

General Knowledge Today



suraj_winner | rajawat.rs.surajsingh@gmail.com | www.gktoday.in/module/ias-general-studies

Prelims Geography-6: Atmosphere and Climatology

Target 2016: Integrated IAS General Studies

Last Updated: April 3, 2016

Published by: GKTODAY.IN

GKToday © 2016 | All Rights Reserved

GKToday has authorized the download by you of an unrestricted number of copies of this document in PDF format. GKToday grants you a nonexclusive, non-transferable license to use this document for your personal use only. The document is a property of GKToday and is protected by India and international copyright and other intellectual property laws. Unauthorized duplication, redistribution and resale of this document and content herein is not permitted.



Contents

Model Questions	3
Composition and Layers of Atmosphere	3
Troposphere	4
Thickness of Troposphere	4
Chemical Composition of Troposphere	5
Temperature of Troposphere	5
Tropopause	6
Stratosphere	6
Why there are no Vertical Winds in Stratosphere?	7
Water vapor Methane Interaction in Stratosphere	7
The temperature stratification in Stratosphere	8
Aviation & Jet Streams in Stratosphere	8
Ozone Layer in stratosphere	9
Mesosphere	9
Ionosphere	10
Temperature in Ionosphere	11
Various Layers in Ionosphere	11
Concept of Aurora	12
Exosphere	13
Insolation Energy Budget	13
Atmosphere and Insolation	13
Effects of the Atmosphere on Solar Radiation	13
Radiation as method of Heat Energy Transfer	14
Conduction as Method of Heat Transfer	14
Convection as Source of Heat Transfer	14
Advection as Source of Heat Transfer	14
Latent Heat of Condensation	15
Earth's Albedo	15
Earth's Energy Budget	15
Balance in Earth's Heat Budget	16
Atmospheric Temperature and Pressure	17
Distribution of Temperature	17
Three Broad Temperature Zones	17
Patterns of Global Isotherms	19
Vertical Distribution of Temperature	20
Inversion of the Temperature	20
Mean Thermal Equator	20
Daily variation of Temperature	21
Annual temperature range	21



Atmospheric Pressure and Pressure Belts	22
Pressure Belts of Earth	23
Creation of the Pressure Belts	23
Intertropical Convergence Zone / Doldrums	24
Subtropical High / Horse Latitudes	25
Other Belts	25
Winds	25
Global Winds	25
Trade winds	26
Westerlies	28
Polar Easterlies	30
Local Winds	30
Local winds near Mountains	30
Barrier Jet	30
List of major Local Winds	31
Climate Related Topics	32
Monsoon Mechanism	32
Mechanism of Monsoon: Traditional View	32
Mechanism of Monsoon: Modern View	32
Rainfall	34
Cooling	34
Convective Rainfall	35
Cyclonic / Frontal Rainfall	35
Orographic Rainfall	36
Distribution of Rainfall	36
Air Mass & Fronts	37
Frontogenesis and Frontolysis	37
Types of Fronts	38
Occluded front	39
Cyclones	39
Basic difference between Tropical Cyclone and Extra-tropical Cyclone	39
Tropical Cyclones	39
Requirements for formation	41
Movement	41
Impact on passing over land	42
Impact of passing over cold water	42
Project Stormfury	42
Naming of Cyclones	43
Types of the Tropical Cyclones	43
Anticyclones	43
Temperate Cyclones	43



Tornado	44
Prelims Model Questions	45

suraj_winner | rajawat.rs.surajsingh@gmail.com | www.gktoday.in/module/ias-general-studies



Model Questions

Please check Prelims Model Questions at the end of this module.

Composition and Layers of Atmosphere

Earth's atmosphere is mainly consisted of nitrogen, oxygen, and argon, which together constitute the major gases of the atmosphere. The remaining gases are often referred to as trace gases. The below table shows the composition of Dry atmosphere.

Composition of Earth's Atmosphere	
Gas	Volume
Nitrogen (N ₂)	78.08%
Oxygen (O ₂)	20.95%
Argon (Ar)	0.93%
Carbon dioxide (CO ₂)	0.04%
Neon (Ne)	0.00%
Helium (He)	0.00%
Methane (CH ₄)	0.00%
Krypton (Kr)	0.00%
Hydrogen (H ₂)	0.00%
Nitrous oxide (N ₂ O)	0.00%
Carbon monoxide (CO)	0.00%
Xenon (Xe)	0.00%
Ozone (O ₃)	0 to 7×10 ⁻⁶ %
Nitrogen dioxide (NO ₂)	0.00%
Iodine (I ₂)	0.00%
Ammonia (NH ₃)	trace



The upper boundary of the atmosphere is not clearly defined. For differentiation of aeronautics and astronautics, the Kármán line at 100 kilometers from sea level is used. Below around 100 kilometers or so, the atmosphere behaves like a fluid. The **outermost layer of Earth's atmosphere is mainly composed of hydrogen and helium**. The particles are so far apart that they can travel hundreds of kilometers without colliding with one another. Since the particles rarely collide, the atmosphere no longer behaves like a fluid. These free-moving particles follow ballistic trajectories and may migrate into and out of the magnetosphere of the Earth.

The atmosphere has been divided into several layers on the basis of change in height and some other factors such as change in climate etc. These include the Troposphere (the lowermost), Stratosphere (stratified), Mesosphere, Thermosphere, Exosphere (outer space). Between individual spheres there are usually distinguished transitory layers, called 'PAUSES' where temperature varies but little with height. The character and composition of the atmosphere changes as we go higher and higher. Thus, there are 4 important spheres, with 3 pauses as follows:

- Troposphere with tropopause
- Stratosphere with stratopause
- Mesosphere with mesopause, and prashant.singh@gmail.com | www.gktoday.in/module/ias-general-studies
- Ionosphere or thermosphere.

Troposphere

Troposphere is the lowest portion of Earth's atmosphere and contains approximately 80% of the atmosphere's mass and 99% of its water vapour and aerosols. The average depth of the troposphere is approximately 17 km in the middle latitudes. The characteristic features of the Troposphere are its great density. In addition to nitrogen and oxygen, carbon dioxide, and water vapour (nearly all of the water vapour contained in the atmosphere is concentrated in the troposphere) and of numerous particles of various origin.

Thickness of Troposphere

Its thickness of the Troposphere is maximum at equator, deeper in the tropics, up to 20 km, and shallower near the polar regions, at 7 km in summer, and indistinct in winter. In India, it is taken to be around 16 Kilometers. The thickness of the troposphere and consequently the atmosphere is maximum at the equator due to the reasons discussed below:

High insolation and strong convection currents occur over the Equator

One of the laws of Ideal gases called Charles' law says that in an ideal gas, **density decreases with increasing temperature**, when pressure is constant. The hot air rises and the Earth is not equally heated everywhere. The troposphere is thicker over the equator than the poles **because the equator is warmer**. Heat differential on the planet's surface causes convection currents to flow from the



equator to the poles. This implies that the warmer the weather, the thicker is the troposphere. Thus the simple reason is thermal expansion of the atmosphere at the equator and thermal contraction near the poles.

Air is less dense at Equator

Over equatorial regions, where the surface is being heated strongly throughout the year and air warmed by contact with it is expanding and rising, the air all the way up to the tropopause is less dense than air to the north and south. Thus, density of the air is maximum at the equator. But here, you must note that almost same amount of atmospheric **mass** exists at both equator and poles but only the density of the air is less at equator and greater at poles

Poles Exert more gravitational pull on atmospheric gases

Gravity increases from equator to poles as the earth is not a perfect sphere. That means the gravitational force is **more over poles**. Hence the atmosphere is pulled with more force near the poles and leads to contraction of the atmosphere.

The centrifugal force due to Earth's rotation is maximum at Equator

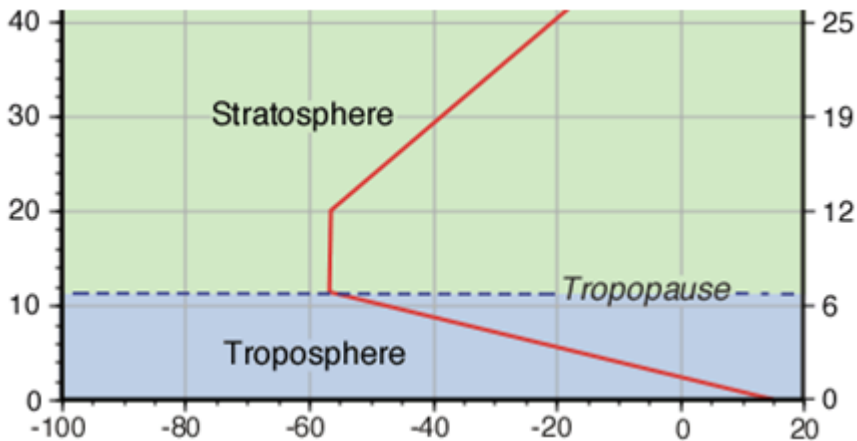
Because the speed of the rotating earth is greatest at the equator the atmosphere tends to bulge out due to friction and Coriolis force.

Chemical Composition of Troposphere

The chemical composition of the troposphere is essentially uniform, with the notable exception of water vapour. The amount of water vapour decreases strongly with altitude. Thus the proportion of water vapour is normally greatest near the surface and decreases with height.

Temperature of Troposphere

Temperature of the troposphere **decreases with height**. The rate at which the temperature decreases is called the **Environmental Lapse Rate (ELR)**. The environmental lapse-rate (ELR) is about 0.6°C per every 100 meters. Temperature decreases at a nearly uniform rate with increased altitude.



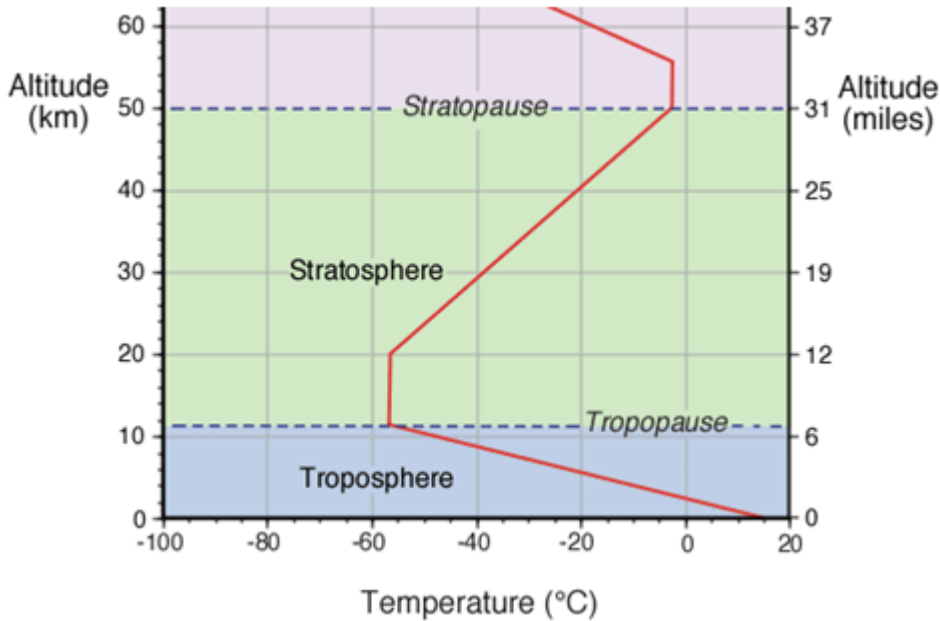
The reason for lapse is that maximum absorption of the sun's energy occurs at the ground which heats the lower levels of the atmosphere, and the radiation of heat occurs at the top of the atmosphere cooling the earth, this process maintaining the overall heat balance of the earth.

Tropopause

The boundary between troposphere and stratosphere, called the tropopause, is a temperature inversion. Tropopause refers to the altitude at which the fall in the temperature is stalled. This layer separates the troposphere from the stratosphere (the second layer of the atmosphere). This layer is usually quiet and no major movement of air takes place in it. Its height at Tropic of Cancer and Tropic of Capricorn is roughly 10 to 15 km, highest at the equator 18 km and at the poles it is about 8 km above the earth. In India, the tropopause is generally at a height of around 16 km. The altitude of the tropopause varies with the variations of sea — surface temperature, season, latitude, and weather systems, such as the passage of cyclones and anti-cyclones. So, Tropopause is not a hard lined boundary. The higher is the temperature of the lower layers, the higher is the height of this layer, the layer is lower where there is a cyclone below it. Also note that the tops of cumulus-nimbus clouds often float in this region.

Stratosphere

The stratosphere is the second major layer of Earth's atmosphere, just above the troposphere, and below the mesosphere. It is called stratosphere because **it is stratified in temperature**, with **warmer layers higher up and cooler layers farther down**. Top of the stratosphere has a temperature of about -3°C , just slightly below the freezing point of water. This is in contrast to the troposphere near the Earth's surface, which is cooler higher up and warmer farther down. This **inversion begins in tropopause.**



The stratosphere is situated between about 10 km and 50 km altitude above the surface at moderate latitudes, while at the poles it starts at about 8 km (5 mi) altitude. Thus, stratosphere is nearest to poles altitudinally.

Why there are no Vertical Winds in Stratosphere?

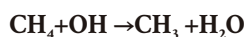
The increase in the temperature with height in the stratosphere makes this region very stable place where the air tends not to overturn vertically. Thus vertical winds are almost absent in Stratosphere. In contrast with the atmosphere, where the vertical wind speeds are often several meters per second, in the stratosphere, they are seldom more than a few centimetres per second. The result is that it takes air a very long time to be transferred from the bottom of the stratosphere, unless there is a thrust of gases such as that during the highly explosive volcanic eruptions. The inability of the air to mix in vertical direction is also the principal reason *why the Ozone depleting Chloro-Fluoro Carbons take so long to reach the altitudes where the Sun's energy is sufficient enough to break them apart*. This also implies that some of the ozone depleting substances will still be there a centuries later from now.

Water vapor Methane Interaction in Stratosphere

The source of methane in Earth's atmosphere can be traced to its release at the surface through a variety of sources such as wood combustion, coal mining, oil and gas drilling and refining, landfills, **wetland rice cultivation**, crop residue burning, industrial activities and the digestive action by grazing animals (such as cow flatulence) and to some extent human flatulence because *around half of us produce methane in farts!*



The tropopause is the very cold boundary between the troposphere and the stratosphere. Due to this, the water vapour is frozen out when moist air is lofted upward through the tropopause. *This means that the air that enters stratosphere is almost dry.* On the other hand, methane remains unaffected by the cold temperatures as it passes through this boundary. Only when methane reaches the upper stratosphere, it is depleted via oxidation reactions with OH. These reactions lead to the production of water vapour molecules. Indeed, each methane molecule eventually is converted in to two molecules of water vapour in the middle to upper stratosphere via the following reaction in which methane is converted into water vapour by a reaction with the hydroxyl radical OH.



