

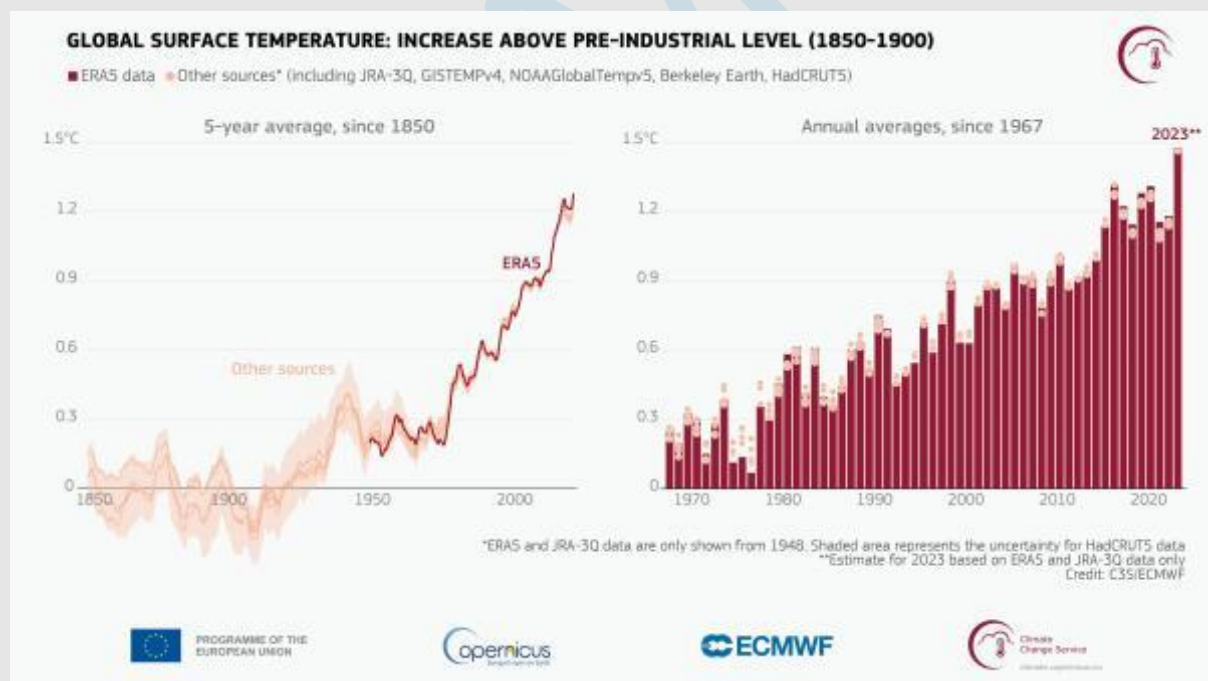
To receive Daily news juice pdf on your WhatsApp, send name and city through WhatsApp on 75979-00000.

1. Why 2023 was the warmest year ever, and what happens now

Why in news?

2023 was the warmest year since records began in 1850, beating the previous record of 2016, Europe's Copernicus Climate Change Service (C3S) said. The announcement said temperatures in 2023 likely exceeded those of any year-long period in at least the last 100,000 years. The announcement was confirmation of what scientists have known for a few months.

Last year was 1.48 degree Celsius warmer than the average of the 1850-1900 pre-industrial level and 0.17 degree Celsius warmer than 2016, C3S said.

