

# El Nino could cast a cloud this monsoon

By **ASHOK B. SHARMA**

**New Delhi, April 19:** The weather god may play truant this monsoon—as he did last year.

Different global forecast models indicate good rains in June, the first monsoon month. But for the three months after, the monsoon's fate may be under a cloud.

One thing is clear: Monsoon 2005 will not have excess rainfall on a nationwide scale. For, experts say the La Nina phenomenon (cooling of Pacific waters), which usually results in excess rainfall, may not emerge this time.

As for the El Nino phenomenon (warming of Pacific waters), global forecast models predict "neutral conditions" in April, May and June — again, leading to good rains in June. But in July, August and September, there are chances of El Nino conditions emerging to spoil the monsoon.

The country's weathermen are keenly tracking developments in the Pacific Ocean before making a preliminary forecast on this monsoon. As per routine, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) should have made this preliminary forecast in the first week of April. But the wait now is for a revised forecast on El Nino, expected on April 21.

Last year, the IMD predicted a 100 per cent normal monsoon, based on El Nino projections in April — a forecast that flopped. This time, it plans to move cautiously.

The US-based National Ocean and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and

National Centre for Environmental Prediction (NCEP) have projected "a transition from weak warm episode (El Nino conditions) to El Nino Southern Oscillation neutral conditions" in April, May and June. Another US agency, International Research Institute for Climate Prediction (IRI) has marked a 65 per cent chance of neutral El Nino conditions in April, May and June. Both projections confirm a good rainfall in June.

However, there is a 50-per cent chance of El Nino emerging in July, August and September, which may spoil the rest of the season.

Back home, the Bangalore-based Centre for Mathematical Modelling and Computer Simulations (C-MMACS) has predicted that monsoon will enter the Indian mainland through North-East — around May 16 — rather than the usual Kerala coast route.

The monsoon will touch the Kerala coast around May 26, say C-MMACS experts. There, the monsoon will be marked by persistent rainfall of 6 millimetre or more per day for three consecutive days. In the North-East, there will be persistent rainfall "with weak breaks" till June 31.

According to C-MMACS, the country will witness above normal rainfall in June, with possible floods in large parts of eastern and north-eastern regions. C-MMACS experts, though, insist that it is not responsible for "any damage arising from the usage of these forecasts by any party. (These forecasts are) for the sole purpose of an objective evaluation of the methodology."