

U.S. team to join Indian Ocean study

Joint study:Preparation on to launch a sediment trap from NOAA ship Ronald H. Brown.file photo: NOAA

A team of 20 scientists, along with a key vessel of the United States National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), is arriving in Goa on Friday, marking the expansion of U.S.-Indian collaboration in the study of the Indian Ocean.

Subtle changes on the surface and deep below in the western Indian Ocean have significant impact on weather in India in days, and in the United States, two to four weeks later. Jointly collecting data on changes in the current, temperature, salinity and other parameters is a less known component of the Indo-Pacific cooperation between India and America.

NOAA's ship Ronald H Brown is on a global expedition on the lines of a similar ocean expedition 50 years ago and will arrive at Mormugao port, where it will welcome local schoolchildren on board on June 8, the World Oceans Day. NOAA scientists will work with Indian scientists at the Second India-United States Colloquium on Earth Observations and Sciences for Society and Economy from June 11 to 13.

The phenomenon called the Madden-Julian Oscillation, discovered in the 1970s, starts when water vapor rises out of the Indian Ocean every 30 to 60 days to create a major ocean storm that travels west to east from near the Seychelles off Africa toward India, crosses into the tropical Pacific Ocean and eventually affects weather patterns across America.

Scientists are advancing the knowledge of this phenomenon with new tools and models, said Craig McLean, NOAA Assistant Administrator for Oceanic and Atmospheric Research, who is leading the U.S. delegation to Goa.

"El Nino was discovered after putting these buoys in the Pacific Ocean. Then we started going further back and we ended up discovering the remarkable importance of the Indian Ocean. So we had the first international expedition 50 years ago, and now we are in the midst of the second international Indian Ocean expedition," he said.

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