



Nineteenth (Update) Session of South Asian Climate Outlook Forum (SASCOF-19)

Online Session, 10 June 2021

Updated Consensus Statement on the Seasonal Forecast over South Asia for the 2021 Southwest Monsoon Season (June – September)

Summary

Normal to above normal rainfall is most likely during the 2021 southwest monsoon season (June – September) over most parts of South Asia. Geographically, above-normal rainfall is most likely over northwest and some region along the foothills of Himalaya. However, the seasonal rainfall over land areas around the north Bay of Bengal, extreme northern part of the region and some south western areas of the peninsular India most likely to be below normal. The seasonal rainfall is most likely to be normal or of climatological probabilities over the remaining areas of South Asia. During the season above normal minimum temperatures are likely over most parts of South Asia except central parts of the region where below normal minimum temperatures are likely. Normal minimum temperatures are likely over remaining parts of the region. The maximum temperatures are likely to be below normal over most parts of South Asia except the northwest and north-eastern part of the region. Normal maximum temperatures are likely over remaining parts of the region.

This regional climate outlook (update) for the 2021 southwest monsoon season over South Asia has been collaboratively developed by all nine National Meteorological and Hydrological Services (NMHSs) of South Asia with the support from international experts at the nineteenth (update) session of the South Asian Climate Outlook Forum (SASCOF-19) conducted online. The process involved an expert assessment of the prevailing global climate conditions and forecasts from different climate models from around the world. There is strong consensus among experts that the ENSO neutral conditions are likely to prevail during the southwest monsoon season. It is recognized that the global climate model predictions prior to and during the spring season generally have noticeable uncertainty due to spring barrier in the seasonal predictability. It is also recognized that other regional and global factors as well as the intra-seasonal features of the region can also affect the seasonal climate patterns over the region.

For more information and further updates on the southwest monsoon outlook on national scale, the respective National Meteorological and Hydrological Services (NMHSs) may be consulted.

Introduction:

The update climate outlook for the 2021 southwest monsoon season (June to September) was finalized during the nineteenth (update) session of the South Asian Climate Outlook Forum (SASCOF-19) held on 10th June 2021 via video conferencing in the backdrop of the current extraordinary circumstances of Covid-19 pandemic prevailing in the world since early 2020. The session was attended by experts representing the National Meteorological and Hydrological Services (NMHSs) of nine South Asian countries as well as those representing several global and regional climate agencies including World Meteorological Organization (WMO), WMO Regional Climate Centre(RCC) Pune, Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM), Met Office (UKMO), International Research Institute for Climate and Society (IRI), Regional Integrated Multi-hazard Early-warning System (RIMES), Japan Meteorological Agency (JMA) , Lead Centre of LRFMME, KMA etc. The online forum deliberated on various observed and emerging climatic features that influence the performance of the southwest monsoon, such as the El Niño-Southern Oscillation (ENSO) conditions over the equatorial Pacific, Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD), winter and spring Northern Hemisphere (NH) snow cover and land surface temperature anomalies. The key features of these conditions are as follows:

ENSO Conditions over the Pacific Ocean

The ENSO is one of the global scale climate phenomena that have significant influence on the year-to-year variability of the monsoon over South Asia. La Niña conditions (colder than normal SSTs over the equatorial Pacific) were developed during the second part of the previous year, which peaked in November. However, La Nina conditions over the equatorial Pacific started weakening in the early part of 2021 and currently ENSO neutral conditions are prevailing over the equatorial Pacific Ocean. The latest global model forecasts indicate the prevailing neutral ENSO conditions are likely to continue over the equatorial Pacific Ocean. ENSO neutral conditions are generally associated with the normal southwest monsoon over the region.

Conditions over the Indian Ocean

In addition to ENSO conditions over the Pacific, other factors such as Indian Ocean SSTs also have influence on the South Asian southwest monsoon. A positive (negative) IOD is associated with a stronger (weaker) than normal monsoon over the region. At present, neutral Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD) conditions are prevailing over the

Indian Ocean. The recent forecasts from coupled global models suggest the possibility of development of weak negative IOD conditions during the monsoon season.