The second reaction involves a series of steps that begins with the methane reacting with the free oxygen form a hydroxyl radical (OH). This hydroxyl radical is then able to interact with non-soluble compounds like chlorofluorocarbons, and UV light breaks off chlorine radicals (Cl). These chlorine radicals break off an oxygen atom from the ozone molecule, creating an oxygen molecule (O₂) and a hypochlorite radical (ClO). The hypochlorite radical then reacts with atomic oxygen creating another oxygen molecule and another chlorine radical, thereby preventing the reaction of monatomic oxygen with O₂ to create natural ozone. This way, methane plays a role in hindering the formation of the Ozone layer. Above about 65 km, photodissociation of methane becomes an important mechanism for **Ozone loss**.

The temperature stratification in Stratosphere

In the stratosphere, temperature has a tendency to rise. This is due to the presence of Ozone. The first thing we have to note is that the air is highly rarefied and there are only eight ozone molecules to a million. The ozone (O₃) here absorbs high energy Ultraviolet energy waves from the Sun and is broken down into atomic oxygen (O) and diatomic oxygen (O₂). Atomic oxygen is found prevalent in the upper stratosphere due to the bombardment of UV light and the destruction of both ozone and diatomic oxygen. The mid stratosphere has less UV light passing through it, O and O₂ are able to combine, and is where the majority of natural ozone is produced. It is when these two forms of oxygen recombine to form ozone that they release the heat found in the stratosphere. The lower stratosphere receives very low amounts of UV, thus atomic oxygen is not found here and ozone is not formed (with heat as the byproduct). This vertical stratification, with warmer layers above and cooler layers below, makes the stratosphere dynamically stable: there is **no regular convection and associated turbulence in this part of the atmosphere**. The top of the stratosphere is called the stratopause, above which the temperature decreases with height.

Aviation & Jet Streams in Stratosphere

Stratosphere is free from the violent weather changes which occur below in the Troposphere. So, it



is preferred by commercial airliners. The commercial airliners typically cruise at altitudes of 9–12 km in the lower reaches of the stratosphere. They do this to **optimize fuel burn**. Jet liners, however, face another menace in stratosphere, namely jet streams. Jet streams are high velocity **horizontal** air currents. The main jet streams are located near the tropopause, the transition between the troposphere (where temperature decreases with altitude) and the stratosphere (where temperature increases with altitude). The location of the jet stream is extremely important for aviation. Jet streams are NOT always harmful for aviation. They are beneficial and used commercially as it reduced the trip time and fuel consumption. Commercial use of the jet stream began in 1950s when an aeroplane flew from Tokyo to Honolulu at an altitude of 7,600 meters cutting the trip time by over one-third. It also nets fuel savings for the airline industry.

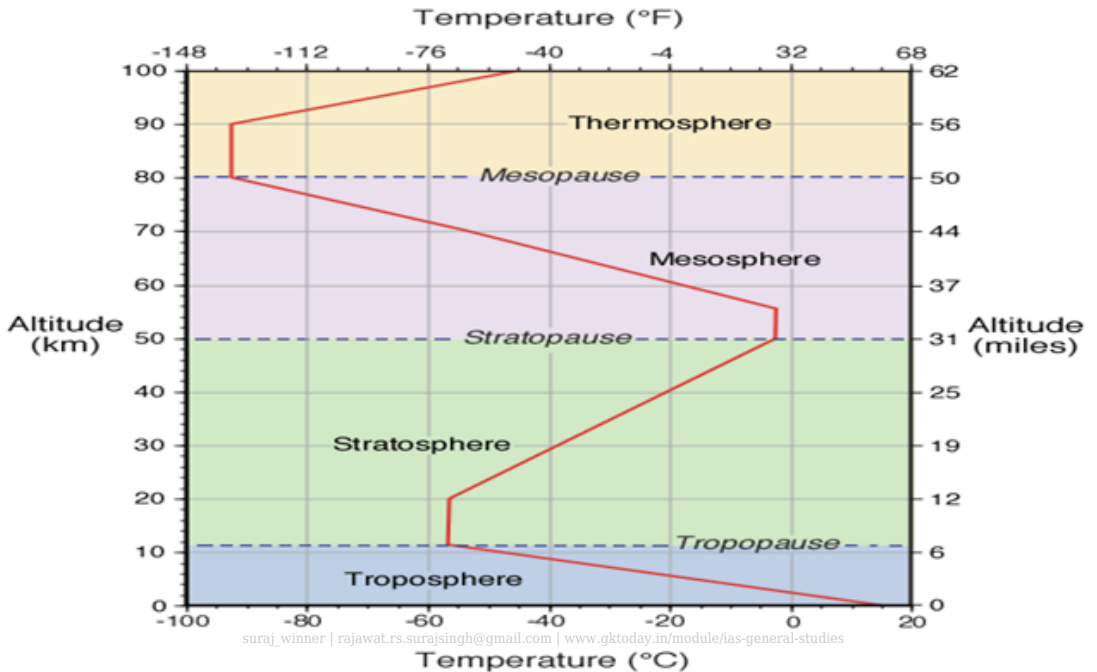
Ozone Layer in stratosphere

As discussed above, the **Ozone layer is contained within the stratosphere**. In this layer ozone concentrations are about 2 to 8 parts per million, which is much higher than in the lower atmosphere but still very small compared to the main components of the atmosphere. It is mainly located in the lower portion of the stratosphere from about 15–35 km, though the thickness varies seasonally and geographically. About 90% of the ozone in our atmosphere is contained in the stratosphere.

The Ozone layer absorbs ultraviolet radiation from the sun and converts it into heat and chemical energy. It is this activity that is responsible for the rise in temperature. The layer is NOT of uniform thickness. ***Height at the equator is maximum and lowest at the poles.***

Mesosphere

The mesosphere extends from the stratopause to 80–85 km. Most meteoroids get burnt in this layer.



Temperature **decreases with height in the mesosphere**. The **mesopause**, the temperature minimum that marks the top of the mesosphere, is the coldest place around Earth and has an average temperature around -85°C . At the mesopause, temperatures may drop to -100°C . Due to the cold temperature of the mesosphere, water vapour is frozen, forming ice clouds. These clouds are called **noctilucent clouds**. This implies that the **noctilucent clouds are the highest clouds in the Earth's atmosphere, located in the mesosphere at altitudes of around 76 to 85 kilometers (47 to 53 mi)**. They are normally too faint to be seen, and are visible only when illuminated by sunlight from below the horizon while the lower layers of the atmosphere are in the Earth's shadow. Noctilucent clouds are not fully understood and are a recently discovered meteorological phenomenon.

Mesopause, a thin layer of extremely cold atmosphere, separates the mesosphere from the Ionosphere above.

Ionosphere

Ionosphere is called so because it is ionized by solar radiation. It plays an important part in **atmospheric electricity** and forms the inner edge of the magnetosphere. Ionosphere stretches from 50 to 1,000 km and typically overlaps both the exosphere and the thermosphere. It has practical importance because it influences, for example, radio propagation on the Earth. It is also responsible for auroras.



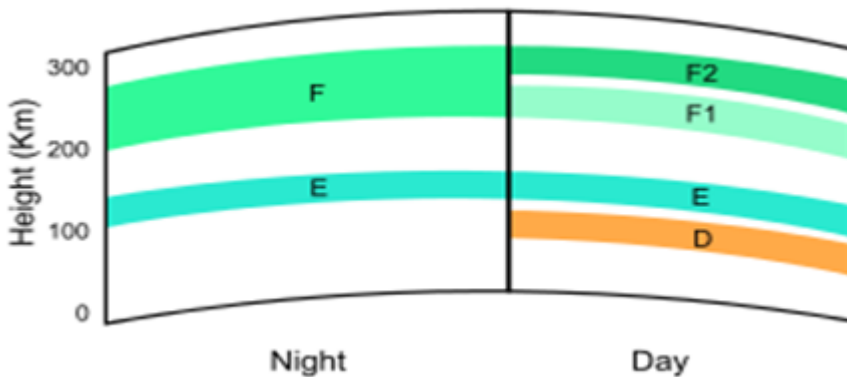
Temperature in Ionosphere

Ionosphere is also known as THERMOSPHERE because of the high temperatures because of the high temperatures prevailing there as much as 870°C over the equator and 1427°C over the north pole, the temperature near the upper boundary of the thermosphere may become higher than 1000-1500°C. Along with temperature rise sharp changes caused by the corpuscular and ultraviolet solar radiation are observed in it.

Various Layers in Ionosphere

We note that the ionization depends primarily on the Sun and its activity. This means that the amount of ionization in the ionosphere varies greatly with the amount of radiation received from the Sun. This is the reason that there are changes in the Ionosphere and there are diurnal effect and seasonal effects. The activity of the Sun is associated with the position of earth in the revolutionary orbit, sunspot cycle, with more radiation occurring with more sunspots. Radiation received also varies with geographical location (polar, auroral zones, mid-latitudes, and equatorial regions). There are also mechanisms that disturb the ionosphere and decrease the ionization. There are disturbances such as solar flares and the associated release of charged particles into the solar wind which reaches the Earth and interacts with its geomagnetic field.

Accordingly, Ionosphere has been divided into different sets of layers during day and night which are shown in this graphic:



D Layer

The D layer explains **why the AM Radio gets disturbed during day time**, but quite smooth in night time. We see in the above graphics that the D layer is the innermost layer, 60 km to 90 km above the surface of the Earth. At this layer, the net ionization effect is low, but loss of wave energy is great due to frequent collisions of the electrons. This is the reason that the high-frequency (HF) radio waves are not reflected by the D layer but suffer loss of energy therein. The absorption is small at night and greatest about midday. This causes the disappearance of distant AM broadcast band



stations in the daytime.

E-Layer

The E layer is the middle layer, 90 km to 120 km above the surface of the Earth, with primary source of ionization being soft X-ray (1-10 nm) and far ultraviolet (UV) solar radiation ionization of molecular oxygen (O₂). This layer disappears in the night because primary source of ionization is no longer present. The practical value of this layer is that it reflects long radio-waves back to earth, which enables them to be received at a distance, rather than disappear into space. It is also known as HEAVYSIDE-KENNELY LAYER.

Importance of E-Layer

The E layer is a region of the ionosphere which influences long-distance communications by strongly reflecting radio waves in the 1-3 megahertz. It is also called E region, Heaviside layer, or Kennelly-Heaviside layer. This region reflects radio waves of medium wavelength and allows their reception around the surface of the Earth. The layer approaches the Earth by day and recedes from it at night. In technical terms, it is a cylinder of relativistic electrons gyrating in the magnetic field, which produces a self field strong enough to dominate the externally applied field and produces half reversal in the system. Since the mid '20s, another connection regarding the ionosphere has been hypothesized that lightning can interact with the lower ionosphere. According to this theory, thunderstorms could modulate the transient, localized patches of relatively high-electron density in the mid-ionosphere E layer, which significantly affects radio wave propagation.

F-Layer

The **F LAYER** extends from about 200 km to more than 500 km above the surface of Earth. The E-layer allows the penetration of short-radio waves, which continue until they reach the APPLETON LAYER. . Appleton layer reflects short-radio waves (which have penetrated the HEAVYSIDE-KENNELY LAYER) back to earth. This is also supposed to be the region where polar AURORAS occur and where most of the meteors burn themselves out.

Concept of Aurora

The luminous effect of electro-magnetic phenomena in the ionosphere is known as **Aurora**, visible in high latitudes as red, green and white arcs, draperies, streamers, rays and sheets in the night sky, best developed at a height of about 90 km. Probably, aurora is the result of magnetic storms and of electrical discharges from the sun during periods of sun-spot activity, causing ionization of gases, though this is still a matter of research. It is called the **Aurora Borealis** (or northern lights) in the northern hemisphere and the **Aurora Australis** in the southern hemisphere. Occasionally the Aurora borealis is seen in England, but it is more common in northern Scotland, presents a magnificent spectacle in northern Scandinavia and northern Canada.



Exosphere

The exosphere lies above the altitude of 800 kilometer and it needs further studies. Characteristic of exosphere is an extreme rarefaction of the air; gas particles, moving with tremendous velocities, nearly fail to meet one another and there takes place an outflow of gas particles into the interplanetary space.

Insolation Energy Budget

Atmosphere and Insolation

Sun is the major source of energy for the entire earth system. The earth does receive very small proportions of energy from other stars and from the interior of the earth itself (volcanoes and geysers provide certain amount of heat energy). However, when compared with the amount received from the sun, these other sources seem insignificant.

The energy emitted by the sun which reaches the surface of the earth is called **Insolation**. The sun, a mass of intensely hot gases, with a temperature at the surface be 6000°C emits radiant energy in the form of waves, which consists of very short wave-length x-rays, gamma rays, and ultraviolet rays; the visible light rays and the longer infrared rays. The earth receives only about one **two-thousand-millionth** of the total insolation poured out by the sun, but this is vital to it; the amount received at the outer limit of the atmosphere is called **Solar Constant**. Thus **Solar Constant** is the rate per unit area at which solar radiation is received at the outer limit of the atmosphere.

Effects of the Atmosphere on Solar Radiation

When the sun's energy passes through the atmosphere several things happen to it. Around one fourth of this energy is directly reflected back to clouds and the ground. Around 8 percent is scattered by minute atmospheric particles and returned to space as diffuse radiation. Some 20 percent reaches the earth's surface as diffuse radiation after being scattered. Approximately 27 percent reaches the earth's surface as direct radiation and 19 percent is absorbed by the ozone layer and by water vapour in the clouds of the atmosphere.

On an average, 47 percent of the solar energy arriving at the outer limits of the atmosphere eventually reaches the surface, and 19 percent is retained in the atmosphere. This 19 percent of direct solar radiation that is retained by the atmosphere is locked up in the clouds and the ozone layer and is thus not available to heat the troposphere. The warmth of the atmosphere is due to the 47 percent of incoming solar energy reaching the earth's surface (that is, both land and bodies of water) and in the transfer of heat energy from the earth back to the atmosphere through such physical processes such as **Long-Wave Radiation, Conduction and Convection**. Some related phenomena such as **advection** and **Latent Heat of Condensation** also contribute to the warmth of the atmosphere.



