



# SOUTH ASIA DISASTER NEWS

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## WEEKLY HIGHLIGHTS

### Summary

During the weekend unseasonal rain disrupted some South Asian countries.

In Afghanistan around 36 houses were destroyed and a number of families forced to move to safer places after a landslide hit a village in Siah Gard district of the central Parwan province.

In Bangladesh, one person was killed and a large number of dwelling houses were razed in a storm that lashed Magura district on 3<sup>rd</sup> April evening. The storm also uprooted many fruit-bearing trees. In another event at least 15 shops of a market and 30 residential houses at Rasulpur burnt to ashes on 30 March.

In Bhutan, tuberculosis (TB) was well under control.

In Indian state of Andhra Pradesh, the crop loss caused by the recent unseasonal rains at over Rs.2,000 crore. In Bangalore, rainwater inundated many houses in low-lying areas, mainly those situated near storm water drain, in Puttenahalli area in J.P Nagar on Sunday night.

Though dengue is still not a public health issue in the South India, the mosquito-borne disease can emerge as a big public health threat in the four southern states, thanks to climate change.

In Pakistan, the road link between Quetta and Karachi was cut on 4 April when a road linking the Purali Bridge with the RCD Highway in the Bela area of Lasbela district was inundated after a flash flood. In another incident, six students of a seminary were killed and four others injured when they were struck by an avalanche in Kala Dhaka tribal area on Sunday.

In Sri Lanka, over 60 families in Walapone have been evacuated following fresh landslide threats in the area the Disaster Management Centre.

### Afghanistan



### Landslide destroys houses

Source: [The Frontier Post](#)

Date:- 31.3.2008

Around 36 houses were destroyed and a number of families forced to move to safer places after a landslide hit a village in Siah Gard district of the central Parwan province. Parwan Agriculture Director Shah Mir Amiri told Pajhwok Afghan News on Sunday the incident took place in Bahadur Khan Village this morning. There were no immediate details of casualties resulting from the landslide. More than 130 more houses in the area ran the risk of being hit by landslides, warned the director, who voiced concerned about the safety of residents. Deputy Chief of Provincial Council Zahir Salangi, confirming the tragedy, said they were yet to receive information about the loss of lives.

## Relief supplies reach northern Afghanistan after worst winter in 25 years

Source: [Action Aid](#)

Date:-4.4.2008

Blankets, warm clothing and other essential supplies are being distributed to 42,000 people recovering from extreme winter weather in Jawzjan province in northern Afghanistan. With the onset of spring, international development agency Action Aid has started a relief and rehabilitation programme in 179 villages in the province with over Euros 370,000 (£290,000) funding from the European Union.

Action Aid assessment teams identified isolated communities in the north of the country that were being left behind in the relief effort and found that war widows and poor families had suffered the most. They discovered 6,000 highly vulnerable families in urgent need of help including 1,212 households headed by women and 372 where the head of the household is disabled.

In addition to general relief the agency is also distributing goats, cattle and poultry to the 1,000 families identified as most at need. During the winter, thousands of head of livestock died in the freezing weather. Action Aid's Emergency and Conflict Advisor for Asia, Paras Tamang said that long-term rehabilitation efforts are crucial.

"Now the relief phase is coming to an end it is vital that poor families, who are totally dependent on cattle, goats and poultry for their living, are helped to restock. Without livestock, these families will be destitute." But Paras Tamang also warned that there is the danger of flash flooding as snow quickly melts followed by drought in the longer term; so far there has been no seasonal rain to support the just-planted wheat crop.

He said: "Action Aid Afghanistan is preparing communities for the very real possibility of flash floods and drought. This disaster mitigation work will be implemented through cash-for-work programmes – cleaning canals and upgrading flood defenses and irrigation systems. The aim is to have a twofold impact on reducing risks around flooding and drought and also help to increase income in the local economy."

The European Union is also supporting an Action Aid disaster preparedness project in Shurtepah district, Balkh province, Afghanistan.

## Bangladesh



## Earthquake- Bangladesh at high risk, but lacks preparedness

Source: [The Daily Star](#)

Date:-31.3.2008

Bangladesh due to its geographic location has a high risk of experiencing earthquakes but the country does not have the capacity to combat such natural calamity, experts said at a roundtable yesterday. They pointed out that unplanned urbanisation, over population, poorly constructed structures, lack of coordination between institutions concerned, inadequacy of recovery tools and lack of awareness are putting the nation at high risk. The experts suggested launching massive earthquake-related awareness campaigns, retrofitting existing buildings, strengthening building inspection system, proper implementation of building code and training for masons, architects and engineers. Network for Information Response and Preparedness Activities on Disaster (Nirapad) in association with USAID and Care organised the roundtable titled "Earthquake risk in Bangladesh: Preparedness and limitations" at Cirdap auditorium in the city to mark the National Disaster Preparedness Day 2008 today. ASM Maksud Kamal, an expert on

earthquake and tsunami preparedness of Comprehensive Disaster Management Programme (CDMP), in his keynote paper said during the last 150 years seven major earthquakes took place in the country and two of them had their epicentres in Bangladesh. He said there are four tectonic source zones that can lead to major earthquakes in future and the faults are the Meghalaya fault zone to the north, the Tripura fault zone to the east, the Sub-Dauki fault zone to the north east and the Bogra fault zone to the west. If an earthquake occurs outside the country then three cities--Dhaka, Sylhet and Chittagong--might be badly affected, he said adding that rapid urbanisation has accentuated the problem of vulnerability. He said the loss of lives and properties caused by earthquakes can be reduced significantly if the government retrofits the existing buildings located in key points and builds awareness. Prof Roksana Hafiz Ahmed of Urban and Regional Planning (URP) of Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (Buet) said there has been no urban planning to improve the standard of living in the country. "We never think of earthquake like floods or cyclones and whenever a jolt occurs in the country we panic and after a while we forget the most disastrous calamity," she said. She said people's awareness regarding earthquakes is very poor and we have to take awareness building measures in schools and colleges. Executive Engineer of Public Works Department (PWD) Syed Mahfuz Ahmed said it is necessary to take proper measures first for buildings at risk. The concerned institutions have lacking in coordination, an obstacle to preparedness of disasters, he said adding that it is yet to be decided who would supervise implementation of the building code. He suggested building expertise and introducing training for architects, engineers and masons. Engineer Syed Azizul Haq, structural designer and plumbing specialist of Public Works Department (PWD), said, "We have to provide support to professionals in this sector since we could not produce many professionals involved with buildings." He said it is essential to increase technical institutions where the professionals will have support for disaster preparedness. Abu Naser Khan of Paribesh Bachao Andolan said institutions concerned like Rajuk and Dhaka City Corporation need to take effective steps and many problems will be solved if these perform their duties on their own. The speakers suggested inclusion of chapters on disaster awareness and preparedness in school and college textbooks and training of first response units. Moderated by Mehedi Ahmed Ansari, professor of Civil Engineering Department of Buet, the roundtable was also attended by Kamrul Hasan of Geology Department of Dhaka University, Prof Abul Kalam, chairman of URP Department of Jahangirnagar University, Engineer Shah Alam, civil engineer of Rajuk, Abu Syed Khan, Abu Sayed Khan, managing editor of Somokal, and Abul Haseeb Khan, chairperson of Nirapad.

