Normal Monsoon Year

Why in news?

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The ‘Normal’ monsoon forecast of the IMD brings the promise of a year of growth and good health for India’s economy and ecology.

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What are the prospects/challenges?

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- A good monsoon year boosts the prospects of enhanced agricultural output, healthy reservoir levels, more hydropower and reduced conflicts over water.
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- It will test the efficacy of the water management initiatives launched during 2014 and 2015 by the Centre and the State governments to harness rainfall and build resilience for future drought cycles.
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- When more than half the population is sustained by agricultural livelihoods, **highly efficient water utilisation** holds the key to higher farm productivity.
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- As the IMD’s experience shows, forecasting is fraught with uncertainties and has often gone off the mark.
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- The dynamic model that it is using this year to make a forecast that **includes an assessment of two phenomena** viz. a possible late onset **El Nino** and variations in sea surface temperatures that create the **Indian Ocean Dipole**.
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What could be done?

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- During the drought, the focus has to be on plant protection, water harvesting and access to post-harvest technologies.
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- The NITI Aayog has also been calling for ways to cut water use, since **India uses two to three times more water per tonne of grain produced** compared to China, Brazil and the U.S.
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- So, the way forward is to create ponds, provide solar power for more farms, mechanise operations and expand drip irrigation coverage.
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- Aiding small farmers with the tools and providing them formal financing can relieve their cyclical distress.
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- The area under drip irrigation, estimated to be less than 10% of net area sown, can then be expanded.
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- A normal monsoon will also relieve water stress in the cities if they **prepare catchments and reservoirs** to make the most of the season and incentivise residents to install scientific rainwater harvesting systems.
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Source: The Hindu

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