

India predicted to receive normal monsoon rains

April 26 2013



Villagers paddle their boat near submerged houses in a village near Kaziranga National Park on September 27, 2012. India will receive normal monsoon rains this year, the government said on Friday, boosting prospects of a stronger performance this year by Asia's third-largest economy.

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The pounding rains that sweep across the continent from June to September are dubbed the "economic lifeline" of [India](#), which is one of

the world's leading producers of rice, sugar, wheat and cotton.

"The southwest [monsoon rainfall](#) for the country is most likely to be normal," said Science Minister S. Jaipal Reddy.

"The monsoon rainfall is likely to be 98 percent with a margin of error of five percent," he added.

But [monsoon rains](#) in the southern states of Kerala, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu may be delayed or could be below normal levels, government officials said.

More than 70 percent of Indians depend on farm incomes, and at least 60 percent of the nation's farms lack irrigation, meaning they depend entirely on the rains that fall in intense bursts over the wet season.

Last year, India got below-normal rain in the first half of the June to September wet season. The rains picked up in some areas later, but large areas of west and south India did not benefit.

The rains are crucial this year for central parts of the western state of Maharashtra, India's biggest sugar-producer, which is reeling from the worst drought in over four decades.

The southern state of Andhra Pradesh is also parched.

India's weather department defines normal monsoon as seasonal rainfall between 96 percent and 104 percent of the long-term, or 50-year, average.

The Congress-led national government's hopes of over six percent economic growth this financial year—up from an estimated decade low of five percent last year—hinge on India receiving a normal monsoon.

A good monsoon is particularly vital for the government this year ahead of the general elections in 2014 as it struggles to kickstart economic growth in the country of 1.2 billion people.

Agriculture contributes about 15 percent to the nation's gross domestic product but the livelihood of hundreds of millions of Indians living in rural areas depend on the farming sector.

Memories remain fresh of India's devastating drought in 2009 that came despite the meteorological department's predictions of a normal monsoon.

The drought, the worst in nearly four decades, sent food prices rocketing and caused huge hardship for the country's poor.

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