### **15 shops, 30 houses gutted at Kamrangirchar**

Source: [The Daily Star](#)

Date:- 1.4.2008



Fire burnt to ashes at least 15 shops of a market and 30 residential houses at Rasulpur under Kamrangirchar in the city early yesterday. Fire Service and Civil Defense (FSCD) sources said the fire originated at 4:30am from an electric short circuit caught the Rasulpur Bridge Market and the houses. Five units of FSCD from Ramna, Labagh and Palashi rushed to the spot and fought for two hours in putting out the fire which burnt to ashes the shops of shoe, cloth, readymade garments and electric goods.

### **Storm kills 3, uproots trees, damage houses in Magura, Rangpur**

Source: [The New Nation](#)

Date:- 1.4.2008

One person was killed and a large number of dwelling houses were razed in a storm that lashed Magura district on Thursday evening. The storm also uprooted many fruit-bearing trees.

The victim was identified as Bhim Chandra Biswas of village Akrampara under Sadar upazila of the district. We were caught in the storm while returning home from a local market on bicycle. At least two persons were injured in the norwester.

A report from our Rangpur Correspondent said, two persons died and 250 people sustained injuries when a severe storm battered Mithapukur and Pirganj upazilas in Rangpur on Monday night.

The two ill-fated persons were identified as Mustima (10) of village Pasgachi and Salina (55) of village Kadinabad. Emadpur Mirzapur, Balahat and Hazratpur unions under Mithapukur upazila and Birhampur, Paegacy and Tukuria unions under Pirgacha upazila bore the major brunt of the calamity.

The storm also caused extensive damage to standing rice and other crops in the two upazilas.

### **USAID to give 90,000 MT of food aid to Bangladesh**

Source: [The New Nation](#)

Date:- 2.4.2008

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) will provide approximately 90,000 mts. of food aid worth \$67.8 million to Bangladesh this year. One third of the food aid will be used to assist Cyclone Sidr affected people of Barguna and Bagerhat districts and the rest will be distributed as part of USAID's regular food aid programs in the flood prone and seasonally food insecure areas of the country.

USAID supported food aid programs target the poorest of the poor who live in the most food insecure and vulnerable areas of the country. USAID food aid assistance is designed to bridge the gap between disaster response and development by supporting planning and preparedness activities. USAID has helped build 245 multi-purpose disaster shelters, developed about 4,000 community-based disaster mitigation structures, and established a stockpile of emergency disaster kits for 30,000 families.

USAID provided training to local disaster committees, volunteers and school teachers in 271 of the country's 277 disaster-prone sub-districts. The program focuses on protection of assets by raising homesteads, and by building raised access roads to markets and schools. The program develops alternate livelihood options for the ultra-poor through activities such as poultry raising, dairy farming, and vegetable gardening.

The program also provides a safety net for the poor through food and cash for work projects. In all, program activities are helping 4 million people in more than 3,000 villages. USAID's \$167 million Food Security and Disaster Management Program addresses disaster risk mitigation and adaptation to climate change threats over the next five years.

USAID has provided more than \$19 million in emergency funds to support relief and early recovery activities since Cyclone Sidr made landfall in southern Bangladesh on November 15, 2007. The U.S. Government continues to monitor the recovery and reconstruction efforts to help rebuild the cyclone affected areas in Bangladesh.

USAID is the principal U.S. Government agency that provides development assistance in more than 100 countries around the world. From 1971 to 2007, USAID has provided more than \$5

billion in development assistance to Bangladesh, with over half of that amount in food aid. In 2007, USAID provided \$82 million in development assistance to the people of Bangladesh.

### **IMF approves \$217.7m aid for cyclone Sidr survivors**

Source: [The Financial Express](#)

Date:- 4.4.2008

The Executive Board of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) Wednesday approved SDR 133 million (about \$217.7 million) in emergency assistance to Bangladesh to assist the government's efforts to deal with the impact of severe damage caused by cyclone Sidr that hit the country on November 15 last year.

Cyclone 'Sidr' and two preceding floods resulted in at least 4,400 deaths and disrupted the lives of millions of people in one of the poorest and most vulnerable regions of the country.

IMF says total damage, mainly to agriculture, housing and infrastructure, is estimated at US\$2.7 billion, or 3.7% of Bangladesh's GDP.

The IMF's emergency assistance will support Bangladesh's international reserve position that has been put under pressure in the face of a sharp rise in disaster-related imports, including large volumes of food.

The IMF provides emergency assistance to member countries hit by natural disasters to help them meet immediate balance of payments financing needs, and to maintain or restore macroeconomic stability. Emergency assistance is repayable in eight equal quarterly installments over 3¼ to 5 years from the disbursement date. In line with the Executive Board's decision to subsidize emergency assistance for PRGF-eligible countries hit by natural disaster, the rate of charge on the assistance will be subsidized to 0.5 percent per annum, subject to resource availability, according to an IMF release issued on April 2.

At the conclusion of the Executive Board's discussion on Bangladesh, Takatoshi Kato, Deputy Managing Director and acting Chair, said: "We extend our deepest sympathy to the people of Bangladesh. The destruction, suffering, and loss of life caused by the floods of July-September and the cyclone of November 15 were devastating. It will take years to repair the physical damage, while the human loss is irretrievable."

He said: "The government, with the support of the international community, responded swiftly to the catastrophe. The authorities allocated food to expand the Vulnerable Group Feeding Program and provide for open market sales of rice. Budgetary funds have been allocated to augment social safety nets and to fund additional subsidies for fertilizer and fuel." Kato said increased revenue collections, the reallocation of funds within the budget, and additional donor assistance have kept the budgetary impact of the disaster response within the parameters of the FY2008 budget.

"Damage to the agricultural sector will reduce economic growth in FY2008. The balance of payments has been adversely affected by the disasters, largely owing to a substantial rise in food imports, which has led to some pressure on international reserves," he added. The IMF official said support from the international community, including emergency assistance from the IMF, will therefore be crucial for financing needed imports while allowing international reserves to remain at about three months of import coverage. Ensuring that pledged aid commitments from donors are effectively mobilized and efficiently used will be crucial for the ultimate success of the recovery and reconstruction program.

Kato said as relief and reconstruction efforts proceed, the limits to implementation capacity and

potential inflationary pressures will be an important consideration. In this regard, it is reassuring that the authorities intend to contain domestic financing of the government to budgeted levels.

He said a recovery in agricultural production, reconstruction activity, and an improved business climate should allow growth to recover in FY2009 to Bangladesh's medium-term potential growth path. The government is also working with stakeholders and donors to further improve the institutional setting for disaster management by developing a specific Disaster Response Fund, exploring other means of financial support, and establishing a dialogue with all development partners on a risk mitigation agenda related to global climate change.

