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Rising sea levels sink Asian coastal cities faster than anywhere else

» AS THE effects of climate change begin to take a stronger hold, it seems like scientists announce a new doomsday scenario every day. The latest one says that sprawling coastal cities in South and Southeast Asia are sinking faster than elsewhere in the world, leaving tens of millions of people more vulnerable to rising sea levels, according to a new study.

Rapid urbanization has seen these cities draw heavily on groundwater to service their burgeoning populations, according to research by Singapore's Nanyang Technological University (NTU), published in the journal Nature Sustainability last week.

"This puts cities experiencing rapid local land subsidence at greater risk of coastal hazards than already present due to climate-driven sea-level rise," the study says.

Vietnam's most-populous urban center and main business hub, Ho Chi Minh City, was sinking an average of 16.2 millimeters (0.6 inches) annually, topping the study's survey of satellite data from 48 large coastal cities around the world.

The southern Bangladeshi port of Chit-

tagong was second on the list, with the western Indian city Ahmedabad, the Indonesian capital Jakarta and Myanmar's commercial hub Yangon also sinking more than 20 millimeters in peak years.

"Many of these fast-subsiding coastal cities are rapidly expanding megacities, where ... high demands for groundwater extraction and loading from densely constructed building structures, contribute to local land subsidence," the study says.

Sinking cities are not themselves a result of climate change, but researchers said their work would give a better insight into how the phenomenon would "compound the effects of climate-driven mean sea-level rise."

More than 1 billion people will live in coastal cities at risk of rising sea levels by 2050, according to United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

The IPCC says that global sea levels could rise by up to 60 centimeters (24 inches) by the end of the century even if greenhouse gas emissions are sharply reduced.

NEW DELHI / AFP



Houses are seen along the Xuyen Tam canal in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, Oct. 19, 2018.

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