

Climate Literacy in Sri Lanka?



Disaster Services



British High Commission Colombo



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What is in this fact sheet?

This factsheet accompanies the poster and brochure on the "Climate Calendar for Sri Lanka". As the climate is changing, and based on the lack of understanding, recognition and action to climate by the older generation, a sustained response relies on youth. We believe that youth literacy can improve through use of more precise language and understanding of key climate mechanisms. This fact-sheet that aims towards better literacy contains:

- A quiz for reader reflection and definitions of key terminology
- An introduction to the Atmosphere and to the Climate System
- Describes the primary driver of seasonality in the climate system

Seasonality is explored in the climate calendar, while the accompanying brochure details mechanisms further as well.

Fact, Fiction or In-between?

1. There is little difference between Weather and Climate.
 2. If we know about the monsoons, then we shall know about rainfall.
 3. Some areas in Sri Lanka get five times more rainfall than other areas of the country.
 4. Some regions in Sri Lanka get parched and heated due to high-winds and mountains
 5. Kites can fly higher in specific months of every year,
 6. Wintering birds fly in and out of Sri Lanka only in specific months.
- This factsheet, poster and brochure may help you to respond to the above questions in greater depth.

Has Confusion in Language of Climate set back youth understanding?

While traditional society in Sri Lanka have understand seasonality of climate historically through observation and experience, seasonality is not understood as well by youth. There is inadequate content in school curriculum and even then the school textbooks use language which differs from the usage by the government departments and the media. The terminology in use is not consistent with what is in common use nor with what is in use among the experts in related fields. There are often references to monsoon and inter-monsoons with no common notion of what these are. The word "monsoon" is misunderstood as a metaphor for rainfall. Some use the words "Yala" and "Maha" but these terms are not understood, consistently. Word such as Dry, Intermediate and Wet zone are use without reference to varied seasonality in these zones by modern Geographers. Traditional calendars and regions are at variance. Here, we circumvent these historical and linguistic pitfalls by providing information on what has been observed on average during each month.

Weather and Climate – Do we agree on the words?

Weather	The state of the atmosphere at a particular place and a time. The atmosphere is a thin gaseous layer with an approximate thickness of 20km which surrounds the Earth's surface.
Climate	The pattern of weather over a long period in a particular region usually to be 30 years.
Climate Variability	Variations in the mean state and other statistics of the climate beyond that of individual weather events
Climate Change	A significant change in the climate weather patterns lasting for an extended period.
Seasons	Period of the year that is distinguished by a specific climatic condition. In Sri Lanka the Yala (Apr-Sep) and Maha (October-March) are considered as two cultivating seasons. Modern folks use the terminology of Monsoons and Inter-monsoons.
Monsoon	A large scale seasonal wind circulation arising from different seasonal rates of heating of land and sea by the sun as the latitude of highest solar radiation varies
Climatology	Monthly or weekly average of the climate over multiple decades. An alternative usage is as the study of climate

