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The Hindu
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Rajasthan Chronicle

M.P. Chronicle
Aaj (Hindi)
Indian Nation
Nai Duniya (Hindi)
The Times of India (L.)

235 Of The Country's 630 Districts Face Monsoon Deficit Of 20% Or More After floods, comes drought

Amit Bhattacharya
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New Delhi: Around 235 districts across the country face the prospect of drought this year as the monsoon appears headed for a below-normal performance, with the season's deficit currently at 6.2% of normal.

These districts, accounting for 37% of the country's 630 districts for which rain data is available, have monsoon shortfall of at least 20%, with nine show acute deficits of 60% or more, data from the India Meteorological Department reveals.

A majority of the distress districts lie in the hinterland, in a swathe running through Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Vidarbha. Uttar Pradesh, Haryana and MP are the hardest hit states, showing rain deficits of 31%, 28% and 25%, respectively.

The deficits have grown gradually since the end of July, when the monsoon started failing in central and north India. The first two months of the season, June and July, ended with a countrywide rain surplus of 2.5%. Monsoon's performance since August 1 has been a dismal 17% below normal (till September 12), with good rainfall being mainly restricted to south and northeast India.

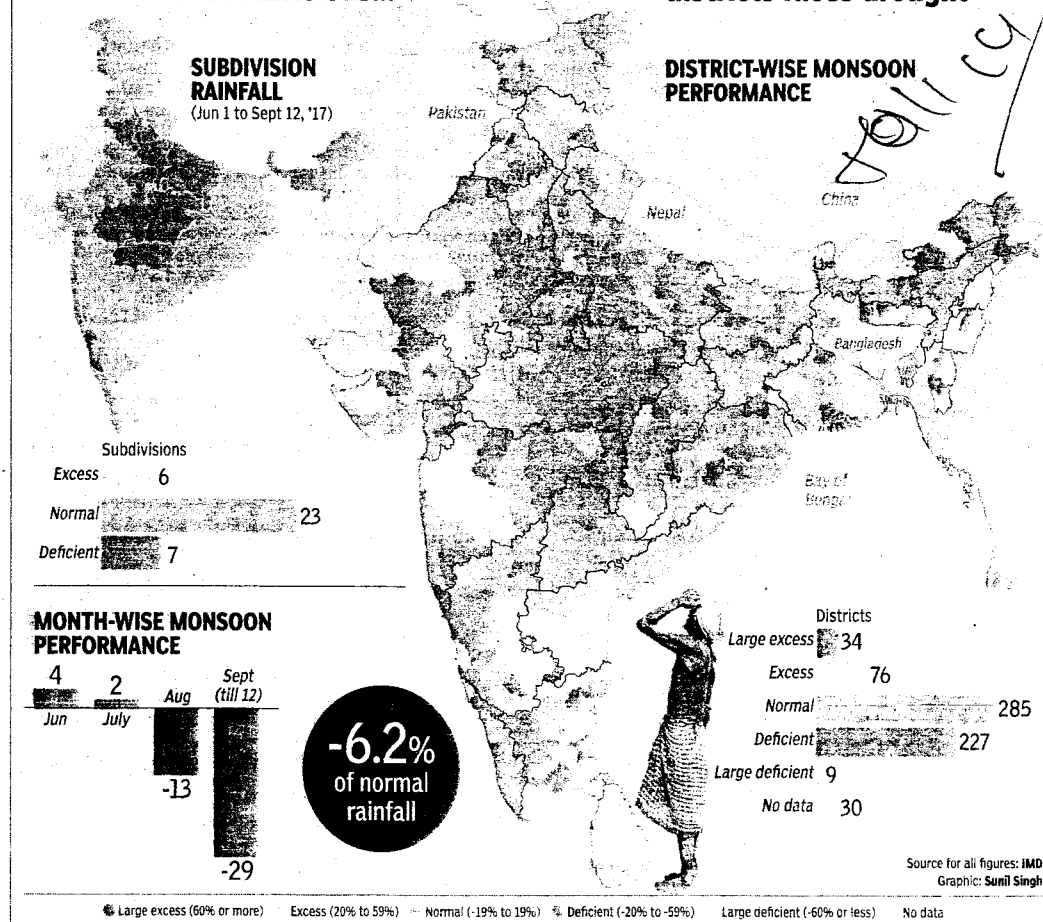
"A number of factors worked against the monsoon since July-end. There have hardly been low-pressure circulations since then and conditions in the Indian and Pacific oceans have been unfavourable," said D Sivananda Pai, head of IMD's long range monsoon forecasts.