Kato said the government has indicated their intention to maintain macroeconomic stability and pursue important reforms in the areas of revenue administration and policy, expenditure management, energy pricing, and state-bank reform.

## **Bhutan**



### **TB to a full stop**

Source: [Kuensel Newspaper](#)

Date:- 31.3.2008

Tuberculosis (TB) in Bhutan was well under control and in keeping with international standards, according to the programme manager for TB of the health ministry, Dr Pandup Tshering. But, as Bhutan observed World TB Day at Khasadrapchu, Thimphu, on March 28, the programme manager warned that TB could get out of hand because of the increasing number of people infected with HIV/AIDS and the MDR (multi drug resistant) variant of TB.

“A total of 1,050 cases of TB were reported in 2007 in Bhutan, out of which about 350 were sputum positive,” said Dr Pandup Tshering. “Bhutan is doing well in TB case detection and successful treatment of cases in the South East Asia region, but more needs to be done to successfully control the disease.”

The theme for this year's World TB Day: “I am stopping TB” was chosen to imply that each and every one could contribute to stalling TB in the country.

According to the World Health Organization representative in Bhutan, Ei Kubota, the theme is a message of personal commitment from people in various walks of life to stop TB. “It's a reaffirmation that every individual's contribution counts,” said Mr Kubota.

TB in Bhutan is mostly caused by poor sanitation, poor nutrition, hygiene, alcoholism, HIV/AIDS, and low immunity in the body. Mr Kubota said that more attention had to be paid to other factors impacting tuberculosis control. He said that both housing and work environments easily allow for transmission of tuberculosis.

The director of public health, Dr Ugyen Dopu, said that TB is a curable and preventable disease. In Bhutan, TB can be diagnosed in the national and two regional referral hospital, and district hospitals and the treatment is provided free of cost under the DOTS (Directly Observed Treatment Short-Course) Strategy. “Each and every individual can play a role in stopping the disease. The armed forces, religious personnel, students, teachers, communities all can play an active part in putting an end to the disease,” he said.

## Fire erupts in Thangrong

Source: [Bhutan Broadcasting Service](#)

Date:- 3.4.2008

Forestry officials and volunteers are still battling a forest fire in Thangrong gewog in Monggar. Our reporter Karma Tenzin says the fire which started on March 27 from Walaktang village is still raging on and has spread to Ngarbatang village. Forest ranger, Dawa, told our reporter that 50 percent of the forest in the gewog has been damaged so far. However there is no damage to property or injuries. He said their efforts are being hampered by the steep mountain terrain and strong winds. He added that at least 100 people have been battling the fire daily.

India



## Steps to prevent flooding of low-lying areas sought

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Date:- 31.3.2008,

Nagercoil: The Conservation of Nature Trust here has urged the Government to take steps to prevent the flooding of low-lying areas in and around Nagercoil municipal limits.

The chairman of the forum, R.S. Lal Mohan has said that there were about 60 tanks, small and big, within the periphery of the town of municipality, the district administration and individuals filled most of the tanks unwisely. After the merger of Kanyakumari district with Tamil Nadu, officers who viewed these areas as wastelands converted them into bus stands, shopping complexes, housing sites and even marriage halls. This has resulted in water scarcity in summer and flood during rainy seasons.

Now, there are only one or two tanks and they are also polluted and encroached. The water from the highlands like Veturnimadam, collectorate area and high level water tank areas will flow naturally to the low lying areas like Chettikulam, Vadiveeswaram, Meenakshipuram, W.C.C. Road and Dennison Street. These highlands were interrupted by tanks while serving as a cushion to receive the rainwater. Further there were large natural canals like odai to receive storm water during rainy seasons. If these tanks were filled, the rainwater would not flood areas like Kottar and cause havoc. With the construction of shopping complexes and marriage halls, the rainwater reached Kottar.

Another tank namely Pochathankulam was also allotted for housing sites by the Nagercoil municipality under the scheme of Government to offer patta to the people. On one side the Government was trying to remove encroachments from the tanks and on the other hand trying to give pattas to the people to strengthen their vote bank.

Hence the Conservation of Nature Trust here has demanded the Government conduct a detailed survey so that a master plan could be formulated to prevent flooding. Moreover one of the important suggestions to prevent the flood was to remove encroachments in odai poromboke. The officials should undertake periodic check-up so that encroachments could be removed to ensure free flow of rainwater, said Mr.Lal Mohan.

## **Government releases Rs.10 crore**

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Date:- 31.3.2008

TIRUNELVELI: Even as the district administration had sent a proposal for Rs.111 crore to the State Government for carrying out restoration work in the flood-affected areas and for disbursement of relief to rain-hit farmers, the Government has released a sum of Rs.10 crore from the Calamity Relief Fund (CRF) in the first phase.

While Tuticorin district has received Rs.6 crore from the CRF, neighbouring Kanyakumari district has got Rs.75 lakh. Due to the recent unseasonal rains, 349 of the 628 revenue villages in the district were badly hit and 2,250 food packets were distributed to the population.

A total of 677 houses – 291 fully and 386 partly – were damaged. Paddy on 13,438 hectare was completely damaged and cereals on 1,258 hectare were destroyed by the flood. Horticultural crops on 476 hectares, maize on 4 hectares, sunflower on 230 hectares, corn on 3.80 hectare, cotton on 65.36 hectare, groundnut on 91 hectare and sugarcane on 24 hectare were also destroyed completely.

Since 737.72 Km-long roads were damaged, the district administration was in need of Rs.11.93 crore for temporary restoration or Rs.68.55 crore for permanently relaying them. Moreover, 89 bridges and culverts, 297 public buildings, breaches in 335 spots of river banks, channels and irrigation tanks, all collectively require Rs.17 crore for restoration.

For repairing the damage to drainage channels, drinking water resources, retaining walls, storm water drains etc. the district administration needed another whopping sum. Totally the district administration sent a proposal for Rs.111 crore to expedite the disbursement of assistance to the affected and carryout restoration activities.

In a communication to the district administration, the Special Commissioner and Commissioner for Revenue Administration, Shaktikanta Das, has said the Collector could draw and disburse the amount to the departments and local bodies concerned except the Public Works Department and Highways Department, as they come under the Letter of Credit System. The Collectors can accord administrative sanction and given funds availability certificate with regard to the restoration works to be carried out by the Public Works Department and Highways Department so that the department concerned can obtain Letter of Credit from the Finance Department.

The assistance of Rs.10 crore allocated by the Government will be utilised for immediate relief assistance to affected people and for undertaking restoration works from the CRF.

