

To predict monsoon, UK varsity joins hands with Earth Sciences Ministry

£8-million project to study ocean processes in Bay of Bengal

OUR BUREAU

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Scientists from the UK's University of East Anglia (UEA) and India have launched a £8-million project to predict monsoon rainfall by studying ocean processes in the Bay of Bengal.

Under the project, scientists from UEA will release underwater robots in the Bay of Bengal to monitor how ocean conditions influence monsoon rainfall, the UEA's press office said in a statement.

The project is funded by the Natural Environment Research Council, the Newton Fund, India's Ministry of Earth Sciences and the UK's Met Office.

UK team arriving

The research team from the UK is slated to reach Chennai and is expected to sail on June 24 into the Bay of Bengal on the Indian re-



search ship, Sindhu Sadhana. They will release seven underwater gliders to measure ocean properties, such as temperature, salinity and current.

The team will spend a month at sea, with data from the 250-mile stretch of international water beamed back to the UK using mobile phone signals daily, read the statement.

Alongside, collaborators from a partner project led by the University of Reading with colleagues across the UK and India will use a state-of-the-art aircraft

to take atmospheric measurements.

Helping farmers

"It is hoped that the combined results of this large-scale scientific campaign will help forecast the arrival of the Indian monsoon more accurately than ever before," said the UEA statement, adding that the research could also revolutionise subsistence farming, improve the livelihoods of millions of people, and help mitigate the damage caused by summer monsoons that provide

80 per cent of annual rainfall in India. "The Indian monsoon is notoriously hard to predict. It is a very complicated weather system and the processes are not understood or recorded in science," said the lead researcher of the project, Adrian Matthews, from the UEA's School of Environmental Sciences.

He said researchers would be combining oceanic and atmospheric measurements to monitor weather systems as they are generated, claiming that "nobody has ever made observations on this scale during the monsoon season itself so this is a truly ground-breaking project."

The Bay of Bengal Boundary Layer Experiment (BoBBLE) is led by UEA scientists in collaboration with the University of Reading and the National Oceanography Centre in Southampton.

The partners in India include the Centre for Atmospheric and Oceanic Sciences, the Indian National Centre for Climate Information Services, the National Centre for Medium Range Weather Forecasting and the National Institute of Ocean Technology.