Snow Cover over the Northern Hemisphere

The snow-covered area over the Northern Hemisphere as well as Eurasia was below normal during the last few months (December 2020, January & March 2021). The northern hemisphere snow cover areas during February and March 2021 were 33rd and 11th lowest ever during the respective months in the last 55 years. On the other hand, the Eurasian snow cover area was 13th lowest ever during the respective months in the last 55 years. Winter and spring snow cover extent has a general inverse relationship with the subsequent Asian summer monsoon rainfall.

Updated regional outlook for the 2021 Southwest Monsoon Rainfall over South Asia:

A updated regional climate outlook for the 2021 Southwest monsoon season rainfall over South Asia was prepared based on the expert assessment of prevailing large-scale global climate indicators mentioned above, experimental models developed during capacity-building workshops conducted for the South Asian countries in association with the previous SASCOF sessions, and experimental as well as operational long-range forecasts based on statistical and dynamical models generated by the NMHSs in the region and various other operational and research climate centres of the world.

There is a strong consensus among the experts that the neutral ENSO conditions are likely to continue during the southwest monsoon season. Further, it is well-known that ENSO predictions at this time of the year generally have substantial uncertainty due to the so-called spring barrier in seasonal predictability. It is also recognized that in general neutral ENSO conditions are favourable for the normal southwest monsoon rainfall over most parts of South Asia. However, it is important to note that ENSO conditions are not the only factor that determines the performance of Southwest monsoon over the region. Other relevant climate drivers such as the state of the Indian Ocean Dipole, tropical Atlantic sea surface temperatures, Eurasian land heating etc. are also important. The relative impact of all these parameters needs to be considered to determine the expected state of the monsoon over the region which is implicitly considered by the dynamical climate models that underpin the present outlook.

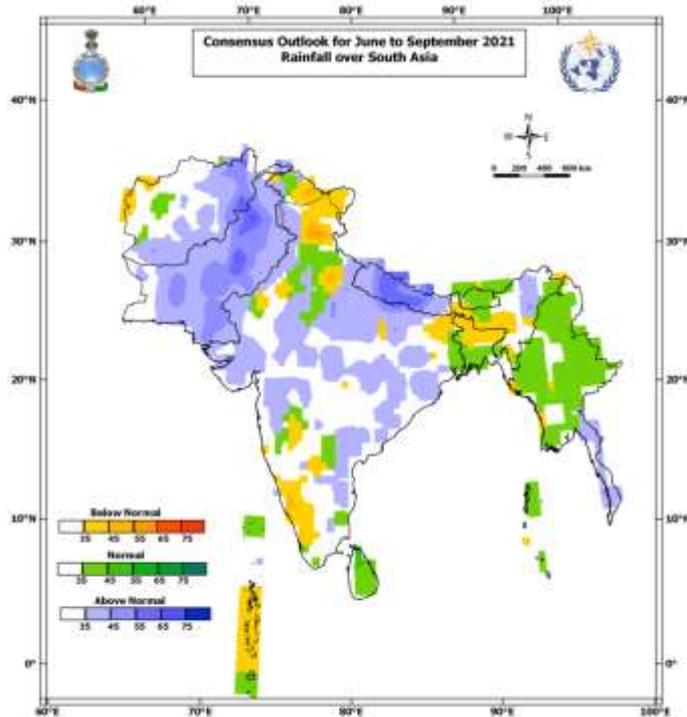


Fig.1a. Consensus outlook of probability of the most likely category for the 2021 southwest monsoon (June to September 2021) rainfall over South Asia.

