

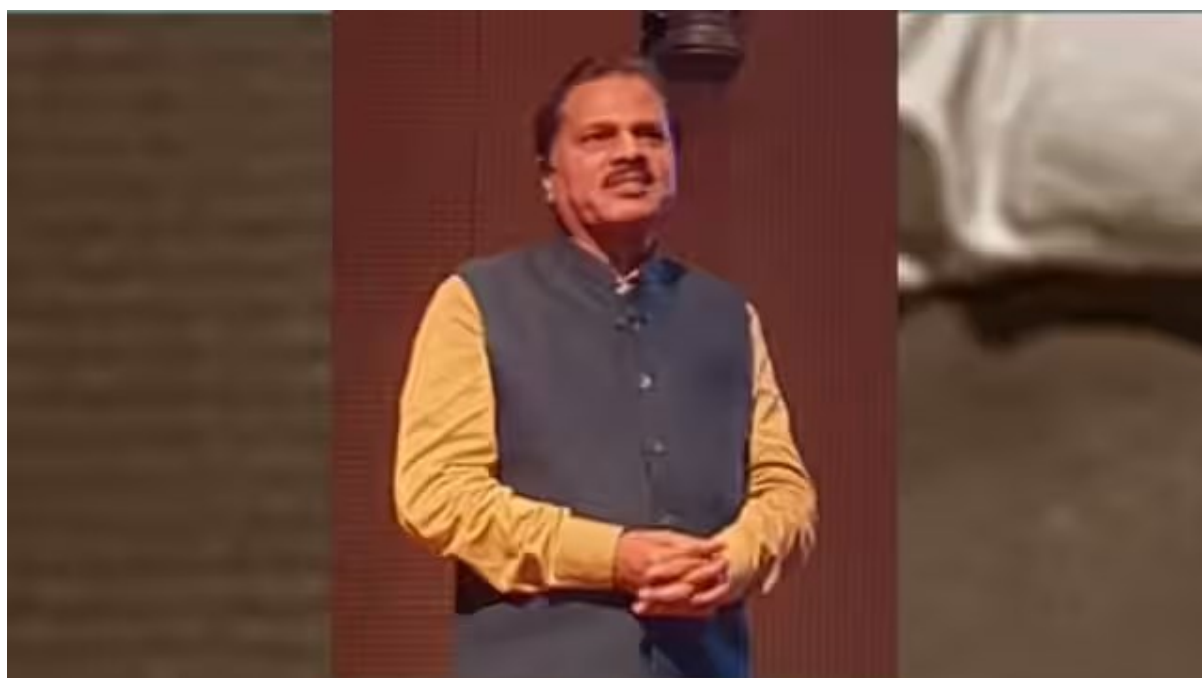
With extreme weather events on the rise, early warning system crucial, says IMD director

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Director General of IMD Mrutyunjay Mohapatra at IISER Pune. (Express File Photo)

Pointing to increasing effects of climate change, the Director General of India Meteorological Department, Mrutyunjay Mohapatra, said that more heat waves, intense cyclones and other extreme weather events have increased. He spoke about the relevance of early warning systems in reducing loss of life and damage to property due to such disasters.

“Being a tropical country, the mean minimum temperature is not rising much but the maximum temperature is seeing much rise. This means we have more threat from heat wave conditions,” said Mohapatra while delivering a public lecture on climate change at the Indian Institute of Science Education and Research (IISER) Pune.

“The impact is not uniform, but in general, extreme weather conditions are increasing,” said the official who is also Vice President and India’s permanent representative to the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO). He illustrated this with the example of cyclones. While the number of cyclones has only decreased globally, the incidents of extreme cyclones have increased, he said.

“According to projections, a one degree increase in mean temperature could mean a three-fold increase in the likelihood of heat waves,” said the official. He added that heat waves have increased even in the southern peninsula which is not a heat core zone. The extreme weather conditions, Mohapatra warned, put at risk global food security, water supply systems and natural ecosystems.

“A 2 degree rise in temperature would decrease Indian wheat yield by up to 6% in sub-tropical areas and 17-18% in tropical areas,” said the official sharing official projections. For rice, a 2 degree rise will reduce yields by 10-16% and a 4 degree rise will lead to 21-30% reduction. “In such a scenario, it is the poorest of the poor, the landless or smallholding farmers who will suffer the most,” said Mohapatra, explaining climate vulnerability. Speaking about extreme weather disasters, the WMO official said, “A major intervention taken up globally in 2022, was that by 2027 each and every country should have early warning which is the simplest means to tackle extreme weather disasters which are increasing due to climate change.”

The official said that tools and technology to provide meteorological hazard assessment, which provides a hazard forecast, are being developed by IMD. Secondary hazard alerts and a geospatial platform are other components of the impact-based forecast system in India, the official said. Assessment of risk and distress warning is crucial,” said Mohapatra.

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