News item/letter/article/editorial published on May 27.05.2016 in the

Hindustan Times
Statesman
The Times of India (N.D.)
Indian Express
Tribune
Hindustan (Hindi)
Nav Bharat Times (Hindi)
Punjab Keshari (Hindi)
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The Times of India (A)
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HT. 27. P-05

Bad drainage, no desilting chokes Capital, says study

EXPERTSPEAK Several roads across Delhi do not have properly designed slopes to drain out rain water. 56 arterial roads identified

Soumya Pillai
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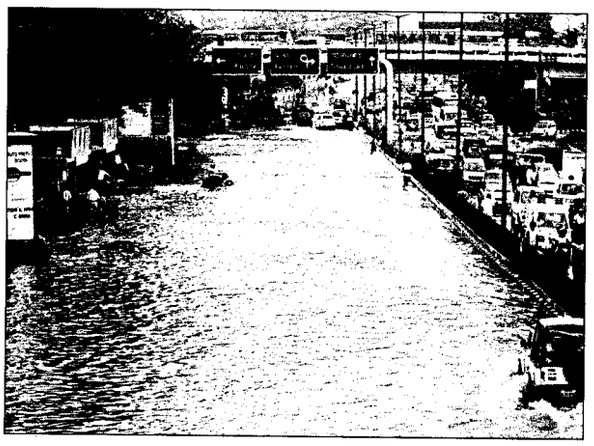
NEW DELHI: A few days of rain this week was enough to clog the roads of the city with knee-deep water followed by incessant traffic jams.

A study by IIT Delhi revealed that improper drainage system and the lack of a comprehensive mechanism for desilting top the list of reasons for traffic jams in Delhi.

The study revealed that several roads across the Capital do not have properly designed slopes to help drain out rain water. A list of 56 arterial roads has been identified with the problem.

"There is a major problem with the drainage design and curves in many major roads which causes knee-deep water. This is the reason why a brief spell of rain is enough to bring the city's traffic to a standstill. Since we cannot redesign the roads, the solution would be to acquire proper desilting mechanism to drain out water," said Dr D Parathasarathy, visiting faculty at IIT and head of the research.

He said that improper drainage and water logging proved to be the reason behind at least 60% of the traffic snarls in the period of April to September. The study was conducted in 2015. Excessive and unchecked water logging not only adds to the jams but over a period of time it also wears down the surface of the road.



Improper drainage, water logging were the reasons behind 60% of traffic snarls in the period between April and September. HT FILE PHOTO

Sri Aurobindo Marg, Adchini Road, South Extension (Ring Road), Safdarjung Development Area, Khajuri Khas, Sarai Kale Khan, Moti Bagh intersection (below the flyover), Pankha Road (towards Sagarpur), Okhla main road, and Jamia Nagar intersection, are among the few roads which have featured in the list.

The list of roads and the findings of the study will be examined by a panel of experts comprising urban city designers, civil engineers, environmentalists, and representatives from all the road owning agencies — Public Works Department (PWD), the three municipal corporations (north, south, and east), New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC), Delhi Development Authority (DDA), National Highways Authority of India (NHAI), and the Delhi Cantonment Board.

The final plan will also be sent to the Delhi Traffic Police and will later be developed into a comprehensive master plan for desilting drains.

"If this plan is approved then this can be a basic draft which all the civic and road owning agencies will have to follow before the onset of monsoons," Parathasarathy said.

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लबालब हुआ डेम

RP-27-P-8

बमनामा. अपरवेदा बांध से पानी छोड़े जाने के बाद स्थानीय डेम लबालब भर गया है। छोड़े गए पानी से पशुओं और रहवासियों के लिए पेयजल की समस्या दूर हो गई है। वहीं गर्मी में लोग डेम पर नहाने का लुत्फ भी उठा रहे हैं।

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Monsoon forecast buoys govt hopes of bumper harvest

IT-27 P-10

VIJAY THAKUR
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New Delhi, 26 May

With weather pundits predicting above average rains for India this monsoon season, the government is hoping for a bumper crop this year and increasing its foodgrain production target to a record high of 270.10 million tonnes this fiscal.

