



India's monsoons, which hit the southern coast late last month, are expected to make slow progress over the next two weeks. (Image: Reuters)

India's monsoons, which hit the southern coast late last month, are expected to make slow progress over the next two weeks and delay the onset of crucial rains over north-western parts of the country, a private U.S.-based weather forecaster said. Monsoon rains, vital for Asia's third-largest economy, hit the southern state of Kerala at the end of May, a few days earlier than normal, brightening the outlook for agricultural and economic output.

"Indian monsoon got off to a pretty good start across much of southern India. But, we see a change in the situation, we are going to see mostly dry weather over the next 10 days," said Kyle Tapley, senior agricultural meteorologist at Radiant Solutions, formerly MDA Earthsat. "North-western areas have yet to see the monsoon and it looks like it's going to be dry over the next couple of weeks. Northern and western India is going to see monsoon behind schedule."

The Monsoon delivers about 70 percent of India's annual rainfall and are the lifeblood of its \$2.5 trillion economy, spurring farm output and boosting spending on items ranging from gold to tractors and refrigerators. Tapley said rains are forecast to return after a 10 day dry spell. "All of India looks below normal over the next 10 days, once you get past that period, it looks like rains begin to return to southern and central India."

For the entire four-month monsoon season, rains are expected to be marginally below normal, he said by phone from the company's headquarters in Washington. India's weather office retained its monsoon forecast at 97 percent of a long-term average on Wednesday.

## **DRYNESS IN AUSTRALIA**

Australia's eastern grain belt is expected to remain dry during coming weeks, hitting wheat production in the world's fourth largest exporter. "The southern and western wheat growing areas in Australia have seen some improvement, but it is quite dry in Queensland and New South Wales," Tapley said.

"Going forward those areas will not see much rainfall for the next couple of weeks. We will probably see more showers across western Australia, Victoria and South Australia over the next week or so." The forecast for Australia's wheat production has been cut by nearly 8 percent for 2018/19, the country's top commodity agency reported on Wednesday, as prolonged dryness across the east coast crimps national output. The crucial August and September months for the Australian wheat crop are expected to receive below normal rains in much of country, Tapley said.

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