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THE HINDU

Climate change drove mastodons to the brink

Climate change played a pivotal role in the extinction of mastodons in North America, new radiocarbon dating of fossils has revealed — though hunting by people may have been the last straw.

Mastodons are the relatives of modern elephants and were widespread across North America from 1,25,000 years ago, going extinct around 10,000 years ago. Their disappearance coincides with the arrival of early humans on the continent, and has led to the “overkill” hypothesis that they were hunted to extinction by our species.

The new results, which are published in *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, suggest a more nuanced sequence of events.

Grant Zazula, a palaeontologist with the Yukon Palaeontology Program, and his colleagues have dated the collection of 36 fossil teeth and bones, found in Alaska and Yukon. They used a technique that targets the collagen in bone, avoiding contaminants such as varnish and glue that were applied many years ago to strengthen the specimens.

All of the fossils were found to be older than previously thought, with most older than the 50,000-year limit of radiocarbon dating.

The team concluded that mastodons were probably only living in the Arctic and Subarctic for a short time around 1,25,000 years ago. This was an interglacial period in which Arctic regions of North America were covered in forests and wetlands.

“The residency of mastodons in the north did not last long,” said Mr. Zazula, “The return to cold, dry glacial conditions along with the advance of continental glaciers around 75,000 years ago effectively wiped out their habitats.” The depleted population of mastodons moved south to escape the advancing ice.

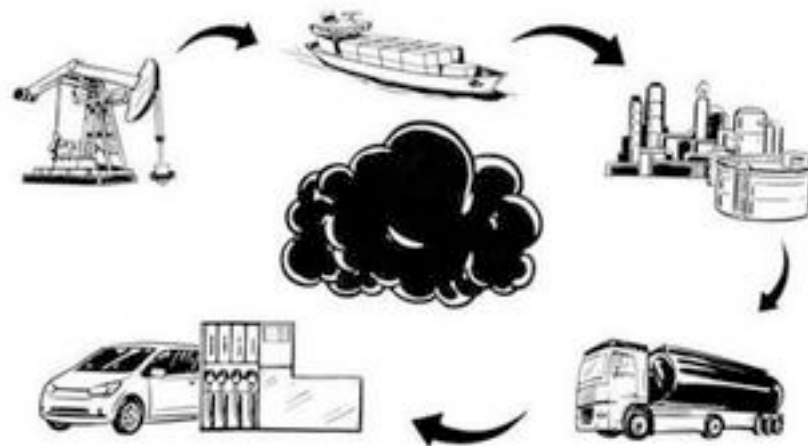
They were just one of dozens of large mammalian species that went extinct around 10,000 years ago. Together they are known as the megafauna and include sabretoothed tigers and giant sloths.

Adrian Lister, research leader in palaeobiology at the Natural History Museum, London, says, “This is a very nice finding. Radiocarbon dating is the best technique we have for this. It seems perfectly reasonable that climate change knocked these populations down in number and to different regions.” From this weakened position, the mastodons had little reserve to resist meat-hungry humans.

“We’re not saying that humans were uninvolved in the megafauna’s last stand 10,000 years ago, but by that time — whatever the mastodon population was down to — their range had shrunk mostly to the Great Lakes region,” said Ross MacPhee, a curator in the Department of Mammalogy at the American Museum of Natural History and a co-author on the paper.— © **Guardian Newspapers Limited, 2014**

Historic climate deal soon

Over 190 nations at UN climate Summit in Peru. Big plans to cut global carbon emission.



Amid rising emissions and 2014 threatening to be the hottest year in history, India and representatives from over 190 nations began talks at the UN climate summit on a new ambitious and binding deal to cut global carbon emissions ahead of next year’s deadline.

The 12-day meeting has to agree on a draft agreement which would form the cornerstone of a historic deal to be signed in Paris in December 2015 and take effect by 2020.

During the opening ceremony, Executive Secretary of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change Christiana Figueres asked negotiators to “make history” at the Peru Summit.

“We need to put on the table the draft of a new universal climate agreement,” she told delegates.