Radiation as method of Heat Energy Transfer

Radiation is the process by which most energy is transferred through space from the sun to the earth. Radiation is given off by all bodies including earth and human being. The **hotter is the body, shorter are the waves.**

We can simply say that the radiation from Sun comes to earth in the form of smaller waves and earth being cooler body, gives off energy in the form of long-wave. These are then radiated back to the atmosphere. This Long-Wave Radiation from the earth's surfaces heats the lower layers of the atmosphere. It is evident that the atmosphere is primarily heated from below by radiation from the heated Earth surface.

As we discussed above, the most important cause of atmospheric temperature is the energy received from the sun. The ***atmosphere of the earth does not heat up directly as solar radiation is in the form of short waves and air cannot absorb the short waves.*** The earth absorbs the short wave energy and then radiates in the form of long wave terrestrial radiation that can be absorbed by the air. So, air heats up when comes in contact with the surface of the earth.

Conduction as Method of Heat Transfer

Conduction is the means by which heat is transferred from one part of a body to another or between two touching objects. Heat flows from the warmer to the cooler (part of a) body in order to equalize temperature. Conduction actually occurs through molecular movement, with one molecule bumping into another. The Atmospheric conduction occurs at the interface of (zone of contact between) the atmosphere and the earth's surface. However, it is actually a insignificant method of heat transfer in terms of warming the atmosphere since it affects only the layers of air closest to the earth's surface. This is because air is a very poor conductor of heat.

Convection as Source of Heat Transfer

When the pockets of air near the surface are heated, they expand in volume, become less dense than the surrounding air, and therefore rise. This vertical transfer of heat through the atmosphere is called convection, and is the same type of process by which heated water circulates in a pan while heating. The currents set into motion by the heating of a fluid (liquid or gas) make up a convectonal system. Most vertical transfer of heat within the atmosphere & Oceans occurs via Convection and is a major cause of clouds and precipitation.

Advection as Source of Heat Transfer

Advection is the horizontal heat transfer within the atmosphere. Obviously the wind is the transfer agent of advection. Wind brings about the horizontal movement of large portions of lower atmosphere. This advection transports warmer or accounts for a major proportion of the lateral heat transfer that takes place within the atmospheric system.



Latent Heat of Condensation

A proportion of the solar energy is used to change liquid water from rivers, lakes, and oceans to water-vapour. The solar energy used to do this is then stored in the water-vapour as latent or potential energy. Later the water-vapour in the atmosphere may change to form liquid water again through a process called CONDENSATION. The energy released through this process is known as the **Latent Heat of Condensation**. Like other means of heat transfer in the earth system, latent heat of condensation plays a major role in warming of the atmosphere and in addition, is a **source of energy for STORMS**.

Earth's Albedo

The ratio between the total solar radiation falling (incident) upon a surface and the amount reflected without heating the earth, is called ALBEDO (expressed as a decimal or as a percentage). The earth's average albedo is about 0.4 (40 percent) ; that is, 4/10 of the solar radiation is reflected back into space. It varies from 0.03 for dark soil to 0.85 for a snow-covered. Water has a low albedo (0.02) with near-vertical rays, but a high albedo for low-angle slanting rays. The figure for grass is about 0.25. Over-pastured land and bare soil are more reflective of solar radiation than are crops and vegetation. A desert is much more reflective than a savanna or forest. If economic pressure on soil and vegetation increases, and drought then occurs, the effect overall is to increase the albedo of the surface.

Earth's Energy Budget

Earth's Energy Budget can be discussed in terms of incoming heat energy and outgoing heat energy. These are as follows:

Incoming Heat Energy

This is made of :

- Solar radiation (99.97%)
- Geothermal energy (0.025%)
- Tidal energy (0.002%)
- Fossil fuel consumption (about 0.007%)
- Minor Sources: remains part

Outgoing Heat Energy

- The average albedo (reflectivity) of the Earth is about 0.3, which means that 30% of the incident solar energy is reflected into space, while 70% is absorbed by the Earth and reradiated as infrared. This 30% of the incident energy is reflected, consisting of 6% reflected from the atmosphere, 20% reflected from clouds and 4% reflected from the ground (including land, water and ice). The remaining 70% of the incident energy is absorbed, out of 51% is absorbed by land and water, and then emerges in the following ways:

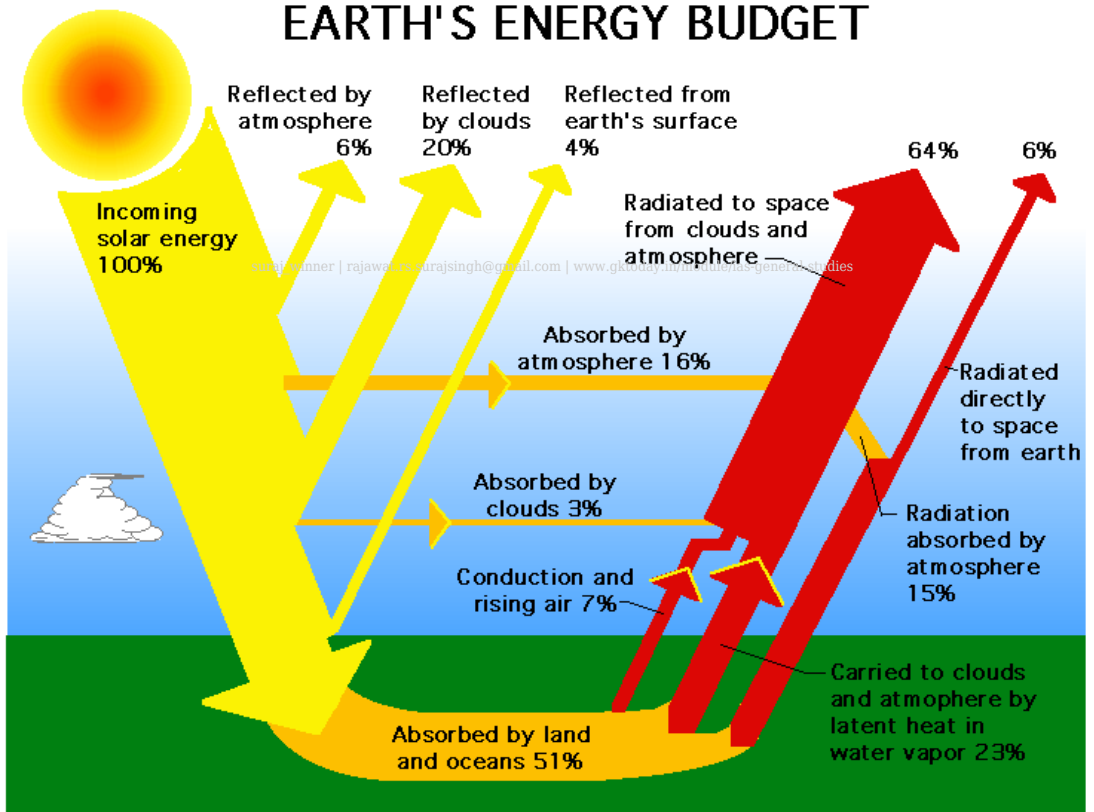
© 2016 GKT Today | All Rights Reserved | www.gktoday.in



- 23% is transferred back into the atmosphere as latent heat by the evaporation of water, called latent heat flux
- 7% is transferred back into the atmosphere by heated rising air, called Sensible heat flux
- 6% is radiated directly into space
- 15% is transferred into the atmosphere by radiation, then reradiated into space
- 19% is absorbed by the atmosphere and clouds, including:
 - 16% reradiated into space
 - 3% transferred to clouds, from where it is radiated back into space.

The above figures are the averages for the whole earth over a year's time.

EARTH'S ENERGY BUDGET



Balance in Earth's Heat Budget

For any particular location, the factors discussed may not be balanced, and adjustments must be made within the entire earth system. Some places have a surplus of incoming solar energy over outgoing energy loss in their budget, while others have a deficit. The main cause of these variations is the differences in latitude, and the seasonal fluctuations.



We know that the amount of insolation received is directly related to the latitude. The tropical zone where insolation is high throughout the year; more solar energy is received at the earth's surface and in the atmosphere than can be emitted back into space. In the arctic and Antarctic zones there is so little insolation during the winter, when the earth is still emitting long-wave radiation, that there is a large deficit for the year. Places in the midlatitude zone have lower deficits or surpluses, but only at about **latitude 38° is the budget balanced**. It is the *heat energy transfer within the atmosphere that prevents a situation whereby the tropical zones get hotter and hotter and the arctic and Antarctic zone get colder and colder*.

Atmospheric Temperature and Pressure

Distribution of Temperature

Temperature differs from one part of the world to the other. Since Insolation is the basic source of energy for the atmosphere, the distribution of insolation would determine the temperature of the earth. Thus **latitude, altitude, distance from sea, features of the surface, nature of the landscape** are some important factors that affect the distribution of temperature.

Since, the insolation is highest at equator; temperature should be highest at the equator and lowest near the poles, however actually it is not. suraj winner | rajawat.rs.surajsingh@gmail.com | www.gktoday.in/module/ias-general-studies Highest temperature on earth is recorded at a few degrees north of equator. Altitude is the second major control of temperature of a place. The temperature depends upon albedo of the surface also.

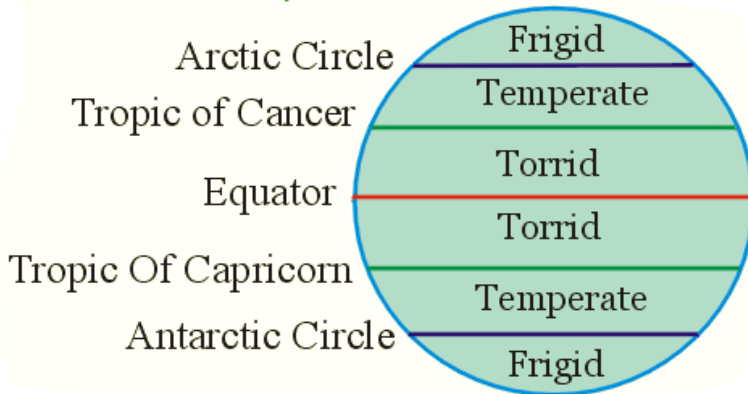
One major factor affecting the distribution of the temperature of Earth is distribution of Land and Oceans. Since there is more land in Northern Hemisphere and more waters in Southern hemisphere and *there is a big difference between the specific heat of land and water*; the **loss of heat from the continents is bigger than the oceans**. The continents get heated faster and get cooled faster in comparison to the Oceans. This is the reason that the *temperatures of the Oceans are moderate while that of continents is extreme*. The moderating effect on temperature of the land due to proximity of the seas is called **Maritime influence**. The increasing effect on temperature of the land at interior of the continents is called **Continental Influence**.

Three Broad Temperature Zones

The earth can be generally divided into three broad temperature zones viz. Torrid Zone, Temperate Zone and Frigid zone.



Temperature Zones



Torrid Zone

Torrid Zone is the tropical region. The temperature remains high. Sun is directly overhead at least once during the year. In the Northern Hemisphere, the overhead Sun moves north from the equator until it reaches 23.5° North (Tropic of Cancer) for the June solstice after which it moves back south to the equator. The year is consequently divided nearly into four equal parts by the two times at which the sun crosses the equator (Equinoxes) and those two at which it attains greatest declinations (Solstices). The Torrid Zone forms the hottest region of the world with **two annual seasons namely a dry and a wet season**. This zone includes most of Africa, southern Asia, Indonesia, New Guinea, northern Australia, southern Mexico, Central America and northern South America.

Temperate Zones

Temperate zones are the mid latitudinal areas, where the temperature is moderate. There are two temperate areas viz. North and South. In the two Temperate Zones, consisting of the tepid latitudes, the **Sun is never directly overhead**, and the climate is mild, generally ranging from warm to cool. The **four annual seasons, Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter occur in these areas**. The North Temperate Zone includes Great Britain, Europe, northern Asia, North America and northern Mexico. The South Temperate Zone includes southern Australia, New Zealand, southern South America and South Africa.

Frigid Zones

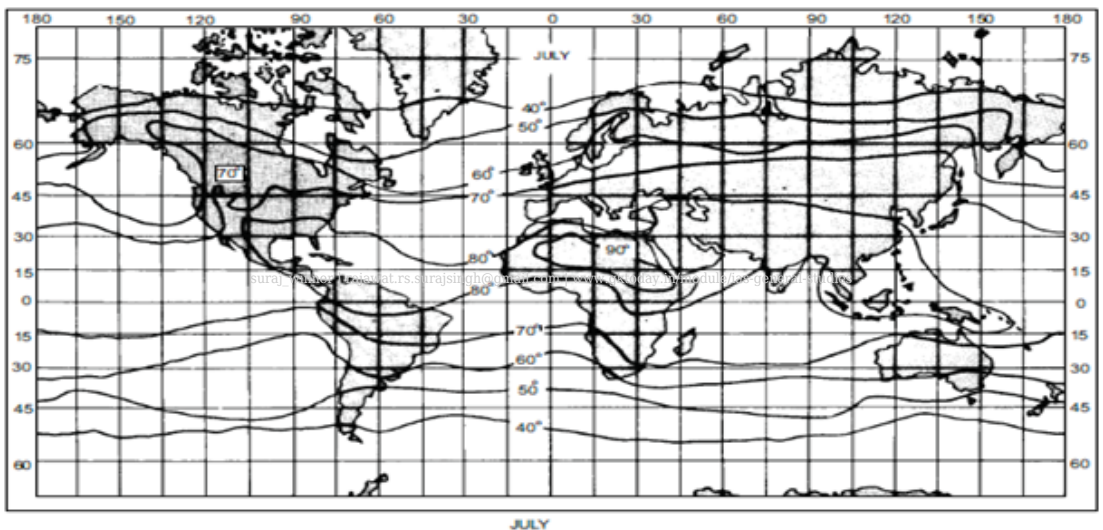
The two Frigid Zones, or polar regions, experience the midnight sun and the polar night for part of the year – the cliff of the zone experiences one day at the solstice when the Sun doesn't rise or set for 24 hours, while in the centre of the zone (the pole), the day is literally one year long, with six months of daylight and six months of night. Please note that the Frigid Zones are not the coldest parts of the earth, and are covered with ice and snow. The coldest temperature on earth has been recorded a few degrees below the 90°N.



