Record warmth in the Pacific as El Niño strengthens: WMO

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News

According to the World Meteorological Organization's (WMO) Global Seasonal Climate Update (8 Oct 2026), sea-surface temperatures in the central-eastern equatorial Pacific (Niño 3.4) are forecast to be about +3.7°C above normal in Oct–Dec 2026, beating the previous peak of +2.6°C (Nov 2015 – Jan 2016). In early October the Niño 3.4 sea temperature crossed 30°C for the first time. This may be one of the strongest El Niños since 1950, with a near-100% chance of lasting to Feb 2027.

Key facts

Report	WMO Global Seasonal Climate Update – 8 Oct 2026
Forecast	Niño 3.4 Oct–Dec +3.7°C above normal; previous peak +2.6°C (2015–16)
Measured	Niño 3.4 sea temperature above 30°C for the first time in early Oct
Indian Ocean	Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD) – positive, peaking in October
WMO head	Secretary-General Celeste Saulo (Argentina) – first woman SG

Background

- El Niño: unusual warming of the central-eastern equatorial Pacific, every 2–7 years. Spanish for 'the boy / Christ child', as Peruvian fishermen noticed it around Christmas. The opposite phase is La Niña; together they form ENSO (El Niño–Southern Oscillation).

- Impact on India: El Niño usually weakens the southwest monsoon; a positive IOD can partly offset it.
- WMO is a UN specialised agency in Geneva; its Convention came into force on 23 March 1950, hence World Meteorological Day on 23 March. India Meteorological Department (IMD) – 1875.
- 2024 was the hottest year on record, about 1.55°C above pre-industrial (1850–1900). The Paris Agreement (2015) aims to limit warming to 1.5°C.

Tamil Nadu link: Tamil Nadu gets most of its rain from the northeast monsoon (Oct–Dec), which tends to be normal or above normal in El Niño and positive-IOD years – e.g. the 2015 Chennai floods during the strong 2015 El Niño (a tendency, not a fixed rule).

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