IMD - Monsoon Forecast

Why in news?

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The Indian Meteorological Department has recently released the monsoon forecast for this year.

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What are the key findings?

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- The country would experience a normal monsoon for the third successive year.
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- South-west monsoon at 97% of the long period average (LPA) is expected.
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- Long Period Average (LPA) is the average annual rainfall for the period 1951-2000.
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- The LPA comes to about 89 cm of rain.
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- Monsoon is considered normal if average rainfall is between 96% and 104% of the LPA.
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- Anything less than 90% of the LPA is considered a deficient monsoon.
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What does it imply?

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- The forecast of a normal monsoon enhanced the economic outlook.
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- For farmers especially, this has given fresh expectations.
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- This is the third year in a row to look forward to a high output for a variety of

crops.
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- However, it is not to be forgotten that fiscal realities have come in the way of realising higher farm incomes.
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- The Centre has been supportive of higher returns through the Minimum Support Price mechanism.
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- Moreover, additional bonuses have been announced by States such as Madhya Pradesh for procurement.
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What is the need for caution?

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- Government efforts have mainly helped only rice and wheat.
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- This trend has led to a skew towards these crops.
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- This is especially worrying from a water management perspective.
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- As the above crops are heavily dependent on groundwater.
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- With a normal monsoon, another year of good cropping is expected.
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- But unremunerative prices will depress public sentiment.
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- So it is vital for the Centre to arrive at a policy.
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- Farmers should be given constructive advice on the ideal cropping mix.
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- They should be helped to get the cost-plus-50% margin that the Centre has promised them.
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Why is water management crucial for India?

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- Rainfall ranges from a few hundred millimetres or less in the northwest to more than a few thousand millimetres elsewhere.

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- The long-term challenge for India is to make the most of the rainfall it receives.
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- India notably uses more water to grow crops comparing to, say, China.
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- Combined with distortions in procurement subsidies, water stress due to exorbitant use is inevitable.
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What should be done?

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- The Master Plan for Artificial Recharge to Ground Water drawn up by the Centre should be pursued scientifically.
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- This is to help States (with the most water-stressed blocks) get adequate funds to build artificial recharge structures.
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- Moreover, for farmers choosing to continue with wheat and rice, transfer of expertise is crucial.
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- Also, provision of equipment that enables efficient utilisation of water is vital.
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- A good monsoon raises agriculture’s contribution to GDP growth.
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- So it is essential that the governments invest consistently to harvest the monsoon.
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Source: The Hindu, Indian Express

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