IMD had forecast normal monsoon this year at 96% of long period average, which it updated to 98% in June.

Poor distribution of rainfall has added to the distress. As many as 110 districts have had excess or 'large excess' (over 60% of normal) rainfall. In addition, heavy rain

Monsoon deficient in less than 20% of subdivisions...

... but at least 37% of districts faces drought



spells in Gujarat, Rajasthan and catchment areas in the Himalayas (particularly in Nepal) caused the worst floods in the country in 10 years.

Ironically, states such as UP have seen both flood fury as well as the prospect of drought. The monsoon deficit in west UP stands at 37%, highest for any subdivision in the country. Of the state's 72 districts, rainfall has been deficient in 48. Of these, five

districts — Agra, Hamirpur, Mahamayanagar, Amethi and Kushinagar — face acute shortfall of 60% or more.

This combination of poor rains and floods is likely to hit kharif output, although data till September 8 reveals that the sowing area this year is only marginally less than last year's, with the biggest drops seen in oilseeds, pulses and jute. Several state governments have reported

ly started drought exercises.

Poor rains have affected water storage levels, important for winter crops. According to the Central Water Commission data, live storage at 91 important reservoirs in the country was at 58% of capacity on September 8, lowest in five years for which data was available. It was lower than the corresponding period during drought years of 2014 (74%) and 2015 (59%),

and significantly below the 10-year average of 69%.

IMD believes the second half of September could bring better rains in central India. "While the situation in northwest is not likely to change too much, there are indications that central India may get some rain in the next couple of weeks. Monsoon isn't likely to start withdrawing in the next few days," Paisaid.

दिनांक 13.09.2017 को निम्नलिखित समाचार पत्र में प्रकाशित मानसून/ बाढ़ सम्बन्धी समाचार

Hindu San Times (Delhi)
महानगर टाइम्स (दिल्ली)
The Tribune (Chandigarh)
The Hindu (Chennai)

The Assam Tribune (Guwahati)
The Times of India (Mumbai)
The Telegraph (Kolkata)
हिन्दुस्तान (पटना)

The Deccan Herald (Bengluru)
The Deccan Chronical (Hyderabad)
Central Chronicle (Bhopal)

China open to talks on Brahmaputra, Kailash

740-13
Move Comes Within Fortnight Of Doklam Pact

Saibal Dasgupta | TNN

Beijing: China indicated on Tuesday — within a fortnight of the Doklam agreement with India — that it wants to negotiate on issues like resuming supply of Brahmaputra river flow data, and the movement of pilgrims to Kailash Mansarovar, suspended during the 10-week stand-off.

The Chinese foreign ministry said it would talk to New Delhi on the pilgrim issue, adding that it needed time to consider reopening the Nathu La route to Indians visiting Mansarovar in Tibet. Beijing had stopped the passage of pilgrims in these areas following the Doklam standoff.

While conceding that Brahmaputra river data collection was stopped as systems were being upgraded, Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Geng Shuang said this did not mean Beijing was setting a timeline as to when the exchange of hydrological data would resume. India considers hydrological data crucial for making advance preparations to face floods or droughts, which are common in Brahmaputra basin areas in Assam and other parts of the Northeast.

"For long time we have conducted cooperation on river data with the Indian side. But to upgrade and renovate the relevant station on the Chinese side, we do not have the conditions now to collect the relevant statistics of the river (sic)," he said. Geng did not specify when the supply of river data would resume. "We will later consider that," he



On the pilgrimage to Mansarovar in Tibet, Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Geng Shuang said China would 'keep communication' channels open with India to discuss the issue

First Chinese min visits India post-Doklam

Kolkata: The first Chinese minister on a diplomatic mission to arrive in India after the resolution of the Doklam impasse reached Kolkata on Tuesday. The visit of the Organisation Department head of Yunnan Province and central committee member of the Communist Party of China (CPC), Li Xiaosan, was part of the relationship-building process that was "being strategically started from Bengal because of its proximity to the Yunnan Province", the Chinese consulate here said. The minister will leave for Delhi on Thursday morning with political meetings on his agenda. "Bengal has been identified as an educational and cultural hub of the country and hence we are looking to improve ties through education in this zone," said Chinese consul general Ma Zhanwu. TNN

said. The spokesman added that India was aware of the upgrading of data collection stations on the Brahmaputra on the Chinese side.

