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The Wrong Month to Be Dry: IMD Forecasts a Below-Normal August

1 August 2026 ·

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The Wrong Month to Be Dry: IMD Forecasts a Below-Normal August

1 August 2026 · 4 min read ·

✓ Every fact web-verified against primary sources

The India Meteorological Department, in its monthly outlook issued on July 31, 2026, forecast August 2026 rainfall at below 94 per cent of the Long Period Average and flagged the entire second half of the monsoon season, August and September, as likely to be below normal.

THE FORECAST

PARAMETER	DETAIL
Issuing body	India Meteorological Department (IMD)
Issued	31 July 2026
August 2026 forecast	Below 94 per cent of the Long Period Average (LPA)
Second half of season (Aug-Sep)	Below normal
Regional exceptions	Parts of peninsular, central, eastern and northeastern India , and parts of northwest India, may still see normal to above-normal rainfall
Attributed driver	Moderate El Nino conditions , expected to strengthen
Indian Ocean Dipole	Currently neutral ; some international forecasting centres expect it to turn positive in September

READING IMD'S CATEGORIES CORRECTLY

IMD's seasonal rainfall classification is a specific, defined scale that UPSC tests directly, and "below 94 per cent of LPA" is not a casual phrase.

CATEGORY	RANGE (AS PERCENTAGE OF LPA)
Deficient	Less than 90 per cent
Below normal	90 to 96 per cent
Normal	96 to 104 per cent
Above normal	104 to 110 per cent
Excess	More than 110 per cent

The **Long Period Average (LPA)** is the average rainfall recorded over a long reference period, used as the benchmark against which any season's performance is measured.

WHY AUGUST SPECIFICALLY IS THE WORST MONTH FOR THIS

A rainfall deficit is not equally damaging in every month of the monsoon. June rainfall drives **sowing**; a June deficit delays planting but can often be recovered if later rain arrives. August rainfall drives **grain filling**, the stage at which the kharif crop's yield per plant is actually determined, and a deficit here cannot be recovered by later rain because the biological window has closed.

MONSOON MONTH	AGRICULTURAL FUNCTION	CONSEQUENCE OF DEFICIT
June	Sowing and transplanting	Delayed planting; partially recoverable
July	Vegetative growth	Stress, but some resilience
August	Grain filling, yield determination	Yield loss largely irrecoverable
September	Crop maturation; reservoir topping-up for rabi	Affects rabi water availability more than kharif yield

August is also the peak reservoir-recharge month. A deficit therefore hits twice: it reduces the current kharif yield and it lowers the reservoir storage baseline that the following rabi season's irrigation depends on.

THE TRANSMISSION CHAIN TO WATCH

STAGE	MECHANISM
Rainfall deficit in August	Kharif yield falls, particularly for rain-fed crops (pulses, coarse cereals, oilseeds)
Lower reservoir storage	Reduced irrigation water for the rabi sowing season that follows
Reduced supply	Upward pressure on food prices, particularly pulses and vegetables
Food inflation	Feeds into headline CPI, in which food carries a substantial weight
Monetary policy	Constrains the RBI's room to ease rates, since food-driven inflation complicates the inflation-targeting framework
Rural demand	Lower farm incomes reduce rural consumption, with knock-on effects for the wider economy

THE EL NINO AND IOD INTERACTION

IMD attributes the outlook to prevailing El Nino conditions. The important analytical **nuance**, and one UPSC frequently tests, is that El Nino's effect on the Indian monsoon is **probabilistic, not deterministic**, and is significantly modulated by the Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD).

A **positive IOD** (warmer western Indian Ocean relative to the east) tends to enhance Indian monsoon rainfall and can partially offset El Nino's suppressing effect. IMD's note that the IOD is currently neutral, with some international forecasting centres expecting it to turn positive only in **September**, is therefore consequential: the offsetting factor arrives after the month in which the deficit does the most agricultural damage.

UPSC RELEVANCE

GS Paper 1: Important geophysical phenomena, climatology; monsoon mechanism and variability.

GS Paper 3: Agriculture, cropping patterns, irrigation; food security; disaster management.

Prelims pointers:

- August 2026 forecast: **below 94 per cent of LPA**; IMD's "**below normal**" category is **90-96 per cent of LPA**.
- **LPA** (Long Period Average): the long-run reference average against which seasonal rainfall is measured.

- Attributed driver: **moderate El Nino conditions**, expected to strengthen; **Indian Ocean Dipole** currently neutral, with some international centres expecting a positive IOD in **September**.
- A **positive IOD** tends to enhance Indian monsoon rainfall and can partially offset El Nino.

★ FACTS CORNER, KNOWLEDGEPEDIA

THE FORECAST:

IMD outlook issued 31 July 2026: August rainfall below 94 per cent of LPA; Aug-Sep below normal.

Exceptions: parts of peninsular, central, eastern and northeastern India, and parts of northwest India.

IMD RAINFALL CATEGORIES (AS % OF LPA):

Deficient <90; Below normal 90-96; Normal 96-104; Above normal 104-110; Excess >110.

WHY AUGUST MATTERS MOST:

August is the kharif grain-filling stage, when yield is determined; deficits here are largely irrecoverable.

August is also the peak reservoir-recharge month, so a deficit also reduces rabi irrigation availability.

DRIVERS: MODERATE EL NINO CONDITIONS, EXPECTED TO STRENGTHEN; IOD NEUTRAL NOW, WITH SOME INTERNATIONAL CENTRES EXPECTING IT TO TURN POSITIVE IN SEPTEMBER, MEANING THE OFFSETTING FACTOR ARRIVES LATE.

Sources: India Meteorological Department, Ministry of Earth Sciences, The Hindu

Source: The Wrong Month to Be Dry: IMD Forecasts a Below-Normal August — Ujyari.com | Free UPSC & State PCS Current Affairs

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