



Week ending Friday, August 13, 2021

Decarbonize Now

Because the world ignored for decades the calls from climate scientists to curb carbon emissions, a new UN climate assessment warns that global heating is now at “code red” for humanity. It says the deepening climate crisis will see Earth’s average temperature reach 1.5 degrees Celsius above preindustrial levels by around 2030, a decade earlier than predicted three years ago. With increasing heat waves, wildfires and floods making headlines around the world, calls for immediate and decisive climate action are growing louder. “This report must sound a death knell for coal and fossil fuels before they destroy our planet,” United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres said in a statement.

Earthquakes

A powerful temblor wrecked several homes and damaged other structures in eastern Taiwan.

- Earth movements were also felt in north-central Kansas, much of the southern Philippines and from northern Sumatra to neighboring Malaysia.

Current Collapse

The Atlantic Meridional Overturning Circulation, of which the Gulf Stream is a key component, is now weaker than at any other time in the past 1,000 years, causing alarm among scientists. Experts say the complex of warm and cold currents began to destabilise in the 20th century and could cause even more weather chaos should it collapse. The AMOC transports warm water from the tropics to the North Atlantic, where it moderates the climate of the Northern Hemisphere. A key reason for the AMOC becoming weaker is the inflow of the lighter freshwater feeding into the Atlantic due to Greenland's melting ice sheet. Increased rainfall from a warming atmosphere also contributes.

Tropical Cyclones

Tropical Storm Fred drenched Hispaniola and northeastern Cuba after forming just to the south of Puerto Rico. It was predicted to threaten parts of Florida during the following weekend.

- Tropical Storm Lupit brought rain and gales to parts of Japan as Mirinae and Nida remained well offshore before dissipating.
- Hurricanes Hilda and Linda, as well as Tropical Storms Jimena and Kevin, churned the waters of the Eastern Pacific.

Winged Victims

The pall of smoke from Greece's catastrophic firestorms is killing migratory storks heading south to Africa. The country's animal welfare group Anima says the birds are losing their way, sometimes plunging to their deaths after crashing into power lines and pylons. Many of the

iconic birds gather each year just southeast of Athens, where they await favourable wind conditions to cross the Mediterranean. “We have many storks. It is the first time we have had so many dead storks in Athens,” Anima President Maria Ganoti said. “People in Athens are picking up dead storks from their lawns.”

Record Smoke

Huge clouds of smoke from wildfires that have blackened parts of Siberia again this year have been blown northward 3,000 km, reaching the North Pole for the first time in recorded history. Officials say almost 14 million hectares have burned so far this summer, making it the second-worst fire season this century. Some of the blazes have raged on top of permafrost in Russia’s largest and coldest region. Environmental advocates say Russia is not fighting the vast majority of the fires because it is cheaper just to let them burn in areas where human settlements are not threatened.

Etna Grows

Six months of intense activity at Sicily’s Mount Etna caused Europe’s tallest and most active volcano to grow in height. The most dynamic and youngest of the volcano’s craters has risen to a new record of 3,357 metres above sea level, which is higher than the previous record of 3,350 metres for the northeast crater set in 1981.

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