

## India to give flash flood warning to Asian nations

India has been designated as a nodal centre for preparing flash-flood forecasts by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO).

That means India will have to develop a customised model that can issue advance warning of floods in Vietnam, Sri Lanka, Myanmar and Thailand, according to Dr. Madhavan Rajeevan, Secretary, Ministry of Earth Sciences.

On the sidelines of the Earth Sciences Foundation Day, Dr. Rajeevan said the IMD would be working to customise a weather model, developed by the United States and donated to the WMO, to warn of flash floods at least six hours in advance.

### Six hours before

A test version of this, according to Dr. Rajeevan, was being tried out by the IMD, and that was able to give a flood warning about an hour in advance. Using a combination of satellite mapping and ground-based observation, this system — called the Flash Flood Guidance System — aims to provide forecasts six hours in advance.

Like India, several southeast Asian countries depend on the monsoon and are prone to its vagaries. The proposed model would provide forecasts by computing the likelihood of rainfall and the soil moisture levels to warn of possible floods, he said. Though Pakistan was among the list of countries that would benefit from the forecast, it had refused to participate in the scheme, Dr. Rajeevan added.

While the science to warn of floods could be developed, India was yet to work out how exactly it would warn countries of potential inundation. India currently has a warning system for tsunamis that also doubles up a warning system for several Asian countries.

The Central Water Commission, which monitors India's dams, warns of rising water levels in the reservoirs, which are usually taken to be signs of imminent floods. The organisation has recently tied up with Google to develop a software application to visualise rising water levels during heavy rains.

The WMO says flash floods account for 85% of flooding incidents across the world, causing some 5,000 deaths each year.

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