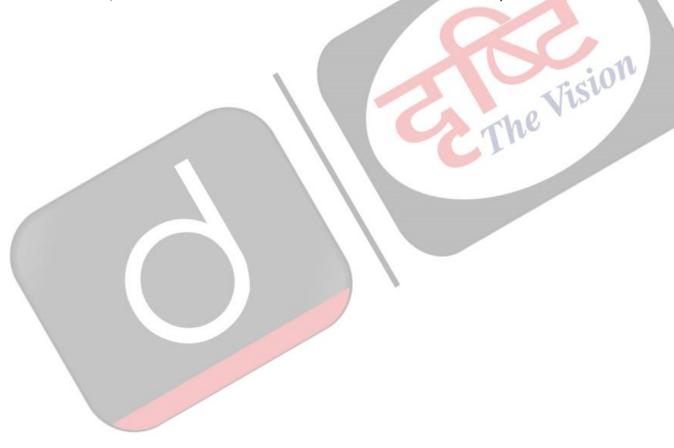


High Temperature at Death Valley

Why in News

Recently, **Death Valley** (USA) registered a temperature of 54.4°C which, once verified, could be the **highest temperature in more than a century.**

- The temperature was recorded at the **USA National Weather Service's automated weather station at Furnace Creek** on 16th August 2020.
- The Death Valley in southeastern California is the lowest point in the North American continent, and is a National Park. It is also the hottest and driest part of the continent.





Key Points

- The temperature has been termed as preliminary and not final as it awaits verification.
- According to the <u>World Meteorological Organization</u> (WMO), Death Valley's all-time record high is 56.7°C taken on 10th July 1913 at Greenland Ranch.
 - It still stands as the hottest ever recorded on the planet's surface.
 - However, since the temperature-recording mechanisms a century ago were not as advanced, many have doubted if that reading was reliable.
- Cause:
 - The high temperature is a result of a **'heat dome'** that is smothering the west coast of the USA.

- **Heat Domes:** High-pressure circulation traps hot ocean air like a lid or a cap trapping heat at the surface and favouring the formation of a **heat wave.**
- Higher daily peak temperatures and longer, more intense heat waves are becoming increasingly frequent globally due to **climate change.**

• Effects of Extreme Heat:

- According to the <u>World Health Organization</u> (WHO), extreme heat can exacerbate preexisting health conditions, including respiratory diseases, heart conditions and kidney disorders.
 - The **immediate effects** on the human body are heat cramps, dehydration and even potentially fatal heat strokes.
- It can also have a severe impact on agriculture and forests.
 - It either causes **vegetables to wilt and die** or **encourage the spread of plant diseases.**
 - It causes wildfires which lead to forest cover reduction and death of fauna.
- It **affects infrastructure too** by straining power grids and causing blackouts. It can ground planes, melt roads and cause the inside of vehicles to overheat to dangerous levels.



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