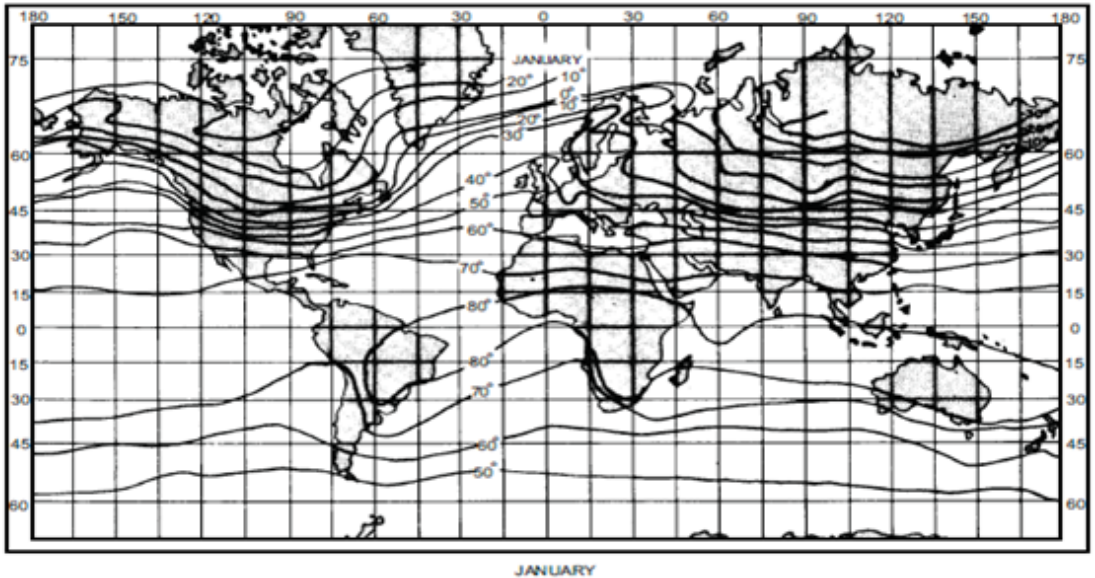
Patterns of Global Isotherms

The global distribution of temperature can be represented with the help of isotherms. Isotherms are the lines that join the places with the identical temperatures. Please note that isotherms are drawn after correcting the temperature of a place to the sea level so that the differences due to altitude can be minimized. The Isotherms on the earth run parallel to the latitudes.

Due to the difference between the specific heat between water and land, at any latitude, the temperature over the landmass is higher in summer and lower in winter in comparison to the seas. Here we discuss about the global isotherms drawn in the month of January and July. As shown in the picture, Isotherms for the month of July bend towards Northward while moving from Sea to Land.



For the Month of January, the isotherms bend towards south while moving from sea to land. The only thing you have to note about Isotherms is that water in the South Atlantic and Pacific is absorbing greater amounts of energy during January and the land is rapidly heating and reradiating energy. Please also note that due to difference in the specific heat, both highest and lowest temperatures are observed in the interiors of the continents.



Vertical Distribution of Temperature

The vertical distribution of temperature on earth is also unequal. As we studied above in detail that in troposphere, the temperature falls uniformly with height as per the Environmental Lapse Rate. The normal value of this Lapse Rate is 6.4°C per kilometers. When a parcel of air rises upwards and cools this is known as adiabatic cooling. This adiabatic cooling is the result of the expansion of air as it is lifted upwards. When the air descends, it gets warmed and this is called adiabatic warming.

Inversion of the Temperature

In the mountain valleys, the temperature of the air is **found increasing with increasing altitude**. Thus there is an inversion of the temperature. This is because during the night, the quick radiation from the upper exposed slopes of the mountains causes the surface and air over it to cool rapidly. This cooler air is denser and gets drained by the valley slopes and displaces the warmer air toward up. So, when we go up in a valley, the temperature seems to getting increased. This phenomenon is also called **drainage inversion**.

Mean Thermal Equator

Thermal equator is a global isotherm having the highest mean annual temperature at each longitude around the globe. Thermal equator does not coincide with the geographical equator. The *highest absolute temperatures are recorded in the Tropics* but the *highest mean annual temperatures are recorded at equator*. But because local temperatures are sensitive to the geography of a region, and mountain ranges and ocean currents ensure that smooth temperature gradients (such as might be found if the Earth were uniform in composition and devoid of surface irregularities) are impossible, the location



of the thermal equator is not identical to that of the geographic Equator.

Further, we know that the Earth reaches perihelion (the minimum distance from the Sun in its orbit) in early January and is at aphelion (maximum distance) in early July. During winter season of the respective hemispheres, the angle of incidence of the sun's rays is low in tropics. The average annual temperature of the tropical regions is therefore lower than the observed near the equator, as the change in the angle of incidence is minimum at equator.

The thermal equator shifts towards north and south with north south shift in the position of vertical rays of the sun. *However, annual average position of the Thermal equator is 5° N latitude.* The reason is that highest mean annual temperature shifts towards northwards during the summer solstice to a much greater extent than it does towards south at the time of winter solstice.

Daily variation of Temperature

Sun is at the highest point at noon but the highest temperature does not occur at 1200 hours because the **atmosphere does not get the heat directly from the Sun**. It receives heat from the earth's surface slowly and that is why maximum temperature is generally attained by 1400 hours (2.00p.m.). The daily minimum temperature at a place does not occur at about 0400 hours (4.00 p.m.) in the morning because radiation of heat continues upto the sun rise.

Here are some notable observations on daily temperature ranges:

- Daily temperature range is **low in clouded areas** because the clouds obstruct the receipt and loss of insolation.
- The sky is clear in hot desert's areas. Insolation is received without obstruction in the day and lost without obstruction in the night. This causes **high temperature range in deserts**.
- Ice or snow absorbs less and reflects the insolation more. Hence, the daily temperature range is low in snow bound areas.
- The air is thin in areas of high altitude. There is great loss of insolation in the night. There is no obstruction in the receipt of insolation in the day. Such places have a high temperature range.
- There is a higher temperature range in than interior areas of continents than at seas because the sea heats and cools slowly but the land heats and cools rapidly.
- Warm and cool winds also disturb the temperature range.

Annual temperature range

On Equator

The duration of the day or night is the same in equatorial countries. The sun's rays are vertical all through the year. Hence, there is no worthwhile difference between the summer and winter seasons. This is the reason that the ***lowest annual temperature range is found in equatorial areas.***



On Poles

Towards the poles, the duration of the day and the inclination of the sun rays go on increasing. It causes a lot of difference between the temperatures of the two seasons. Hence, towards the poles, the annual temperature range goes on increasing.

Near Oceans

Near the seas and oceans, the equalizing effect of sea water makes the winter less cold and the summer less hot. This reduces the annual range of temperature near the seas. The equalizing effect of the sea water cannot reach land areas, away from the seas. The countries like Mongolia and Tibet which are situated far into the interior of the continent have a high annual range of temperature. The ocean currents near the coasts also affected the temperature range. Due to the warm gulf stream, the winter of western Europe is less cold than what it should have been without the gulf stream. This reduces the annual temperature range.

The shifting attitude of ocean currents has a lot of effect on the annual temperature range. For example, the weather and seasons have to undergo greater changes on the eastern coasts of Indian and Australia due to the shifting of ocean currents. It increases the annual temperature range on these coasts as compared to that on the opposite side coasts.

Impact of Winds

suraj_winner | rajawat.rs.surajsingh@gmail.com | www.gktoday.in/module/ias-general-studies

The prevailing winds also have a greater effect on the annual temperature range. Winds from the land blow in Arabian countries and therefore increase the annual range of temperature. Winds from the oceans and seas blow into Western Europe and reduce the annual temperature range. The variation in the annual temperature range in west and east European countries is due to land and sea winds. The effect of winds from the ocean has a far smaller effect in Eastern Europe than in Western Europe. It is why the annual temperature range is higher in eastern than in Western Europe.

Atmospheric Pressure and Pressure Belts

Air has weight and a column of air extending vertically over a given area on earth's surface exerts pressure. The atmospheric pressure is measured as a force per unit of area and most common unit of measuring the air pressure is millibar. The instrument used for measuring pressure is Barometer. Some barometers are calibrated to show pressure in mercury inches. At constant temperature of 0°C and latitude of 45°, 1049 millibar is equal to 31 inches of mercury. Barograph is used to take continuous readings of air pressure.

Measuring Atmospheric Pressure

Bar is a unit of pressure equal to 100 kilopascals and roughly equal to the atmospheric pressure on Earth at sea level. Other units derived from the bar are the megabar (symbol: Mbar), kilobar (symbol: kbar), decibar (symbol: dbar), centibar (symbol: cbar), and millibar (symbol: mbar or mb). Bar is neither an SI unit nor a CGS unit. 1

© 2016 GKToday | All Rights Reserved | www.gktoday.in



bar is 1% smaller than the atmosphere (symbol: atm), which now is defined to be 1.01325 bar exactly. One millibar is also equal to 1000 dynes per cm².

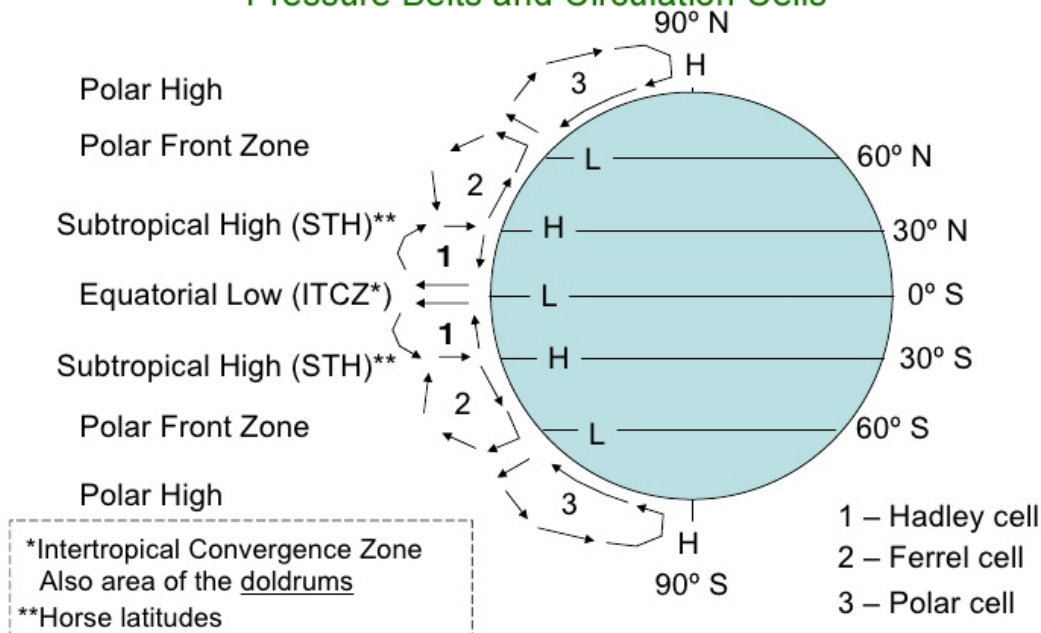
Pressure Belts of Earth

The distribution of pressure **on earth is uneven**. Usually pressure is inversely related to the temperature and pressure reduced with altitude. The major factors are earth's rotation and ascent and descent of air to affect distribution of pressure.

Creation of the Pressure Belts

Due to high amount of insolation over the equator, the air ascends and this air rising in the equatorial region descends at around 30° north and south latitudes. This means that the air at the equatorial region is thrown away from the earth and air at the Polar Regions is pulled towards earth. *This implies that there is a low pressure is on equator and there is a high pressure area on poles.* This gives rise to two belts of high pressure on Polar Regions each and one belt of low pressure on equator. The air that descends at 30°N and 30°S also created two belts of high pressures in the subtropical regions of both the hemispheres. Further, the rotation of the earth pulls the air at Polar Regions causes a rarification of air pressure at sub-polar regions. This also produces two belts of low pressure around 60°N and S latitude. This means that there are 7 belts of pressure as shown in the below graphics.

Pressure Belts and Circulation Cells



The planetary distribution of pressure, in the 7 belts is determined by two major factors viz. **thermal factor and dynamic factor**. Please note that equatorial belt of low pressure and polar



belts of high pressures are due to the thermal factor while, the subtropical belts of high pressure and subpolar belts of low pressure are primarily due to **earth's rotation or dynamic factors**.

Intertropical Convergence Zone / Doldrums

The pressure belt between the 0° to 5°N and S is called **Equatorial Low Pressure Belt**. This belt is characterized by intense heating, with expanding air and ascending convectional currents. Because the air is largely moving upward, surface winds are light and variable. This region is known as the **doldrums**.

The term doldrums has been used by the sailors as it has been marked by erratic weather patterns with stagnant calms and violent thunderstorms.

Doldrums are **belt of calms and variable winds** occurring at times along the equatorial trough.

Doldrums are characterised by:

- Low atmospheric Pressure
- High Humidity
- Thunderstorms

The same area is also called the Intertropical Convergence Zone (ITCZ) or Doldrums. This is the area encircling the earth near the equator where winds originating in the northern and southern hemispheres come together. Please note that the location is not precisely defined as location of the Intertropical convergence zone varies over time. Over land, it moves back and forth across the equator following the sun's zenith point. Over the oceans, where the convergence zone is better defined, the seasonal cycle is more subtle, as the convection is constrained by the distribution of ocean temperatures. Sometimes, a double ITCZ forms, with one located north and another south of the equator. When this occurs, a narrow ridge of high pressure forms between the two convergence zones, one of which is usually stronger than the other. Between 10° and 15° North and South, there are high pressure belts, where air is comparatively dry, light and calm. This region is beneficial to the maritime trade.



Subtropical High / Horse Latitudes

Horse Latitudes or Subtropical High are subtropical latitudes between 30 and 35 degrees both north and south. This region, under a ridge of high pressure receives little precipitation and has variable winds mixed with calm. The air is **comparatively dry and calm**. This is also the region of descending air current and is marked by some cyclonic activities. The consistently warm, dry conditions of the horse latitudes also contribute to the existence of temperate deserts, such as the Sahara Desert in Africa, the southwestern United States and northern Mexico, and parts of the Middle East in the Northern Hemisphere; and the Atacama Desert, the Kalahari Desert, and the Australian Desert in the Southern Hemisphere.

Other Belts

30°-60° North and South Belt region is of temperate low pressure belt or anti-trade wind area. It is marked by cyclones and anticyclones. 60° North and South are the two Temperate Low Pressure belts which are also called zones of convergence with Cyclonic activity. The 90° North and South are called Polar High belts.

Winds

Global Winds

When air moves in a definite direction, it is called wind. If the winds move **from west** to east, they are called westerlies. If they move **from east** to west, they are called easterlies.

