

IMD forecasts a normal South-West monsoon

Prabudatta Mishra

New Delhi

The country will experience a normal South-West monsoon this year, said the IMD, allaying concerns over the most-important weather event being affected by El Nino.

“Rainfall during the monsoon will be 96 per cent of the long-period average (LPA) of 87 cm. It will be 82.5 cm of the 87 cm received from 1971 to 2020,” M Ravichandran, Secretary, Ministry of Earth Sciences, said in a press conference.

FIFTH NORMAL YEAR

Mrutyunjay Mohapatra, Director-General, India Meteorological Department (IMD), said the forecast, making it the fifth consecutive year of a normal monsoon, is based on both statistical and dynamic model probabilities. The forecast has an error margin of 5 per cent on either side.

The IMD will likely come up

with an update on the monsoon by the end of next month, when spatial distribution and monthly rainfall will be predicted for each of the four regions, Mohapatra said.

KEY FOR BHARAT

The South-West Monsoon, which accounts for 74 per cent of the total annual rainfall the country receives, is key to the kharif crops grown between June and September and harvested around October. Accounting for 60 per cent of India’s total agricultural production, the kharif crop holds the key to the country’s economy, particularly the rural areas.

The forecast should assuage fears expressed by some of a below-normal monsoon. On Monday, private forecaster Skymet predicted a below-normal monsoon, saying the rainfall will be 94 per cent of the LPA.

But experts said whatever the IMD’s outlook, it will finally

Asia, could set in from July. This may impact rainfall in the second half (August–September) of the monsoon season.

On the impact of El Nino in the latter part of the monsoon, Ravichandran said showers in August and September could be lower than normal, but the possibility has been factored into the overall monsoon forecast.

Mohapatra said there is a 35 per cent chance of a normal rainfall as per the forecast probability. The climatological probability pegs the chance of a normal rainfall at 33 per cent.

He said normal rainfall is likely over peninsular India and adjoining east central, east, and north-east regions, as well as some parts of the north-west. However, some other parts (mainly Haryana and Punjab) of the north-west region, where major kharif crops such as paddy are grown, will likely see below-normal rainfall. The same pattern is forecast for the west-central region, which comprises Gujarat, west

Forecast vs actual (% departure from LPA*)

	Actual	Forecast-I	Forecast-II
2013	106	98	98
2014	88	95	93
2015	86	93	88
2016	97	106	106
2017	95	96	98
2018	91	97	97
2019	110	96	96
2020	109	100	102
2021	99	98	101
2022	106	99	103
2023	-	96	-

Note: Forecast I in mid-April and Forecast II in May-June. Long period average (LPA) is 87 cm (1971-2020).

depend on the distribution of rainfall. Though the country received “above normal” rainfall (106 per cent of LPA) last year, the distribution was uneven, with the eastern parts receiving deficient showers.

EVENT FACTORED IN

Mohapatra said the El Nino weather phenomenon, which results in droughts in parts of

Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, and pockets of the north-east.

On El Nino, Mohapatra said conditions are likely to develop for the weather event during the monsoon, but all El Nino years “are not bad monsoon years”. According to IMD data, out of 15 El Nino years in the past (1951-2022), India had normal or above-normal monsoon rainfall on five occasions.

He said the snow-cover over the northern hemisphere and Eurasia was below normal during December 2022-March 2023. “Lower snow cover over the northern hemisphere as well as Eurasia during winter and spring is favourable for the South-West monsoon,” the IMD chief said.

Outlining the third influential weather system over the monsoon, he said the Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD) conditions, which are currently neutral, may turn positive during the season, which will be good for the South-West monsoon over India.