

IMD's Annual Summer Forecast

Why in news?

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India Meteorological Department (IMD) has recently released its annual summer forecast.

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What are the key aspects?

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- **Summer** - 'Normal' temperatures refer to the mean temperatures during a particular period (months) between 1981 and 2010.

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- IMD has forecasted a "warmer" than normal summer months from March-May.

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- **Heat Waves** - The IMD's climate summary in January said that 2017 was the "fourth warmest year on record since 1901".

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- Several parts of India, from Palakkad in Kerala to Mumbai, reported heat wave conditions.

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- They recorded day time temperatures greater than 35°C.

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- Increasing trends in the frequency and duration of heat waves over the country is also indicated.

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- This is attributed to increasing trends in the greenhouse gases emission.

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- The warming of the sea surface temperatures over the equatorial Indian and Pacific oceans is also a reason.

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- **Regions** - A harsh summer is awaiting certain states, with mean seasonal temperature-spikes likely to be greater than 1 °C.

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- These are J&K, Punjab, HP, west and east Rajasthan, Uttarakhand, west and

east UP, west and east MP, Vidarbha, Gujarat and Arunachal Pradesh.

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- Certain parts would witness temperature rise between 0.5°C and 1°C from their historical normal.

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- These include Tamil Nadu, south interior Karnataka and Rayalaseema.

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- **La Nina** - La Nina is a weather condition that generally brings heavy rains to India.

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- Currently, the sea surface temperature conditions over equatorial Pacific suggest moderate La Nina conditions.

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- The IMD forecast indicates that La Nina conditions are likely to be moderate till spring (May-end).

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- They are likely to start weakening after spring.

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- But even if La Nina weakens, it is sure that El Nino (which negatively effects monsoon) will not immediately develop.

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- Given these, the prospects of a normal monsoon are more.

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- However forecasts before spring are prone to error, with better accuracy after May.

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Why is the forecast significant?

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- A scientific estimate of annual mortality attributable to heat waves between 2010 and 2015 ranges between 1,300 and 2,500.

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- For many States, the summer of 2018 may pose a public health challenge.

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- Even a marginal rise above the normal may lead to enormous heat stress for

millions of Indians, given the deprived conditions of life.

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- A heat event can lead to fatal heat stroke in some, and exhaustion, cramps and fainting in many.

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- Moreover, there are distinct groups at particular risk for health-related problems during a heat wave.

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- These include senior citizens and people with pre-existing disease, mental illness or disability.

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What does it call for?

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- The IMD's forecast is a timely alert for State authorities to review their summer preparedness.

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- **Interventions** - States must facilitate for community-level interventions.

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- This is to deal with heat stress and particularly to help the vulnerable groups.

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- All stakeholders, including the health-care system, should be prepared to deal with the phenomenon.

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- **Alerts** - The World Health Organisation recommends that countries adopt heat-health warning systems.

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- This includes daily alerts on weather conditions.

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- This could ensure that people are in a position to deal with adverse weather, starting with reduction of exposure.

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- **Water stress**- Water stress is a common and often chronic feature in many States.

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- Arrangements should be made by the State authorities to meet possible water scarcity.

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- **GHG** - The average temperature caused by climate change and the frequency and intensity of extreme weather events are perceivably linked.

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- Thus, taking a long-term view, India has to pursue mitigation of greenhouse gases.
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Source: The Hindu

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Quick Fact

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La Nina

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- La Nina is associated with the cooling of the eastern equatorial Pacific Ocean.
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- It favourably impacts the four-month long (June to September) south-west monsoon in India.
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- This is particularly critical to the rain-fed farming season which begins in June.
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