There are winds because there are differences in pressures. The direction of wind is also affected by Coriolis affect. Due to Coriolis Force, the wind flowing from equator towards the North Pole and from North Pole towards the equator are deflected to their right while the winds flowing north-south and south-north in the southern hemisphere are deflected towards their left. The magnitude of

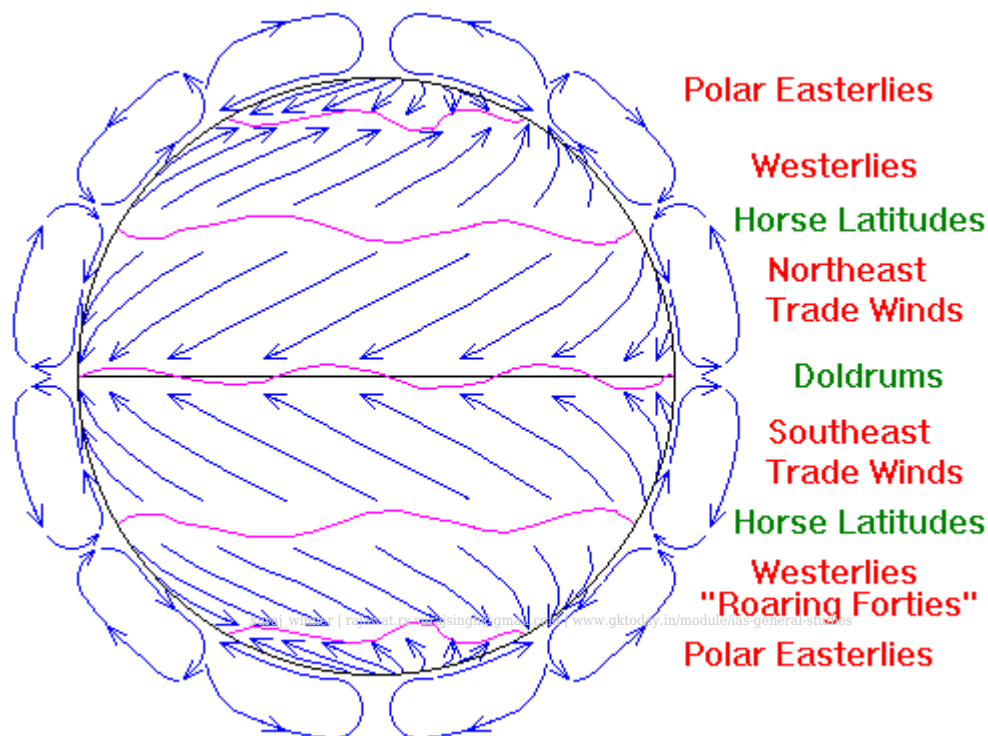


the deflection, or “Coriolis effect,” varies significantly with latitude. *The Coriolis Effect is zero at the equator and increases to a maximum at the poles.* The effect is proportional to wind speed; that is, deflection increases as wind strengthens. The resultant balance between the pressure force and the Coriolis force is such that, in the absence of surface friction, air moves parallel to isobars (lines of equal pressure). This is called the geotropic wind. The Coriolis force explains why winds circulate around high and low pressure systems as opposed to blowing in the direction of the pressure gradient. Central idea behind the Coriolis force is that when the earth rotates from west to east, it produces the centrifugal force and due to this force, there is a change in the direction of the wind. There is Ferrel’s law derived from Coriolis Effect, which says that in northern hemispheres, wind deflects towards the right and in southern hemisphere wind deflects towards left. This means that in northern hemisphere, wind deflects clockwise, while in southern hemisphere, wind deflects anti-clockwise.

Trade winds

Trades wind blow out from the Subtropical High Pressure belts. In the northern hemisphere, they blow towards the equatorial low and called **North East Trade Winds**. In the Southern hemisphere they blow towards the equatorial low and become the **South East Trade winds**. This implies that Trade winds blow from North east towards equator in Northern hemisphere and South East Towards equator in southern hemisphere. It has been shown in the following graphics.

The trade winds are **most regular winds of all kinds on earth**. They blow with great force and in constant direction that is why they are preferred by the sailors. The trade winds bring heavy rain falls and sometimes contain intense depressions.



Trade winds and Hadley cells

There are three primary circulation cells on earth known as the Hadley cell, Ferrel cell, and Polar cell. The Hadley cell mechanism provides an explanation for the trade winds. Hadley cell is a closed circulation loop, which begins at the equator with warm, moist air lifted aloft in equatorial low pressure areas (the Intertropical Convergence Zone, ITCZ) to the tropopause and carried pole ward. At about 30°N/S latitude, it descends in a high pressure area. Some of the descending air travels equatorially along the surface, closing the loop of the Hadley cell and creating the Trade Winds. Hadley Cells is described to be lying on equator but it follows sun's zenith point, or what is termed the "thermal equator".

Origin of Trade Winds

Trade winds are part of the Hadley cell circulation. At the equator, a low-pressure area of calm, light variable winds is known Intertropical Convergence Zone as we discussed above. The air lifts from here and at around 30° North and South, the air begins to descend toward the surface in subtropical high-pressure belts known as subtropical ridges. At the surface, the air flows from these subtropical high-pressure belts toward the Equator but is deflected toward the west in both hemispheres by the



Coriolis Effect. Thus, these winds blow predominantly from the northeast in the Northern Hemisphere and from the southeast in the Southern Hemisphere. Because winds are named for the direction from which the wind is blowing, these winds are called the northeast trade winds in the Northern Hemisphere and the southeast trade winds in the Southern Hemisphere. **The trade winds meet at the doldrums.**

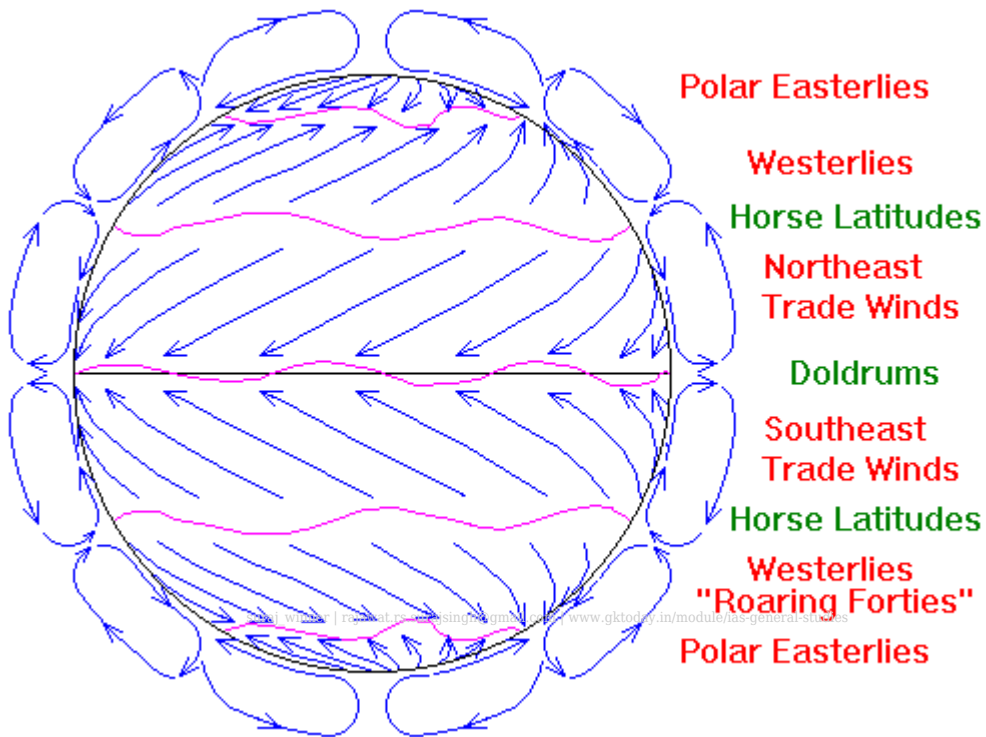
You can visualize more about trade winds & Hadley Cells in this animation: <http://bit.ly/UfHnbt>

Implications of Trade winds

- Trade winds are the surface winds in low latitudes, representing the low-level airflow. Back in history, two large belts of winds were discovered blowing toward the equator called North East and South East trade winds. The word trade in those days referred to advance steadily and was synonymous with efficient sailing. The trade winds allowed the sailing vessels to advance steadily—and, of course, to set up patterns of international trade. However, you must note that trade winds are not totally steady in force or direction, but they do trend in the general direction of southwest and northwest.
- Hawaii is located south of Tropic of Cancer, yet, the temperatures are pleasant, temperatures and humidity tends to be a bit less extreme. This makes it one of the most famous tourist destinations of the world. What make such a climate are Trade Winds.

Westerlies

The directions of the Westerlies are opposite to trade winds and that is why they are also called **antitrade winds**. Westerlies blow in the middle latitudes between 30 and 60 degrees latitude, and originate from the high pressure area in the horse latitudes towards the poles. Under the effect of the Coriolis force, they become the south westerlies in the northern hemisphere and Northern westerlies in the southern hemisphere. Please note that in the southern hemisphere, there is more of ocean and less of land in comparison to the northern hemisphere. Due to this reason, the westerlies blow with much greater force in southern hemisphere in comparison to northern hemisphere.



This also has implications in the Ocean currents. The currents in the Northern Hemisphere are weaker than those in the Southern Hemisphere due to the differences in strength between the Westerlies of each hemisphere.

Generally, **Westerlies are strongest in the winter hemisphere** and at times when the pressure is lower over the poles, while they are weakest in the summer hemisphere and when pressures are higher over the poles. Please note the westerlies are also associated with the “**extra tropical**” cyclones which refer to the fact that this type of cyclone generally occurs outside of the tropics, in the middle latitudes of the planet, where the Westerlies steer the system generally from west to east. Whenever there is a convergence of the cold and denser polar winds and warm and light westerlies, there are much variation in the weather. The velocity of the westerlies increases southward and they become stormy. When we move towards poles, the velocity of the westerlies is given different terms as follows:

- Roaring Forties between the 40-50°S
- Furious Fifties at the 50°S and Shrieking Sixties at 60°S.



Polar Easterlies

Polar easterlies blow from the polar high pressure belts towards the temperate low pressure belts. These are extremely cold winds that come from the Tundra and Icecap regions of the poles. The Polar Easterlies **are more regular in the southern hemisphere in comparison to the northern hemisphere**. These polar cold winds converge with the warm easterlies near 60° latitudes and form the Polar front or Mid Latitude front. This mid-latitude front becomes the centre of the origin of the Temperate Cyclones.

Local Winds

The Local winds around the world are formed through the *heating of land*. In coastal regions, the sea breezes and land breezes are important factors in a location's prevailing winds. The sea is warmed by the sun more slowly because of water's greater specific heat compared to land. As the temperature of the surface of the land rises, the land heats the air above it by conduction. The warm air is less dense than the surrounding environment and so it rises. This causes a pressure gradient of about 2 millibar from the ocean to the land. The cooler air above the sea, now with higher sea level pressure, flows inland into the lower pressure, creating a cooler breeze near the coast. At night, the land cools off more quickly than the ocean because of differences in their specific heat values. This temperature change causes the daytime sea breeze to dissipate. When the temperature onshore cools below the temperature offshore, the pressure over the water will be lower than that of the land, establishing a land breeze, as long as an onshore wind is not strong enough to oppose it.

Local winds near Mountains

There is a different explanation for local winds near mountains. Over elevated surfaces, heating of the ground exceeds the heating of the surrounding air at the same altitude above sea level, creating an associated thermal low over the terrain and enhancing any thermal lows that would have otherwise existed, and changing the wind circulation of the region. In areas where there is rugged topography that significantly interrupts the environmental wind flow, the wind circulation between mountains and valleys is the most important contributor to the prevailing winds.

Barrier Jet

The mountains and valleys are capable to distort the airflow by increasing friction between the atmosphere and landmass by acting as a physical block to the flow, deflecting the wind parallel to the range just upstream of the topography, which is known as a **barrier jet**. This barrier jet can increase the low level wind. Wind direction also changes because of the contour of the land. If there is a pass in the mountain range, winds will rush through the pass with considerable speed because of the Bernoulli principle that describes an inverse relationship between speed and pressure. The airflow can remain turbulent and erratic for some distance downwind into the flatter countryside. These



conditions are dangerous to ascending and descending airplanes.

List of major Local Winds

- Abroholos: squall frequent wind that occurs from May through August between Cabo de Sao Tome and Cabo Frio on the coast of Brazil
- Amihan : northeasterly wind across the Philippines
- Bayamo : violent wind on Cuba's southern coast
- Bora : northeasterly from eastern Europe to northeastern Italy
- Calima : dust-laden south to southeasterly wind blowing in the Saharan Air Layer across the Canary Islands
- Cape Doctor : dry south-easterly wind that blows on the South African coast in summer
- Chinook : warm dry westerly off the Rocky Mountains
- Elephanta : strong southerly or southeasterly wind on the Malabar coast of India
- Föhn : warm dry southerly off the northern side of the Alps and the North Italy, the name gave rise to the fén-fèng or 'burning wind' of Taiwan
- Fremantle Doctor : afternoon sea breeze from the Indian Ocean which cools Perth, Western Australia during summer
- Gregale : northeasterly from Greece
- Habagat : southwesterly wind across the Philippines
- Harmattan : dry northerly wind across central Africa
- Karaburan : "black storm", a Spring and Summer Katabatic wind of central Asia
- Khamsin : southeasterly from north Africa to the eastern Mediterranean
- Khazri : cold north wind in the Absheron Peninsula of the Azerbaijan Republic
- Kona : southeast wind in Hawaii, replacing trade winds, bringing high humidity and often rain
- Košava : strong and cold southeasterly season wind in Serbia
- Lodos : southwesterly towards Turkey. Strong "Lodos" events occur 6 – 7 times a year bringing 35 kt winds into Marmara Sea. The winds are funneled SE from the Mediterranean and through the Dardanelles Strait.
- Loo : hot and dry wind which blows over plains of India and Pakistan.
- Mistral : cold northerly from central France and the Alps to Mediterranean
- Monsoon : mainly south-westerly winds combined with heavy rain in various areas close to the equator
- North wind : northern cold winds blowing from the Gulf of Mexico to the Isthmus of Tehuantepec



- Nor'easter : strong storm with winds from the northeast in the eastern United States, especially New England
- Nor'wester : wind that brings rain to the West Coast, and warm dry winds to the East Coast of New Zealand's South Island, caused by the moist prevailing winds being uplifted over the Southern Alps, often accompanied by a distinctive arched cloud pattern
- Pampero : Argentina, very strong wind which blows in the Pampa
- Simoom : strong, dry, desert wind that blows in the Sahara, Israel, Jordan, Syria, and the desert of Arabia
- Sirocco : southerly from north Africa to southern Europe
- Sundowner : strong offshore wind off the California coast
- Zonda wind : on the eastern slope of the Andes in Argentina

Climate Related Topics

Monsoon Mechanism

The word monsoon derived from the Arabic word *mausim* means seasonal winds. In this system, the direction of the winds reverses seasonally. The first thing we note is that Monsoon is typically considered a phenomenon of tropical south Asia, but it is also experienced over parts of North America and Africa.

