

Met office aiming at accurate forecast

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THE recent cyclone that hit Bangladesh seems to have stumped meteorologists, whose forecasts were off target.

First, reports indicated that the cyclone would hit the Chennai coast. Then, the finger was pointed towards the Orissa and Andhra coastline, but ultimately, the cyclone made its way to Bangladesh.

How did the meteorologists get things wrong? Analysing this event, Dr P.S. Goel, Director of the Satellite Application Centre of the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), said - we need better wind velocity data over the Indian Ocean region to improve cyclone predictions.

And what are we doing? The ISRO on its part has scheduled a few initiatives. These include, the launch of the INSAT 3A by mid February 2003, which would have a special payload and a one-km resolution with meteorological applications. This would be followed by INSAT 3B, which will have two payloads - imager and a sounder with better atmosphere profiling, he said.

The INSAT 3B to be launched in the second half of 2004 will substantially boost India's meteorological capability, Dr Goel said in his special oration at the 26th National Systems Conference-2002 (NSC), hosted by the Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS), here.

In the next stage, the joint satellite project called 'Megha-Tropiques', with CNES of France, an exclusive meteorology satellite, would be developed and launched in 2006. This would give considerable data to improve climate-related predictions in the country.

Dr Goel said the launch of OceanSat II satellite was being advanced to the end of the Tenth Plan. The payload for this satellite will have a wind analyser called Scatterometer, which will provide crucial inputs on the wind velocity and directions. With data exchange among countries quite free, especially in the meteorological area, the scope for improving the predictability of climate, especially cyclones should be better, he added.

Earlier, the NSC honoured Dr N. Seshagiri, former Director-General of the National Informatics Centre (NIC) for his contributions in the area of systems science. About 10 scientists from various scientific organisations are participating in the two-day conference.

Inaugurating the conference, the Secretary, Department of Ocean Development (DoD), Dr Harsh K. Gupta, said India was an active participant in ocean related studies at the global level.

In the Indian Ocean region, it had recently deployed 9 ARGO floats, which would be part of the total network of 450 to be deployed by various Indian Ocean region countries in the next few years. India would deploy 150 such floats, which would provide real-time ocean data.

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