

A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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THE BURST OF THE MONSOON

Now is the time of year when the people of India look forward anxiously to the coming of the southwest monsoon -- the rain-giving wind upon which the prosperity of the country depends. In the southernmost part of the continent the monsoon generally sets in toward the end of May; farther north it comes later -- about June 5 in Bombay, June 15 in Bengal; June 25 in the Northwest Provinces; July 1 in the Punjab. Its arrival is sudden and often quite stormy; hence this event is known as the "burst of the monsoon".

The coming of the monsoon in Ceylon is thus described by Sir E. Tennant:

"At last the sudden lightnings flash among the hills and sheet through the clouds that overhang the sea, and with a crash of thunder the monsoon bursts over the thirsty land; not in showers or partial torrents, but in a wide deluge that in the course of a few hours overtops the river banks and spreads in inundations over every level plain. All the phenomena of this explosion are stupendous; thunder as we are accustomed to be awed by it in Europe affords but the faintest idea of its overpowering grandeur in Ceylon. The rain at these periods excites the astonishment of a European. For some days heavy showers continue to fall at intervals in the forenoon; and the evenings that follow are embellished by sunsets of the most gorgeous splendor, lighting the fragments of clouds that survive the recent storm."

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