India faces threat of deadly heat waves: UN report

IPCC panel study prescribes ‘large-scale changes’ to keep the rise in global temperature below 1.5°C

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If the average global temperature rises by more than one degree Celsius from the present, India could “annually” expect conditions like the 2015 heat wave that killed at least 2,000, according to the ‘Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5°C,’ commissioned by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).

The report was put together by about 91 authors and review-editors from 40 countries, who had convened in Incheon, South Korea, last week, to assess the feasibility of keeping the average global temperature from rising beyond 1.5 degree Celsius from pre-industrial times.

Achieving this would require “rapid, far-reaching and unprecedented changes in all aspects of society,” the IPCC said in the assessment. The 2015 agreement in Paris, considered a landmark achievement, had the world agree to keep rise in temperatures below 2 degrees Celsius and “pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels.”

With the U.S. withdrawing from the accord, the chances of such an ambitious target were significantly weakened.

Rapid transitions

The report stated that capping the rise in temperature to 1.5 degrees Celsius would require “rapid and far-reaching” transitions in land, energy, industry, buildings, transport and cities.

The global net human-caused emissions of carbon dioxide (CO₂) would need to fall by about 45% from 2010 levels by 2030, reaching ‘net zero’ around 2050. This means any remaining emissions would need to be balanced by removing CO₂ from the air.

However, allowing the global temperature to temporarily exceed the 1.5°C target would mean a greater reliance on techniques that remove CO₂ from the air, if the aim is to return the rise in global temperature to below 1.5°C by 2100.

Many of these techniques, such as carbon capture and storage, were unproven on a global scale and some carried significant risks for sustainable development, the report said.