

CHASING THE MONSOON

Relevant for: World & Indian Geography | Topic: Important Geophysical phenomena - Cyclones & Atmospheric Circulation

Even though the monsoon is fairly consistent in the amount of rainfall that India receives between June and September, there is a sharp variation every year that makes it unique. This year, the floods in Kerala and the torrential rains in Himachal Pradesh may have given the impression of a good monsoon, but the numbers say that India is facing a 9% deficit. This means that the country has only received 81 cm of rainfall compared to the normal 89 cm. Also, 11 of India's 36 meteorological subdivisions (comprising 30% of the country's area) have seen a 20% shortfall.

Until mid-September, India faced a 10% deficit. If the current 9% deficit increases, 2018 could be termed as an "all India deficient year". Since 2015, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) doesn't use the term "drought".

The maximum shortfall (24%) has been in the eastern and Northeastern States, which account for 40% of the monsoon rains. Arunachal Pradesh has seen a 37% deficit, Assam and Meghalaya 27%, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram and Tripura 22%, Jharkhand 26%, and Bihar 23%. All the other divisions — the Southern Peninsula, Northwest India, and Central India — have also registered less rainfall than their normal quotas.

Last week, Cyclone Daye, which originated as a cyclonic circulation in the Bay of Bengal, gave rains to most parts of the country except the southern States. When it collided with another system from the Arabian Sea that had travelled up north, it led to flash floods and landslides in Northwest India. The cyclone even delayed the exit of the monsoon that normally begins from the first week of September, and the IMD in a statement said it expects this withdrawal to begin on Saturday. All rainfall in India until September 30 counts as monsoon rainfall.

On September 17, the Agriculture Ministry stated that it had set a production target of 285.2 million tonnes for 2018-19, a marginal increase from the previous year's harvest of 284.8 million tonnes. This was when the rainfall deficit was at 10%. The 2018-19 target for rice is 113 million tonnes; for wheat, it is 100 million tonnes. These are marginally higher than last year's harvest. However, the targets for pulses, coarse cereals and maize are slightly lower.

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Last week Ram Kadam, a BJP MLA from Maharashtra, told the men in an audience that if they were interested in women who didn't reciprocate the feeling,

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