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Cherrapunji, India, Holds New Record for 48-Hour Rainfall

GENEVA, 4 April 2014 (WMO) - A World Meteorological Organization (WMO) panel has concluded that Cherrapunji in India now holds the world record for two-day (48-hour) rainfall, with 2 493 millimeters (98.15 inches) recorded on 15–16 June 1995.

This rainfall total exceeds the previous world 48-hour rainfall record of 2 467mm (97.1”) associated with the passage of a tropical cyclone over the Indian Ocean island of La Réunion (France) in April 1958. La Réunion, which is frequently hit by tropic cyclones and receives large amounts of rainfall over its mountains, continues to hold the record for the most rainfall over periods of 12-hours and 24-hours (in 1966), as well as 72-hours and 96-hours (in 2007).

The WMO Commission of Climatology international panel of experts reached its decision following an in-depth investigation of the Cherrapunji rainfall event for it to be included in the WMO World Archive of Weather and Climate Extremes (http://wmo.asu.edu/), the official international listing of weather and climate extremes.

The new 48-hour record is particularly noteworthy as it reaffirms Cherrapunji (also known as Sohra) as one of the wettest places on Earth. It complements Cherrapunji’s long-held record rainfall for a 12-month (one-year) period, with 26 470 mm (86 feet 10 inches) of rain from August 1860 to July 1861, It also supplants a two-day rainfall record associated with a tropical cyclone. In contrast to other short-term rainfall records, Cherrapunji’s extensive rains are the result of summer monsoon depressions interacting with its mountainous topography. Cherrapunji is situated on a plateau in the state of Meghalaya at an average elevation of 1 484 metres (4 869 ft), facing the plains of Bangladesh.

The investigation was conducted at the request, and with the support, of the India Meteorological Department, and was based on post-event data analysis. The investigating committee was composed of climate experts from Argentina, Columbia, France, Germany, India, Morocco, Spain and the United States of America.

Continued official categorization and evaluation of all weather and climate extremes is a major concern for WMO. Continued improvements in meteorology and climatology allow climate experts to reanalyze past weather records in much more detail than ever before. The end result is an even better set of climate data for analysis of important global and regional questions involving climate variability and change. Evaluation of weather and climate extremes is critical in (a) determining to what degree our world’s climate is changing, (b) for use in establishing engineering and policy standards, (c) in establishing weather links to medical concerns, (d) for aid in media reporting, (e) for general public interest and to aid in education, and (f) to permit commemoration and recognition of locales experiencing weather extremes.

Weather, Climate and Water

WMO website: www.wmo.int

A full list of weather and climate extremes is available at the WMO Archive of Weather and Climate Extremes (http://wmo.asu.edu/). This includes the world's highest and lowest temperatures, rainfall, heaviest hailstone, longest dry period, maximum gust of wind, as well as hemispheric weather and climate extremes.

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