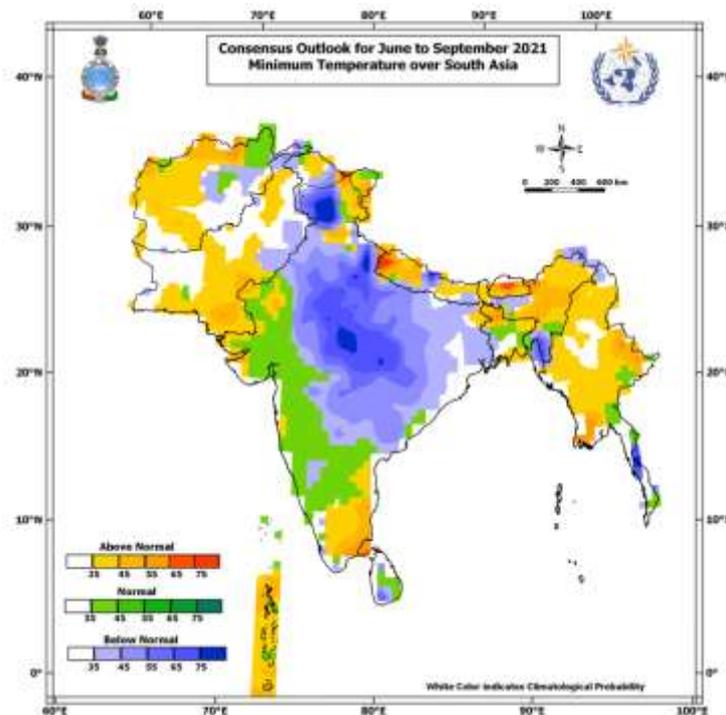


Fig.1b. Consensus outlook of probability of the most likely category for the 2021 southwest monsoon (June to September 2021) season Minimum Temperature over South Asia.

Tercile categories have equal climatological probabilities, of 33.33% each.

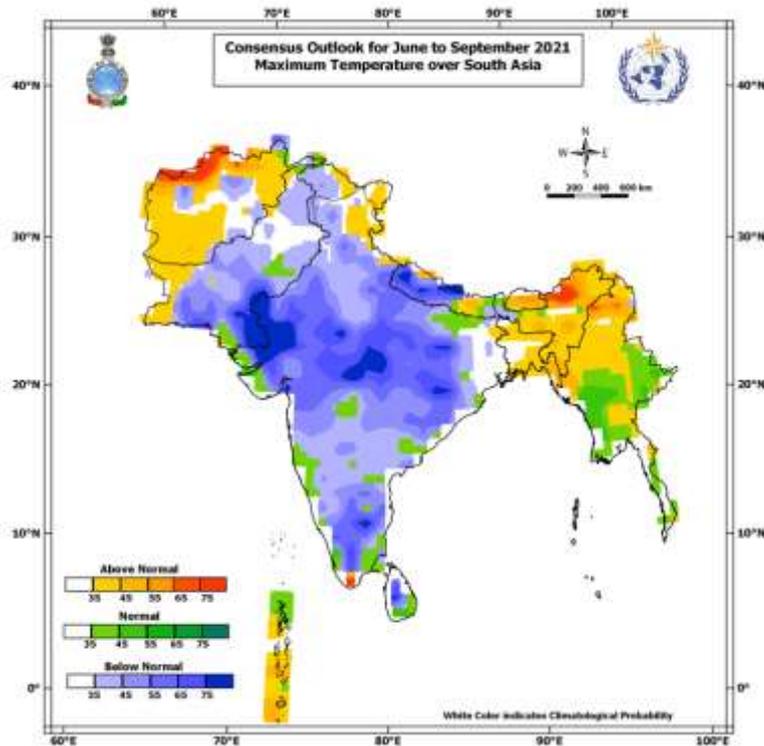


Fig.1c. Consensus outlook of probability of the most likely category for the 2021 southwest monsoon (June to September 2021) season Maximum Temperature over South Asia.