Mechanism of Monsoon: Traditional View

Traditionally, monsoon has been considered a result of the differential heating of land and sea.

- In summer, southern Asia develops a low pressure while the pressure over the sea is relatively higher. As a result the air starts flowing towards land from the Indian oceans. The winds coming from ocean carry moisture and thus cause rainfall in summer season. This is known as the southwest monsoon or summer monsoon.
- In winter, the pressure over land is higher than over the sea and consequently the air starts flowing from land to sea. The air coming from land being dry, these winds do not cause rainfall.

The above explanation is known as the thermal theory of monsoon. This theory explains monsoon as a regional phenomenon but fails to explain the total amount of energy / processes involved in the global monsoon circulation.

Mechanism of Monsoon: Modern View

The modern meteorologists seek explanation for the phenomenon of monsoon on the basis of *seasonal shift in the position of the global belts of pressure and winds*. This is also known as **Dynamic Theory**.

According to the dynamic theory, monsoons are a result of the *shift of the inter-tropical convergence*



zone (ITCZ) under the influence of the vertical sun. Though the average position of the ITCZ is taken as the equator, it keeps shifting vertical sun towards with the migration of the vertical sun towards the tropics during the summer of the respective hemisphere.

- During summer in the northern hemisphere in the months of May and June, the sun shines vertically over the tropic of cancer. Due to the northward shift of the zone of maximum heating and low pressure at this time the ITCZ also shifts northwards and approaches, the tropic of cancer. The ITCZ being the zone of the lowest pressure in the tropical region is the destination of the trade winds blowing from both the hemispheres.
- With ITCZ situated close to the tropic of cancer the northeast trade winds are confined to an area extending to its north while the southeast trade winds blowing from the southern hemisphere have to cross the equator to reach this area of low pressure. However as the winds blowing from the southern hemisphere cross the equator their direction is altered due to Coriolis effect, i.e. their direction is turned to their right and thus it gives rise to the formation of a belt of equatorial westerlies in the months of May and June northeast and they are called the southwest monsoon.
- As the ITCZ again moves southwards at the end of the summer of the northern hemisphere the areas north of the equator which experienced the equatorial westerlies during the summer season come under the influence of the northeast trade winds. These northeasterly winds are called the northeast monsoon. The onset of winter season the ITCZ shifts south of the equator and reaches as far south at this time. In this season the northeast trades blowing towards the ITCZ have to cross the equator towards south and as a result they get deflected giving rise to the equatorial westerlies in the southern hemisphere. These westerlies blow from the northwest to the southwest, replacing the trade winds of the southern hemisphere between the ITCZ and the equator. They form the summer monsoon of the southern hemisphere.

We can say that due to the seasonal shift of the wind belts under the influence of the north-south migration of the vertical sun the areas situated in the tropical zone in both the hemisphere come under the influence of the trade winds during the respective winter and the equatorial westerlies during the respective summer season. The direction of the winds is thus reversed seasonally and it makes up the monsoon system of these regions.

Please note that though, dynamic theory provides a much better explanation of the system of monsoon as a global phenomenon, it does not negate the influence of differential heating of land and sea.

Differential heating still plays an important role in making monsoon much stronger in certain of the



south-west monsoon factor that explains the extension of the southwest monsoon even to the north of the tropic of cancer in northern India.

Rainfall

The amount of moisture in air is commonly recorded as **relative humidity**; which is the percentage of the total water vapour air can hold at a particular air temperature. The presence of warm, moist and unstable air and sufficient amount of the hygroscopic nuclei is a prerequisite condition for rainfall. The warm and moist air after being lifted upwards becomes saturated and clouds are formed after condensation of water vapour around the hygroscopic nuclei such as dust particles.

How much water vapour a parcel of air can contain before it becomes saturated (100% relative humidity) and forms into a cloud (a group of visible and tiny water and ice particles suspended above the Earth's surface) depends on its temperature. Warmer air can contain more water vapour than cooler air before becoming saturated.

Cooling

The process of condensation begins only when the relative humidity of the ascending air becomes 100% and air is cooled through four main mechanisms to its dew point: **adiabatic cooling**, **conductive cooling**, **radiational cooling**, and **evaporative cooling**. www.gktoday.in/module/ias-general-studies

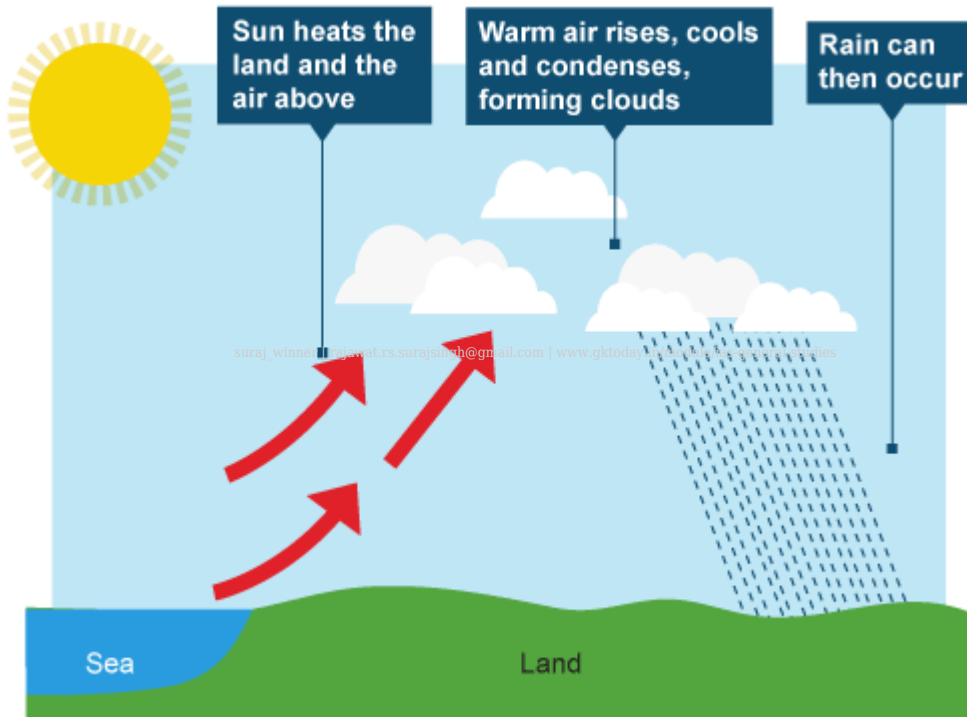
- **Adiabatic cooling** occurs when air rises and expands. The air can rise due to convection, large-scale atmospheric motions, or a physical barrier such as a mountain (orographic lift).
- **Conductive cooling** occurs when the air comes into contact with a colder surface, usually by being blown from one surface to another, for example from a liquid water surface to colder land.
- **Radiational cooling** occurs due to the emission of infrared radiation, either by the air or by the surface underneath.
- **Evaporative cooling** occurs when moisture is added to the air through evaporation, which forces the air temperature to cool to its wet-bulb temperature, or until it reaches saturation.

Further, we note that the very small rain drops are almost spherical in shape. As drops become larger, they become flattened on the bottom, like a hamburger bun. Very large rain drops are split into smaller ones by air resistance which makes them increasingly unstable. When water droplets fuse to create larger water droplets, it is called **Coalescence**. When water droplets freeze onto an ice crystal, which is known as the **Bergeron process**. Air resistance typically causes the water droplets in a cloud to remain stationary. When air turbulence occurs, water droplets collide, producing larger droplets. As these larger water droplets descend, coalescence continues, so that drops become heavy enough to overcome air resistance and fall as rain. Coalescence generally happens most often in clouds above freezing, and is also known as the warm rain process.



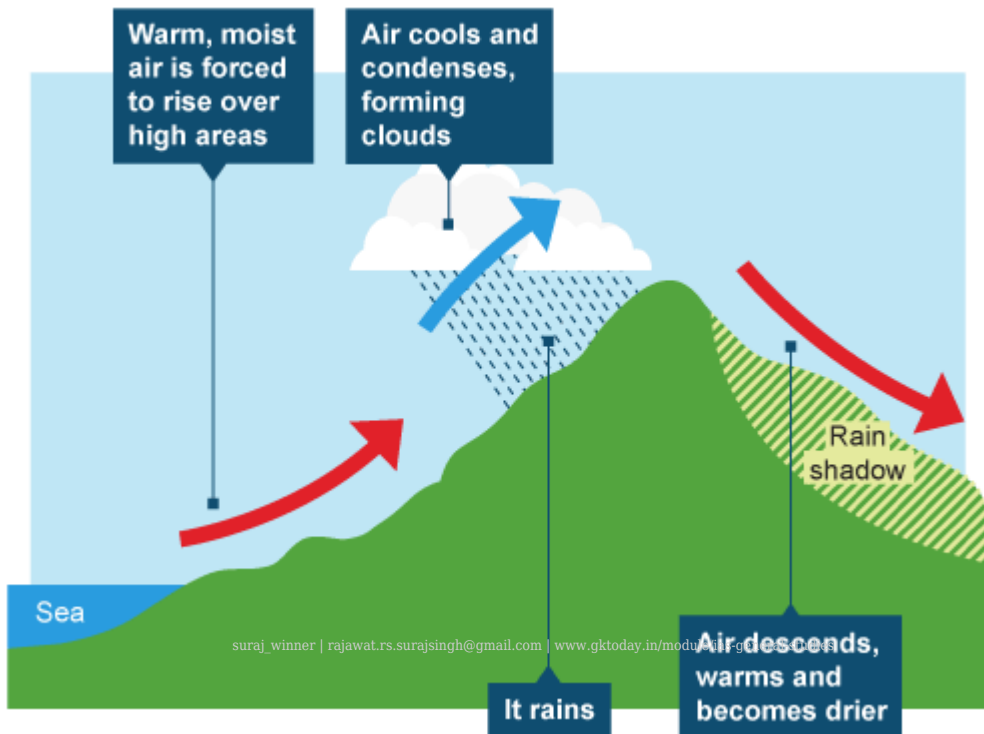
Convictional Rainfall

The convectional rainfall occurs due to the thermal convection currents caused due to the heating of ground due to insolation. The convectional rainfall is prevalent in equatorial regions. In these, the warm air rises up and expands then, reaches at a cooler layer and saturates, then condenses mainly in the form of **cumulus or cumulonimbus clouds**. In the equatorial regions, the precipitation due to convectional rainfall occurs in the afternoon. The rainfall is of very short duration but in the form of heavy showers.



Cyclonic / Frontal Rainfall

Frontal rainfall occurs due to the upward movement of the air caused by the convergence of different air masses with different temperatures. The warm air rises over the cold air and cyclonic rain occurs. The cold air pushes up the warm air and sky gets clear again.



Orographic Rainfall

The orographic rainfall occurs due to the ascent of air forced by the mountain barrier. The mountain barrier should be across the wind direction. So that the moist air is forced in obstruction to move upward and get cooled. In Rajasthan, the Aravalli is not an obstructing barrier to the highly moist air coming from Arabian Sea and that is why they don't play very important role in rainfalls. Thus they produce a Rain shadow area. A rain shadow is a dry area on the lee side of a mountainous area. The mountains block the passage of rain-producing weather systems, casting a "shadow" of dryness behind them. In south India, the Mangalore is located on the western windward slope and gets 2000 mm of rainfall. But Bangalore is in rain shadow area and that is why receives less than 500 mm of rainfall.

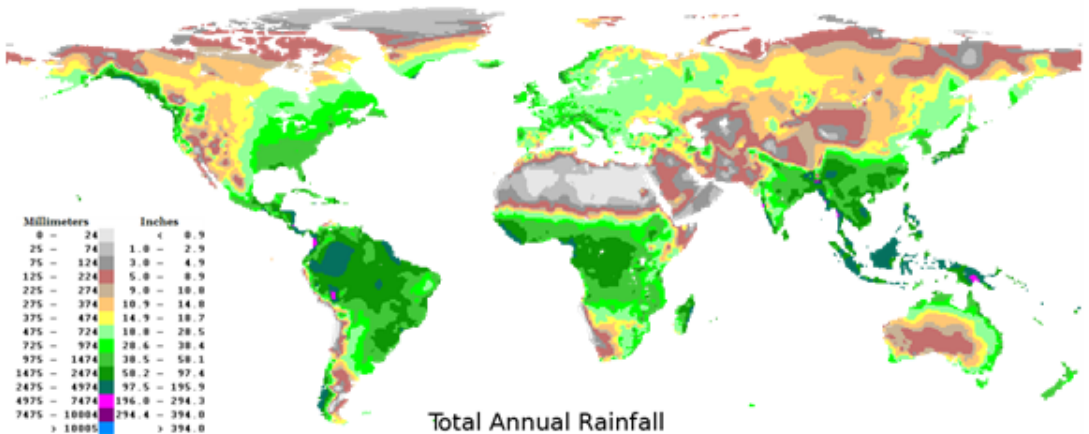
Please note that the amount of the rainfall increases with increasing height of the barrier such as mountain, but this is up to a certain limit. After that there is a marked decrease due to lesser moisture content of the air and this phenomenon is called "**Inversion of Rainfall**"

Distribution of Rainfall

The regions having high temperature and abundance of water receive higher amount of rainfall, such as equatorial regions. In the subtropical regions, the western parts receive lesser rainfalls. This



is due to anticyclone activities.



Mean annual rainfall for earth is 970mm. The equatorial regions receive rainfall through out the year while the other regions receive rainfall seasonally. The Mediterranean region receives rainfall during the winter generally.

Air Mass & Fronts suraj_winner | rajawat.rs.surajsingh@gmail.com | www.gktoday.in/module/ias-general-studies

Air mass is a volume of air defined by its temperature and water vapour content. An air mass may be of many hundreds or thousands of square miles, and adopt the characteristics of the surface below them. An air mass can be so extensive that it may cover the large portion of a continent below it and may be vertically so thick that it may cover the troposphere. The vertical distribution of the temperature in an air mass and moisture content of the air are the two properties of air mass which control the weather conditions of an area under that particular air mass. The air mass is considered to be cold air mass if its temperature is lower than the underlying surface, while an air mass is termed warm air mass when its temperature is higher than the underlying surface. The boundary between the two air masses is called the **front**.

