

MERCURY RISING: THE HINDU EDITORIAL ON THE 'ERA OF GLOBAL BOILING' REMARK BY U.N. CHIEF ANTÓNIO GUTERRES

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July 29, 2023 12:10 am | Updated 09:02 am IST

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The United Nations Secretary-General, António Guterres, this week reiterated the consequences of the climate catastrophe that has enveloped the globe. The earth had passed from a warming phase into an “era of global boiling”, [he said at the U.N.'s headquarters](#) in New York. His comments come even as scientific evidence converges on the conclusion that [July is set to be the hottest month](#) in the last 12,000 years. This was a “disaster” for the whole planet, he said, noting that “short of a mini-Ice Age over the next few days, July 2023 will shatter records everywhere”. Scientists from the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and the European Commission’s Copernicus Climate Change Service described conditions this month as “rather remarkable and unprecedented”, with July seeing the hottest three-week period on record. Average July temperature so far has been 16.95° Celsius, 0.2° C warmer than in July 2019 — a record in the 174-year observational data of the European Union.

With ocean temperatures on the rise and the Central Equatorial Pacific Ocean transitioning from La Niña conditions — where average sea surface temperatures are below normal — to El Niño conditions, the opposite, it was widely expected that temperatures would be warmer than that in the last three years (when La Niña prevailed). However, it is the distribution and impact of the 16.95° C, which includes temperature in northwest China touching 52° C; wildfires in Greece and the baking heat in the United States’ Southwest. The extraordinarily high rains in north and western India, while largely due to prevailing monsoon conditions, were also due to the warm air increasing atmospheric capacity to hold moisture resulting in short torrential bursts, causing floods and devastation. While climate prognostication induces pessimism, Mr. Guterres said that it was still possible to limit global temperature rise to 1.5° C and avoid the very worst of climate change but only with “dramatic, immediate climate action”. At a G-20 ministerial meet in Chennai the same day, the COP28 President-designate, Sultan Ahmed Al Jaber, also emphasised that the world’s largest economies should be more ambitious with emission cuts. While Prime Minister Narendra Modi has promised to make India the “third largest economy” if his party is re-elected in the general election, it will also mean greater pressure on India to take on a greater share of greenhouse gas mitigation responsibilities. This could mean advancing its net zero commitments from 2070 to 2050, as Mr. Guterres says, and generating fossil-free electricity by 2040. While these are the testy points on which climate negotiations hinge, the climate — it bears reminding — waits for nobody.

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