The outlook for the southwest monsoon rainfall and Temperature (Minimum & Maximum) for the season (June to September) as a whole over South Asia is shown in Fig. 1a-c. The Figure illustrates grid wise most likely tercile category¹ as well as its probability for each of the 1° latitude x 1° longitude spatial grid boxes over the region. The box-wise tercile probabilities were derived by a synthesis of the available information and expert assessment. It was derived from an initial set of gridded objective forecasts and was iterated through collaborative assessment to synthesize predictive signals coming from reliable multiple sources.

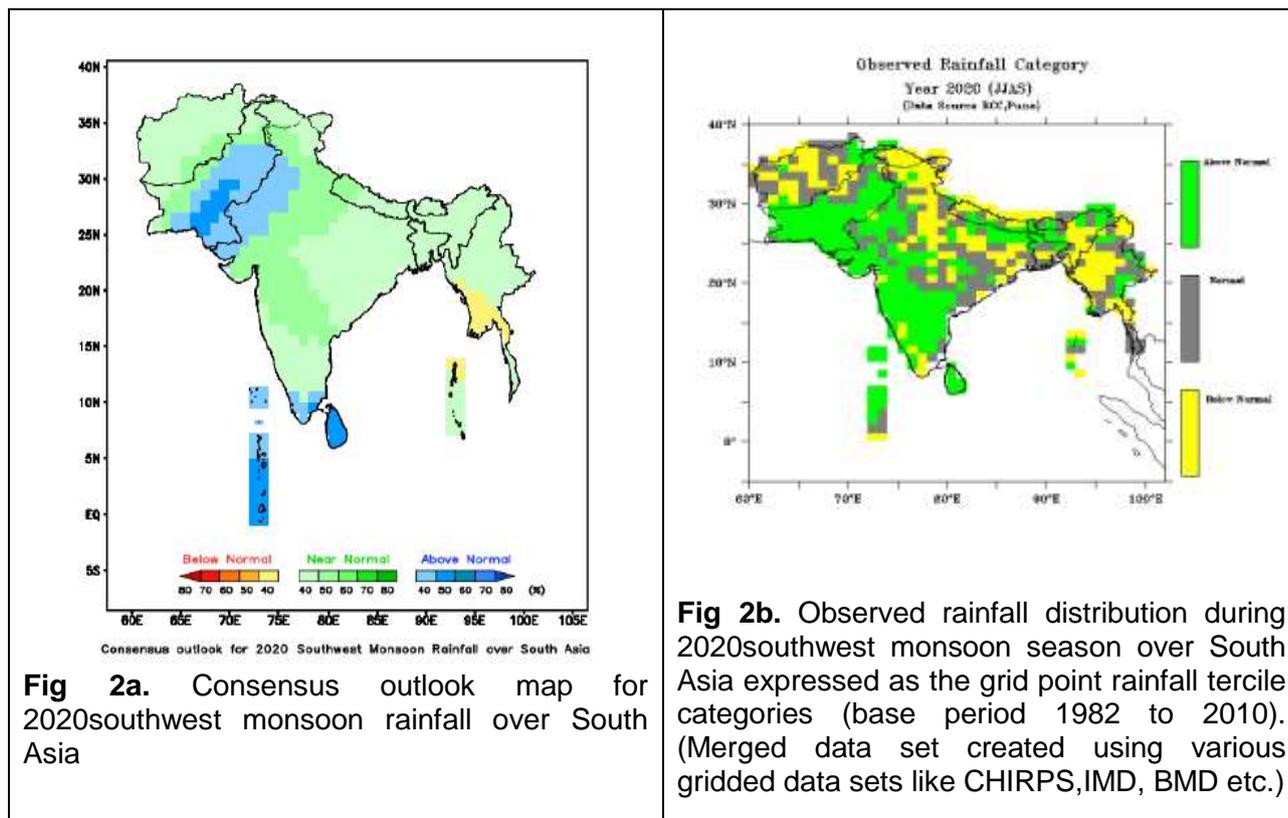
The outlook suggests that the rainfall for the season as a whole is most likely to be normal during the 2021 southwest monsoon season (June – September) over most parts of South Asia. Above-normal rainfall is most likely over northwest and some region along the foothills of Himalaya. However, the seasonal rainfall over land areas around the north Bay of Bengal, extreme northern part of the region and some south western areas of the peninsular India most likely to be below normal. The seasonal rainfall is most likely to be normal over the remaining areas.

