

Environment News Futures

Lean Cyclone Season? Monsoon Winds, Cyclonic System Can Help or Disrupt Each Other

Late genesis of cyclonic system before or around onset of southwest monsoon can translate into weak or late monsoon over Kerala or block progress to rest of country.

By Akshit Sangomla

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News: Nearly 6 Million Trees Disappeared From Farmlands in Three Years, Says Satellite Mapping Study

India faces severe decline in farmland trees, major losses in Maharashtra and Telangana.

Africa Recently Launched Lab Network, Cholera Taskforce. Can It Help Contain the Disease?

Goal of Eastern Africa Regional Cholera Taskforce is to streamline regional strategies for cholera management and prevention, foster experience sharing, strengthen containment efforts.

By Tony Malesi

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Africa CDC Eastern Africa Regional Ministerial Steering Committee meeting in Nairobi.

The health ministers of African countries met in the last week of April 2024 in Kenya and launched two key initiatives: the Eastern Africa Regional Integrated Surveillance and Laboratory Network (RISLNET) and the Eastern Africa Regional Cholera Taskforce.

The ministers, from 14 countries in the wider Eastern Africa region and under the auspices of the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC), expressed concerns over the growing burden of infectious diseases, especially cholera, and called upon governments to work together.

How Did They Drag All Those Stones to Build Egypt's Pyramids? They Had the Nile Flowing at the Spot, Says Study

The extinct Ahramat branch of the Nile died due to increasing sand deposition, reduced precipitation and tectonic activity, according to scientists

By Rajat Ghai

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It is a question that every child must have pondered over in school: How did the ancient people of Kemet or Egypt get so many huge stones to build their towering pyramids in the burning desert? Now, a study by scientists from the University of North Carolina Wilmington has an answer: The mighty Nile river.

Today, the Nile is the longest river on the planet — although that status is hotly disputed by acolytes of the Amazon. Its headstream is the Kagera river in Africa's Great Lakes region. From there it flows into South Sudan and Sudan, where the Blue Nile, flowing in from Lake Tana in Ethiopia, joins it.

It makes those impressive cataracts between Khartoum and Aswan. At the latter, it is now spanned by the Aswan High Dam and Lake Nasser. It then enters Lower Egypt, passing through Cairo before emptying into the Mediterranean through its distributaries, the Rosetta and the Damietta.

The Far-reaching Impacts of Wildfire Smoke – and How to Protect Yourself

5 days ago

By Isabelle Gerretsen, Richard Gray and Martha Henriques

The air we breathe can have profound effects on our physical and mental health. Is there any way of protecting yourself from this pervasive problem?

All but 1% of the world's population is exposed to unhealthy air that exceeds World Health Organization limits for pollutants. In parts of the world, air quality has rapidly improved through policies that aim to limit pollution. But elsewhere, gains in air quality are at risk of being lost.

More than 25% of the US population is exposed to air considered “unhealthy” by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), according to a report by the climate non-profit First Street Foundation. By 2050, the number of people exposed to “unhealthy” days is set to increase by more than half. The worst days of air pollution (“hazardous” or maroon, under the EPA's system) are expected to rise by 27%.

Wildfire smoke is one of the factors driving this trend. One study of PM_{2.5} (see fact box: What is PM_{2.5}?) from wildfire smoke found that levels had increased by up to five micrograms per cubic metre in the western US in the past decade – enough to reverse “decades of policy-driven improvements in overall air quality”, the authors concluded.

Inside The Giant ‘Sky Rivers’ Swelling With Climate Change

6 days ago

By Sophie Hardach

Atmospheric river storms have wreaked havoc on the West Coast, and are getting bigger. These scientists chase them in the sky to predict where they will strike.

In January 2024, Anna Wilson was sitting aboard a Gulfstream IV jet, observing a deceptively calm-looking sea of white clouds over the northern Pacific Ocean. Through her headphones, Wilson – an atmospheric scientist and extreme weather expert – could hear her colleague give a countdown. At the back of the plane, another colleague dropped slim, cylindrical instruments through a chute, into the brewing storm below them, to measure its strength as it approached the US West Coast.

The Environmental Cost of China’s Addiction to Cement

23 April 2024

By India Bourke, Features correspondent

The use of concrete exploded to fuel China’s rise. Now the costs of this weighty material are being counted.

China’s cities are sinking – apparent victims of their own success. Large swathes of the country’s population now live in major cities that are subsiding at more than 3mm (0.1in) per year, according to a recent study. Some areas are sinking by more than 45mm (1.7in) each year, such as parts of Beijing. And by 2120, around a quarter of China’s coastal land will be beneath sea-level, the researchers predict.

While there are a number of reasons for the subsidence, the researchers have pointed to the rapid rate of urban development as among the culprits. The huge amounts of groundwater abstraction needed to support urban populations alongside the weight of the buildings and city infrastructure were singled out by the researchers as contributing to the sinking.

It follows similar research in New York City that found the enormous weight of the concrete, glass and steel – an estimated 762 million tonnes – in the city’s skyscrapers were contributing to subsidence of the land they sit upon.

Climate Crisis Made Crippling April Heatwave in South Asia 45 Times More Likely: Scientists

Longest heatwave in Bhubaneswar since 1969 impacts health, livelihoods, and highlights the urgent need for climate action

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Temperatures in Odisha's Bhubaneswar remained above 40° Celsius for 17 consecutive days in April. This streak was the longest since 1969, severely impacting health and livelihoods. Similar heatwaves could occur once every 30 years and they have already become about 45 times more likely due to climate change, leading climate scientists said on May 15, citing historical weather data.