Air masses are classified according to latitude and their continental or maritime source regions. Colder air masses are termed polar or arctic, while warmer air masses are deemed tropical. Continental and superior air masses are dry while maritime and monsoon air masses are moist. Weather fronts separate air masses with different density (temperature and/or moisture) characteristics. Once an air mass moves away from its source region, underlying vegetation and water bodies can quickly modify its character.

Frontogenesis and Frontolysis

The boundary between the two air masses is called the **front**. A temperature difference is essential in the definition of a front because it implies a density difference. The air masses of different



densities don't mix readily and tend to retain their identity as far as we care for the moisture. The front represents a transition zone between two air masses of different density. Generally, an air mass from one region moves to the other region which is occupied by some other air mass. When a warmer and lighter air mass moved against a cold and denser air mass, the former rides over the other and it is called **warm front**. If the cold air mass forces its way under a warm air mass, it is called **cold front**. When new fronts are created or old fronts are regenerated, it is called Frontogenesis. Please note that fronts don't appear all of a sudden. They appear only after a process of Frontogenesis which is there in place for quite some time. When winds converge towards a point it would lead to **Frontogenesis**.

Frontogenesis takes place only when two conditions are met. First, two air masses of different densities must exist adjacent to one another; and second, a prevailing wind field must exist to bring them together. There are three basic situations, which are conducive to Frontogenesis and satisfy the two basic requirements. The wind flow is cross isothermal and flowing from cold air to warmer air. The flow must be cross isothermal, resulting in a concentration of isotherms (increased temperature gradient). The flow does not have to be perpendicular; however, the more perpendicular the cross isothermal flow, the greater the intensity of Frontogenesis.

On the other hand, the dying of a front is called **Frontolysis**. Frontolysis also does not happen all of a sudden. The process of Frontolysis must happen for quite some time to destroy the existing front.

Types of Fronts

Cold Front

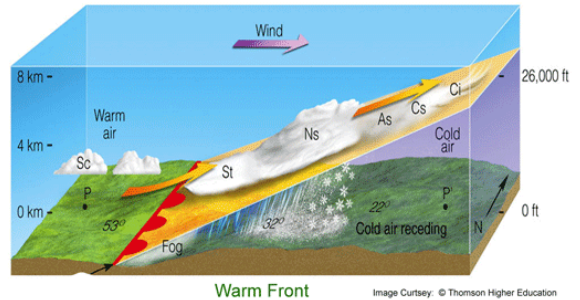
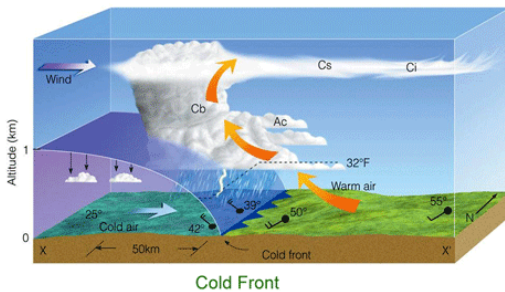
When a cold air invades the warm air, it remains at the ground and forcibly **uplifts the warmer and lighter air mass**. This is known as **Cold front**. This upward motion causes lowered pressure along the cold front and can cause the formation of a narrow line of showers and thunderstorms when enough moisture is present. Cold fronts can move up to twice as fast as warm fronts and can produce sharper changes in weather. Since cold air is denser than warm air, it rapidly replaces the warm air preceding the boundary. Cold fronts are usually associated with low-pressure areas. Cold front usually causes a shift of wind from southeast to northwest, and in the southern hemisphere a shift from northeast to southwest.

Warm front

When a warmer and lighter air mass moved against a cold and denser air mass, the former rides over the other and it is called **warm front**. Being lighter, the warm air mass is unable to displace the cooler air mass and instead is forced upward along the upper boundary of the colder air in a process known as overrunning. The boundary between the two air masses has a gradual slope of 1:30 and lifting is slow but persistent. As the air mass rises into regions of lower pressure, it expands and



cools. As it cools, water vapour condenses and forms extensive cloud coverage. The first clouds to form along the sloping surface of the cold air are high cirrus, which thicken to cirrostratus and altostratus.



Occluded front

An occluded front is a front that is formed when a cold front overtakes a warm front. The cold front moves rapidly than the warm front. Ultimately, the cold front overtakes the warm front and completely displaces the warm air at the ground.

Cyclones

Cyclone is a *system of low atmospheric pressure in which the barometric gradient is steep*. Cyclones represent circular fluid motion **rotating in the same direction as the Earth**. This means that the inward spiralling winds in a cyclone rotate anticlockwise in the Northern Hemisphere and clockwise in the Southern Hemisphere of the Earth. Most large-scale cyclonic circulations are centred on areas of low atmospheric pressure. The cyclones can be tropical cyclones or temperate cyclones (extra-tropical cyclones).

Basic difference between Tropical Cyclone and Extra-tropical Cyclone

The term “tropical cyclone” is used to refer to **warm-core**, low-pressure systems that develop over tropical or subtropical oceans. This definition differentiates tropical cyclones from extra tropical (midlatitude) cyclones that exhibit a **cold-core** in the upper troposphere and often form along **fronts in higher latitudes**. Subtropical cyclones are hybrid systems that exhibit some characteristics of tropical cyclones and some characteristics of extra-tropical cyclones.

Tropical cyclones extract much of their energy from the upper layer of the ocean, while extratropical cyclones derive much of their energy from the baroclinic temperature gradients in which they form.

Tropical Cyclones

The tropical cyclone is a system of low pressure occurring in tropical latitudes characterized by very strong winds. Here are the important notes which you must note about the Tropical Cyclones:

Distribution

The tropical cyclones are found over the North Atlantic Ocean, Southern Atlantic Ocean, the



eastern, central and western North Pacific Ocean, the central and western South Pacific Ocean and the northern and southern Indian Ocean.

Formation in Low Pressure areas

All tropical cyclones are formed in areas of low atmospheric pressure in the Earth's atmosphere.

Minimum Pressure is at centre

The pressures recorded at the centers of tropical cyclones are among the lowest that occur on Earth's surface at sea level.

Driver is the Large Heat of Condensation

Tropical cyclones are driven by the release of large amounts of latent heat of condensation, which occurs when moist air is carried upwards and its water vapour condenses. This heat is distributed vertically around the center of the storm. Thus, at any given altitude, environment inside the cyclone is warmer than its outer surroundings.

Eye is the sinking air

There is an area of sinking air at the center of circulation, which is known as Eye. Weather in the eye is normally calm and free of clouds, although the sea below it may be extremely violent. Eye is normally circular in shape, and is typically 30–65 km in diameter.

Stadium Effect

suraj winner | rajawat.rs.surajsingh@gmail.com | www.gktoday.in/module/ias-general-studies

The mature tropical cyclones sometimes exhibit an outward curving of the eye wall's top, making it resemble an arena football stadium. It is called Stadium Effect.

Greatest Wind speeds are at eye walls

Greatest wind speeds in a tropical cyclone is found at the eye wall, which is a circle of strong thunderstorms that surrounds the eye. Here, the clouds reach the highest, and precipitation is the heaviest. The heaviest wind damage occurs where a tropical cyclones eye wall passes over land.

Source of the huge Energy

Primary energy source is the release of the heat of condensation from water vapour condensing, with solar heating being the initial source for evaporation. So a tropical cyclone can be visualized as a giant vertical heat engine supported by mechanics driven by physical forces such as the rotation (Coriolis force) and gravity of the Earth. Inflow of warmth and moisture from the underlying ocean surface is critical for tropical cyclone strengthening.

Impact of Earth's Rotation

The rotation of the Earth causes the system to spin (Coriolis Effect) giving it a cyclonic characteristic and affecting the trajectory of the storm. In Northern Hemisphere, where the cyclone's wind flow is counterclockwise, the fastest winds relative to the surface of the Earth occur on the eastern side of a northward-moving storm and on the northern side of a westward-moving one; the opposite occurs in the Southern Hemisphere, where the wind flow is clockwise.

Movement of Clouds

In Lower troposphere, motion of clouds is toward the center. At upper-level, there is outward flow

© 2016 GKT Today | All Rights Reserved | www.gktoday.in



of clouds.

Formation in Northern Atlantic Ocean

Northern Atlantic cyclone season occurs from June 1 to November 30, sharply peaking from late August through September. The statistical peak of the Atlantic hurricane season is 10 September.

Formation in North East Pacific

The Northeast Pacific Ocean has a broader period of activity, but in a similar time frame to the Atlantic.

Formation in North West Pacific

The Northwest Pacific sees tropical cyclones year-round, with a minimum in February and March and a peak in early September.

Formation in North Indian basin

Storms are most common from April to December, with peaks in May and November.

Formation in Southern Hemisphere

Tropical cyclone year begins on July 1 and runs all year-round and encompasses the tropical cyclone seasons, which run from November 1 until the end of April, with peaks in mid-February to early March.

Requirements for formation

suraj winner | rajawat.rs.suraisingh@gmail.com | www.gktoday.in/module/ias-general-studies

- Water temperatures of at least 26.5°C down to a depth of at least 50 m, so that it may cause the overlying atmosphere to be *unstable enough to sustain convection and thunderstorms*.
- Rapid cooling with height, so that it may cause release of the heat of condensation that powers a tropical cyclone.
- High humidity
- Low amounts of wind shear as high shear is disruptive to the storm's circulation.
- A **distance from the Equator is necessary**, which should be at least 555 km or 5° of latitude, so that it *allows the Coriolis effect to deflect winds blowing towards* the low pressure center and creating a circulation. Because the Coriolis effect initiates and maintains tropical cyclone rotation, tropical cyclones rarely form or move within about 5° of the equator, where the Coriolis effect is weakest.
- A pre-existing system of disturbed weather.

Movement

Coriolis Effect causes cyclonic systems to turn towards the poles in the absence of strong steering currents. The pole ward portion of a tropical cyclone contains easterly winds, and the Coriolis effect pulls them slightly more pole ward. The westerly winds on the Equatorward portion of the cyclone pull slightly towards the equator, but, because the Coriolis effect weakens toward the equator, the net drag on the cyclone is pole ward. Thus, tropical cyclones in the Northern Hemisphere usually turn north (before being blown east), and tropical cyclones in the Southern Hemisphere usually turn

© 2016 GKT Today | All Rights Reserved | www.gktoday.in



south (before being blown east) when no other effects counteract the Coriolis Effect.

High speed of rotation

It is caused by Coriolis effect as well as energy released by heat of condensation.

Fujiwhara effect

When two cyclones approach one another, their centers will begin orbiting cyclonically about a point between the two systems. The two vortices will be attracted to each other, and eventually spiral into the center point and merge. *When the two vortices are of unequal size, the larger vortex will tend to dominate the interaction, and the smaller vortex will orbit around it. This phenomenon is called the Fujiwhara effect.*

Impact on passing over land

We should note that the **deep convection is a driving force for tropical cyclones**. The convection is strongest in a tropical climate; it defines the initial domain of the tropical cyclone. This is a major difference between the Tropical cyclones with other mid-latitude cyclones as the later derive their energy mostly from pre-existing horizontal temperature gradients in the atmosphere. To continue to drive its heat engine, a **tropical cyclone must remain over warm water**, which provides the needed atmospheric moisture to keep the positive feedback loop running. When a tropical cyclone passes over land, it is cut off from its heat source and its strength diminishes rapidly. The moving over land deprives it of the warm water it needs to power itself, quickly losing strength. Thus, most strong storms lose their strength when they pass on to land, but if it manages to move back to ocean, it will regenerate.

Impact of passing over cold water

When a tropical storm moves over waters significantly below 26.5 °C, it will lose its strength. This is because of losing its tropical characteristic of the warm core.

Project Stormfury

The United States Government attempted in 1960s and 1970s to artificially weaken the Cyclones. During this project, Cyclones were seeded with silver iodide. It was thought that the seeding would cause supercooled water in the outer rainbands to freeze, causing the inner eye wall to collapse and thus reducing the winds. The ***Hurricane Debbie*** lost as much as 31% of its strength, when seeded with Silver Iodide in this project but Debbie regained its strength after each of two seeding forays. So, it was not a good idea. There were some more ideas applied which were as follows:

- Cooling the water under a tropical cyclone by towing icebergs into the tropical oceans and covering the ocean in a substance that inhibits evaporation
- Dropping large quantities of ice into the eye at very early stages of development (so that the latent heat is absorbed by the ice, instead of being converted to kinetic energy that would feed the positive feedback loop)



- Blasting the cyclone apart with nuclear weapons.
- A Project called Project Cirrus involved throwing dry ice on a cyclone.
- None of the idea was very much practical because the tropical storms are too large and too momentary.

Naming of Cyclones

Tropical cyclones are classified into three main groups, based on intensity: tropical depressions, tropical storms, and a third group of more intense storms, whose name depends on the region. If a tropical storm in the North-western Pacific reaches hurricane-strength winds on the Beaufort scale, it is referred to as a typhoon. If a tropical storm passes the same benchmark in the Northeast Pacific Basin, or in the Atlantic, it is called a hurricane. Neither “hurricane” nor “typhoon” is used in either the Southern Hemisphere or the Indian Ocean. In these basins, storms of tropical nature are referred to simply as “cyclones”.

Types of the Tropical Cyclones

There are three kinds of Tropical cyclones:

- **Tropical Depression:** A tropical depression is a system with low pressure enclosed within few isobars and with the wind speed of 60 kmph. It lacks marked circulation
- **Tropical Storm:** It is a system with several closed isobars and a wind circulation of 115 kmph.
- **Tropical Cyclone:** It is a warm core vortex circulation of tropical origin with small diameter, circular shape and occurs in oceanic areas.

Anticyclones

An ‘anticyclone’ is opposite to a cyclone, in which winds move into a low-pressure area. In an anticyclone, winds move out from a high-pressure area with wind direction clockwise in the northern hemisphere, anti-clockwise in the southern hemisphere. Such a high pressure area is usually spread over a large area, created by descending warm air devoid of moisture. The absence of moisture makes the dry air denser than an equal quantity of air with moisture. When it displaces the heavier nitrogen and oxygen, it causes an anti-cyclone.

Temperate Cyclones

Temperate cyclones are generally called depressions. They have low pressure at the centre and increasing pressure outwardly. They are of varying shapes such as circular, elliptical. The formation of tropical storms as we read above are confined to oceans, the temperate cyclones are formed over land and sea alike. Temperate Cyclones are formed in 35-65° North as well as South Latitudes. While the tropical cyclones are largely formed in summer and autumn, the temperate cyclones are formed in generally winter. Rainfall in these cyclones is low and continuous not as furious as in case of tropical cyclones.



Tornado

Basically, hurricanes and typhoons form over water and are huge, while tornados form over land and are much smaller in size. A tornado is a violent windstorm characterized by a twisting, funnel-shaped cloud. In the United States, twister is used as a colloquial term for tornado.