Consensus outlook on minimum temperatures for June to September 2021 season suggests that above normal minimum temperature is likely over most parts of South Asia except central parts of the region where below normal minimum temperatures are likely. Normal minimum temperatures are likely over remaining parts of the region.

Consensus outlook on maximum temperatures for June to September 2021 season suggests that below normal maximum temperature is likely over most parts of South Asia except northwest and north-eastern part of the region. Normal maximum temperatures are likely over remaining parts of the region.

As the rainfall and Temperature during the southwest monsoon season depicts strong intra-seasonal variability, it is advised to watch the extended range forecasts along with updated seasonal forecasts for better decision making. The extended range forecasts for rainfall, temperature, cyclone genesis, MJO etc. over the region can be obtained from RCC, Pune website (<http://rcc.imdpune.gov.in/exrange.html>). These forecasts are updated every week.

Verification of rainfall outlook (updated) for JJAS2020 issued by SASCOF-16



The updated outlook for the 2020 southwest monsoon season (June to September) shown in Fig.2a suggested normal rainfall over most parts of South Asia. However, above normal rainfall was forecasted over the southern parts and some areas of north- western parts of South Asia. Below-normal rainfall was forecasted for over land areas around north-east Bay of Bengal and northern most parts of Andaman Islands. Normal rainfall was forecasted for the remaining areas of the region.

Fig.2b shows the observed rainfall distribution during the 2020 southwest monsoon season expressed in terms of tercile categories. It is seen that normal to above normal rainfall was experienced over most parts of the region. The above normal rainfall observed over the north-western parts of South Asia and some parts of southern region matched very well with the forecast. The below normal rainfall observed over some areas around north-east Bay of Bengal and northern most parts of Andaman Islands also matched with the forecast. However, there were differences between the observed and forecasted rainfall patterns over the areas along foothills of Himalayas, some parts of extreme north-west, central and north-east parts of the region where normal rainfall was forecasted.

Background of SASCOF

Climate predictions are of substantial benefit to many parts of the world in risk management and adaptation to the impacts of climate variability and change, and it is considered useful for countries having common climatological characteristics to come together and collaboratively assess the available prediction information to develop consensus outlooks. Recognizing this, regional climate outlook forums (RCOFs) were conceived with an overarching responsibility to produce and disseminate a joint assessment of the state of the regional climate for the upcoming season. Built into the RCOF process is a regional networking of the climate service providers and user sector representatives. In Asia, China has been coordinating the 'Forum on Regional Climate Monitoring, Assessment and Prediction for Regional Association II' (FOCRA II) since 2005, covering the entire Asian continent.

Asia is a large continent with large differences in the climatological settings on sub-regional scales. Therefore, WMO's Regional Association II (Asia) recommended sub-regional RCOFs devoted to specific needs of groups of countries having similar climatic characteristics. Implementation of the South Asian Climate Outlook Forum (SASCOF) in 2010 is a step in that direction with specific focus on the climate information needs of nations affected by the Asian southwest monsoon climate. The first three sessions of the SASCOF were held at Pune, India (during April) and its 4th session was held in April, 2013 at Kathmandu, Nepal. SASCOF-5 (April 2014) was again held in Pune, India.