## **Crop loss estimated at over Rs.2,000 crore**

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Date:- 1.4.2008

HYDERABAD: The Andhra Pradesh Ryotu Sangham has estimated the crop loss caused by the recent unseasonal rains at over Rs.2,000 crore and demanded adequate compensation to those farmers who lost heavily. K. Ramakrishna, president, and R.Venkaiah, general secretary, in a statement issued here on Monday said chilli crop in lakhs of acres worth Rs.700 crore was lost in Guntur district alone. They put the loss of paddy and chilli crops and vegetables in Krishna at Rs.1,000 crore and that in Prakasam district of chilli and banana plantation at Rs. 300 crore. The leaders urged the government to purchase discoloured chilli at Rs. 3,000 a quintal and to make arrangement at market yards to buy maize and turmeric. They criticised the loss assessment reports prepared by the Horticulture department as 'faulty'. They demanded immediate implementation of crop insurance scheme and waiver of loans taken by farmers for the damaged crops, so as to render immediate succor.

### **Many houses in Puttenahalli flooded**

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Date:- 1.4.2008

Bangalore: Rainwater inundated many houses in low-lying areas, mainly those situated near storm water drain, in Puttenahalli area in J.P Nagar on Sunday night. Bruhat Bangalore Mahanagara Palike officials blamed the flooding on construction of illegal structures such as shortcut paths across the drain by those residing in the area. Illegal constructions at three locations, which had blocked free flow of water, were removed Monday morning using earthmovers. However, in some areas, ongoing civil works on storm water drain blocked flow of rain water as a result of which water entered the houses. BBMP personnel removed branches of trees brought down by the rain in many localities of northern and eastern parts of the city.

### **Climate to hit coastal pregnancies**

Source: [The Times of India](#)

Date:-2.4.2008

NEW DELHI: A rise in sea levels due to global warming will force people in India's coastal areas to drink salty water, thus affecting pregnant women and their unborn children, says a scientist associated with the Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). "Global warming will increase the sea level and engulf the coastal belt. Since India has a long coastline, the impact here will be severe," said Anthony J. McMichael of the Australian National University, Canberra. "There will be a severe problem of potable water and people will drink salty water. This will adversely impact pregnancy in coastal India," McMichael said. He was in Delhi last week to deliver the Public Health Foundation of India (PHFI) foundation day lecture. The Indian coastline stretches over 7,500 km and touches around eight states and two island territories. States with a coastline include Orissa, West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Goa and Maharashtra.

According to IPCC reports, a sea level rise of between 15 cm and 38 cm will displace tens of thousands of people in the country's coastline and make drinking water a major threat to states bordering the Indian Ocean. "The extra intake of salt through drinking water will lead to high blood pressure mainly during the last three-four months (of pregnancy). It has the potential to make deliveries difficult," he said.

"Salt is associated with heart problem as well and the sea water exposure may affect the normal life cycle of an unborn baby. The baby may develop complications after birth," he warned. He said a group of British scientists had carried out a survey in Bangladesh and found that the surge in sea level had started affecting pregnant women there.

"We don't have any research data in India, but the situation will not be much different. I think India needs to develop research capacity to tackle the climate change issue. "We know the earth's temperature is increasing and our glaciers melting. The Himalayan glaciers and Antarctica are losing their ice base," said the environmentalist, who is also co-chairman of the Global Environmental Change and Human Health project of the International Council of Science.

He said India has enough health problems and any addition to it will be a burden on the country's economy. "Environmental changes will cast an increasingly long shadow over future population health unless we effectively communicate these health risks and help society shape a sustainable way of living," said the professor. Scientists say besides affecting crops and the drinking water problem, global warming will aggravate vector-borne diseases like dengue, malaria and chikungunya in India. "We have seen the malaria problem in Rajasthan, dengue problem in Delhi and the chikungunya problem in many southern Indian states. We should take them as indicators of future problems," said Rais Akhtar, an environmental scientist who also worked with IPCC. The IPCC, which is headed by Indian environmental scientist Rajendra

Pachauri, got the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize. The organisation shared the award with climate campaigner and former US vice president Al Gore.

### **Climate change can spur dengue in South India**

Source: [Deccan Herald](#)

Date:-2.4.2008

Though dengue is still not a public health issue in the South, the mosquito-borne disease can emerge as a big public health threat in the four southern states, thanks to climate change. Because of steady temperature rise, dengue may become a common disease by 2085 in Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Karnataka all of which have a long coast line, said eminent public health expert Dr Anthony J McMichael who met key Indian officials here last week.

The Australian expert's visit preceded the climate change convention in Thailand which is trying to find out a way to clean the earth after the Kyoto Protocol expired in 2012. Barring one major outbreak way back in 1968, dengue is not known to have caused a serious public health problem in the southern states so far.

But Dr McMichael who played a central role in the Noble-prize winning UN inter-governmental panel on climate change's (IPCC) assessment of health impacts of climate change said the prevalence of dengue can be more than 1 per cent in these states, if temperature rise due to climate change continues unabated.

Moreover, it will reduce the number of workable days. For instance, if Delhi temperature goes up by seven degrees, the workable days for heavy work in a year would be just 50 instead of 365. This will lead to a sharp adverse impact on the economic growth.

The IPCC expert gave the grim warnings at a public health lecture which was attended by the top brass of the Union Health Ministry including Health Secretary Naresh Dayal, Director General of Health Services Dr R K Srivastava and the chief of Public Health Foundation of India Dr K Srinath Reddy.

Climate Change's health impacts are already visible. The latest UNDP Human Development Report points out that in 2005, officially more than 400 died in India due to the sweltering heat that engulfed the sub-continent. With temperature rise, humidity will also go up thereby triggering more outbreaks of tropical diseases.

Rapid deterioration of public health may take place because the temperature is changing very fast. During the last ice age, it changed by 7-8 degrees over 5,000 years. On the other hand, the world is now facing a realistic chance of temperature rise by four degrees in only 100 years.

### **Record crop damage by rain, farmers told**

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Date:- 2.4.2008

*Damage to maize, paddy, groundnut, foxtail millet, onion, say farmers, 11 mandals with 50-100 mm rain suffer maximum damage: Collector*

KURNOOL: The district administration has decided to write to the government about the damage caused to various crops in the recent rain in Kurnool district. Collector M. Dana Kishore, accompanied by agriculture officials, visited several villages near Nandikotkur on Tuesday. He asked agriculture officials and farmers to record the damage supported with photographs and send it to the district so that they could forward a comprehensive report to the government.

Farmers narrated the large scale damage caused to maize, paddy, groundnut, foxtail millet, onion and other crops. A farmer told the Collector that he had invested Rs. 10,000 per acre for raising groundnut crop but he would not be able to get half of it now because of the damage. The pods got discoloured resulting in price loss. Farmers said if the government did not come to their rescue they would not be able to cultivate next crops. Collector said 11 mandals suffered the maximum damage where the rainfall was between 50 and 100 mm. Shepherds brought to the notice of the collector the damage suffered by them on account of lightning and flood.