The signal from Beijing is that it wants to renegotiate some aspects of bilateral relations without allowing New Delhi to assume that the end of the border stand-off would mean a return to the old situation. The two countries had agreed to end the stand-off near the Sikkim border on August 30. On the pilgrimage to Mansarovar in Tibet, Geng said China would "keep communication" channels open with India to discuss the is-

sue. He indicated that the pilgrim route was opened in the first place on the assumption that there was no problem on the India-China border and that the situation changed after Indian troops "illegally" crossed the border. "For long, China has made efforts to provide necessary convenience to the Indian pilgrims. According to the agreement reached between the two leaders (Modi and Xi Jinping), and based on the fact that the western section of the India-China boundary has been recognised by the two sides, China opened the pass to the Indian pilgrims," he said.

and documented at Bhagirath(English)& Publicity Section. CWC

Patchy monsoon clouds prospects for bumper harvest repeat this year

HARISH DAMODARAN
NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 13

THE UNION agriculture ministry will, most likely early next week, release the first advance estimates of this year's kharif crop output. What is more or less clear, though, is that overall farm production this time isn't going to be as good as last year.

There are two reasons for this.

The first is the southwest monsoon rains, which haven't been as well-distributed, both spatially and temporally, as in 2016. Although the country as a whole received four per cent and 1.7 per cent above-average rainfall in June and July, respectively, the Deep South belt — covering much of Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Kerala — experienced a dry spell, coming on top of last year's drought/near-drought conditions. These tracts have since seen some revival, even if too late for sowing, but rains at an all-India level have been deficient by 12.7 per cent in August and by 31.3 per cent so far this month. Since August, rainfall activity has been particularly weak across Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra's Vidarbha region. Add to this the impact of flooded fields from excess rains in parts of Gujarat, Rajasthan, Bihar, Assam and West Bengal, the picture doesn't look all that pretty.

Secondly, the agriculture ministry's own data on area sown during the current kharif season shows a decline over last year for most crops, barring cotton and sugarcane. Lack of rains has especially hit Karnataka, with the state reporting lower acreages under maize, jowar (sorghum), bajra (pearl-millet), rice, arhar (pigeon-pea), moong (green gram), groundnut, soyabean and

sunflower. MP has recorded higher plantings of urad (black gram), moong, maize, bajra, jowar and sesamum, but it remains to be seen to what extent their yields — and also of soyabean, the state's main kharif crop — have been affected by the extended dry weather from August.

In all, we can, at best, expect a decent kharif crop this time and, at any rate, not the record-breaking production of rice, maize, arhar, urad and moong achieved last year.

More worrying, however, is the prospects for the ensuing rabi season, the plantings for which take place from end-October. According to the Central Water Commission's latest available information as on September 7, water levels in 91 major reservoirs of the country were only 57.8 per cent of their total live storage capacity. During the same time last year, these reservoirs were 68.5 per cent full, while the last 10-year-average storage level for this period was also higher at 68.9 per cent. Current water levels are below their corresponding ten-year-average in as many as 47 out of the 91 reservoirs, with the situation most precarious in Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Tamil Nadu and Kerala.


That, together with the monsoon's weakening in the second half of the season (August-September), translates into relatively poor water availability for growing wheat, chana (chickpea), masur (lentil) and mustard. This would be more so in Madhya Pradesh, which is a major producer of all these rabi crops. That, in turn, rules out a repeat of 2016-17, which had witnessed an all-time-high production of wheat as well.

AREA COVERAGE UNDER KHARIF CROPS* (IN LAKH HECTARES)

	THIS YEAR	LAST YEAR	NORMAL
Rice	371.46	376.89	368.61
Pulses	139.17	144.84	113.58
Arhar	42.81	52.19	40.07
Urad	42.15	34.83	27.27
Moong	31.48	34.25	25.63
Coarse cereals	183.43	186.06	178.88
Maize	79.43	82.79	76.31
Bajra	71.38	68.65	66.83
Jowar	17.89	19.51	20.11
Ragi	9.82	9.78	10.26
Oilseeds	169.20	187.16	182.41
Soyabean	105.26	114.66	114.48
Groundnut	40.78	46.46	40.16
Sesamum	13.48	15.48	15.20
Castor	6.86	7.51	9.00
Cotton	120.98	101.72	113.10
Sugarcane	49.88	45.64	49.49
Jute & Mesta	7.05	7.56	7.92

*Data, including for 2016 and Normal, is as on September 8;
Normal is average of 2012-13 to 2016-17 as on September 8.

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maravati, the new capital of Andhra Pradesh being built along the Krishna river, is touted as a model of a planned city. But its residents may have to shell out a lot for drinking water. And during heavy rains, a threat of floods will loom over them.

