



Increase in Frequency of Medicanes

Why in News

Scientists have warned that **extra-tropical storms** in the **Mediterranean Sea**, known as 'Medicane' or 'Mediterranean Hurricanes', could become more frequent due to [human-induced climate change](#).



Key Points

▪ Medicanes:

- Medicanes are **tropical-like cyclones** formed over the Mediterranean Sea.
- With the surrounding dry climate and the relatively shallow waters of the sea, the occurrence of tropical-like cyclones is **infrequent**.
- They typically **form in the fall or winter months and occur once or twice a year**.
- On September 18, 2020, a medicane named **Lanos** made landfall along the coast of **Greece** and caused heavy rainfall and flooding in Greece and surrounding islands.

▪ Comparison with Tropical Cyclones:

- These **occur more in relatively colder waters** than tropical cyclones, [hurricanes](#) and [typhoons](#). Hence, the cores of these storms are also cold, as compared to the warm cores

of tropical cyclones (but warmer as compared to extra-tropical cyclones).

- These are typically **smaller in diameter and have lower wind speeds than true tropical cyclones.**
- Sometimes, **warm-cored tropical cyclones transform into cold-cored extratropical cyclones** and in rare cases, the opposite can also happen.
- Such an event of extra tropical cyclone becoming a tropical cyclone occurred in November 2011 and caused severe flooding in parts of Spain, Italy and France, killing 11 people.

▪ Increase in Occurrence

- Medicanes have **increased in number in the past half-century.**
- Two of these storms, one in 2005 and another in 2012, even formed over the [Black Sea](#), which is a much smaller water body than the Mediterranean Sea.
- Due to global warming, warmer sea surface temperatures in the Mediterranean can allow the storms to **take on more tropical appearances and characteristics**, increasing the wind speeds and making the storms more intense and cause heavier rainfall.
- This year is a **mild La Niña**, according to the [World Meteorological Organization](#). La Niña tends to reduce the land falling hurricanes but even if the **La Niña this year is mild, the hurricane season is very active.** This implies that the impacts of [El Niño Southern Oscillation \(ENSO\)](#) are being modulated by global warming in all oceans, including the Mediterranean.
- La Niña is the cooling phase of the ENSO cycle in the equatorial Pacific Ocean, as opposed to the warming El Niño phase. It is characterised by the **unusual cooling of the central and east-central equatorial Pacific Ocean.**
- The [Special Report on the Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate](#) released Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in 2019 warns of increased temperatures **and more frequent extreme El Niño and La Niña events.**

▪ Threats:

- Increase in frequency of medicanes will be a threat for already vulnerable populations living in North Africa, possibly triggering [human migration](#).
- They could also be a menace for European countries like Italy and Greece.

[Source: DTE](#)