often brings. Indian stakeholders have already identified some



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of these risks in ongoing conversations with the Bar Council of India. For instance, the differences in how Indian and foreign law firms are regulated in their home jurisdictions can create unintended distortions. While Indian lawyers are prohibited from soliciting clients through advertisements, such restrictions rarely exist in other jurisdictions. The ethical rules governing foreign-qualified lawyers may also differ from those in India, creating confusion as to which set of rules will apply in a transaction or arbitration setting. Finally, certain multi-jurisdictional law firms with offices in various countries may have greater monetary capabilities than their Indian counterparts, making it difficult for the latter to compete. This would require the Bar Council of India to carefully regulate the speed and extent of foreign lawyers' entry into India. If not, the

pitfalls of liberalisation may soon outweigh its anticipated benefits.

There is dialogue

It appears that the Bar Council of India is conscious of the pros and cons of its decision. This is clear from the imposition of stringent registration (and renewal) requirements on foreign entrants and their continued exclusion from any litigious work in the BCI Rules. But the most important encouragement emanates from the consultative approach adopted by the Bar Council of India. The regulator is not taking any decision in a hurry and remains in dialogue with the critics of its decision. It is for these reasons that one may perceive the BCI Rules with careful optimism, and hope that it ushers the Indian legal industry towards a brighter future.

“Doing nothing is very hard to do. You never know when you’re finished.”—Leslie Nielsen