For, the city is coming up on the floodplains and palaeo channels (extinct course of a river) that play a key role in controlling overflow from the Krishna and ensuring potable water in a region otherwise afflicted by the scourge of groundwater salinity.

"The Krishna used to follow a different course 5 lakh to

Any construction on them is expected to prove dangerous. Though a deeper foundation will protect buildings, it will obstruct the flow of underground water streams through paleo channels, thereby affecting aquifers in the region that are fed by them, said K Babu Rao, a scientist from the National Alliance of People's Movements, championing the cause of ecological balance.

Aquifers in the Krishna delta hold valuable reservoirs of fresh water—the rest of the region has saline groundwater—worth over Rs 1,000 crore annually. But they will be lost if Amaravati is built over paleo channels, says experts.

However, the Andhra Pradesh State Capital Region Development Authority (APCRDA) seems oblivious to the problem. It is only focused on ensuring that the river's floodplains are kept free of construction. Stressing on the fact that Amaravati would require "extra protection from flooding", APCRDA officials said a minimum construction level would be set to ensure Amaravati is safe even when Krishna crosses the danger mark.

APCRDA has informed the National Green Tribunal about its strategy to prevent flooding and has approached the World Bank seeking funds for flood mitigation, and development activities in Amaravati. In a report to World Bank, APCRDA said it has studied the flood lines for once-in-100 years, -50 years and -25 years floods in the region.

Environmentalists are not convinced though. Water conservationist Rajendra Singh, who recently toured Amaravati, challenged APCRDA for a debate on the impact of paleo channels and floodplains.

Discounting flood fears, APCRDA principal secretary Ajay Jain told **TOI**: "The idea of a river-based capital is not to spoil the environment but to protect and beautify the Krishna riverside. The green field capital is being shaped essentially as a blue green city. We have roped in a consultant from the Netherlands for this."



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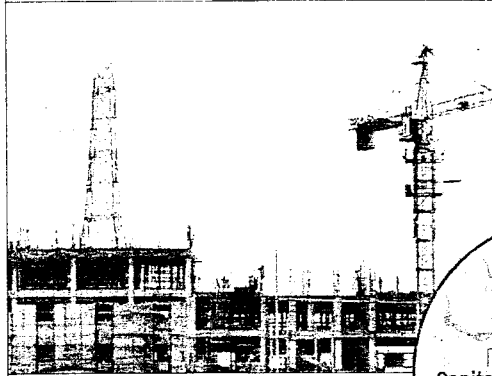
Building the Future with Sustainable Communities & Partners

10 lakh years ago. These courses are now present in the form of palaeo channels. Water flows through them underground. Any obstruction to their path—through construction of buildings or roads—will lead to flooding and abnormal increase in the groundwater table," says environmentalist V Satyanarayana.

Flooding along the Krishna in 2009 that affected over 400 villages and towns was partly attributed to such activity.

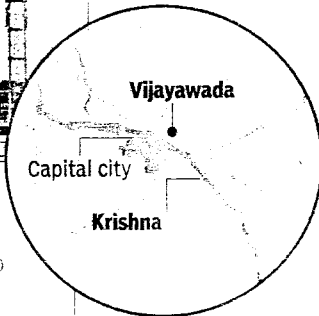
Experts from the Geological Survey of India (GSI), Hyderabad, say the floodplains of Vijayawada are spread over 246 sqkm and the palaeo channels cover about 55 sqkm.

AMARAVATI MAY FACE RISK OF WATER SHORTAGE



New capital will come up on about

50,000 acres
of fertile land

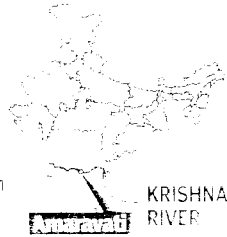


Krishna's journey
1,300 km
Length

► **4 states:** Flows through Maharashtra, Karnataka, Telangana and Andhra Pradesh

► **5 major dams in Andhra:** Srisailem, Nagarjunasagar, NS dam tail pond, Pulichintala and Prakasam Barrage

► Meets the Bay of Bengal in Krishna district after dividing into two



Lifeline of Andhra

► Krishna is source of drinking water for Vijayawada and upcoming Amaravati, besides thousands of villages. Water is also supplied to Chennai & Hyderabad

What's a paleo channel & why is it important?

