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India's Monsoon Stalls: MJO, Somali Jet and a 38% June Deficit

19 June 2026 ·

GEOGRAPHY**GS1**

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WHY IN NEWS

After an early onset over Kerala on May 24, 2026, India's southwest monsoon has stalled. As of June 17, the country was running a 38% all-India rainfall deficit (central India at 62% below normal), with the advance into the central and eastern plains held up by a cluster of unfavourable atmospheric conditions.

The stall matters because June rain seeds the kharif sowing season. A prolonged hiatus delays planting of paddy, pulses, oilseeds and cotton across the rain-fed heartland.

THE MECHANICS OF THE INDIAN MONSOON

The southwest monsoon is a large-scale sea-breeze driven by differential heating between the Indian landmass and the surrounding oceans. The normal onset over Kerala is June 1, with a model error of plus or minus four days; coverage of the whole country is normally complete by around July 8.

The Engines

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DRIVER	ROLE IN THE MONSOON
Somali (Findlater) Jet	Cross-equatorial low-level jet that funnels moisture-laden winds from the southern Indian Ocean towards the west coast
Madden-Julian Oscillation (MJO)	An eastward-moving pulse of cloud and rainfall; its phase over the Indian Ocean can enhance or suppress monsoon convection
Wind convergence (https://ujiyari.com/vocab/convergence/)	Convergence of monsoon currents lifts moist air, triggering rainfall
Convection	Vertical uplift that forms rain-bearing clouds

WHY IT STALLED: FIVE SUPPRESSING SYSTEMS

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) attributed the hiatus to a confluence (<https://ujiyari.com/vocab/confluence/>) of factors:

- ❶ **Unfavourable MJO phase:** The MJO had shifted away from the Indian Ocean, reducing large-scale convective (<https://ujiyari.com/vocab/convective/>) support over the subcontinent.
- ❷ **Feeble Somali (Findlater) Jet:** A weak cross-equatorial jet cut the supply of moisture from the southern hemisphere.
- ❸ **Weak convection** over the monsoon trough region.
- ❹ **Poor wind convergence**, limiting the uplift needed for rain.
- ❺ **Suppressed atmospheric dynamics** generally, delaying the trough's northward push.

Despite the stall, the monsoon had already covered most of south, east and northeast India by June 15. Further advance into Telangana, Odisha, Jharkhand and Bihar was expected only around June 23.

INDICATOR	STATUS (JUNE 1 TO 17, 2026)
All-India rainfall deficit	38% below normal
Central India deficit	62% below normal
Kerala onset	May 24, 2026 (eight days early, earliest since 2009; normal June 1)
Expected revival	Around June 23

ANALYSIS: THE KHARIF RISK

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June rainfall is the trigger for kharif sowing. A 38% deficit at this point raises three risks. First, delayed sowing compresses the crop calendar and can lower yields. Second, rain-fed regions of central India (the worst hit at 62%) have the least irrigation buffer. Third, a weak start can stress reservoir storage and rural demand. The saving grace is that the monsoon is a 100-day phenomenon: an early-season deficit can be recovered if July and August rains are robust, which is why the seasonal total matters more than any single fortnight.

WAY FORWARD

- **Contingency** (<https://ujjiyari.com/vocab/contingency/>) **cropping**: Promote short-duration, drought-tolerant varieties where sowing is delayed.
- **Strengthen forecasting uptake**: Translate IMD's extended-range and Long Range Forecast into actionable, district-level agro-advisories.
- **Water buffering**: Prioritise watershed recharge and micro-irrigation in rain-fed central India to cushion early-season gaps.

UPSC RELEVANCE

Prelims: Somali/Findlater Jet; Madden-Julian Oscillation; normal Kerala onset date; IMD Long Range Forecast.

Mains (GS1): “Explain the factors that govern the onset and progress of the southwest monsoon. How do oscillations such as the MJO modulate intra-seasonal rainfall variability?”

FACTS CORNER

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Normal Kerala onset: June 1 (+/- 4 days); 2026 onset May 24 (earliest since 2009).

Somali (Findlater) Jet: Cross-equatorial low-level jet carrying moisture to India's west coast.

MJO: Madden-Julian Oscillation, an eastward-moving pulse of cloud and rain that enhances or suppresses monsoon convection.

2026 deficit (June 1 to 17): 38% all-India; 62% in central India.

Forecasting body: India Meteorological Department (IMD); seasonal outlook via the Long Range Forecast.

Sources: *The Hindu* (<https://www.thehindu.com>), *Down To Earth* (<https://www.downtoearth.org.in>)

Source: ~~India's Monsoon Stalls: MJO, Somali Jet and a 38% June Deficit~~ [Ujivari.com](#) | Free UPSC & State PCS
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