

UNPRECEDENTED DRY SPELL, U'KHAND SIZZLES

NARENDRA SETHI @ Dehradun

UTTARAKHAND, a Himalayan state, has been experiencing temperatures above 40 degrees Celsius this summer due to an unprecedented dry spell, surprising meteorologists.

"Compared to previous years, this time the temperature in Uttarakhand has been relatively higher. In Dehradun, the temperature has remained above 40 degrees for 22 out of the last 30 days," said Bikram Singh, director of the Meteorological Centre, Dehradun.

"One of the main reasons for this is the occurrence of a continuous dry spell in May and June," Singh added.

Dehradun had recorded 43.9 degrees C on June 4, 1902, and 43.7 degrees C on June 16, 1995, according to meteorological department data. In 1995, the temperature exceeded 40 degrees for 12 days in June. On Tuesday, Uttarakhand experienced intense heat with temperatures soaring above 40 degrees C in 15 cities, including Srinagar, Devprayag and Rudraprayag in the hills.

The 'Citizens for Green Doon' will organise a protest march on Sunday against the state government's decision to cut down trees. The government has identified 250 trees, aged between 50 and 75 years, in a central area of Dehradun for removal to make way for the construction of four lanes.

"The loss of green cover and increasing concretisation is leading to the urban heat island effect. The unbearable 43°C temperature in Dehradun is the re-



Protest march against felling of trees by govt

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sult of undesirable and mostly avoidable concretization," said Ira Chauhan, a senior member of Citizens for Green Doon. "It will be a regrettable realisation for the government when they finally wake up to the fact that the network of expressways and roads has supplanted Dehradun's renowned basmati rice fields and 'litchi' orchards," Ira said.

Expressing concern, Anoop Nautiyal, the founder of the Social Development for Communities Foundation, said, "It is quite perplexing that there has

been a notable absence of discussion regarding the persistent heatwave in Uttarakhand. I fail to comprehend why the political leadership in our state has remained silent on crucial matters pertaining to climate and public welfare."

Hill state Himachal Pradesh is also experiencing extreme temperatures this year. According to IMD, a hilly region experiences heatwave when the maximum temperature is over 30 degrees Celsius, with 4.5 degrees Celsius above normal for two consecutive days.

HEATWAVE PLAGUES HILLY AREAS

- Mercury crossed the 40 degree Celsius mark for eight consecutive days in U'khand

- One of the main reasons for this is the occurrence of a continuous dry spell in May and June, say experts

- On June 18, Uttarakhand saw intense heat with temperatures soaring above 40 degrees C in 15 cities

- The rise in mercury has led to an increase in the water level of the Bhagirathi river due to glacier melting, resulting in enhanced power generation

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... meanwhile, melting glaciers push power generation to record

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WHILE people in the plains and hilly regions of Uttarakhand are grappling with scorching heat, the soaring temperatures have proved advantageous for the state's hydroelectric power projects. The rise in mercury has led to an increase in the water level of the Bhagirathi river due to glacier melting, resulting in enhanced power generation at the Dharasu powerhouse of the Maneri Bhali Phase-2 project, officials said.

"Electricity production in the Maneri Bhali Phase-2 project of the Jal Vidyut Nigam depends on the water level of the Bhagirathi River. Currently, the rate of glacier melting has increased due to severe heat, causing the water level of the river to reach 150 to 180 cusec feet per second in just two days," said Sandeep Singhal, the managing director of Uttarakhand Jal Vidyut Nigam.

"The increase in the river's water level has led to the production of 7 million units of electricity at Dharasu powerhouse.

The 304 MW capacity project

comprises four turbines, each with a capacity of 76 MW. The total recorded generation reached 290.46 MW, with the first turbine producing 69.29 MW, the second 74.48 MW, the third 72.22 MW, and the fourth 74.36 MW," said Singhal.

Vimal Dabral, public relations officer of the corporation, said, "Production is expected to increase further due to rise in river water level during the monsoon season."

He also highlighted the potential risk of silt deposition in the river during monsoon, which could hamper production midway. "In the absence of silt-related issues, the project stands to achieve significant production levels during the monsoon season," Dabral said.

According to experts, the accelerated melting of glaciers poses a major environmental threat, though state hydropower project operators consider it as a blessing.

With the summer season driving up power demand, the Uttarakhand government previously had to purchase electricity from other states, power department officials said.