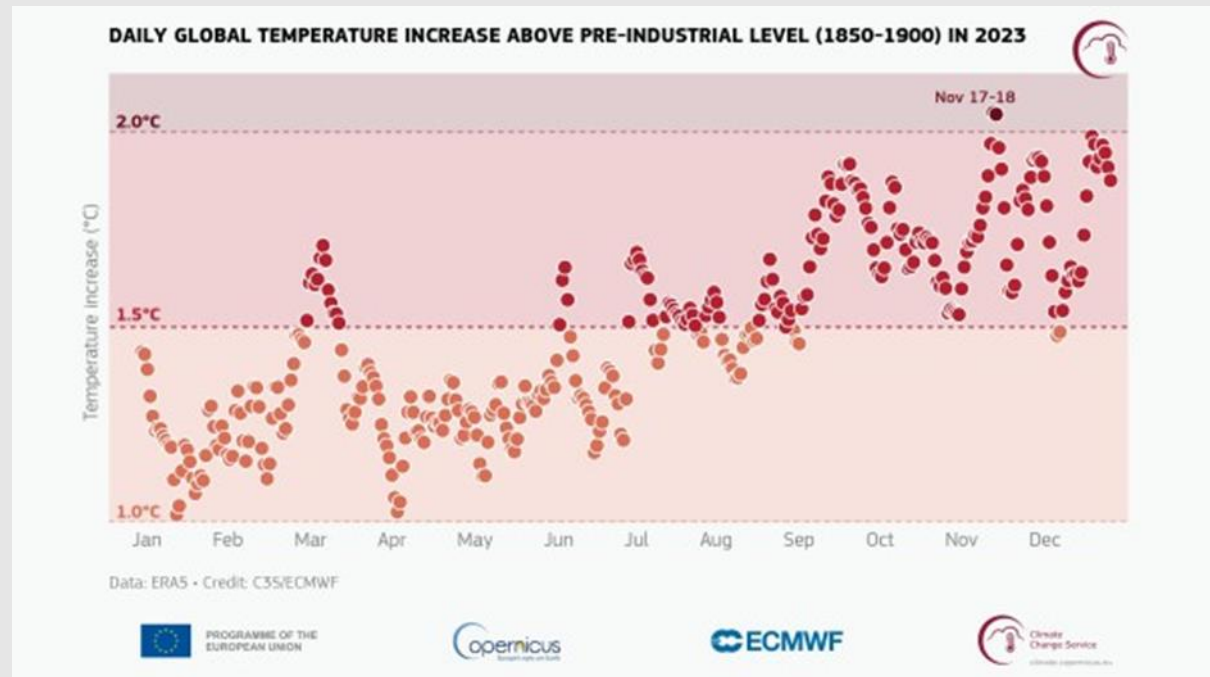


Tumbling records

Climate records fell like dominoes in the exceptional heat spell witnessed last year. 2023 marked the first time on record that every day within a year exceeded 1 degree Celsius above the 1850-1900 pre-industrial level.

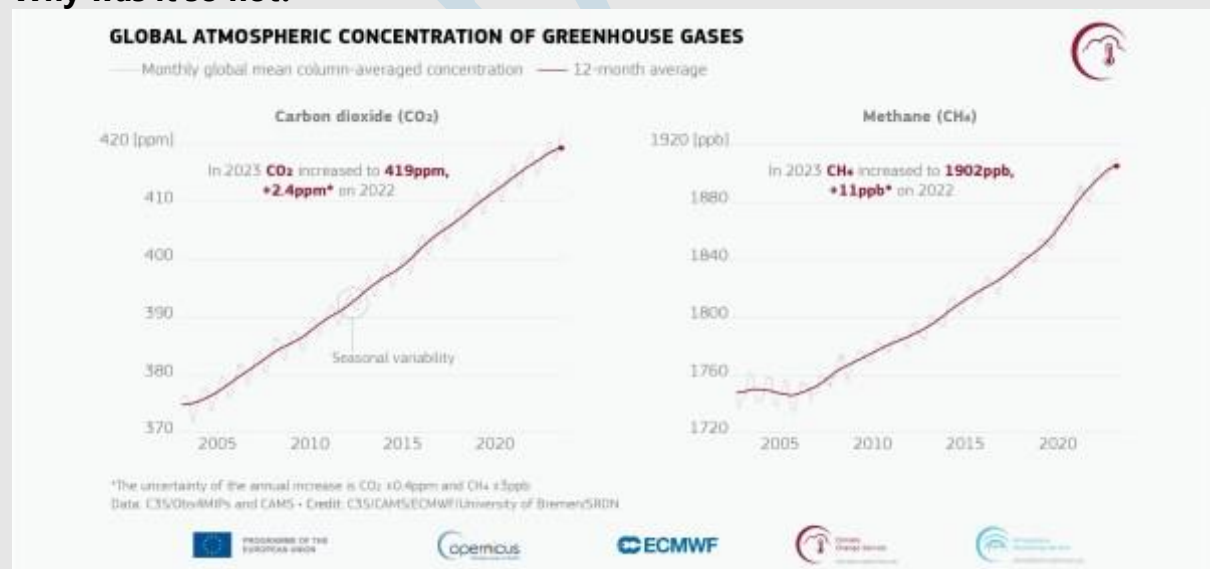
About 50% of days were more than 1.5 degree Celsius warmer than the 1850-1900 level — and two days in November were, for the first time, more than 2 degree Celsius

warmer.