The Indian Meteorological Department and private weather forcast, Skymet (Bureau of Meteorology (BoM), Australia), has predicted 'good monsoon'. While IMD in its preliminary weather forecast has predicted a late but good monsoon this year, Skymet has predicted above average monsoon rains in India. In April, Skymet had claimed 105% rainfall, but it raised its forecast to 109% last week.

The Agriculture Ministry has also increased its expectations setting a record high production target for 2016-17 of 270.1 million metric tonnes of food grains, Union Agriculture Minister Radha Mohan Singh said. There is reason for cheer in the Agriculture Ministry as foodgrain production has under stress due to bad monsoon for the past two years.

Mr Singh said a target of 108.50 million tonnes rice production has been fixed for year 2016-17, 96.50 million tonnes for wheat and another 20.75 million tones for pulses, 35 million tonnes for oilseeds and 355 million tonnes production for sugarcane.

Skymet had said June rainfall might be weak as El Nino conditions are still waning but rains would pick up in July and will continue in October just like in 2010.

It said monsoon rainfall will be 13% below normal in June, 8% more than normal in July, 13% more than normal in August and 23% more than normal in September. Similarly India Meteorological Department had also forecast above normal monsoon rainfall this year. It said the monsoon would reach Kerala on 7 June, almost a week late.

दिनांक 26 मई 2016 को निम्नलिखित समाचार पत्र में प्रकाशित मानसून/ बाढ़ सम्बन्धी समाचार

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The Deccan Chronical (Hyderabad)
Central Chronical (Bhopal)

TOI - 26 May 2016

On second anniv, monsoon forecast adds to govt cheer

109% Rains Likely: Skymet

Amit.Bhattacharya
@timesgroup.com

New Delhi: Upgrading its outlook for this year's monsoon, private forecaster Skymet on Wednesday said rains are expected to be 'above normal' at 109% of the long period average (LPA), almost reaching 'excess' levels.

This is four percentage points higher than Skymet's first monsoon prediction made on April 11, when the forecaster said rains were expected to be 105% of LPA. The forecast has a 4% margin of error. India Meteorological Department, the country's official monsoon forecaster, has predicted 106% rains. The department is expected to issue an updated forecast in the first week of June.

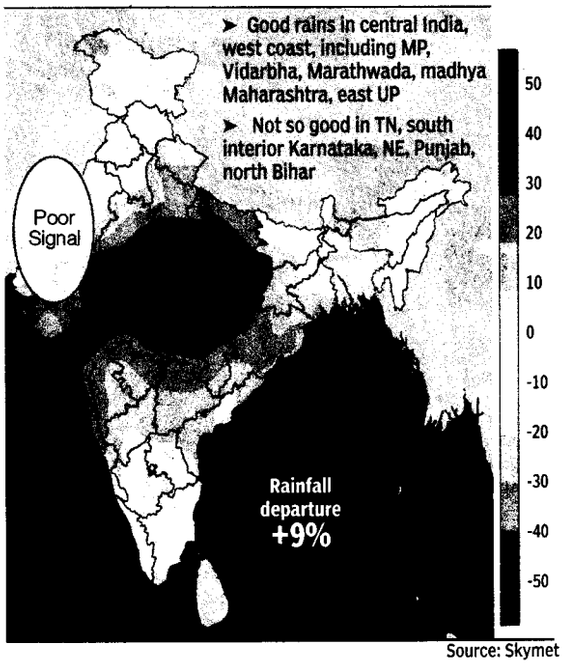
"The last prediction was based on data from March. In our updated forecast, we have looked at data till the beginning of May and it's showing more favourable conditions, particularly the increased possibility of La Nina forming later this year," said G P Sharma, VP meteorology, Skymet.