### **Rs. 11.24 crore rain damage to district**

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Date:- 2.4.2008

MYSORE: The untimely rain, which wreaked havoc in Mysore district since last week, has caused widespread damage to public and private property. Normally, the district receives about 12.5 mm rainfall in March. This year, the district received over 135.2 mm rainfall. The unseasonable rain caused damage to houses, power supply network, roads and drainages. Many livestock died because of the heavy downpour.

The loss due to heavy rains has been put at Rs. 11.24 crore, according to the office of the Deputy Commissioner of Mysore. A report on the rain damage and the estimated loss will be sent to the Government for seeking grants for relief works, it said.

The office said two committees had been formed under the chairmanship of the Assistant Commissioners of Mysore and Hunsur sub-divisions to prepare an action plan after assessing the rain damage. They are to recommend relief measures in the respective taluks. All necessary rain relief measures had been taken, the office said.

### **Lightning claims 13 lives**

Source: [Deccan Herald](#)

Date:- 5.4.2008

At least thirteen people were killed and several got burn injuries in separate incidents of lightning and thunderstorm in eastern Uttar Pradesh, police said on Friday. Seven deaths were reported from the Chandauli district since Thursday.

Two persons died each in Mirzapur and Sonbhadra district and one died due to lightning in the Jaunpur district. Chandauli Superintendent of Police G P Kannaujia said that in incidents of lightning at Chakia, Saiyyadraja and Sahabganj, seven people including two women died on Thursday.

### **Dengue, malaria caused by climate change**

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Date:- 6.4.2008

VISAKHAPATNAM: Confirmation of dengue cases in the city and other places in the neighbourhood and resurgence of malaria in Araku and Seethammampeta agency tracts could be due to climate change, according to noted physician Kutikuppala Surya Rao.

He told *The Hindu* on Saturday on the eve of World Health Day that climate change was a significant and emerging threat to public health. "Impact of climate change on human health is not evenly distributed in the world. Vulnerability is more in arid, high mountainous, island and densely populated coastal areas," he stated.

Dr. Rao, a recipient of Padmasri award, said heavy influx of migrant population to the city and location of valley blocking natural drainage system could be contributing to ecological imbalance and climatic divergence.

### **Sudden rain with hailstorm wreaks havoc**

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Date:- 6.4.2008

NALGONDA: Sudden rain coupled with hailstorm wreaked havoc in some villages of Bhoodan Pochampally, Choutuppal and Chityal mandals in Nalgonda district on Saturday. While about 400 acres of paddy got damaged in Pochampally mandal, hundreds of chickens were perished at Choutuppal mandal headquarters due to the impact of the hailstones.

“Hailstones, weighing about half kilogram, severely damaged the poultry shed owned by Mutyala Mohan Reddy and more than 2,000 chickens died after being hit by them,” the Communist Party of India (Marxist) district secretary Nandhyala Narasimha Reddy said in a press release. The Bhongir Revenue Divisional Officer Lakshmi told *The Hindu* that the officials were on the job of assessing the damage caused by the flash hailstorm.

Dharmojigudem and Lakkaram were reportedly worst hit villages in Choutuppal mandal. “We are taking every care to rehabilitate the victims if necessary,” the official told *The Hindu* over phone.

The Pochampally tahasildar K.Vidyasagar, who visited the affected areas and interacted with farmers, said that six villages—Antammagudem, Dhotigudem, Jublakpalli, Pochampally, Sivareddygudem, Mukthapur and Kanumukkala—experienced rain coupled with hailstones.

Chinna Kaparthy, Pittampally, Gundrampally, Velminedu and Sunkenapally villages in Chityal mandal also suffered losses, according to the CPI (M) press release. Many houses belonging to poorer sections were also damaged, it maintained.

### **Culling begins in Nadia**

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Date:- 7.4.2008

Kolkata: Culling operations began on Sunday in West Bengal's Nadia district where, according to reports, nearly 400 chickens have died from avian flu over the past few days. It is the fourth district to have been hit over the past five weeks. The culling operations were carried out in parts of the district that fall within a five km radius of the Mandalpukur area.

“We are a little surprised that the deaths occurred in places beyond a 10 km radius of those areas to have been affected by avian flu on the earlier occasion,” Omkar Singh Meena, District Magistrate, told *The Hindu* over telephone from Nadia district.

Blood samples of the dead poultry birds that had been sent for examining had tested positive and the district authorities had received a notification from the State's Animal Resources Development department on Saturday for initiating culling operations.

“We plan to destroy 21,000 poultry birds within three days”, Mr. Meena said. Prior to the outbreak at Nadia, the districts partially affected by avian flu since early March were Murshidabad, Malda and Jalpaiguri.

The sale and movement of poultry birds and products in places falling within the notified area has been prohibited. The ban will last three months. All the four districts to be hit by the disease recently were among those where the outbreak had occurred in January-February.

## Maldives



### Government Obtains \$15 Million from Saudi Fund

Source: [Minivan News](#)

Date:- 31.4.2008

The Maldivian government has been loaned US\$15 million from the Saudi Fund for Economic Development to settle losses sustained in the 2004 Asian tsunami, reports *Haveeru*.

In a press release, the Ministry of Finance says the sum came with a grace period of three years, with ten years to pay back the loan at a three per cent interest rate.

A previous US \$12 million loan from the Saudi fund is being used to build 298 homes destroyed in the tsunami in Gaaf Alif and Gaaf Dhaal atolls.

Funds have been confirmed for water, sanitation and harbour development projects from the Saudi funds.

### Retaining wall erected at Kolhufushi Island

Source: [Miadhu News](#)

Date:- 6.4.2008

According to Mulak Atoll Kolhufushi Island Office work was carried out last Friday to construct a retaining wall of 1100 feet in length and 3 feet in height. According to Island Office the retaining wall constructed on the western side of the island as a protection from the heavy erosion being experienced on that side of the island.

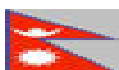
Mr. Ismail Shakir Junior Island Chief of Kolhufushi speaking to Miadhu Daily said that the western side of the island is occupied by a large number of people and that the severe erosion pose a considerable threat to the people in terms of eventual loss of their property.

“Erosion is very rapid and as this is the area where people live it causes a huge threat to the people, and in order to protect the further erosion we have erected this small retaining wall” said Mr. Ismail Shakir.

Island Office informs that work was carried out under the guidance of community facilitators trained by American Red Cross, Island Development Committee, Women Development Committee, Island Office, and the 2 wards of the island.

Mr. Shakir said that he was confident that this retaining wall would prevent further erosion. “As long as the retaining wall is there, there will be no erosion” said Mr. Shakir.

Kolhufushi was one of the islands which were severely affected by the tsunami of 2004. Due to the tsunami many houses were destroyed and many are still living in temporary shelters provided by the government.



