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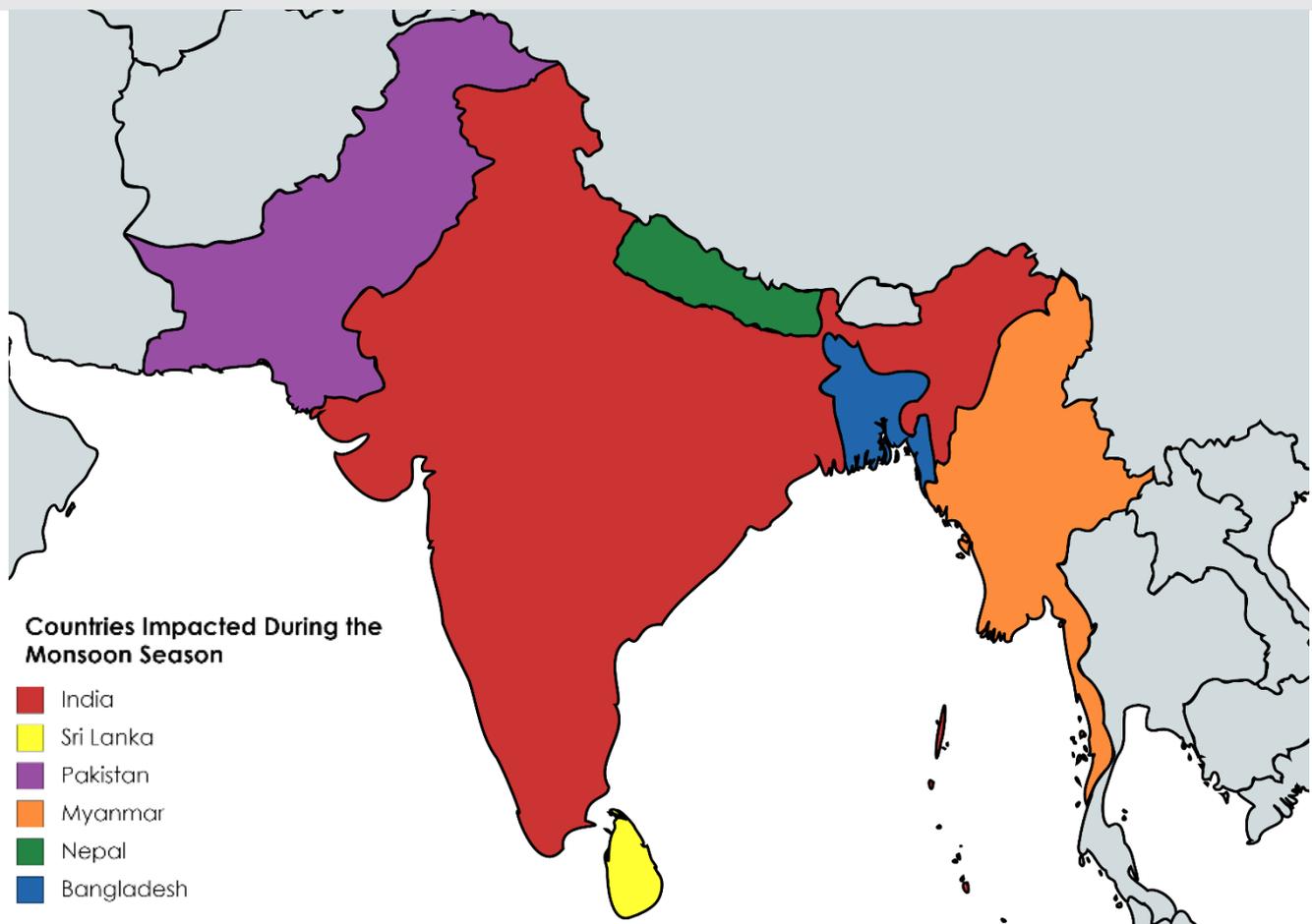




2018 South Asia Monsoon Season

KEY POINTS

- The annual South Asia monsoon season runs from June to September.
- India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, and Nepal are all impacted by the torrential rains.
- More than 1,200 people were killed and 40 million impacted during the 2017 monsoon.



SITUATIONAL SUMMARY

Environmental: A monsoon is an annual, seasonal change in the direction of the strongest winds of a region. Monsoons cause wet and dry seasons throughout the tropic and are most regularly associated with the Indian Ocean. In South Asia, the monsoon season runs from June through September. Monsoons always blow from cold to warm areas. The summer and the winter monsoons determine the climate for most of India and South Asia. The summer monsoon is associated with heavy rainfall. As winter ends, warm, moist air from the southwest Indian Ocean heads towards South Asia; the summer monsoon brings humidity



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and torrential rainfall.

The South Asia monsoon season is vital for agriculture and livelihoods in the region. The region is home to 23.7 per cent of the world's population but only 4.6 per cent of renewable water sources. Many areas in these countries lack sufficient irrigation systems surrounding lakes, rivers, or snowmelt areas. The summer monsoon fills wells and aquifers for the rest of the year. Rainfall during this period accounts for 70 to 80 per cent of annual rainfall in most countries in the region. Much electricity in South Asia is produced by hydroelectric power plants, which are driven by water collected during the monsoons.

