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Google Fund for Journalists

- Google is about to launch an emergency fund to help local news outlets struggling to maintain operations in the face of the coronavirus pandemic.
- It would offer grants ranging from the “low thousands of dollars” for the smallest operations to “low tens of thousands for larger newsrooms.”
- The fund will open to outlets producing original news for local communities during this time of crisis with applications due by April 29.
- The move comes with the media sector facing deep cutbacks resulting from the global consumer lockdown, an intense economic slump and a retrenchment in advertising revenues that many news outlets depend on.

Indian Meteorological Department

- The IMD issues a two-stage forecast: the first in April, followed by a more detailed one in the last week of May, which will also illustrate how the monsoon will spread over the country.
- IMD uses dynamical model or the Monsoon Mission Coupled Forecast System for forecasts,that relies on supercomputers, mathematically simulating the physics of the ocean and the atmosphere.
- The dynamical model, while better at forecasting the state of the weather a week or two in advance, isn’t yet considered reliable by meteorologists in forecasting the monsoon.
- Recently IMD has predicted that India will likely have a normal monsoon in 2020, with a chance of ‘above normal’ rain in August and September.
- It has also officially redefined the definition of what constitutes ‘normal’ rainfall and reduced it by 1 cm to 88 cm from 89 cm.
- The June-September rainfall accounts for 75% of the country’s annual rainfall.
- Quantitatively, the monsoon seasonal rainfall is likely to be 100% of the Long Period Average (LPA) with a model error of ± 5%.
- The IMD’s confidence stems largely from global weather models pointing to negligible chances of El Nino, a warming of the central equatorial Pacific that’s associated with the drying up of monsoon rain.

Indian Ocean Dipole

- The Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD), also known as the Indian Niño, is an irregular oscillation of sea surface temperatures in which the western Indian Ocean becomes alternately warmer (positive phase) and then colder (negative phase) than the eastern part of the ocean.
- The IOD involves an aperiodic oscillation of sea-surface temperatures (SST), between "positive", "neutral" and "negative" phases.
- A positive phase sees greater-than-average sea-surface temperatures and greater precipitation in the western Indian Ocean region, with a corresponding cooling of waters in the eastern Indian Ocean—which tends to cause droughts in adjacent land areas of Indonesia and Australia.
- The negative phase of the IOD brings about the opposite conditions, with warmer water and greater precipitation in the eastern Indian Ocean, and cooler and drier conditions in the west.
- The IOD also affects the strength of monsoons over the Indian subcontinent.
- The IOD is one aspect of the general cycle of global climate, interacting with similar phenomena like the El Niño-Southern Oscillation (ENSO) in the Pacific Ocean.

Long Period Average

- Long Period Average (LPA) is the averages of rainfall received over a 50-year period between 1951 and 2001, this average comes to 88 cm of rainfall (according to recent change).
- This is the average rainfall recorded during the months from June to September, calculated during the 50-year period, and is kept as a benchmark while forecasting the quantitative rainfall for the monsoon season every year.
- IMD maintains five rainfall distribution categories on an all-India scale which are

1. **Normal or Near Normal:** When per cent departure of actual rainfall is +/-10% of LPA, that is, between 96-104% of LPA
2. **Below normal:** When departure of actual rainfall is less than 10% of LPA, that is 90-96% of LPA
3. **Above normal:** When actual rainfall is 104-110% of LPA
4. **Deficient:** When departure of actual rainfall is less than 90% of LPA
5. **Excess:** When departure of actual rainfall is more than 110% of LPA

Haftar forces

- Khalifa Belqasim Haftar is is the Commander of the Libyan National Army

(LNA).

- In 2015, he was appointed commander of the armed forces loyal to the elected legislative body, the Libyan House of Representatives.
- Under Haftar's leadership, LNA replaced nine elected municipal councils by military administrators, and as of May 2019, was engaged in the Second Libyan Civil War.
- Recently LNA rained rockets on the Libyan capital city Tripoli, several homes were hit around Mitiga airbase, the capital's functioning airport.
- The UN-recognised Government of National Unity, which has been battling an offensive against the capital for just over a year, accused Haftar's forces of taking revenge against Tripoli's civilian population following their losses on Monday.
- The unity government recaptured the coastal cities of Sorman and Sabratha and several inland towns.

Environment Impact Assessment (EIA)

- Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is a process of evaluating the likely environmental impacts of a proposed project or development, taking into account inter-related socio-economic, cultural and human-health impacts, both beneficial and adverse.
- Environment Impact Assessment in India is statutorily backed by the Environment Protection Act, 1986 which contains various provisions on EIA methodology and process.
- To address unprecedented situation arising from global outbreak of Novel Corona Virus (COVID-19), and to ramp up availability or production of various drugs, MoEF&CC, has made an amendment to EIA Notification 2006.
- According to the amendment all projects or activities in respect of bulk drugs and intermediates, manufactured for addressing various ailments, have been re-categorized from the existing Category ‘A’ to ‘B2’ category.
- Projects falling under Category B2 are exempted from requirement of collection of Base line data, EIA Studies and public consultation.
- The re-categorization of such proposals has been done to facilitate decentralization of appraisal to State Level so as to fast track the process.
- This amendment is applicable to all proposals received up to 30th September 2020.
- The states have also been issued advisories to expeditiously process such proposals.
- Further, to ensure expeditious disposal of the proposals within given time-line, Ministry has also advised states to use information technology e.g.

video conference, considering the fact that in view of the prevailing situation on ground, appraisal of proposals may not be possible through physical meetings.

Source: PIB, AIR News, the Hindu

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