This, however, does not mean that the planet has breached the 1.5 degree and 2 degree Celsius thresholds set by the 2015 Paris Agreement. Those thresholds refer to long-term warming — which means global temperatures over a period of 20-30 years, on average, must not exceed 1.5 degree or 2 degree Celsius.

Why was it so hot?



The main driver behind the extreme warming is the increasing greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere. Greenhouse gases like carbon dioxide and

methane, and water vapour trap the Sun's energy in the Earth's system before it escapes to space, causing warming.

Since the industrial revolution, human activities like burning fossil fuels such as coal, oil, and gases have released unprecedented levels of such gases. As a result, the planet has warmed rapidly, especially in recent decades.

In 2023, greenhouse gas concentrations reached the highest levels ever recorded in the atmosphere, according to C3S and the Copernicus Atmosphere Monitoring Service (CAMS). Carbon dioxide concentrations in 2023 were 2.4 parts per million (ppm) higher than in 2022; methane concentrations increased by 11 parts per billion (ppb).

The onset of El Niño last year, after seven years, played a role. El Niño refers to an abnormal warming of surface waters in the equatorial Pacific Ocean. It increased the likelihood that temperature records would be broken, and there would be more extreme heat in many parts of the world and the ocean.

What could happen now?

Scientists have suggested that 2024 could be warmer than even 2023. Typically, in the past few decades, very hot years have been ones that began in an El Niño state. Last year, El Niño didn't set in until around July, which means that it wasn't the primary reason behind the abnormal heat at that point.

It is also possible that the next year may surpass the 1.5 degree Celsius warming threshold across the entire calendar year for the first time. The World Meteorological Organisation in its 2023 State of Global Climate report said there was a 66% chance that at least one of the years between 2023 and 2027 would cross the threshold.

A long-term breach of the 1.5 degree limit would unleash far more severe climate change impacts, including more frequent and severe droughts, heatwaves, and rainfall. To prevent this, the world needs to urgently implement certain steps, including greenhouse gas emission cuts, which it has failed to do so far.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper III; Environment

Source: The Indian Express

2. Gabriel Attal: Who is the new PM of France, what changes with his appointment

Why in news?

France's President Emmanuel Macron appointed a new Prime Minister. Gabriel Attal, 34, the youngest person to ever hold the post. In France, the President is the head of State with the real powers and the Prime Minister is the head of the government.

Before Attal, the Socialist leader Laurent Fabius was the youngest French PM, appointed at the age of 37 by President François Mitterrand in 1984. Attal's appointment comes after sitting PM Elisabeth Borne resigned a day earlier, following a tumultuous term in office.

Why a new PM?

The appointment of a fresh face as the PM seems to be part of Macron's attempts to infuse new life into his government ahead of the European Union Parliament elections in June, where his ratings are trailing. Macron was re-elected as French President in 2022 and the going has not been great for him since — his government lost parliamentary majority the same year. Getting policies through parliament has been a major challenge for his government. In the midst of all this, Attal is a popular face appreciated in Opposition circles too. He also happens to be France's first openly gay Prime Minister.

Who is Gabriel Attal?

Attal held the education portfolio in previous government. He has been polled the most popular minister in the outgoing government.

As education minister, Attal was in the news for banning abayas (long, loose robes worn by Muslim girls), for pushing a proposal for mandatory uniforms in schools, and for efforts to stamp out bullying, something he says he has been a victim of.

What changes with Attal's appointment?

Not much. In France's political system, the President is the one with the greater powers. The Prime Minister is appointed by the President and is in charge of implementing domestic policy.

Relevance: GS Prelims

Source: The Indian Express & The Hindu

3. India-Maldives ties: Amid row, why the two countries need each other and what is at stake

Why in news?

Maldives has been in the news for all the wrong reasons for the past some time now. The new government led by President Mohamed Muizzu asked India to withdraw military personnel, chose China for one of his first overseas visits, and then moved to scrap a key pact involving a water survey.

The latest trigger has been undiplomatic words used by ministers in Muizzu's cabinet against Prime Minister Narendra Modi in particular and Indians in general. Maldives has moved to control the damage by sacking all the three leaders who made the disparaging remarks. In India, calls are growing louder for boycotting Maldives as a tourist destination.