## Nepal

### 2 minors killed in house collapse; lightning kills 1

Source: [Kantipur Report](#)

Date:- 6 .4.2008

KALIKOT, April - Two minors were buried alive when a house collapsed due to mudslide triggered by incessant rainfall at Serabadha of Pakha VDC-1 in Kalikot district in the early hours of Sunday. The house of local resident Nir Bahadur Malla collapsed at about 4 am today resulting in the death of his 12-year-old son Keshar and 7-year-old daughter Ballu. Four others including Nir Bahadur have been critically injured in the incident. Preparations are underway to transport the injured to the District Hospital at the d Meanwhile, 52 year old Nar Bahadur Roka was killed by a lightning strike at Tolle Marke, Siddul Takura-3 in Salyan district on Sunday..



Pakistan

### Climate talks hit by concerns over global recession

Source: [Dawn](#)

Date:- 3.4.2008

BANGKOK, April 2: Painstakingly tough negotiations on how to fight climate change are getting even harder as concerns mount that the global economy is heading into recession. Even when the economic outlook looked brighter, the United States led criticism that the existing Kyoto Protocol's requirements on cutting greenhouse gases would prove too costly for rich countries.

As more than 160 nations talk here about what to do after Kyoto's obligations end in 2012, the backdrop is tepid growth in major developed economies and widening fallout from the troubled US housing sector. "There's no question it's going to make enacting climate policy more difficult," said Angela Anderson, head of the global warming campaign at the Washington-based Pew Environment Group.

"The economic situation is going to make the fight about cost containment versus ambitious emissions reductions that much more controversial," she said. Anderson and other environmentalists hope policymakers see the long-term benefits of fighting global warming, which UN scientists say could affect millions of people and cause the extinction of animals and plants by later this century.

A study last month by the US Environmental Protection Agency said that legally capping emissions in the world's largest economy would shave only one per cent from growth in gross domestic product by 2030. The Apollo Alliance, a US green initiative, argues that a major drive to end US reliance on foreign oil would create three million new jobs.

But Alan Oxley, a former Australian ambassador who leads the pro-globalisation group World Growth, said that green technologies were not yet economically viable. "If we try and engineer a new economy, we would have the same success as the Soviet communist party," he said.

Mr Oxley, a critic of the Kyoto Protocol, said that curbing emissions would inevitably reduce consumption, particularly of energy, and would hit developing economies particularly hard. The European Union has championed fresh binding cuts in emissions of up to 40 per cent by 2020 from 1990 levels. But US President George W. Bush's administration has pushed for greater commitments from developing economies such as China and India.

Japan, concerned about its fragile recovery from recession in the 1990s, has recently pressed calls to shift the base year for future emissions cuts from 1990 to 2005, easing the burden on Asia's largest economy.

### **Flood severs Karachi-Quetta road link**

Source: [Dawn](#)  
Date:- 5.4.2008

QUETTA, April 4: The road link between Quetta and Karachi was cut on Friday when a road linking the Purali Bridge with the RCD Highway in the Bela area of Lasbela district was inundated after a flash flood. Hundreds of buses, coaches, trucks and trailers and other vehicles were stranded on both sides of the bridge. Official sources said heavy flood in Purali river triggered by continuous rainfall was hampering repair work.

Train service between Quetta and the rest of the country also remained suspended for several hours on Friday after a railway bridge was damaged by a blast near Quetta. Police said that tracks were safe.

### **HYDERABAD: Rain damages wheat crop, kills two**

Source: [Dawn](#)  
Date:- 5.4.2008

HYDERABAD, April 4: As moderate to heavy rains lashed Sindh on Thursday night and Friday morning, two people died in Sanghar while the ceilings of the emergency ward of Naushahro Feroze Civil Hospital have developed cracks in it. Reports from other parts of the province indicated that wheat crops have been damaged due to the heavy rains which were already forecast by meteorological office.

Power supply remained badly affected while powerful windstorm uprooted signboards and trees in many areas. In Hyderabad, rains accompanied by windstorm lashed the city. Met office recorded 8mm of rains at its airport office on Thursday while 6.5mm of rain was recorded on Friday morning. People were enjoying pleasant weather change and went for picnics.

The rains proved beneficial, according to agriculturists, to standing crops and to the land that was dry for three months. Due to water shortage at the Kotri barrage not only the non-perennial but perennial canals were also not getting proper discharges of water. Met office has predicted partly cloudy weather and chances of rains throughout the defunct Hyderabad, Mirpurkhas, Larkana and Sukkur divisions.

In Sanghar district, rain caused considerable damage to wheat, oilseed (sarsoon) and fennel (sounf) crops. Rain started early on Friday and continued intermittently for more than two hours in Khadro, Shahpur Chakar, Sinjhor and Jhol. Two persons died due to rain related accidents. Aftab Chan at Sinjhor and Manjhi Khan Samejo at Khipro were struck by lightning and died on the spot. Naushahro Feroze, Moro, Kandiaro, Mithiani, Tharushah, Bhirya, Bhirya Road, Mehrabpur, Padidan and other towns of the district received rain on Thursday night.

The wheat crop at encampment or standing in the fields was affected due to rain. The ceilings of emergency ward of civil hospital Naushahro Feroze were damaged and developed cracks due to the rain, hence the ward and the CMO office shifted there from on Friday. The Medical Superintendent and CMO Dr Mohammad Ibrahim told journalists that the building was constructed just nine years ago. They said that engineers of the building department had visited the building on Thursday and they will arrange its repair and after their clearance the emergency ward and CMO office will be again shifted to the ward.

Mirpurkhas Umerkot districts were hit by rain coupled with thunderstorm on Thursday night after which power supply was disconnected. Signboards were uprooted at different places in the district. Sindh Abadgar Board Mirpurkhas chapter general secretary Imtiaz Ali Panhwar, Mohammad Moosa Mahar and Javed Babar said that standing wheat crop had suffered losses due to rains. However, they said that there was acute shortage of irrigation water and water was needed for sowing of sugarcane, cotton and chilli crops. They deplored that due to shortage of water in Sukkur Barrage, only 4,800 cusecs water was released in the Nara canal which was not sufficient to fulfil requirements of drinking water in its command area.

Jacobabad district received heavy rain with lightening. With the first drop of water, electricity went off. Thul, Kashmore and Kandhkot also received rains. In Shikarpur, mango and date crops were badly affected. Low lying areas came under rainwater which could cause spread of malaria. In Khairpur, electricity went off with first drop of rain which was restored on Friday. The rain is likely to affect mango, date palm orchards and wheat crops. Mithi, Islamkot, Diplo, Nagarparkar, Chelhar, Kantio, Chhachhro and other parts of Thar received scattered showers on Thursday night as well on Friday.

### **0.13 m malaria patients, 3.5 m suspects in Pakistan**

Source: **Daily Times**

Date:- 5.4.2008

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan reported 3.5 million suspected malaria cases in 2007 and 0.13 million of them were later confirmed, says an official of Directorate of Malaria Control (DOMC). World Health Organisation (WHO), however, claims that high incidence of suspected malaria cases is exaggerated and the figure couldn't be more than 1.6 million because malaria has yet not reached epidemic proportions in Pakistan, Dr Faisal Mansoor told Daily Times on Friday. Dr Mansoor said the figure had been reported to DOMC by health management system, lady health workers (LHWs), hospitals and pharmaceutical companies and it was correct.

