
BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

6 Minute English

Heatwaves: can we adapt?

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This is not a word-for-word transcript.

Beth

Hello. This is 6 Minute English from BBC Learning English. I'm Beth.

Neil

And I'm Neil.

Beth

I have a confession to make, Neil - I love the hot weather. It's a chance to get outside, maybe get a suntan. But sometimes it gets too hot, even for me.

Neil

Yes, depending where in the world you live, you've probably noticed that it's getting hotter year after year. 2023 is the hottest year on record with heatwaves in many countries around the world, even Britain.

Beth

When it gets too hot, the human body knows how to cool down. It **sweats**, passing salty water called sweat through the skin to lose heat. But unlike the body, houses don't know how to keep cool. And in hot parts of the world where air conditioning is unavailable, or unaffordable, this is a real problem.

Neil

In this programme, we'll be hearing about an innovative new idea for keeping houses cool in one of the hottest countries on Earth, India. And as usual we'll be learning some useful new vocabulary as well.

Beth

But before we hear more about this sweaty subject, I have a question for you, Neil. Living in cities where summer temperatures regularly exceed 45 degrees Celsius, Indians have been finding clever ways to keep their houses cool for over five thousand years. One of them is called 'jaali', but what exactly is it? Is 'jaali':

- a) a tall house designed to reduce sunlight?
- b) a honeycomb pattern used in windows? or,
- c) a system for spraying cool water?

Neil

Hmmm, I'll guess jaali is, b) a honeycomb window pattern.

Beth

OK, Neil, we'll find out the answer later in the programme. In May 2022, the temperature in Uttar Pradesh, the largest state in north India, reached 49.2 degrees Celsius. Roshni Diwakar is a consultant for the Mahila Housing Trust, an NGO helping poor Indian women to heat-proof their houses. These women often work from home while their husbands are out in the heat working on construction sites. Here Roshni describes a typical house to BBC World Service programme, People Fixing The World:

Roshni Diwakar

They live in a small one-bedroom house with no windows, no natural **ventilation**. They don't necessarily have illegal electric connections, and even if they do, they don't have electricity 24 hours a day - there are **power cuts**, especially in the summer months. Many of them have tin roofs which of course will really heat up. Health gets affected, because their health is affected, their livelihood gets affected because they're **daily wage earners** - if you don't work you don't earn.

Neil

Many of the houses have no window so there is no **ventilation** - the movement of fresh air around a space. Air conditioning needs electricity which most families can't afford, and even those who can experience frequent **power cuts** - periods when the supply of electricity is stopped.

Beth

In this heat, sickness is common. Often the men can't work, which is a problem because they are the **daily wage earners** - someone who earns money on a day-to-day basis meaning that they will receive no money if they cannot work. Families spend most of the day outside in the street, and at night it's still too hot to sleep, even on the roof.

Neil

But fortunately, Roshni has been working on a clever cool roof solution – white paint. Painting reflective anti-solar white paint on the roof can reduce room temperatures by up to 4 degrees. It may not sound like much, but it makes a big difference and allows families to work, cook, and even sleep inside. Here's Roshni again, talking with BBC World Service programme, People Fixing The World:

Roshni Diwakar

This has honestly been the most successful of the technologies that they've adopted. We started off by doing it in the city of Ahmedabad, but we've done it across other cities - we've done it in Bangalore, we've done it in Jodhpur. In fact in Jodhpur we've done it in an entire **slum**.

Myra Anubi

Mahila Housing Trust gets external funding and uses it to **subsidise** the cost of the paint meaning communities only end up paying 15 to 20% of the actual price.

Beth

Roshni's housing trust has been painting houses in cities all over India. In Jodhpur, a city on the edge of the Thar Desert, they painted an entire **slum** – a poor and crowded area of a city with very bad housing conditions.

Neil

What's more, the trust **subsidises** the paint meaning they pay part of the cost, so even the poorest families can afford it. It's a great example of Indians skilfully finding ways of adapting to the heat – a modern version of 'jaali', you could say. So, what was the answer to your question, Beth? Was my idea - that 'jaali' is a honeycomb pattern used in windows – correct?

Beth

It was... the correct answer! 'Jaali' is a honeycomb design with many small holes set into wooden or stone windows. The small holes keep out the sunlight, and cool down the air coming in.

Neil

OK, it's time to recap the vocabulary we've learned in this programme, starting with **sweat** - passing salty water through the skin to stay cool.

Beth

Ventilation is the movement of fresh air.

Neil

A **power cut** is an interruption in the supply of electricity.

Beth

A **daily wage earner** is a worker who earns money on a day-to-day basis.

Neil

A **slum** is a very poor and crowded area of a city.

Beth

And finally, if you **subsidise** something, you pay part of its cost. Once again our 6 minutes are up. Goodbye for now!

Neil

Bye!

VOCABULARY

sweat

salty water which the body passes through the skin to stay cool

ventilation

the movement of fresh air around a closed space

power cut

period of time when the supply of electricity is stopped

daily wage earners

someone who earns money on a day-to-day basis meaning that they will receive no money if they do not work

slum

poor and crowded area of a city with very bad living and housing conditions

subsidise

pay part of the cost of something