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GEOGRAPHY

What high-temperature maps get wrong about heatwaves

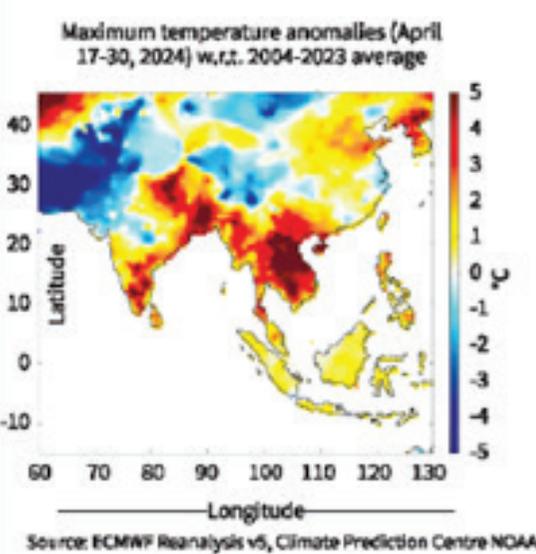
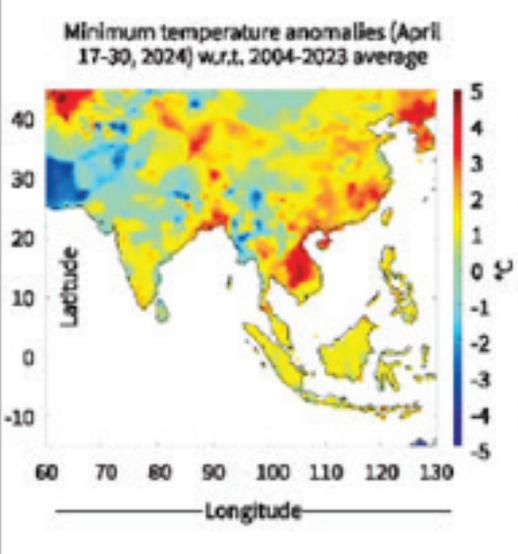
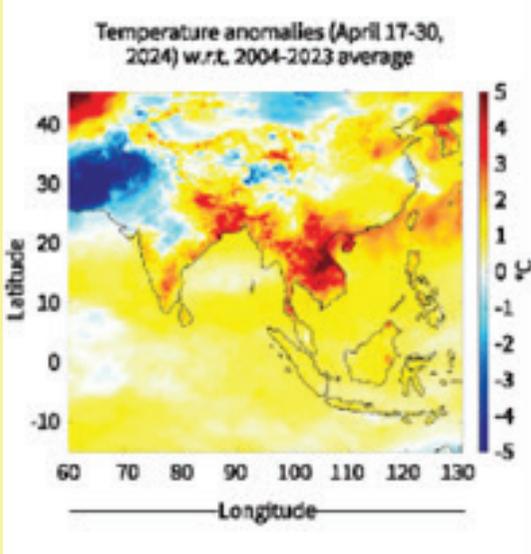
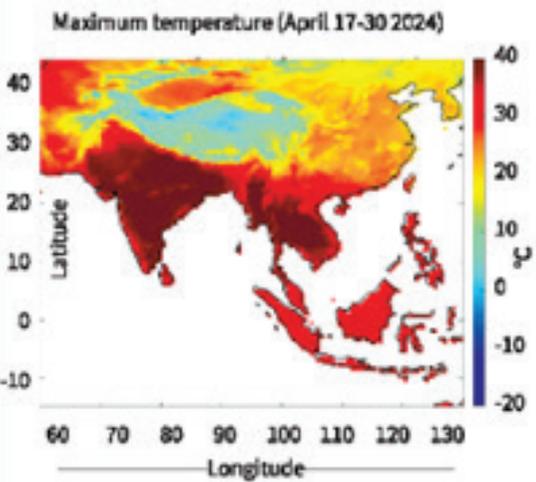
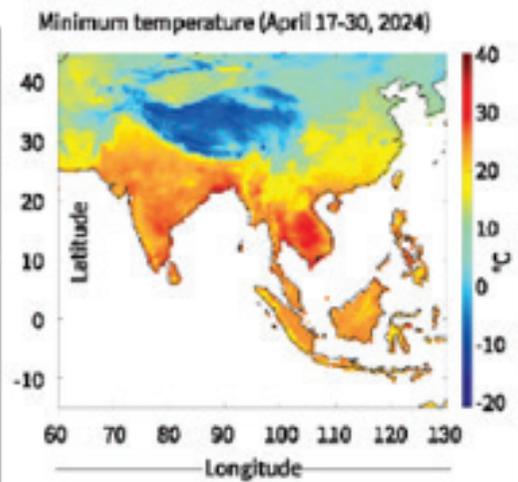
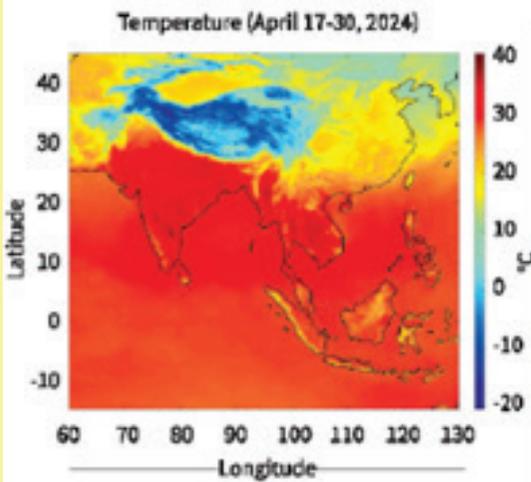
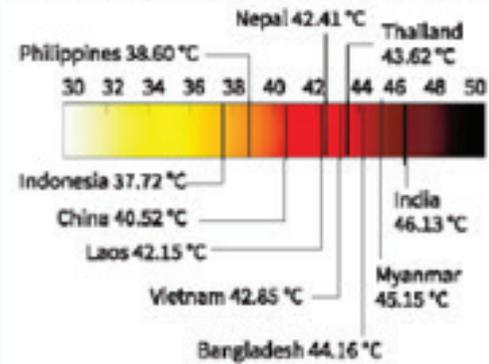
CONTEXT: Heatwaves arrive like clockwork over many regions of the world and are getting even more attention due to the upward trends in many regions in terms of their duration, frequency, intensity, and scale.

Constructing the right heat map

These maps show the total average temperatures along with the averages of daily minimum and daily maximum temperatures. One can see that temperature anomalies maps provide a more accurate picture



Maximum temperature recorded over past two weeks



Source: ECMWF Reanalysis v5, Climate Prediction Centre NOAA

They arrive at more or less expected times of the year because they are directly related to the natural seasonal arrival of spring. This pattern is called the climate. Most people see heat waves on the horizon as March rolls in over the Indian subcontinent. This is why the old adage says climate is what you expect and the weather is what you get; and herein lies the challenge of accurately predicting heatwaves at a hyperlocal scale to save lives. Fortunately, India is getting better at predicting extremes and managing the resulting disasters.

Predicting a heatwave

The challenge of predicting heatwaves, or in fact any extremes, raises the question of how we should depict them for the people at large. For better or for worse, a new trend has emerged where even reputable scientific organisations, such as NASA, publicise frightening total-temperature maps. While these maps may communicate alarm well, they can also be misleading. Scientific methodology says we need to show anomalies, not the absolute value.

In reality, heat waves are excess temperatures over the expected seasonal values. Seasonally warm temperatures are expected and they don't become heatwaves until we have anomalous temperatures riding on top of them. This is a simple point, yet it requires strict adherence to avoid confusing the general public. To illustrate, here are maps that compare visual representations of total and anomalous temperature values.

