

Feeling hot-headed, violent? Blame it on climatic changes

A study by a group of scientists from University of Berkeley has shown that even a small departure from normal temperature or rainfall can lead to increased violence in India.

Titled Quantifying the Influence of Climate, the study published in an international science journal states: “Some forms of intergroup violence, such as Hindu-Muslim riots, is likely to occur following extreme rainfall conditions. This relationship between intergroup violence and rainfall is primarily documented in low-income settings, suggesting that reduced agricultural production may be an important mediating mechanism, although alternative explanations cannot be excluded.”

“There are three types of studies involving India— one is inter-ethnic riots, another is interpersonal violence that increases when rainfall is low, and the last comprises global studies where India is among the many countries where the likelihood of violent conflicts between the central government and organised groups rises during El Nino years (which are hotter and drier),” Solomon Hsiang, the study’s lead author, told HT.

The study examines various aspects of climate such as rainfall, drought or temperature and their association with three categories of violence — personal violence and crime; intergroup violence like civil wars and riots and institutional breakdowns.

The results indicate that all the three types of conflict exhibit systematic and large responses to changes in the climate.

“Our results show how climate will shape human societies,” said Marshall Burke, the co-author. The findings suggest that a global temperature rise of 2 degrees Celsius could increase the rate of intergroup conflicts by over 50% in many parts of the world.

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