



# CURRENT AFFAIRS



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## SNOWLESS KASHMIR

### SNOWLESS KASHMIR

THIS ARTICLE COVERS 'DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS' AND THE TOPIC DETAILS OF "SNOWLESS KASHMIR". THIS TOPIC IS RELEVANT IN THE "GEOGRAPHY" SECTION OF THE UPSC CSE EXAM.

**UPSC MAINS GS1 SYLLABUS:** IMPORTANT GEOPHYSICAL PHENOMENA

### WHY IN THE NEWS?

The main Indian tourist attractions, Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh, have seen little snowfall or rainfall this winter, which has resulted in a drop in visitors.

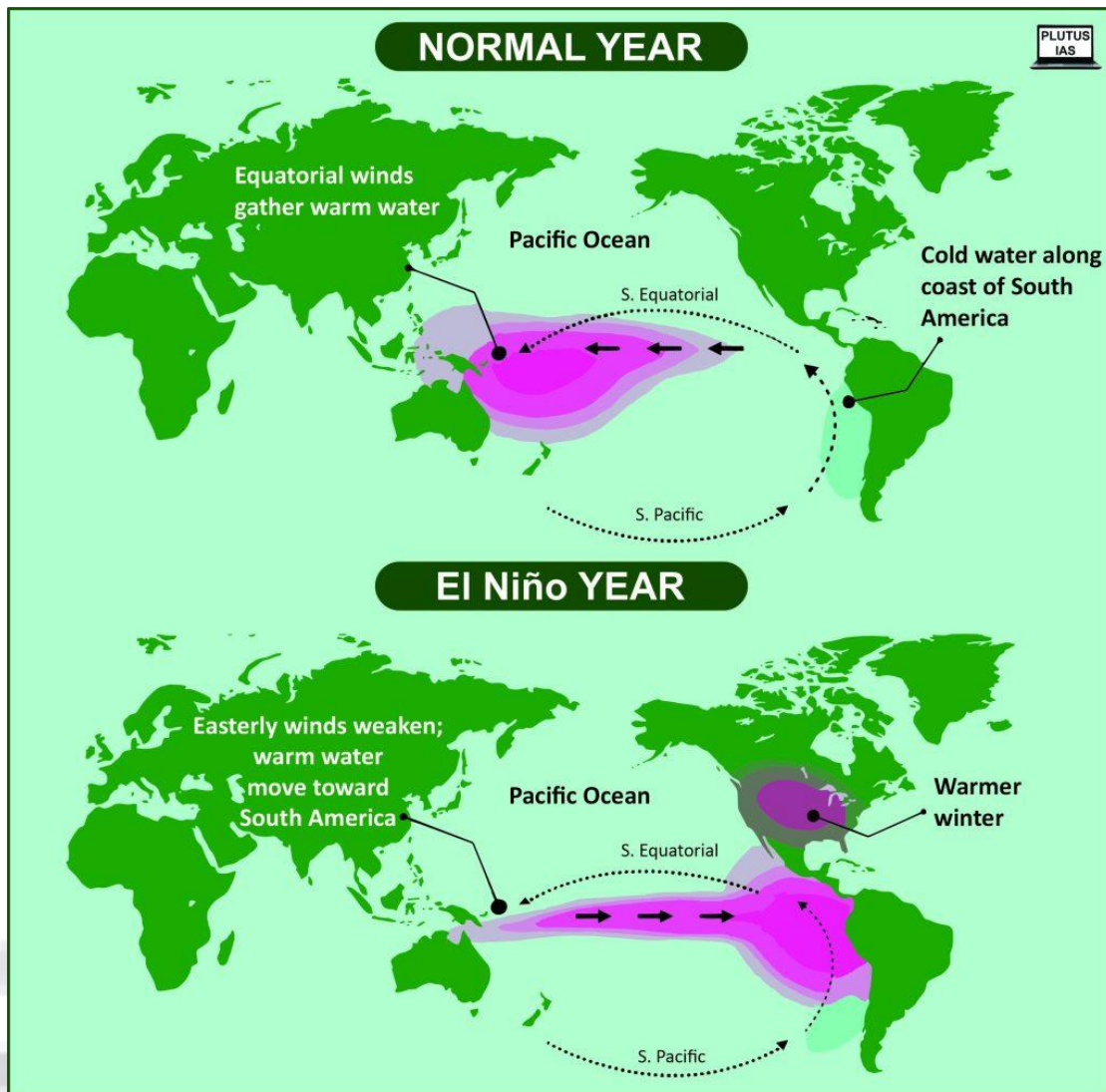
### SCENARIO THIS YEAR

- In Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh, **winter precipitation** primarily takes the form of **snowfall**. The first snowfall often occurs in the first part of December and lasts through most of January in this area.
- However, **this season** has been generally **dry**. The whole of Jammu and Kashmir as well as Ladakh have mostly avoided rain or snow this winter, despite the fact that the absence of snow is most noticeable in **Gulmarg**, a popular tourist destination at this time of year.
- According to data from the **India Meteorological Department (IMD)**, Jammu and Kashmir experienced an **80%** rainfall shortfall in December and a **100% (none at all)** deficiency in January thus far. There has been absolutely no precipitation in Ladakh in December or January.

### WHAT CAUSES DRY WINTER IN KASHMIR?

- **WESTERN DISTURBANCE**
  1. A progressive rise in temperatures, perhaps caused by climate change, and a decrease in Western Disturbance episodes have been linked to the overall trend of decreased snowfall. The main cause of winter precipitation in the Himalayan region is Western Disturbances.
  2. There has been a downward tendency in the quantity of Western Disturbance events, which has led to a decrease in total precipitation over the winter.
  3. Large rain-bearing wind systems known as "Western Disturbances" originate outside of Afghanistan and Iran and move eastward, bringing moisture with them from as far away as the Atlantic and Mediterranean Seas.
