Climate and Water related Risks in the Coming Months

Lareef Zubair,
Sri Lanka Meteorology, Oceanography and Hydrology Network and Geo/RecoverLanka
October 31, 2005

The rainfall in Sri Lanka from January to October is shown below.

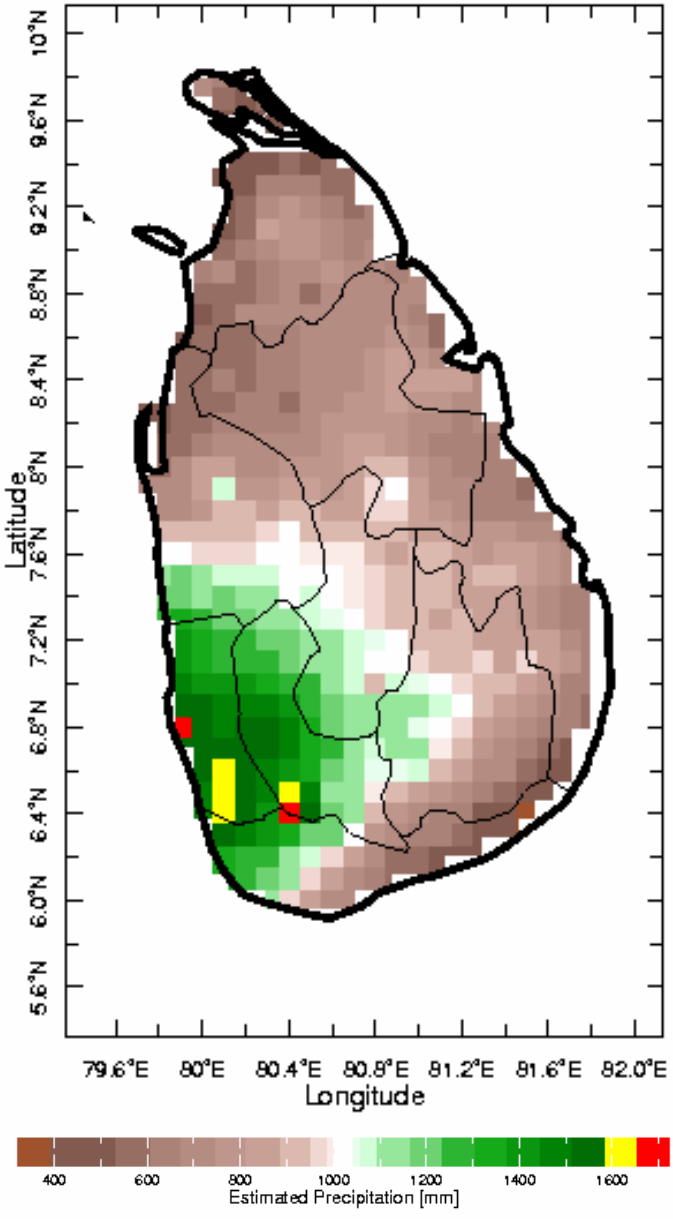

Figure Left: The cumulative monthly rainfall for January-October 2005 is provided. Heavy rainfall in the South-West quadrant is typical. Yet, there have been seasonal and regional differences - the heavy rainfall in the SW quadrant is more than usual and the rest of the island has got less than usual rainfall. However, the rest of the country tends to get its rainfall from October to December.

The regions affected by the Tsunami have only obtained less than 600 mm of rain so far and thus the rainfall in the rest of the *Maha* season shall be crucial. Typically this region gets about 70% of its rainfall in the *Maha* rains from October to December.

These rains are also pivotal for agriculture and to prevent a drought into next year. The details of the rainfall shall be important in preventing malaria epidemics. Uniform rainfall tends to avoid this – but flooding and intermittent rainfall exacerbates malaria.