But lost in the noise are three key questions:

First, what's at stake?

At stake is the diplomatic and political relationship between the two countries, painstakingly built over the last about six decades.

After the British relinquished control of the islands in 1965, India established diplomatic ties. While there was no diplomatic mission in Male earlier — it was run by the Indian High Commission in Colombo till 1978 — since 1980, India has had an ambassadorial representative in the islands.

After the democratic transition took place in 2008, India has built deep relationships with all relevant stakeholders — players in politics, military, business, and civil society — despite the change in governments.

This was a work of years: of networking with the local population, and building India as the first destination of choice for most Maldivians — for education and medical reasons.

Second, why does India need the Maldives?

Just one look at the world map tells you the strategic location and the significance of the island nation.

Location and maritime security: Maldives' proximity to the west coast of India (barely 70 nautical miles from Minicoy and 300 nautical miles from India's West coast), and its location at the hub of commercial sea-lanes running through the Indian Ocean (particularly the 8° N and 1 ½° N channels) imbues it with significant strategic importance to India. Maldives is one of the key elements in India's maritime security

calculus. The security scenario in India's periphery in the Indian Ocean is very much linked to the maritime strength of Maldives.

Defence: This is the reason why India invests on Maldives' security by training its defence forces. Estimates suggest that almost 70 per cent of Maldives' defence training is done by India — either on the islands or in India's elite military academies.

India has trained over 1,500 Maldivian National Defence Force (MNDF) personnel in the past 10 years. The Indian Navy has given aircraft and choppers to the Maldivian defence forces for aerial surveillance, and have trained their personnel on how to land vertically in the islands.

India also wants to set up a coastal radar system in Maldives, with a view to keep an eye on the activities in the Indian Ocean.

China: The Chinese have also worked their way in, in the past 15 years. Maldives opened its embassy in that country in 2009, and China opened its embassy as recently as 2011. But with investments into projects, especially since President Xi Jinping came to power and pushed the Belt and Road Initiative, Male has been actively wooed by the Chinese.

India is obviously concerned at the expanding Chinese footprint there. While Mohamed Nasheed first started the engagement with China, Abdulla Yameen took it up several notches during his term from 2013-2018. Muizzu, who was a minister in Yameen's government, is seen as carrying forward his mentor's policies.

So, from a purely strategic perspective, India needs Maldives on its side to secure its maritime periphery, keep an eye on the Indian Ocean, and check the influence of China in its neighbourhood.

Now, the third question is: why does Maldives need India?

Daily needs: India supplies Maldives with its everyday essentials: rice, spices, fruits, vegetables, poultry — basically every possible edible item in the country, except, of course, seafood, which Maldives has in plenty.

It supplies medicines — not just everyday medicines, but all critical care and life-saving drugs.

India also supplies basic items to build infrastructure in Maldives — cement, rock boulders, and basically anything one needs to build a house or a bridge or a school or

a hospital. In fact, one of the major multi-speciality hospitals in Maldives has been built by India, the 300-bed Indira Gandhi Memorial hospital.

Education: India has been the education provider for Maldivians. Since the country has a small population base and the islands are isolated and spread out, there are no major educational institutions. So, every year, Maldivian students flock to Indian higher educational institutions. Some come to India's boarding schools as well. The government gives out scholarships for Maldivian students to study in India.

Economic dependence: Maldives is dependent on India for most items, and hence India is among its top trading partners. Of the Rs 50 crore total trade between India and Maldives in 2022, Rs 49 crore was India's exports to Maldives. India emerged as Maldives' second largest trade partner in 2022.

Help during disasters: India has been the main pillar of help for Maldives in times of crisis and distress.

When a tsunami struck the islands in 2004, India was the first to send in help. Again, in 2014, when Male suddenly had a drinking water crisis as the major desalination plant broke down, India overnight airlifted drinking water to the islands. During the Covid-19 pandemic, India sent essential medicines, masks, gloves, PPE kits and vaccines for the island country.

Security provider: When there was a coup attempt in 1988 against then President Abdul Gayoom, India sent in troops to fight the combatants.

Indian Navy and the Maldivian Navy conduct joint exercises and Indian assets are always in readiness in the vicinity to protect the island nation.

In this overall context, it is in the interest of both New Delhi and Male to dial down the current tensions, by assuaging each other's concerns and cooperating on what matters most for both sides.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; Bilateral Relations

Source: Indian Express & The Hindu