He said LHWs had found scores of people with serious malaria complications in rural areas during a countrywide survey in 2007. He said nationwide hospitals had admitted 51,000 malaria patients in 2006 and 250 of them later died. He said the situation could neither be called alarming or encouraging, as the malaria incidence was intact.

He said pharmaceutical firms had sold DOMC 70 million courses of malaria in 2007. Access to malaria treatment: The DOMC official said only 20 percent of the total population had access to malaria treatment, which was insufficient in certain cases. He said doctors should properly guide patients on malaria control and prevention.

Bed nets: He said 80 percent houses required insecticide-treated bed nets to prevent malaria but by and large, they had no such facility. He said low use of bed nets at home especially because of poor awareness of their importance posed serious threat to the life of pregnant women and their coming babies. He said it was noticed that women preferred covering their husbands and children with bed nets, thus, they exposed themselves to malaria. He said mosquito mostly bit infants and women especially expectant ones, so malaria incidence among them was high compared with that of men.

Dr Mansoor said DOMC was understaffed and overburdened and it had proposed fresh recruitment in the revised PC-I of malaria control programme. He said the PC-I had been awaiting approval by Planning Commission (PC) and it was likely to be accorded shortly.

He said DOMC had recently received \$ 22 million from The Global Fund (TGF), which funded the international fight against malaria, AIDS and tuberculosis, to combat malaria in 19 districts of the country. He said the funding would help DOMC perform better on malaria control front. He said the malaria control programme required the government's political will for its success.

He said Pakistan had banned production and promotion of artemisinin monotherapies in November 2007. "The ban is considered a major breakthrough in ensuring future of malaria treatment due to expected delay in resistance development in malaria parasites," he said. The DOMC official also welcomed ban on production of chloroquine injections and Halfan drug, whose injudicious use by doctors and people led to many deaths in the country. He appreciated the pharmaceutical industry's cooperation in this respect.

World Malaria Day: Dr Mansoor said World Malaria Day (WMD) would be marked for the 1st time throughout the world including Pakistan on April 25 in line with the Resolution of 16th World Health Assembly in May 2007. The theme of the Day is 'Disease Without Borders' and the theme for Pakistan is 'The Leaders Make The Difference', he said. He said this theme had been selected in the context of the desired political commitment from the leaders and policy makers to realise the importance of the disease and extend their support in terms of funding to those vulnerable to the disease.

He said DOMC had planned a major event in Islamabad, where key politicians and policy makers would turn up. He said seminars on malaria control and prevention would also be held at Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (PIMS), Polyclinic, Rawalpindi General Hospital (RGH), CDA Hospital, schools and colleges.

He said NGOs like PAIMAN and Save the Children in collaboration with the LHWs Programme and DOMC had planned daylong events on the outskirts of Islamabad to create public awareness of malaria. He said activities had been planned in all the four provinces to mark WMD. WHO Technical Officer Dr Qutbuddin Kakar on the occasion said that WHO had joined hands with Pakistan for malaria control and was a major sponsor of WMD events. He said \$22 million worth of TGF funding was the result of strong partnership with WHO, USAID and other organisations.

He said a series of events had already been launched in the country. He said the 1st activity was held in Mirpurkhas and Hyderabad (Sindh) where WHO, DOMC, the district governments and corporate sector jointly initiated the advocacy for the promotion of the rational approaches in care delivery and the use of cost-effective preventive measures as the use of the insecticide-treated bed nets.

### **Fatal bird flu cases in Pakistan**

Source: [BBC-Online](#)

Date:- 7.4.2008

The first case of human-to-human transmission of avian flu in Pakistan has been confirmed. Tests carried out by the World Health Organisation (WHO) show that bird flu killed some members of a family in north-west Pakistan late last year. The WHO says steps were taken to prevent future fatalities in the area. Pakistan's north-west and southern regions were hit by bird flu last year. Thousands of birds were culled to control the spread of the disease.

### **Avalanche kills six seminary students**

Source: [Dawn](#)

Date:- 7.4.2008

MANSEHRA, April 6: Six students of a seminary were killed and four others injured when they were struck by an avalanche in Kala Dhaka tribal area on Sunday. Locals said that the students of Darul Alum Islami were returning home from the seminary when the avalanche triggered by rain and snowfall hit them.

The deceased students were identified as Mohammad Fiaz, Mohammad Amin, Mohammad Mahad, Mohammad Abidullah and Mohammad Abadullah. Minister for Auqaf Nimroz Khan announced a compensation of Rs100,000 for each family of the deceased and Rs50,000 for the injured.

### **Awareness vital to combat malaria**

Source: [Dawn](#)

Date:- 7.4.2008

RAWALPINDI - Integrated awareness programme is vital to eradicate malaria because this disease has no boundaries and the residents of malaria-free areas, too, are falling victim to this dreadful disease. Pakistan Green Task Force President Dr Jamal Nasir said while addressing a seminar held here under the auspices of Federal Malaria Control Programme (FMCP).

Eminent doctors, medical students, representatives of civil societies, members of Pakistan Green Task Force and people from all walks of life attended the seminar. Delivering the keynote speech, Federal Malaria Control Programme Director Dr Faisal Mansoor said that Malaria is the second most prevalent and devastating disease in the country and it has a tendency of epidemic breakouts over larger areas, particularly in Balochistan, NWFP and Sindh. However, he said, the disease is now emerging as a prominent health hazard in FATA, particularly along the international border with Iran and Afghanistan.

Dr Faisal Mansoor urged the physicians not to suggest anti-malarial medicines to patients by finding symptoms of temperature because it has been observed that Rs 3.5 billion are being spent on manufacturing of anti-malarial medicines which is obviously not required in our vicinity. He also briefed about the measures, so far, adopted for protection from malaria and dengue viruses, saying the efforts were being made to seek cooperation of policy-makers and public opinion leaders for proper implementation of Malaria Control Programme.

Associate Professor of Surgery of Rawalpindi General Hospital Dr Jhangir Sarwar called for initiating practical measures for collection of statistics from the grass root level, and demanded provision of adequate resources to overcome malaria and other related ailments both in urban and rural areas. Dr Badar-i-Alam and Dr Ferhan also spoke on the occasion and highlighted various aspects of viral diseases.

**Sri Lanka**



### **Evacuation due to landslide threats**

Source: [Daily Mirror](#)

Date:- 1.4.2008

Over 60 families in Walapone have been evacuated following fresh landslide threats in the area the Disaster Management Centre said yesterday. Disaster Management Centre sources said two acres of land near the Kumbalgamuwa school and two houses have been damaged as a result. Meanwhile bad weather has been reported in many areas with Ministry of Power and Energy warning of increased lightning. The Minister called upon the general public to be vigilant especially when using electrical appliances. The Ministry reported there have been many incidents including loss of life.