- **ROLE OF CLIMATE CHANGE AND EL NINO**
  1. Numerous research have shown that Kashmir's decreasing snowfall is partly due to climate change.

2. Snowfall is further impacted by the faster rate of temperature increase in upper elevation places compared to the lowlands.
3. It is proposed that an additional element influencing global air circulation and contributing to the region's precipitation shortfall is the ongoing El Niño event in the eastern Pacific Ocean.
4. In the past ten years, Jammu & Kashmir has experienced a few relatively dry winters with very little snowfall, including in 2022, 2018, and 2015.



**El Niño** is a climate phenomenon characterized by the periodic warming of sea surface temperatures in the **central and eastern equatorial Pacific**. This disrupts normal weather patterns, leading to droughts, floods, and other extreme conditions globally. El Niño events occur irregularly, impacting agriculture, fisheries, and weather-related disasters across regions.

- **CLIMATE AND WEATHER PATTERN**

This winter, there has been little snowfall or rain in any part of Jammu and Kashmir or Ladakh, with substantial deficits of 80% in December 2023 and 100% in January 2024 (i.e., no rain). In these areas, winter precipitation primarily takes the form of snowfall, which is essential to the local climate.

## WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS OF DRY WINTER IN KASHMIR?

- **LONG-TERM IMPLICATIONS**

1. reduced production of hydroelectricity
2. An upsurge in the glacier melting rate
3. Negative effect on the drinking water supply since there is limited groundwater recharge due to the sparse snowfall.

- **SHORT TERM IMPLICATIONS**

1. An upsurge in forest fires may occur during a dry spell.
2. Drought affecting agriculture
3. Decrease in crop yield.

- **ON AGRICULTURE**

Winter crops, especially horticulture, depend on the winter snow because it keeps the soil moist. When there is not enough snowfall, the yields of apples and saffron get negatively impacted.