SASCOF-6 (April 2015) was held in Dhaka, Bangladesh along with Climate Service User Forum (CSUF) for the water sector. SASCOF-7 (October 2015), which was the first forum that focused on the winter season, was held in Chennai, India in conjunction with the first CSUF-Agriculture. SASCOF-8 (April 2016) was held in Colombo, Sri Lanka along with CSUF Water and CSUF-Health in parallel sessions. SASCOF-8 was also preceded by a capacity building training workshop on seasonal prediction for the operational climate experts of the South Asian countries. SASCOF-9 (September 2016) was held in Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar in September 2016, in conjunction with the second CSUF-Agriculture. SASCOF-10 was held in Thimphu, Bhutan (April 2017) and SASCOF-11 was held in Male, Maldives (September 2017). The SASCOF-12 (April 2018) and associated training workshop on Climate Data Base Management and seasonal prediction were held in Pune, 2018. SASCOF-13 (September 2018) was held in Colombo, Sri Lanka. The SASCOF-14 and associated Pre-COF training workshop on seasonal prediction and CSUF was held in Kathmandu, Nepal and hosted by the Department of Hydrology and Meteorology (DHM). India Meteorological Department (IMD), World Meteorological Organization (WMO), Met Office, UK and Regional Integrated Multi-hazard Early-warning System (RIMES) co-sponsored the event held during 18-23 April, 2019. The SASCOF-15 and associated Pre-COF training workshop on seasonal prediction and CSUF was held in Thiruvananthapuram, India and hosted by India Meteorological Department (IMD). India Meteorological Department (IMD), World Meteorological Organization (WMO), Met Office, UK and Regional Integrated Multi-hazard Early-warning System (RIMES) co-sponsored the event held during 23-25 September 2019.

The sixteenth session of the SASCOF (SASCOF-16) & Climate Service User Forum (CSUF) was held during 20-22 April 2020 via video conferencing in the backdrop of the extraordinary circumstances of Covid-19 pandemic prevailing in the world. The session was jointly conducted by Bangladesh Meteorological Department (BMD), India

Meteorological Department (IMD), World Meteorological Organization (WMO), Met Office, UK and Regional Integrated Multi-hazard Early-warning System (RIMES). SASCOF-16 session was also held on 8th June to issue an update to the outlook issued in April.

The seventeenth session of the SASCOF (SASCOF-17) & Climate Service User Forum (CSUF) was held during 23-24 and 28th September 2020 being held online due to continuing COVID-19 pandemic. The session was jointly conducted by India Meteorological Department (IMD), World Meteorological Organization (WMO), Met Office, UK and Regional Integrated Multi-hazard Early-warning System (RIMES).

The eighteenth session of the SASCOF (SASCOF-18) was held during 28th November 2020 being held online due to the continuing COVID-19 pandemic. The session was jointly conducted by India Meteorological Department (IMD), World Meteorological Organization (WMO), Met Office, UK and Regional Integrated Multi-hazard Early-warning System (RIMES).

The nineteenth session of the SASCOF (SASCOF-19) and Climate Service User Forum (CSUF) is again being held online due to the continuing COVID-19 pandemic. The session was jointly conducted by the India Meteorological Department (IMD), World Meteorological Organization (WMO), Met Office, UK and Regional Integrated Multi-hazard Early-warning System (RIMES).

For preparing the consensus forecasts, the forecast products from various centres such as RCC Pune, JMA, CMA, WMO's Lead Centre for Long Range Forecasting –Multi-Model Ensemble (WMO LC-LRFMME), National Centre for Environmental Prediction (NCEP), USA, Météo France, Met Office UK, European Centre for Medium Weather Forecasting (ECMWF), Canadian Meteorological Centre (CMC), Bureau of Meteorology (BoM), Australia, International Research Institute for Climate and Society (IRI), USA, Japan Agency for Marine-Earth Science and Technology (JAMSTEC), APCC, and CPTEC, Brazil etc. were also considered.

The long-term historical patterns of the southwest monsoon rainfall over South Asia (Fig.3), characterized by remarkable spatial variability, provide the general reference points at the respective locations for the rainfall anomalies indicated in the outlook.