“2014 is threatening to be the hottest year in history and emissions continue to rise. We need to act urgently.”

UN-member states have vowed to limit global warming to two degrees Celsius over pre—Industrial Revolution levels.

Last week, the US scientific agency National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration had warned that the world could witness the hottest year this year with the first 10 months of 2014 being the warmest since record keeping began more than 130 years ago.

The average global temperature between January and October has been 0.68 degrees Celsius higher than the 20th century’s average global temperature of 14.1 C.

The Peru summit comes weeks after US President Barack Obama and his Chinese counterpart signed a historic deal in November under which the US would reduce emissions by 28 per cent by 2025 and China would reduce emissions by 2030.

The agreement between the two biggest polluters will provide momentum, and pressure, for other countries to announce similar plans.

As the third-largest emitter, India is at the forefront of the conference because it has yet to announce a post—2020 climate action plan.

How India reacts to the recent US and China climate deal is the focus of many at the Lima talks as it is seen as the country with the potential for the largest impact on future emissions and the fate of a cohesive Paris agreement.

‘Focus on value addition in farm produce’

Speakers at the inaugural of a day-long symposium on “Emerging Technologies in Agricultural Engineering” organised at the Tamil Nadu Agricultural University – Agricultural Engineering College and Research Institute at Kumulur near here on Tuesday, underlined the role of

agricultural engineers in protecting the depleting resources and protecting the environment and conservation of soil and other natural resources.

They appealed to the students to update their knowledge in research and development, through an in-depth study of minute information.

S. Natarajan, General Manager of National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development, who inaugurated the symposium, appealed to students to focus on innovation in their research-based mechanisation projects. There was scope for taking up projects in areas such as post-harvest technology cold storage. He specifically appealed to students to focus on value addition in agricultural produce.

He said that NABARD had planned to set up 60 Farmers Producers Organisations in Tamil Nadu and Puducherry this financial year. These organisations would be a registered body and would cater to the needs of farmers from a strategy known as “seed to market”. Crop protection, good practices in cultivation, and provision of attractive marketing strategy would be the objective of these organisations. Steps had been taken for forming about 15 to 20 organisations in Tamil Nadu and Puducherry, he added.

K. Ramaswamy, Dean (in-charge) of the college, said that excessive use of fertiliser and chemicals had caused more harm to the nutrients of soil. Students should address these issues.

Reeling out statistics, he said that fall in the capacity of dams and reservoirs was another problem which resulted in under-utilisation of irrigation waters.

Explaining the efficacy of modern agriculture strategy, Dr. Ramaswamy said that agricultural engineering students should learn the nuances of land management, conservation of natural resources, and environment-related issues. He underlined the need for incorporating the current-day issues confronting the agriculturists in the agricultural engineering colleges across the country.

S. Suresh Kumar, Assistant General Manager, NABARD, Tiruchi, G.L. Sivaprasath, General Manager, Yanmar Coromandel Agri-Solutions, and K.R. Udhyakumar, consultant on real estate values, spoke.

‘Post-harvest requirements offer good scope for farm students’

NABARD GM says agricultural engineers have a key role in soil conservation



S. Natarajan, General Manager, NABARD (third from right), checking the shovels used in a garden land power weeder at TNAU Agricultural Engineering College and Research Institute at Kumulur near Tiruchi on Tuesday.— Photo: A. Muralitharan

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Turmeric, a lucrative supplementary



A farmer looking at the turmeric crop at Poovalur near Tiruchi on Tuesday.— Photo: A. Muralitharan

Turmeric, a short-duration crop, provides ample revenue to farmers of the district, particularly those on the banks of the river. It does not require much part of the land and is less labour-intensive.

The 45-day crop is raised in the Tamil month of Karthigai so that it can be harvested by Thai month. It is widely grown in Uppliyapuram, Thuraiyur, Musiri, and Lalgudi blocks on fields located on the banks of the river.

N. Veerasekaran, coordinator of the Ayyan Vaikkal Ayacutdars Welfare Association, said the crop was ideally suited for fields where paddy, sugarcane, or plantain is cultivated.