What is it?

Technically, a tornado is a rotating column of air that is in contact with both the surface of the earth and a cloud, which is generally cumulonimbus and occasionally cumulus. Most tornadoes have wind speeds less than 110 miles per hour and travel several kilometers before dissipating.

How it is formed?

First the rotating cloud base lowers. This lowering becomes a funnel, which continues descending while winds build near the surface, kicking up dust and other debris. Finally, the visible funnel extends to the ground, and the tornado begins causing major damage.

Where they are seen?

Tornadoes have been observed on every continent except Antarctica.

How they are detected?

Tornadoes can be detected before or as they occur through the use of Pulse-Doppler radar by recognizing patterns in velocity and reflectivity data. www.gktoday.in/module/ias-general-studies

What is Fujita Scale?

Fujita scale rates tornadoes by damage caused, and has been replaced in some countries by the updated Enhanced Fujita Scale. An F0 or EF0 is the weakest tornado, while F5 or EF5 is the strongest tornado.

What is Torro Scale?

TORRO scale ranges from a T0 for extremely weak tornadoes to T11 for the most powerful known tornadoes.

Funnel Cloud as predecessor

Tornadoes often begin as funnel clouds with no associated strong winds at the surface, although not all evolve into a tornado. However, many tornadoes are preceded by a funnel cloud. Most tornadoes produce strong winds at the surface while the visible funnel is still above the ground, so it is difficult to discern the difference between a funnel cloud and a tornado from a distance.

Infrasonic signature

Tornadoes produce identifiable inaudible infrasonic signatures. Due to the long distance propagation of low-frequency sound, efforts are ongoing to develop tornado prediction and detection devices with additional value in understanding tornado morphology, dynamics, and creation.

Electromagnetic Spectrum

Tornadoes emit on the electromagnetic spectrum. There are observed correlations between tornadoes and patterns of lightning.



When they occur?

Tornadoes are most common in spring and least common in winter. Spring and fall experience peaks of activity as those are the seasons when stronger winds, wind shear, and atmospheric instability are present. Tornado occurrence is highly dependent on the time of day, because of solar heating. Worldwide, most tornadoes occur in the late afternoon, between 3 pm and 7 pm local time, with a peak near 5 pm.

Prelims Model Questions

Atmosphere and Climatology Model Questions

1. Why the thickness of the atmosphere is maximum at equator ?

- 1.High insolation and strong convection currents occur in troposphere over the Equator
- 2.Air is less dense at Equator
- 3.Equator exerts more gravitational pull on atmospheric gases
- 4.The centrifugal force due to Earth's rotation is maximum at Equator

Which among the above is / are correct?

[A] Only 1, 2 & 3

[B] Only 2, 3 & 4

suraj_winner | rajawat.rs.surajsingh@gmail.com | www.gktoday.in/module/ias-general-studies

[C] Only 1, 2 & 4

[D] 1, 2, 3 & 4

Answer: [C] Only 1, 2 & 4

One of the laws of Ideal gases called Charles' law says that in an ideal gas, density decreases with increasing temperature, when pressure is constant. The hot air rises and the Earth is not equally heated everywhere. The troposphere is thicker over the equator than the poles because the equator is warmer. Heat differential on the planet's surface causes convection currents to flow from the equator to the poles. This implies that the warmer the weather, the thicker is the troposphere. Thus the simple reason is thermal expansion of the atmosphere at the equator and thermal contraction near the poles.

Air is less dense at Equator

Over equatorial regions, where the surface is being heated strongly throughout the year and air warmed by contact with it is expanding and rising, the air all the way up to the tropopause is less dense than air to the north and south. Thus, density of the air is maximum at the equator. But here, you must note that almost same amount of atmospheric mass exists at both equator and poles but only the density of the air is less at equator and greater at poles.

Third statement is incorrect because it will result in reducing the thickness at equator.

2. The atmosphere of the Earth primarily get heated due to ____:

© 2016 GKToddy | All Rights Reserved | www.gktoday.in



- [A] Conduction of Heat Energy by Atmosphere
- [B] Convection of Heat Energy
- [C] Radiation from Earth
- [D] Absorption of Solar light

Answer: [C] Radiation from Earth

Radiation is the process by which most energy is transferred through space from the sun to the earth. Radiation is given off by all bodies including earth and human being. The hotter is the body, shorter are the waves. We can simply say that the radiation from Sun comes to earth in the form of smaller waves and earth being cooler body, gives off energy in the form of long-wave. These are then radiated back to the atmosphere. This Long-Wave Radiation from the earth's surfaces heats the lower layers of the atmosphere. It is evident that the atmosphere is primarily heated from below by radiation from the heated Earth surface.

3. Consider the following statements:

1. Strongest westerlies blow in the winter hemisphere
2. Westerlies play major role in the formation of tropical cyclones
3. Roaring Forties are a kind of westerlies

Which among the above statements is / are correct?

- [A] Only 1 & 2
- [B] Only 2 & 3
- [C] Only 1 & 3
- [D] 1, 2 & 3

Answer: [C] Only 1 & 3

Second statement is incorrect because westerlies are higher latitude winds and are not responsible for tropical cyclones.

4. With reference to Geographical terminology, the term "Roaring Forties" is used for ____:

- [A] Westerlies
- [B] Easterlies
- [C] Doldrums
- [D] None of the options A, B and C is correct

Answer: [A] Westerlies

Roaring Forties is the name given to strong westerly winds found in the



Southern Hemisphere, generally between the latitudes of 40 and 49 degrees

5. With reference to the Tropical Cyclones, which among the following is / are correct observation(s)?

1. All Tropical Cyclones are formed in low atmospheric pressure areas
2. The highest atmospheric pressures are generally recorded at their centres
3. At any given altitude, environment inside the cyclone is warmer than its outer surroundings

Choose the correct option from the codes given below:

[A] Only 1

[B] Only 1 & 2

[C] Only 1 & 3

[D] 1, 2 & 3

Answer: [C] Only 1 & 3

All tropical cyclones are formed in areas of low atmospheric pressure in the Earth's atmosphere. The pressures recorded at the centers of tropical cyclones are among the lowest that occur on Earth's surface at sea level. Tropical cyclones are driven by the release of large amounts of latent heat of condensation, which occurs when moist air is carried upwards and its water vapour condenses. This heat is distributed vertically around the center of the storm. Thus, at any given altitude, environment inside the cyclone is warmer than its outer surroundings.

6. Why the strong tropical cyclones lose their strength when they pass on to land?

1. Land terrain impedes the movement of Cyclone
2. Land absorbs the heat energy of Cyclone quickly
3. Cyclone is cut from its heat source

Choose the correct option from the codes given below:

[A] Only 1

[B] Only 1 & 2

[C] Only 1 & 3

[D] 1, 2 & 3

Answer: [C] Only 1 & 3

The first statement is correct. The Friction over land increases considerably from that over water, and this acts to weaken the storm's structure. This is especially true over rugged terrains and mountains in particular. But the real reason is something very important. We know that the deep convection is a driving force for tropical cyclones. The convection is strongest in a tropical climate, it defines the initial domain of the tropical cyclone. This is a major difference between the

© 2016 GKT Today | All Rights Reserved | www.gktoday.in



Tropical cyclones with other mid-latitude cyclones as the later derive their energy mostly from pre-existing horizontal temperature gradients in the atmosphere. To continue to drive its heat engine, a tropical cyclone must remain over warm water, which provides the needed atmospheric moisture to keep the positive feedback loop running. When a tropical cyclone passes over land, it is cut off from its heat source and its strength diminishes rapidly. The moving over land deprives it of the warm water it needs to power itself, quickly losing strength. Thus, most strong storms lose their strength when they pass on to land, but if it manages to move back to ocean, it will regenerate. Please also note that when a tropical storm moves over waters significantly below 26.5 °C, it will lose its strength. This is because of losing its tropical characteristic of the warm core.

7. The atmospheric temperature of a place is governed by ___:

1. Its latitudinal distance from the equator
2. Its elevation from the sea level
3. Prevailing winds and influence of ocean currents, if any

Choose the correct option from the codes given below:

[A] Only 1 & 2

[B] Only 2 & 3

[C] Only 1 & 3

[D] 1, 2 & 3

Answer: [D] 1, 2 & 3

suraj_winner | rajawat.rs.surajsingh@gmail.com | www.gktoday.in/module/ias-general-studies

The atmospheric temperature governs the type of biodiversity, fertility of soil, the hydrological cycle and many other abiotic and biotic parameters of our planet. It acts as a resource – in the sense that optimum temperature promotes the production and productivity of many natural resources, such as plants, animals and microbes. Adverse temperature may also act as deterrent to production and propagation of these natural resources.

8. In context with the Monsoon winds, consider the following statements:

1. They are generally regular and equally distributed winds
2. They show a complete reversal of direction during a year
3. They are generally orographic in nature

Which among the above statements is / are correct?

[A] Only 1 & 2

[B] Only 2 & 3

[C] Only 1 & 3



[D] 1, 2 & 3

Answer: [B] Only 2 & 3

First statement is incorrect because monsoon winds are not equally distributed winds. The rainfall due to monsoon winds is mainly orographic (relief) in nature.

9. The Coastal deserts are usually consequences of ___?

[A] warm ocean currents

[B] orographic precipitation

[C] cold ocean currents

[D] subtropical high pressure

Answer: [C] cold ocean currents

Cold ocean currents contribute to the formation of coastal deserts. Cold ocean currents contribute to the formation of coastal deserts. Air blowing toward shore, chilled by contact with cold water, produces a layer of fog. This heavy fog drifts onto land. Although humidity is high, the atmospheric changes that normally cause rainfall are not present. A coastal desert may be almost totally rainless, yet damp with fog.

The Atacama Desert, on the Pacific shores of Chile, is a coastal desert. Some areas of the Atacama are often covered by fog. But the region can go decades without rainfall. In fact, the Atacama Desert is the driest place on Earth. Some weather stations in the Atacama have never recorded a drop of rain. (National Geographic)

10. The propagation of the Radio Waves in the atmosphere of earth is affected by ___:

1. Reflection

2. Refraction

3. Diffraction

4. Absorption

Choose the correct option from the codes given below:

[A] Only 1, 2 & 3

[B] Only 1, 3 & 4

[C] Only 1, 2 & 4

[D] 1, 2, 3 & 4

Answer: [D] 1, 2, 3 & 4

11. The southern hemisphere of the earth has more water than land. What is / are the implications of this?



1. The atmospheric pressure is generally high at south pole
2. More doldrums are produced near south pole
3. Less westerlies blow in southern hemisphere

Choose the correct option from the codes given below:

- [A] Only 1 is correct
[B] Only 1 & 2 are correct
[C] Only 2 & 3 are correct
[D] 1, 2 & 3 are correct

Answer: [A] Only 1 is correct

12. Consider the following statements:

1. If there were no atmosphere, Sun would have looked white and sky have looked black
2. If earth stops rotating on its axis, the oceans would migrate toward the poles

Which among the above is / are correct?

- [A] Only 1
[B] Only 2
[C] Both 1 & 2
[D] Neither 1 nor 2

suraj_winner | rajawat.rs.surajsingh@gmail.com | www.gktoday.in/module/ias-general-studies

Answer: [C] Both 1 & 2

The blue color of the sky is due to Rayleigh scattering. As light moves through the atmosphere, most of the longer wavelengths pass straight through. Little of the red, orange and yellow light is affected by the air. However, much of the shorter wavelength light is absorbed by the gas molecules. The absorbed blue light is then radiated in different directions. It gets scattered all around the sky. Whichever direction you look, some of this scattered blue light reaches you. Since you see the blue light from everywhere overhead, the sky looks blue. If there was no atmosphere, sky would look black and sun would look white.

The second statement is also correct. Please refer to this page for understanding.

<http://www.esri.com/news/arcuser/0610/nospin.html>

13. Consider the following statements:

1. Most of the meteoroids that enter into Earth's Atmosphere, get burnt into mesosphere
2. The lowest temperatures in the entire atmosphere of the earth are found in mesosphere

Which among the above is / are correct statements?

- [A] Only 1



- [B] Only 2
[C] Both 1 & 2
[D] Neither 1 nor 2

Answer: [C] Both 1 & 2

The mesosphere extends from the stratopause to 80–85 km. Please note that most meteoroids get burnt in this layer. Temperature decreases with height in the mesosphere. The mesopause, the temperature minimum that marks the top of the mesosphere, is the coldest place around Earth and has an average temperature around -85°C . At the mesopause, temperatures may drop to -100°C . These are the lowest temperatures anywhere in Earth's atmosphere.

14. Which among the following is the source of light in aurora in sky near the earth's poles?

- [A] Photon emissions in the earth's upper atmosphere
[B] Cosmic Rays
[C] Sunlight
[D] None of them

Answer: [A] Photon emissions in the earth's upper atmosphere

suraj winner | sriawal.rs.surajsingh@gmail.com | www.gktoday.in/module-as-general-studies

The aurora borealis is a display of natural light in the sky near the North Pole. It was named after the Roman goddess of the dawn, Aurora, and the Greek name for the north wind, Boreas, by Pierre Gassendi in 1621. It is a result of photon emissions in the earth's upper atmosphere from ionized nitrogen atoms regaining an electron, and oxygen and nitrogen atoms returning from an excited state to a low-energy state.

15. Which among the following methods of heat transfer is maximum responsible for heating of the lower layers of the atmosphere near earth's surface?

- [A] Radiation from Sun
[B] Radiation from Earth
[C] Conduction
[D] Convection

Answer: [B] Radiation from Earth

Radiation from Sun comes to earth in the form of smaller waves and earth being cooler body, gives off energy in the form of long-wave. These are then radiated back to the atmosphere. This Long-Wave Radiation from the earth's surfaces heats the lower layers of the atmosphere.

The Atmospheric conduction occurs at the interface of (zone of contact between) the atmosphere



and the earth's surface. However, it is actually a minor method of heat transfer in terms of warming the atmosphere since it affects only the layers of air closest to the earth's surface. This is because air is a very poor conductor of heat. When the pockets of air near the surface are heated, they expand in volume, become less dense than the surrounding air, and therefore rise. This vertical transfer of heat through the atmosphere is called convection, and is the same type of process by which heated water circulates in a pan while heating. The currents set into motion by the heating of a fluid (liquid or gas) make up a convectional system. Most vertical transfer of heat within the atmosphere & Oceans occurs via Convection and is a major cause of clouds and precipitation.

suraj_winner | rajawat.rs.surajsingh@gmail.com | www.gktoday.in/module/ias-general-studies