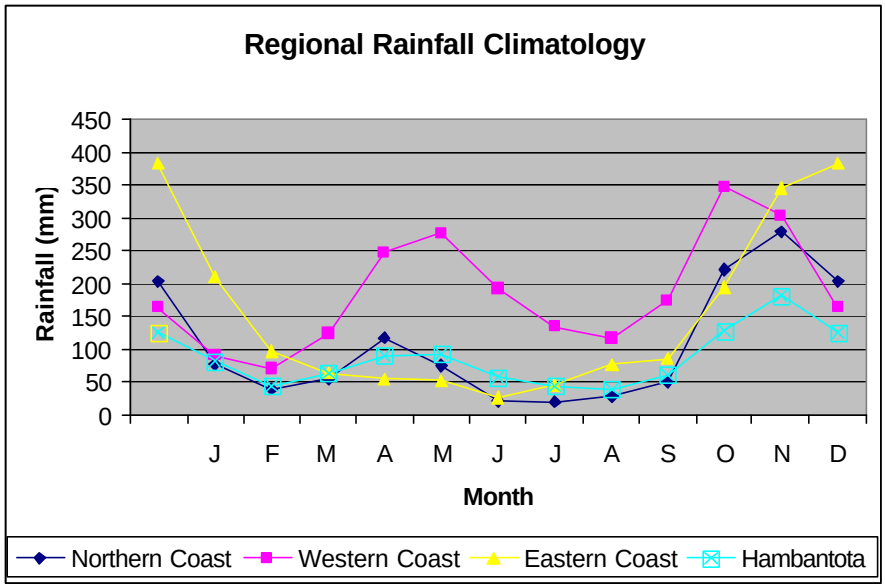

Figure Left: Figure above: The average monthly rainfall in the tsunami affected coastal regions of Sri Lanka.

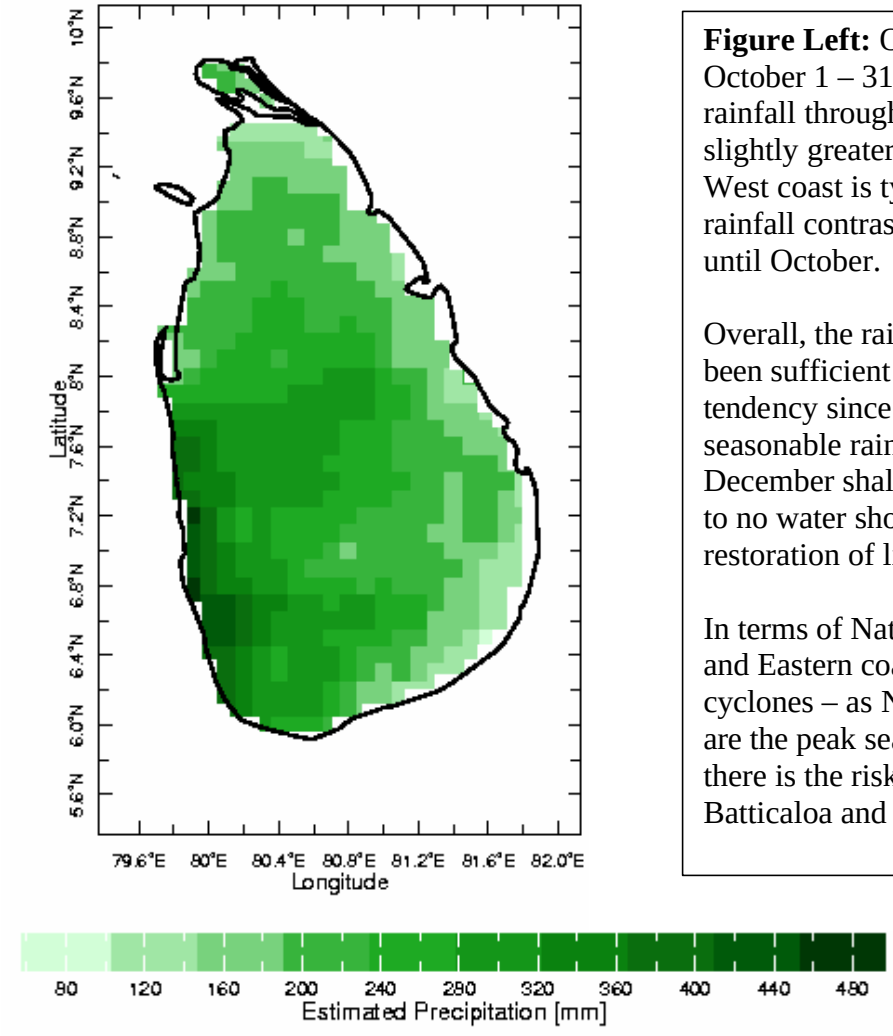

Figure Left: Observed Rainfall from October 1 – 31, 2005. The heavy rainfall throughout Sri Lanka with slightly greater rainfall on the South-West coast is typical. This heavy rainfall contrasts with the dry weather until October.

Overall, the rainfall in October has been sufficient to overcome the drought tendency since the Tsunami. Continued seasonable rainfall in November and December shall help agriculture, lead to no water shortages and the restoration of livelihoods.

In terms of Natural Hazards, the North and Eastern coasts can be exposed to cyclones – as November and December are the peak season for cyclones. Also, there is the risk of flooding in the Batticaloa and Ampara districts.