Average rainfall of 887mm across the country from June to September is considered normal. If this is taken as 100%, the normal monsoon range is 96%-104%. Rains in the 104%-110% range is termed 'above normal', while those above 110% is excess. According to the forecast, monsoon may have a relatively poor start. Rainfall in June is expected to be 13% below normal. The situation is likely to improve sharply in July, when 8% above normal rains are predicted.

"We expect the second half of the monsoon season to be better, with our models showing 13% above normal rains in August and 23% higher than normal in September," Sharma said. Skymet said the total area under kharif foodgrains was expected to increase by 15-20% over last year. The total foodgrain output in the kharif season could touch 129-130 million tonnes, it said.

RAIN BOUNTY FOR CENTRAL INDIA?

Predicted monsoon distribution June-Sept (% departure from normal)



Source: Skymet

El Nino over, says Oz agency as La Nina lurks

Amit.Bhattacharya
@timesgroup.com

New Delhi: El Nino is over, the Australian weather agency declared on Tuesday, ringing the curtains on the weather abnormality that lasted almost 14 months and left its imprints across the globe, including India's deficient monsoon last year. The agency said the tropical Pacific Ocean had returned to a neutral state, although going by the protocol governing the onset and end of the weather event, it could still be weeks before El Nino's demise is formally declared.

"Sea surface temperatures across the tropical Pacific have cooled to neutral levels over the past fortnight, supported by much cooler-than-average waters beneath the surface," the bulletin from Australian Bureau of Meteorology said.

El Nino is an abnormal warming of waters in eastern and central equatorial Pacific, which brings about changes in winds patterns that affect weather across the world. The event occurs with a periodicity of four to seven years.

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Pedestrians caught in the rain at Burrabazar on Wednesday. (Pradip Sanyal)

The Telegraph - 26 May 2016

Fast and furious storm

OUR BUREAU

The season's strongest Nor'wester lashed Calcutta at 81kmph on Wednesday afternoon, snapping branches and tearing billboards across the city.

The howling wind uprooted a tree that fell on a parked car in front of the Eden Gardens. No one was injured.

In Howrah, two women were injured when a wall collapsed on them.

A Mumbai-Calcutta Indigo flight had to be diverted to Ranchi because of the storm.

"The wind blew at 81km/hr for barely a minute from 2.38pm. This is the highest wind speed recorded during any Nor'wester this season. For another two or three minutes, the wind blew at 72kmph," said an official at Alipore weather office.

The Dum Dum Met office too recorded wind speed of 72kmph for a minute.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 17 ▶

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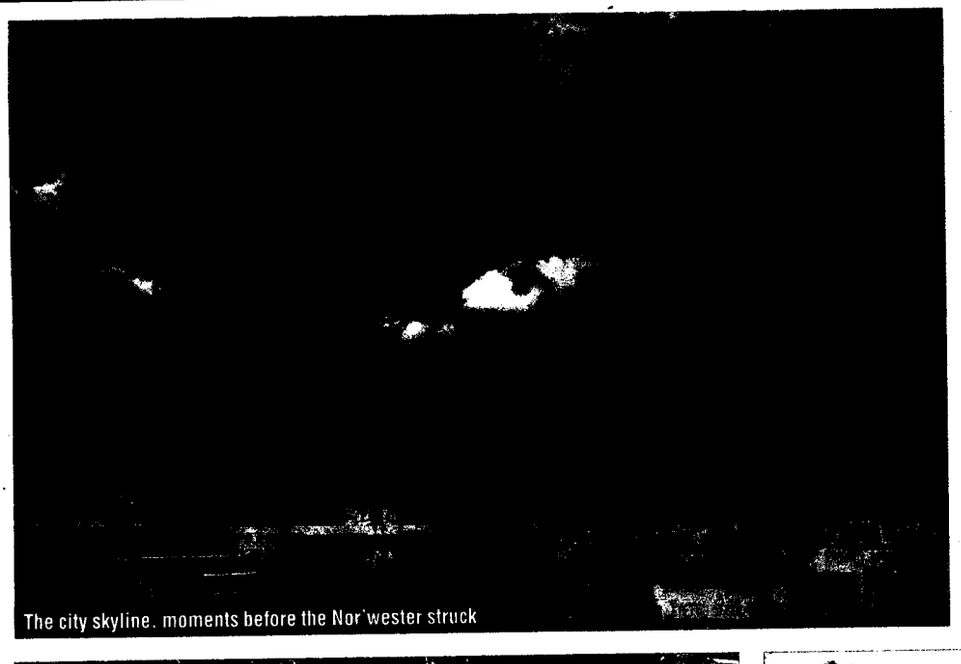
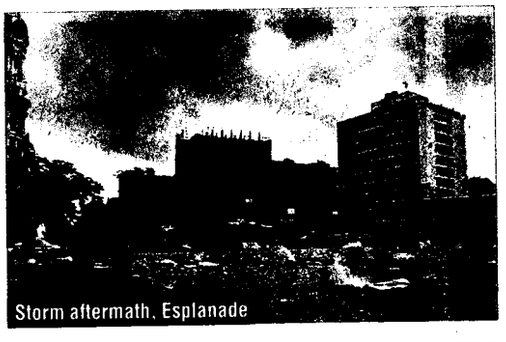
SEASON'S STRONGEST NOR'WESTER RAGES THROUGH CITY