### **SRI LANKA: Variable rains and flooding impact on rice harvest**

Source: [IRIN Asia News-online](#)

Date:- 1.4.2008



Photo: Amantha Perera/IRIN

Rain is the last thing a mature paddy field requires and can severely harm the quantity and quality of the harvest

COLOMBO, 1 April 2008 (IRIN) - Changing rainfall patterns in Sri Lanka have prompted later paddy planting by farmers and affected the country's overall rice yield, government officials said.

Traditionally, rice farmers would begin planting in early October for the Maha harvest – the main growing season in the country. However, variable rainfall in that month over the past two decades has pushed farmers to wait until the rains arrive, sometimes as late as the end of the month.

“For about 15 years we have noticed this. The farmers would wait till the rains arrive,” Dr B Poonyawardena, head of the Agro-climatology Division at the country's Department of Agriculture told IRIN. But now the Maha crop, generally harvested in February and traditionally a dry month, is falling in mid March. “This year stronger than usual torrential rains in mid-March left the harvest even more vulnerable,” Poonyawardena said.

Heavy rains affect 400,000 people

According to the National Disaster Service Centre, heavy rains beginning on 12 March lashed the island nation, affecting close to 400,000 people in 10 districts. “In some of these areas the rainfall was sometimes 70 percent higher than the usual,” S H Kariyawasam, the deputy director at the Department of Meteorology told IRIN, resulting in heavy flooding in Ampara, Mannar, and Batticaloa districts, as well as parts of the Polonnaruwa District - all major rice producing areas. Sri Lanka produces around 3.3 million metric tons of rice annually, says the country's Department of Census and Statistics.

But this year's rains and the subsequent flooding destroyed about 2.5 percent of the total yield, Shantha Emithiyagoda, deputy director at the Agriculture Department noted. “The problem is that this will add to the 10 percent shortfall between the harvest and local demand, making it 12.5 percent,” he said, referring to this year's yield.

Rice price rising

This in turn has increased pressure on local market prices, and led to a drop in quality, Emithayagoda said.

“We would have to locate seed paddy for the next harvest and also there will be qualitative and quantitative effects on prices,” he explained, adding his department has already moved to locally procure six million kilogrammes of paddy seed for the next harvest. Rice prices have already risen significantly over the past year due to a combination of factors, including high local demand and rising global prices. Some varieties have recorded price gains of between 60 to 90 percent in the retail market, according to the Census and Statistics Department.

Limited understanding of climate change

Meanwhile, researchers and experts worry that limited scientific studies on climate change and local harvests have prevented them from gaining a proper handle on the situation. “Obviously, there have been changes to the harvesting due the changing rains over the years,” Nalin Munasinghe, programme associate at the Food and Agriculture Organization in Colombo said.

But planting delays in October may be an indication that the farmers have already begun adjusting. "They may not have the scientific knowledge, but they feel the practical changes and that may be one reason why the planting is delayed," he said.

One solution being suggested is to use sturdier rice varieties, rather than trying to tinker with planting patterns. "Most paddy cultivations are on low level fields and excess water flows over those fields. One way [to get over this] is by selecting suitably tolerable paddy varieties for floods," Gunawargana Banda Giragama, research fellow at the Hector Kobbekaduwa Agrarian Research and Training Institute, said.

"If there are warnings of bad weather the crop can be harvested even two weeks before maturity. But it should be consumed as early as possible. It is difficult to store for longer durations," he added.

### **Symbol of drought for central hills**

Source: [Daily Mirror](#)

Date:- 2.4.2008

Water levels of several hydropower reservoirs are fast dwindling due to the prevailing drought in the central hills. The water level in the Maussakele reservoir that feeds Laxapana, Canyon, Wimalasurendra and Polpitiya hydropower reservoirs stood 30 feet below the still level. Pictured here is the Kadireshan Hindu temple in the old Maskeliya town that emerged from water.

### **Tsunami hit children to be assisted**

Source: [The Island](#)

Date:- 6.4.2008

A number of projects to help children of the Eastern Province, who had lost either both or one parent during the tsunami are to be started by the Child Protection Authority (CPA) with Asian Development Bank aid of Rs. 400 million, Chairman CPA Jagath Wellawatta told *The Island* yesterday. Vocational training programmes for such children over 16 years of age are to be started and fixed deposits for children under 16 are also to be made.

There were 5,750 such children countrywide but this special programme will be implemented in the East in Arugambay Division as it was one of the worst affected areas. A resource centre is being set up there to help affected school children to improve their studies with tutors, computers and sports goods made available, Wellawatta said.

### **British HC to speak on climate change**

Source: [Sunday Observer](#)

Date:- 6.4.2008

British High Commissioner Dr. Peter Hayes will speak on 'climate change at the 'Climate Positive Action Project' forum on April 9, at the Trans Asia Hotel from 1-3 p.m. Representatives from the Environmental Ministry including the Minister and the Ceylon Chamber of Commerce will also participate.

'Climate Positive Action' is a project implemented in partnership with the Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry of Sri Lanka (FCCSL). The project will be implemented in

nine districts in collaboration with the business community, NGOs and people threatened by climate change in Sri Lanka.

### **Concerted effort can control climate change: Minister**

Source: [Daily Mirror](#)

Date:- 7.4.2008

Climate change, a creation of mankind has brought many ills to the world, but a solution is not far off as long as a concerted effort involving all countries is made to protect the environment sooner than later, Healthcare and Nutrition Minister Nimal Siripala de Silva said.

Addressing media personnel at a seminar conducted to mark 'World Health Day' tomorrow at the Health Education Bureau he said the challenge before us is to find correct solutions to our health problems. "We were not aware of ailments such as coronary heart disease, AIDs or diabetes a few decades ago. But with the so called climate change, not only the patterns of the diseases but our life patterns have been changed drastically," he said.

Sri Lanka expected a bumper paddy harvest in the Maha season this year. But unfortunately the unexpected and out of season heavy showers that could be attributed to climate change destroyed 40% of paddy this year. In Australia, food production has been severely affected due to a month long drought, whereas farmers have been compelled to commit suicide, Minister de Silva said.

Minister de Silva drew the attention of the audience to the hypocritical attitude of certain developed countries who are the perpetrators of air pollution that leads to climate change. Many of these countries have failed to ratify the UN resolution 'Kyoto Protocol' brought to protect the environment. A majority of developing countries suffer due to air pollution caused by a small number of developed countries who are biggest polluters, he stressed.

Country representative, WHO Agostino Borra said environment pollution and the resulting climate change will cause many problems to the world in the years to come if the present generation did not act fast to stall the damage. "The climate change and the environment pollution are manmade. Hence, it is up to man to prevent it before it goes out of hand.

The impact is already visible with the melting of the ice caps in both poles bringing low sea level countries under threat of submerging," he said. Chief government Epidemiologist Dr. Nihal Abeyasingha and head of Climate Change Studies, Met. Department, Mr. K.H.M.S. Premalal also spoke.