

WMO Forecast on El Niño 2026

Prelims: Current events of national and international importance | Geography

Why in News?

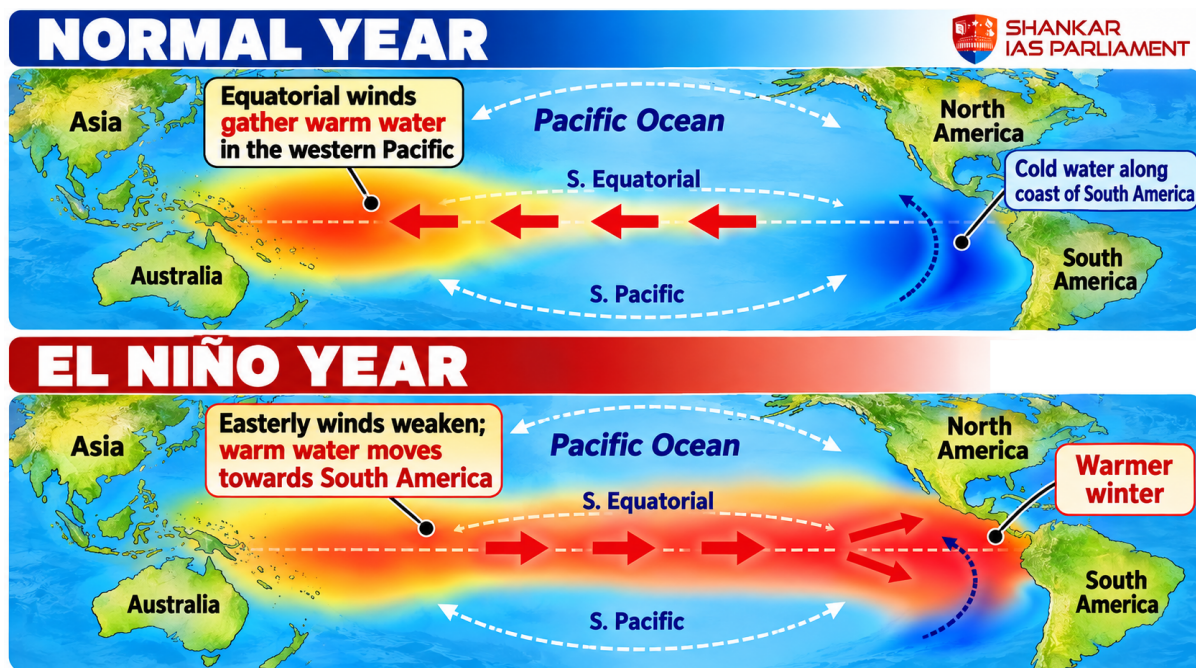
The World Meteorological Organization (WMO) has forecast that the ongoing El Niño event could become one of the strongest on record since 1950, potentially peaking around December 2026.

WMO - Forecast Findings

- Sea surface temperatures in the Niño 3.4 region of the equatorial Pacific have reached record levels, with anomalies projected to rise to approximately 3.7°C above normal.
- Around 2.6 billion people worldwide could experience unusually high temperatures through December.
- Drought conditions could intensify across parts of India, Africa, Central and South America, Indonesia and the Pacific, while extreme rainfall could threaten around 1.3 billion people globally.
- The WMO forecasts a near-100% likelihood of El Niño persisting through February 2027, with its influence on weather patterns potentially continuing into spring.

El Niño

- El Niño represents the warm phase of the El Niño-Southern Oscillation (ENSO), which is a naturally occurring climate phenomenon in the tropical Pacific Ocean.
- This phase is characterized by abnormal warming of sea surface temperatures in the central and eastern equatorial Pacific Ocean.
- El Niño occurs as a result of changes in ocean-atmosphere interactions, particularly the weakening of trade winds.



Impact of El Niño on India

- **Indian summer monsoon** - El Niño events are typically associated with an elevated risk of below-average rainfall during the southwest monsoon season.
- **Agriculture** - Rain-fed crops, including pulses, millets, and oilseeds, are particularly susceptible to rainfall deficits and increased heat stress.
- **Water resources** - Reservoir storage, groundwater recharge, and the availability of drinking water are likely to be adversely affected.
- **Food security** - Reduced agricultural output can contribute to increased volatility in food prices.
- **Heatwaves** - Elevated temperatures are expected to intensify heat stress and increase electricity demand.

Reference

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