

Monsoon rainfall amount stable for decades

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Heavy rains balanced by less frequent moderate rain during India's monsoon season keep the rain amounts in check, researchers said.

This, researchers said, could explain why monsoon-delivered rains remained stable over the last 50 years. Researchers had thought the warming of the Indian Ocean would have prompted an increase in rains delivered by monsoons, NewScientist.com said.

A team headed by B.N. Goswami at the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology in Pune, India, examined readings from rain gauges over a large portion of central and eastern India. Its results indicated storms producing at least 4 inches of rainfall a day were twice as common in 2000 as they were in 1951, but those producing moderate rainfall occurred less often.

A scientist at the University of Reading in Britain said Goswami's findings, while significant, should include several cautions. Julia Slingo said 50 years is too short a time to reach definitive conclusions because Indian monsoon rainfall patterns seem to vary over several decades.

Also, the study related rainfall to the Indian Ocean, but Slingo said the area the researchers examined included monsoon rains influenced by other factors, such proximity to the Himalayas.

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