- **LESS TOURISTS:**

Due to a lack of snow, Gulmarg, a popular winter tourist destination in Kashmir, is experiencing a dramatic drop in visitor numbers this year. Even with a significant influx of tourists in 2023, officials anticipate a minimum 60% decrease in foot traffic. The local economy is getting negatively impacted as ski resorts and other companies aren't generating enough profit due to the lack of snow.

## PRELIMS PRACTICE QUESTIONS

### Q1) Consider the following statements regarding El-Nino

- 1) It occurs in every 2 years
- 2) It causes droughts in South America
- 3) La Nina is the opposite phenomenon of El-Nino

### Which of the following statements given above is/are correct?

1. a) 1 and 3
2. b) 1 and 2
3. c) 1 only
4. d) 2 and 3

**ANSWER: D**

### Q2) With reference to 'Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD)' sometimes mentioned in the news while forecasting Indian monsoon, which of the following statements is/are correct? (UPSC Prelims 2017)

- 1) The IOD phenomenon is characterised by a difference in sea surface temperature between tropical Western Indian Ocean and tropical Eastern Pacific Ocean.
- 2) An IOD phenomenon can influence an El Nino's impact on the monsoon.

### Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- (a) 1 only

- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

**ANSWER: B**

### **MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION**

**Q1) Compare and contrast the effects of El Niño and La Niña on the Indian climate. Highlight the distinct characteristics of these phenomena and their varied impacts on monsoons, temperatures, and extreme weather events in different parts of the country.**

**Q2) Explain the role of Western Disturbances in influencing the weather in northern parts of India. How do these disturbances contribute to winter precipitation and temperature variations? Provide specific instances to illustrate their impact.**

## **IRAN-PAKISTAN CONFLICT**

### **Iran-Pakistan conflict**

THIS ARTICLE COVERS 'DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS' AND THE TOPIC DETAILS OF ' IRAN-PAKISTAN CONFLICT' THIS TOPIC IS RELEVANT IN THE "INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS" SECTION OF THE UPSC CSE EXAM.

**UPSC MAINS GS2 SYLLABUS:** EFFECT OF POLITICS OF DEVELOPED AND DEVELOPING COUNTRIES ON INDIA'S INTERESTS.

### **WHY IN THE NEWS?**

Iran has blasted two sites of militant group Jaish al-Adl in Pakistan's Balochistan province with missiles and drones. This incident has killed 2 children and wounded another three. As a result, Pakistan withdrew its ambassador and dismissed the Iranian diplomat.

### **WHY IRAN ATTACKED PAKISTAN:**

- Iran has described the missile strikes as a retaliation for terrorist acts that have occurred inside its borders.
- Iran launched an attack on the Kurdistan region of Iraq, while the target in Pakistan was the Balochistan province, which is close to the Iranian border and home to the base of the Sunni Muslim extremist group **Jaish al-Adl**. The Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps was responsible for carrying out the strikes.
- According to Iran, terrorist organisations were the intended targets of the suicide attack that claimed 84 lives during a Qassim Suleimani mourning parade.
- The attacks on an Iranian police post in the southeast region of Sistan-Baluchistan prompted the missile strikes on targets in Pakistan as well.

### **ABOUT SISTAN-BALUCHISTAN**

- There are one to four million members of the Baluch minority in Iran, most of whom are concentrated in Sistan-Baluchistan's southeast.
- The area is undeveloped and impoverished. It is made up of rough, rocky terrain, it has developed into a sanctuary for opium and heroin smugglers from over the border in nearby Afghanistan and Pakistan.
- **Demography of Sistan-Baluchistan:** The majority of the Baluchs that reside there are Sunni Muslims who consider themselves to be members of a historic tradition distinct from the Persian ethnic group of Iran. Shia people make up the bulk of Iran's population. They have a strong sense of identity with the Baluch communities in Pakistan, across the border.