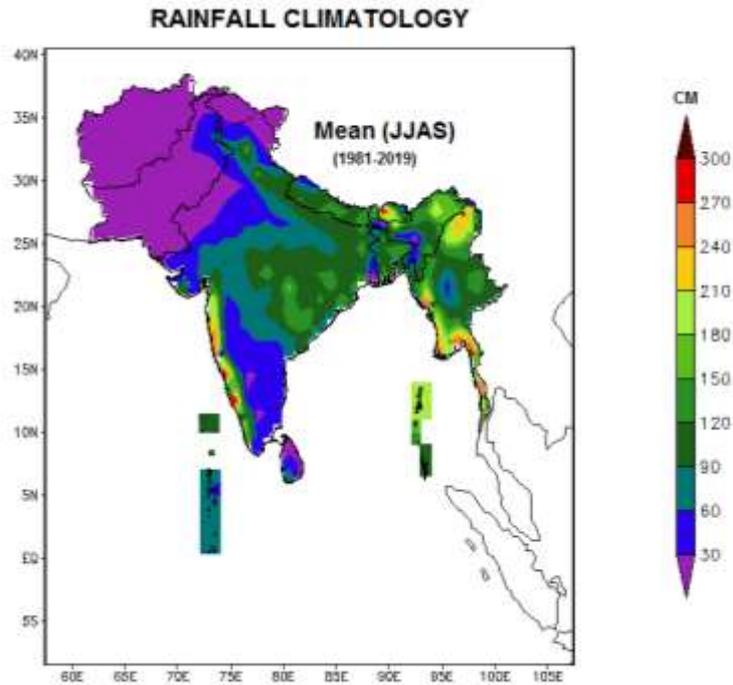


Fig.3 Rainfall climatology for the period 1981-2019 over South Asia.
Source: Merged rainfall data over south Asia of RCC, Pune)

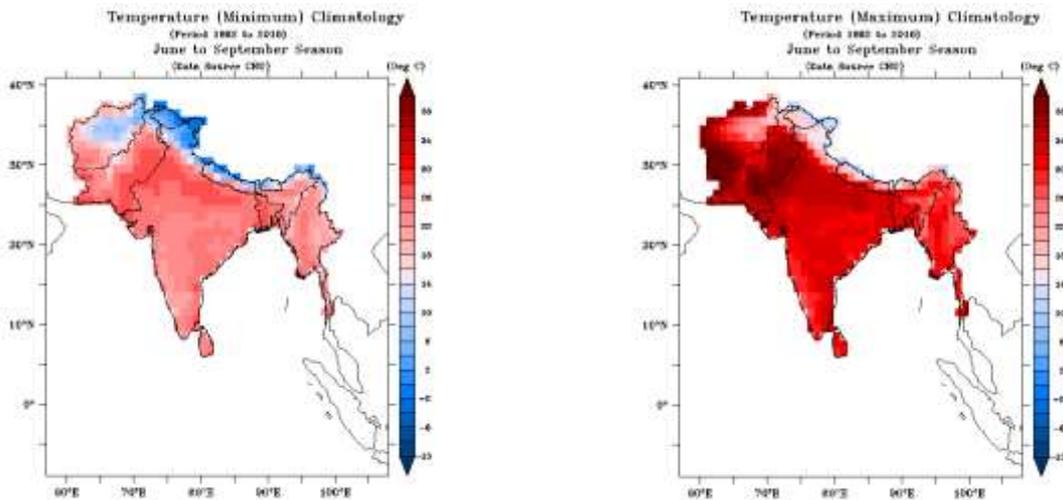


Fig.4 (a) Minimum Temperature climatology for the period 1982-2010 for June to September Season over South Asia

Fig.4 (b) Maximum Temperature climatology for the period 1982-2010 for June to September Season over South Asia

The long-term historical patterns of the Temperature (Minimum and Maximum) over South Asia during June to September (Fig.4 a & b), characterized by large spatial variability, provide the general reference points at the respective locations for the temperature anomalies indicated in the outlook.