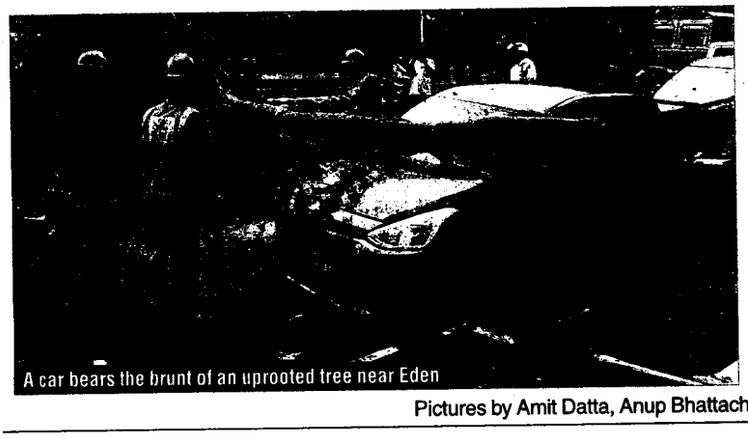


The city skyline, moments before the Nor'wester struck

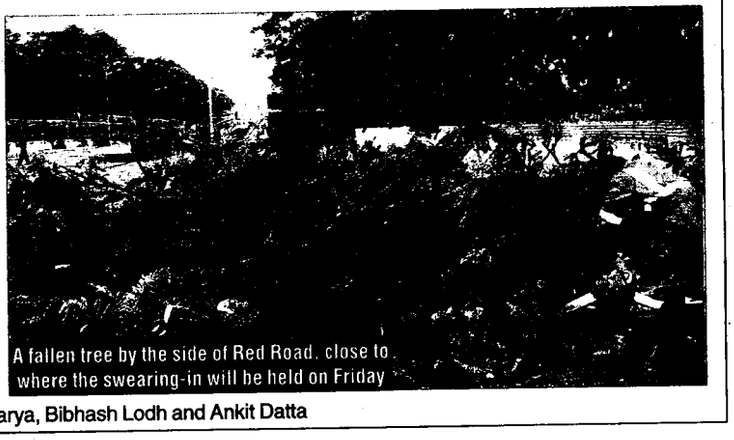


Storm aftermath, Esplanade

An uprooted tree near Park Street flyover



A car bears the brunt of an uprooted tree near Eden



A fallen tree by the side of Red Road, close to where the swearing-in will be held on Friday

Pictures by Amit Datta, Anup Bhattacharya, Bibhash Lodh and Ankit Datta

Rain relief from morning swelter

▶ FROM PAGE 15

The Nor'wester was accompanied by rain that brought relief from the heat and humidity.

Like the storm, the rain did not last long but was quite heavy.