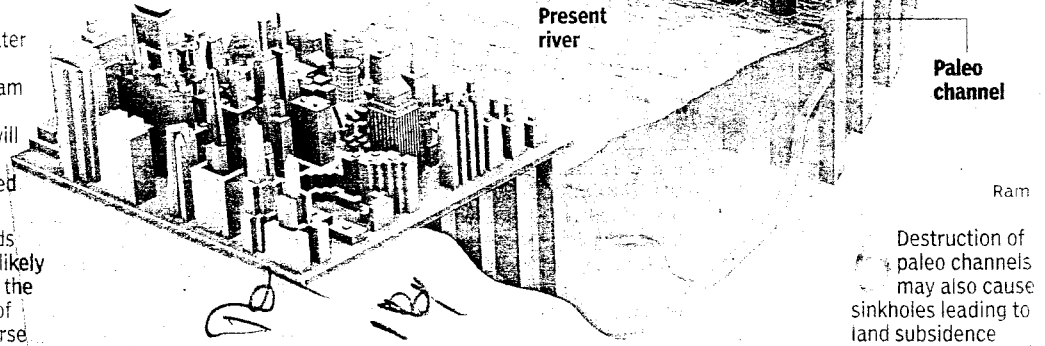
It's an underground channel which represents an extinct course of a river or water body

► In Krishna delta, fresh water is held by paleo channels; if they are blocked, groundwater aquifers downstream from the channel will not get replenished

► Floods also likely from the blocking of paleo course

Massive constructions are proposed on Amaravati riverfront, which will block the paleo course of Krishna

In Amaravati, which has largely saline groundwater, paleo channels provide valuable freshwater streams; if they are lost, cost of boosting water supply would be Rs 1,000cr



Infrastructure proposed for capita!

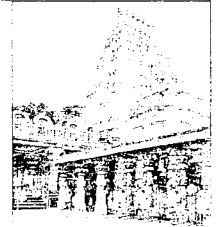
Kuchipudi originated in a village on Krishna banks

► It is believed Arjuna performed penance at Indrakeeladri ghat in Vijayawada before battle. He emerged victorious, thus giving Vijayawada its name - The City of Victory

Krishna Pushkaram: Millions of

people take holy dip during Pushkaram held once in 12 years

► **Srisailem**, Sri Amareswara Swami temple and several other Hindu, Buddhist and Jain religious places located on the banks or in vicinity



Saline groundwater leaves villagers thirsting on river islands

Saline groundwater leaves villagers thirsting on river islands

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They live in the midst of coconut lagoons and mangroves. But life's not rosy for the lakhs living in islands on the mouth of the Godavari and Krishna in Andhra Pradesh.

The two major islands and over two dozen islets face a severe shortage of potable water almost round the year. It gets worse during summer and in years when rain is deficient. The river water is not an option because currents carry the seawater right up the mouth and upstream turning the river saline around island villages up to 15 km away from the Bay of Bengal.

Andhra Pradesh's Lakshmi Narayana Murthy, minister for water resources, says the state government is planning to build a desalination plant to provide potable water to the islands.



BATTLING NATURE Residents of many river islands at the mouth of the Krishna and Godavari ferry potable water from the mainland by boat for a premium.

Andhra Pradesh's Lakshmi Narayana Murthy, minister for water resources, says the state government is planning to build a desalination plant to provide potable water to the islands.

Suman Reddy

AP CHANTS JALA SIRI

Andhra Pradesh chief minister N Chandrababu Naidu on Wednesday said his government aims to make the state a role model in protecting and reviving rivers. Speaking at an event held in Vijayawada as part of the Sadhguru's pan-India Rally for Rivers, the chief minister said his government has launched the Jala Siri programme to conserve groundwater resources. Sadhguru expressed concern over the depletion of water in perennial rivers. Later, he left for Hyderabad, where he will address public events on Thursday and Friday.

Andhra Pradesh chief minister N Chandrababu Naidu on Wednesday said his government aims to make the state a role model in protecting and reviving rivers.

islets. As a result, vast stretches of farmlands have turned barren; cattle are in dire straits. "Sometimes, the animals are forced to drink from the highly polluted river. The only source of freshwater for the villages is the channels from the main canals of Prakasam Barrage, some 50 km upstream," says Venkateswaramma, a farmer from Gollamanda.

The last time the Krishna estuary had potable freshwater was in October 2009 when the river was in spate.

Experts blame the scarcity of potable water on the reduced inflows from upstream, frequent failure of the monsoon, seawater ingress, over-drawing of groundwater and loss of vegetation. "The scarcity is mostly due to human intervention. The river is not getting enough water from the upstream," says Venkateswaramma.

Andhra Pradesh chief minister N Chandrababu Naidu on Wednesday said his government aims to make the state a role model in protecting and reviving rivers.