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'Monsoon likely to be delayed'

New Delhi: Monsoon may arrive on the southern coast around June 3, the weather office forecast on Wednesday, a late debut that will raise fears any revival for drought-hit tracts of southern and western farmland could be delayed.

"The date of onset of southwest monsoon over Kerala is likely to be on June 3," the India Meteorological Department said in a statement, adding that the forecast has an error margin of four days, a time frame treated as normal.

Last year, monsoon hit Kerala four days after June 1, the date forecast by the weather office, and the season brought below average rainfall across the country.

A poor monsoon could be bad news for the coalition government as deficient rainfall could dent hopes for a fast economic rebound and reignite inflation. The weather department said it was too early to say how the monsoon would behave over these states, echoing caution from food minister K V Thomas last month. REUTERS