When the summer monsoon is delayed or not strong, the region's economy suffers. Fewer people can grow their own food, and larger farming companies do not have sufficient produce to sell, leading to food imports. Electricity becomes more expensive and can lead to intermittent blackouts, especially so in rural areas. The monsoon's impact on the economy of the region has led to it being dubbed "India's real Finance Minister".

Despite India's economic miracle in recent times, taking millions out of poverty and becoming one of the world's leading economies, issues persist. Countries in the region desperate need superior drainage systems. The country is routinely underprepared for the destruction which is brought by the monsoon. India lacks an effective prewarning system for urban areas, let alone rural ones. In 2017, even some government officials stated that they had not been sufficiently warned of incoming storms. Moreover, the country lacks the infrastructure to provide post-disaster services to those in rural areas.

The 2017 South Asian Monsoon

Despite being a positive for South Asia, heavy summer monsoons frequently cause great damage. Streets in urban areas typically flood with almost half a metre of water every summer. However, when the summer monsoon is stronger than expected, floods can devastate the region, and cause extensive damage to infrastructure. In cities like Mumbai, entire neighbourhoods can be drowned. In rural areas, mudslides can bury villages and destroy crops.

In 2017, more than 1,200 people were killed and more than 40 million impacted by a comparatively average monsoon season. According to the International Disaster Database in Belgium, the average annual number of fatalities during the monsoon is 2,000 over the past two decades. July is typically the worst month of the monsoon season, however, in 2017 the earlier half of season was less severe than usual. However, the latter half of the monsoon season, from mid-August, was unexpectedly damaging. The area most severely impacted was the India-Bangladesh-Nepal border region. In Mumbai, India's business capital, 33 people died after monsoon conditions caused a residential building to collapse. The building was designated unsafe for human habitation in 2013, demonstrating the real-world impact of challenges with health and safety practice in the Indian subcontinent.

The Monsoon in 2018

Heavy pre-monsoon rains have already been reported in South Asia, notably in Kolkata and West Bengal of India and in Bangladesh. The rainfall in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh (which is known for having one of the highest rainfall totals in the country during monsoon season) has highlighted the plight of the Rohingya refugees from western Myanmar who have been driven from the country. Refugees are living in makeshift accommodation, many of it on newly deforested areas which are susceptible to mudslides and flash flooding. It is feared that the lives of 150,000 people could be at risk directly from torrential rains and indirectly from the spread of disease; there are around 700,000 Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh at this time.

The exact impact of the 2018 monsoon is difficult to predict. However, the South Asian Climate Outlook Forum (SASCOF) stated that "normal rainfall is most likely" during the monsoon season, with heavier than usual rainfall likely over some areas of southern, northwestern, and northeastern parts of South Asia. Weather models predict that climate change is predicted to push back the beginning of the monsoon season by five to 15 days by the end of the 21st century. However, climate change may also produce the



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conditions which could lead to a reduced total level of precipitation over the Indian subcontinent. Despite this, climatologists also predict that there could be greater rainfall over eastern areas – the Indian Ocean, Bangladesh, and Myanmar – and less over India, Nepal, and Pakistan.

SECURITY ADVICE

HIGH ENVIRONMENTAL RISK



Travel to South Asia will be more challenging than usual in the coming weeks and months. Roads, especially in rural areas, are liable to flooding and landslides which will inhibit road travel. Monsoon weather is likely to impact flight schedules, often with little notice.

If travelling to the region, it is important that all journeys are undertaken with careful journey management planning in order to avoid the most affected roads, reducing the risk of injury due to landslides. Travellers should consider that many locations may be unreachable by land, meaning that alternative travel may need to be arranged. Long rural journeys should be cautiously considered in line with the latest weather forecast. Travellers should undertake careful research of any hotels or residences due to be used (if possible), especially given the poor implementation of building standards in the region and the potential for these to be exacerbated by monsoon conditions. Travellers should also ensure preparedness for water- and insect-borne diseases, making sure that the necessary health insurance is in place. Individuals should also be aware that a number of clinics and hospitals, in rural areas especially, are likely to be severely impacted by monsoon flooding, with basic medical supplies likely to become scarce.

In any environmental disaster, it is important to follow the instruction of local officials. In certain locations, including the Indian sub-continent, the preparedness of local officials is not always of a sufficient standard. Travellers should always take note of local media, should any warnings or instructions be issued. In general, the advice when flooding strikes is to do the following:

- Gather essential items together either upstairs or in a high place – this should include torches, medication, and waterproof clothing.
- Have a supply of clean water – either bottled or distilled in jugs and saucepans.
- Gather with others upstairs or a high place with access to a means of escape.
- Turn off utilities – gas, electricity, and water – when flood water enters your residence, if it is safe to do so.
- Do not touch any electrical equipment when stood in flood water.

For most locations in South Asia, Solace Global would advise clients to employ the minimum of a security trained or fully vetted driver. It may also be advisable to employ a close protection officer, dependent on location. Solace Global would also advise clients to use travel tracking technology alongside an intelligence feed. This enables a traveller to inform others should an emergency occur and allows them to stay updated on any security-related incident.



Solace Global remains available to provide the full range of Travel Risk Management services to clients. Solace Global is also able to provide comprehensive crisis management, in-country journey management, tracking, response, and evacuation services.

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