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Headline: Japan reports warmest spring on record

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TOKYO: Japan experienced its warmest spring on record this year, the East Asian country's weather agency said on Thursday, as greenhouse gasses and the El Niño phenomenon send temperatures soaring worldwide.

Temperatures across March, April and May were 1.59 degrees Celsius (34.9 Fahrenheit) higher than average, the Japan Meteorological Agency said. That made it the hottest spring since the agency started taking comparable measurements in 1898.

"Global warming has made such record-level temperatures more frequent, and they are expected to become even more common in the future as global warming progresses," it said.

Average sea-surface temperatures for waters around Japan in the same months were tied for the third-highest recorded since 1982, the agency added.

The United Nations said last month it was near-certain that 2023 to 2027 would be the warmest five-year period ever recorded.

This is partly due to a growing likelihood that El Niño will develop in the coming months, fueling higher global temperatures.

El Niño — a naturally occurring climate pattern typically associated with increased heat worldwide, as well as drought in some parts of the world and heavy rains elsewhere — last occurred in 2018 and 2019.

There is also a two-thirds chance that at least one of the next five years will see global temperatures exceed the more ambitious target set out in the Paris accords on limiting climate change, the UN's World Meteorological Organization said.

The 2015 Paris Agreement saw countries agree to cap global warming at "well below" 2 degrees Celsius above average levels measured between 1850 and 1900 — and 1.5 C, if possible.

The global mean temperature in 2022 was 1.15 C above the 1850-1900 average.

Much of South and Southeast Asia has sweltered through spring heatwaves as global warming exacerbates adverse weather.

Records are being hit around the region, and on Monday, Shanghai logged its hottest May day in more than 100 years, shattering the previous high by a full degree.

Scientists say climate change is intensifying the risk of heavy rain in Japan and elsewhere, because a warmer atmosphere holds more water.

Strong rain in 2021 triggered a devastating landslide in the central resort town of Atami that killed 27 people.

And in 2018, floods and landslides killed more than 200 people in western Japan during the country's annual rainy season.

Japan is the current president of the Group of Seven, which this year pledged to accelerate the phaseout of planet-heating fossil fuels.

However, the group of leading economies failed to agree to any new deadline on ending polluting power sources, such as coal.