"It rained about 10 minutes. For the first five minutes, it was very heavy. The wind blew the rainwater into the shed where I had taken shelter along with others," said Aishik Roy, a student who was on the road near Esplanade when the Nor'wester hit the city.

At Alipore, 5.2mm of rain was recorded on Wednesday afternoon.

The storm and rain left broken branches lying on the road across the city.

The tree outside Eden blocked almost half of Kings Way for 20 minutes before it was chopped into pieces and removed.

Large snapped branches also blocked portions of Red Road and JL Nehru Road.

Sima Gupta and Rina Gupta, residents of Foreshore Road, were injured when a part of a wall of a closed godown fell on them during the storm. They were being treated in a private hospital for head injuries.

A weather scientist said a trough of low pressure from east UP to Tripura that passed over Bihar and gangetic Bengal caused the storm and rain.

A trough is an imaginary line joining low-pressure areas. A low-pressure area draws moisture towards itself and the moisture accumulates to form clouds. The location of the trough passing over gangetic West Bengal helped to draw moisture from the Bay of Bengal.

"Conditions were ripe in Calcutta for the formation of thunderclouds that cause rain," said a Met department official.

Other than moisture, high temperature is also needed for thunderclouds to form. On Wednesday, the maximum temperature, which was recorded before the storm, was 36.8 degrees, two degrees above normal.

The Nor'wester, which originated in Dumka before noon, left a trail in Jharkhand as well, uprooting trees and snapping power lines. Wind speed of over 60kmph was recorded in Jharkhand.

The Alipore Met office has predicted that Thursday's weather will be similar to Wednesday's: a hot and humid morning and early afternoon followed by possible rain.

The weather office said the maximum temperature on Thursday is likely to stay two degrees above normal at 37.

The Telegraph

The rot in Indian agricultural policies

COMMENTARAO

S.L. RAO

Every aspect of Indian economic policies is influenced by all-pervading government control. Many times, they are also subject to massive leakages due to inefficiencies and corruption (for example, bogus ration cards, rotting grains and corrupt procurement in the public distribution system). The poor state of industrial development, inability to increase domestic defence production in spite of massive imports, diversion of government revenues from taxes on minerals, mismatch between demand for agricultural products and their production, and so on, are some examples.

India has massive unemployment and underemployment. More are seeking fresh employment each year, consumption levels are low, and there are many poor people. Yet, growth in production of physical goods from agriculture and industry has, in five years since 2011, been modest. At constant prices, agriculture grew annually from 2011 in per cent at 1.5, 4.2, -9.2 and 1.1. Over these years, industry grew in per cent at 3.6, 5.0, 5.9, and 7.3; manufacturing at 6.0, 5.6, 5.5 and 9.5. There is heavy pressure of population on land. The average size of land holding was 1.41 hectares in 1995-96 and 1.15 in 2010-11.

India has more arable land than China. Indeed it has the second-most arable land in the world. But it has very low productivity of crops per acre. When one takes paddy, as one example, and on comparing with China, India remains far behind. This is so for other crops as well and as compared to most Southeast Asian countries.

A good reason for the low productivity is the growing fragmentation of holdings and their decline in size. The high population pressure on small land holdings is on account of high rural poverty. Alleviation requires consolidation of land holdings by leasing, urbanization and the acquisition of rural lands for the purpose with adequate compensation. This will also reduce this pressure.

> ‘Government interference in the agricultural markets causes the farmer to lose the margins made by middlemen’

Consumption habits are changing at all levels. Rice consumption per person per month in rural India was estimated at 5.98 kilogramme in 2011-12 compared to 6.38 kg in 2004-05 — a fall of 0.4 kg in seven years. In urban India, the fall in rice consumption between these two periods was 0.2 kg per person per month — from 4.71 kg to 4.49 kg per capita. A high proportion was taken at subsidized prices from the public distribution system. Per capita consumption of wheat in 2011-12 showed a slight rise since 2004-05 of about 0.1 kg per person per month in rural areas and a fall of 0.35 kg in urban areas. As with rice, the share of PDS purchase in wheat consumption has increased considerably, from 824 grammes to 901 gm in the urban sector. At the same time, and in contrast, 69 gm in the rural sector and 57 gm in the urban sector were contributed by split gram, whole gram, pea and *besan* bought at rising market prices. The four pulses — *arhar*, *moong*, *masur* and *urd* — also rose. So did consumption of vegetables, eggs and fruits. All these have seen rising prices and no price support to consumers.

