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THE INFLUENCE OF SOUTH INDIAN OCEAN TROPICAL CYCLONES ON THE WEATHER IN SRI LANKA AREA

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Before the onset of the south west monsoon Sri Lanka receives an appreciable amount of rain during April and in early May. Occasionally, during this period, there are spells of dry weather lasting for several days. It was observed that some of these dry spells occurred when there were tropical cyclones in a certain region of the South Indian ocean. This region, which is south of Sri Lanka, is approximately bounded by latitudes 5S and 15S and longitudes 70E and 90E.

An analysis of the daily rainfall during the period 1st April to 15th May for the years 1974 to 1979 (when satellite cloud pictures were available in the department) revealed that dry spells occurred in 1975, 1976, 1978 and 1979. Except for the dry spell in 1978 the others were probably associated with cyclones in South Indian ocean. In 1974 and 1977 there were no dry spells over the island and no cyclones developed in that particular region of South Indian ocean.

The dry spells seem to occur mostly during the period of intensification of the cyclones.

In May 1979 there were twin cyclones in the Indian ocean on either side of the equator. Initially the cyclone in the southern hemisphere influenced the movement of the one in the northern hemisphere. Later when the cyclone in the northern hemisphere intensified the one in the southern hemisphere dissipated.

When a tropical cyclone is within about 15 degrees of the equator its intensification apparently generates an area of subsidence on the other side of the equator.

References :

1. Monthly weather summary 1974-1979, Department of Meteorology.