The total temperature can be the average value over several days or the average of the daily minimum and daily maximum temperatures. Temperatures averaged over several days show the warmth (which we expect) over the ocean and on land, with lower temperatures over the Himalayas and the Tibetan Plateau. The daily minimum temperature map shows colder temperatures everywhere compared to the daily averages, again as one would expect. The daily maximum temperatures are similar to those in NASA's maps — and they now appear routinely in media reports. And for good measure, some reports also use words like “frying pan” and “cauldron” to describe temperatures over large areas.

Note that even if specific countries are identified with their maximum temperatures, these annotations are not so useful for real-world disaster management. Total temperature maps hide many details of what we need from forecasts to guide disaster management. This fact becomes clear in the anomaly temperature maps for the same days. The contrasts with the total temperature maps couldn't be starker than when we examine the anomalous quantities in the same temperatures. We derive these anomalies by subtracting the long-term average temperatures for the same days from the recorded values. For example, the long-term average is 300 C and the recorded value is 340 C, the anomalous value is 40 C.

The daily averages and minimum and maximum temperatures for the days considered here were in fact lower than normal over parts of India and Pakistan. Anomalies in the maximum temperature are indeed much lower than anomalies in the minimum temperatures over these regions. The warmest maximum temperatures occurred over several

places — but this hardly describes a “frying pan” or a “cauldron”. However, Pakistan's heatwave season extends into July, so it isn't out of the woods yet as far as heatwaves this year are concerned.

Global warming is local

Another crucial aspect of mapping anomalies instead of total temperatures is that the location-specific processes that generate these heatwaves are very important for us to be able to predict them at the scales relevant to disaster management. Entire countries can't prepare for weather disasters; the sharper the spatial hazard and the risk information, the likelier it is for disaster management to be effective and efficient. This is rendered more important considering the limited resources — even in rich countries, leave alone the economically developing world facing worse heatwaves.

Such caveats apply to extremes of rainfall, droughts, and floods as well. However, anomalous temperatures manifest on much larger scales. Exposing people to scary maps may raise awareness but they could also undermine credibility if a heat wave doesn't materialise in a particular local area or if forecasts don't pan out.

The case for anomaly maps

Forecasting systems function at the scale of the forecast's model grid. For example, the Indian forecast system for short- (days 1-3) and medium- (days 3-10) range forecasts has a resolution of 12 km, so the forecasts are made at this scale. Early warnings are also developed based on these forecasts.

The National Disaster Management Agency coordinates with the India Meteorological Department and local governments to spread awareness across the country and save lives. With more than 12 lakh polling booths this year for the Lok Sabha polls, scary maps may also have the negative consequence of scaring people away from turning out to vote. We can avoid this by using anomaly maps instead. Reliable early warning systems can also be improved continuously, especially by downscaling the model forecasts to neighbourhood scales using artificial intelligence and machine-learning techniques. More examples of such successful downscaling are now being reported with applications in measuring and forecasting extreme events as well as in other sectors such as agriculture, energy, and health. Forecasts are also best downscaled for anomalies.

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INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Colombo fixes price for Adani power

CONTEXT: Sri Lanka has agreed to purchase power at \$0.0826, or 8.26 cents, per kWh from Adani Green Energy, which is executing a wind power project in Mannar and Pooneryn in the island's Northern Province.

Power deal

Sri Lanka's PPA with Adani Green Energy will facilitate development of wind power units to produce 484 MW of electricity

■ Based on current exchange rate, cost of energy will be LKR24.78/kWh: minister posts on X

■ Country aims to add 2,800 MW to national grid through renewable energy



■ The \$442-mn wind power plant is Adani Group's second major investment in Sri Lanka

The country's Cabinet cleared a proposal on Monday for a 20-year power purchase agreement with Adani Green Energy for the development of wind power stations to produce 484 MW of power. While Sri Lanka would pay in Sri Lankan Rupees, based on the prevailing exchange rate at the time of payment, according to the minister, details of clauses on possible revisions in rates were awaited.

Sri Lanka generates about 4,200 MW of power a year, and authorities have pledged to add another 2,800 MW to the national grid through renewable energy sources over the next three years. In 25 years, the island aims to generate all of its energy through renewable energy.

The \$442-million wind power plant is the Adani Group's second major investment in Sri Lanka, after its \$700 million investment in the West Container Terminal at the strategic Colombo port. The proposed renewable energy plant in the Northern Province earlier sparked controversy over the process followed by Colombo to select the company. More recently, residents of Mannar and environmentalists voiced apprehensions that the project could adversely impact biodiversity and local livelihoods in the area. Authorities and Adani Green, in turn, said they had factored in environmental considerations before finalising the project.



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