Minimum support prices for cereals are increased almost every year and have been the same as procurement prices. But retail prices were not raised similarly. There is also government interference in the agricultural markets which cause the farmer to lose the margins made by middlemen.

India has stimulated the production of cereals when the demand was dropping, while growing for other non-subsidized items. Rural households bought the cheap PDS grains and sold their own produce for government stocks, which are at unsustainably high levels without adequate storage. They might as well have been given free to the malnourished rural poor.

Productivity remained low because of falling land holdings. Improved seeds were not easily available. Genetic modification of food grains was prevented by environmentalists with no evidence of ill-effects. (Research has shown no ill-effects on humans; in some cases, there might be resistance to plant resistance.) Fertilizers are subsidized, benefiting manufacturers and big farmers. Subsidies are relatively more for urea, leading to a mismatch in fertilizer use and inadequate productivity. Water availability has been shrinking as lakes and rivers become polluted and groundwater levels are used excessively.

Per-capita availability of fresh water has declined sharply, from 3,000 cubic metres to 1,123 cubic metres over the past 50 years *versus* the global average of 6,000 cubic metres. India needs to make judicious use of surface water and groundwater. Dams on rivers have robbed some of them of their usual water flow, while diverting the course of others. Urban effluents have also destroyed the potability of river water. Fifty five per cent of India’s total water supply is now groundwater. This has reduced levels across much of India. Growing water-intensive crops and using techniques like flooding for paddy have further depleted groundwater. Over 60 per cent of irrigation comes from groundwater. Nearly 30 per cent of urban water supply and 70 per cent of rural water supply come from groundwater. We need a rational water policy and less populism. Massive subsidies on equipment and electricity required to mine groundwater have accentuated its use to the financial detriment of the power sector. Free or heavily subsidized flat rate electricity tariffs helped bring the Green Revolution. They have now become the norm. The result is indiscriminate use of groundwater.

> ‘Free or subsidized electricity has now become the norm. The result is indiscriminate use of groundwater’

Each of the issues mentioned is the result of government policies or their absence. Land legislation encourages fragmentation of holdings. There is little encouragement for leasing. Land acquisition for urban areas and for factories has been a corrupt business, and there is little incentive for many farmers to give up their land and move away. Government procurement policies and the public distribution system have stimulated rising production of rice and wheat. Little has been done to help production, storage and marketing of other items like vegetables, pulses, fruits and eggs (such as cold storages, improved varieties, and so on). There is little sign of a rational water policy: indeed, it is the opposite. Electricity tariffs encourage a rise in the use of groundwater. There is no policy on groundwater. Neither is there a limit on what water-intensive crops can be grown with it. There is no concerted recharging of groundwater. State governments follow irrational water-pricing policies. Cleaning up river and lake water so that it is available to supplement water supply in case of drought is uncommon.

Little is being done to spread better agricultural practices and scientific developments that benefit farmers. Agricultural productivity can be increased even on small holdings, but there is little attempt, except by non-governmental organizations, to disseminate these practices. In Israel, these have reduced the use of water. There are vineyards producing good wine in the Negev desert. Groundwater use is not metered in India as it should be. Fertilizer subsidies do not benefit the small farmer. Rational policies, which ensure that subsidies reach the farmer and do not encourage unbalanced use of fertilizers, are urgently needed. Environmental agitations against genetically modified seeds should be countered by scientific evidence so that more productive seeds can be used.

Agricultural policies have developed into a messy package. They need a thorough overhaul. Our political masters are unable to even think of it.

The author is former director-general, National Council of Applied Economic Research