### ABOUT JAISH AL-ADL

- Jaish al-Adl, which translates to “Army of Justice,” is a violent Sunni Salafist organisation based in the Balochistan province of Pakistan.
- These terrorists operate in Pakistan's and Iran's mountainous border regions. According to Iranian officials, it was created in 2012 and mostly functions in Pakistan.
- This group's militants claim that they are fighting for Asli Balochistan, the province of Sistan and Baluchistan, to become independent. This province, which borders the Indian Ocean and the province of Balochistan in Pakistan, is situated in southeast Iran.
- The group has purportedly carried out a number of violent operations in Iran, claiming to have bombed targets and abducted Iranian border police officers.
- Jaish al-Adl took credit for a suicide bombing that killed 27 members of Iran's Revolutionary Guard paramilitary group in 2019 and was directed towards a bus.
- Iran has suspicions that militants are being hosted by Sunni-majority Pakistan, potentially with Saudi Arabia's request.

### INSTABILITY IN THE REGION

- **SPREAD OF WAR**

Global observers are of the opinion that the disastrous war in Gaza may escalate into a more extensive and deadly regional confrontation in central Asia.

- **CONTINUED AMERICAN TROOP PRESENCE IN IRAQ**

The attack may lead to the continued deployment of American forces in Iraq.

- **RESURGENCE OF KURDISH MILITIA**

Tensions between Iranian Kurds and Kurds may increase as a result of the onslaught on Kurdish territories.

- **START OF A PROXY WAR**

Iran's actions could lead to a conflict between Iran and the United States and its allies.

- **ESCALATION OF TENSIONS**

Since the end of the Afghan civil war, the region of central Asia has been quiet. Things could soon change.

## **HOW IS IT GOING TO IMPACT INDIA?**

- **IMPACTS ON CHABAHAR PROJECT**

The instability may have an impact on the Chabahar port project, which is situated in the Sistan-Baluchistan area of Iran.

- **EFFECTS ON THE SOUTH ASIAN REGION**

There is a chance that the hostilities between Iran and Pakistan will turn into a war.

- **INDIAN STAKES IN AFGHANISTAN**

India has interests in development projects in Afghanistan, where the conflicts could expand.

- **PAKISTAN'S SECURITY DILEMMA**

Should Pakistan fall apart, India doesn't want nuclear weapons to end up in the hands of non-state actors.

- **A SURGE IN INSURGENCY IN J&K**

Pakistan can intensify insurgency in the region to deflect attention away from its own citizens during election season.

## **INDIA'S POSITION ON TERRORISM**

- **ZERO TOLERANCE**

When it comes to terrorism, India maintains an unwavering stance.

- **NON-STATE ACTORS**

India opposes using force against a state in order to combat terrorism, but it supports using force against non-state actors.

- **LABELLING**

India is against categorising acts of terrorism according to the reasons behind them.

- **SELF-DEFENSE**

India is aware of the measures other nations take to protect themselves. India acknowledges the legitimate national liberation groups' right to self-defense.

- **COOPERATION**

India is in favour of greater international cooperation in the battle against terrorism.

## **UPSC PRELIMS QUESTION**

**Q1) Which of the following strait connects the Persian Gulf with the Gulf of Oman and the Arabian Sea:**

1. a) Strait of Hormuz
2. b) Strait of Malacca
3. c) Bering strait
4. d) Sunda strait

**ANSWER: A**

**Q2) Which of the following are NOT correctly matched?**

- 1) Strait of Bab-el- Mandeb – between Red Sea and Gulf of Aden
- 2) Strait of Malacca – between Peninsular Malaysia and Sumatra
- 3) Strait of Hormuz – between Oman and Iran

**Select from the following codes**

1. a) 1 and 2
2. b) 2 and 3
3. c) 1 only
4. d) None

**ANSWER: D**

**MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION**

**Q1) Discuss the potential economic implications for India in the event of war or instability between Iran and Pakistan. Consider factors such as trade routes, energy resources, and economic partnerships.**

**Q2) Explore the impact on regional security if there is a conflict or instability between Iran and Pakistan, and its consequences for India's security concerns. Discuss potential measures India could take to address these challenges.**

**Himanshu Mishra**