“It requires only just part of a field, normally the corner of a field used for raising the nurseries. Turmeric raised on the fields starts generating after a fortnight. Mostly, it is free from any pest attack,” says A. Ameer john, another farmer of Poovalur. He pointed out that it was harvested beyond January 10 so that it could be immediately marketed on the eve of ‘Pongal’ festival. Each plant is sold anywhere between Rs.10 and Rs. 20. Poolvalur, Pallavapuram, and Peruvalanallur are the major villages where the crop is raised.

According to Agriculture Department sources, this spices crop is raised on an area of 300 hectares of land in the district.

Brimming with hope



The Hindu Following the Supreme Court order, Tamil Nadu was been able to store 142 feet of water in the Mullaperiyar dam, the lifeline of five southern districts this year. File photo: H. Vibhu

The increased storage in the Mullaperiyar dam has brought cheer to farmers in Tamil Nadu's five districts where cultivation has gone up by thousand of acres

The farmers in 20,000 acres of the rain-fed areas in Bodi, which Chief Minister O. Panneerselvam represents in the Assembly, can raise a crop this year.

While the Cumbum valley farmers are happy that the Mullaperiyar dam level has been increased to 142 feet, these farmers in the rain shadow region of the Western Ghats, where desertification has set in, pinning their hopes on the dammed water to be released through the 18-channel project to fill up 48 tanks.

Besides, the four municipalities and wayside villages in Theni district need not fret about drinking water problem for a year, say officials of the Public Works Department (PWD). A channel from the Vaigai basin that feeds the Nilakottai block in Dindigul district will help to cultivate 3,000 acres.

Downstream the Vaigai dam, the farmers of Madurai can benefit from the additional storage. "The area under cultivation has increased by at least 10,000 hectares in Madurai district, up from 22,000 hectares last year," says an agricultural officer.

"Melur farmers are now confident of assured irrigation, and more are taking up farming this year," says M. Murugan, president of the Periyar-Vaigai Project Committee. "Irrigation was suspended only for three days when the PWD drew water for Sivaganga and Ramanathapuram districts," he adds.

A PWD engineer says most of the 1,000 irrigation tanks have water around 50 per cent of their capacities only because of the additional storage of 1,548 mcft in the Mullaperiyar dam.

Ramanathapuram, an arid district, will get its full quota from the Vaigai dam this year. The Vaigai water is shared among Madurai, Sivaganga and Ramanathapuram districts in the ratio of 2:3:7.

For the past two years, the district did not receive water because of the poor storage in the Vaigai dam and the insufficient discharge from the Mullaperiyar dam. "This year, Ramanathapuram is given priority," PWD officials say.

Over 3,000 cusecs has been released into the irrigation system since November 21. By the end of last week, irrigation tanks realised 1,850 mcft. The water reached Pandiyur, traversing 30 km into the district.

The 130 tanks in the district, plus the RS Mangalam tank and the Ramanathapuram big tank, would benefit paddy and other crops on 67,000 acres, PWD sources say.

Once the quota for Ramanathapuram is released, Sivaganga farmers stand to benefit, say officials.

In short, there is a renewed hope among farmers in the five mid-south districts here, which depend heavily on the Mullaperiyar dam — still standing majestically, with history as a pointer and reminder.

Medicinal plant growers want marketing centre

Say this will help farmers meet buyers, eliminating middlemen



GROWING DEMAND:Collector N. Venkatachalam and officials inspecting a field at Kothapulli near Reddiyarchatram in Dindigul district on Tuesday, on which *Gloriosa superba* has been cultivated.— PHOTO: G. KARTHIKEYAN

Even as groundwater level was depleting below 700 feet and rains were becoming a rare phenomenon, farmers at several villages in Oddanchatram and Reddiyarchantram blocks in the district managed to get a decent profit, thanks to Superbily, with the botanical name *Gloriosa superba*, locally known as ‘Kanvali Kizhangu,’ on 1,600 hectares.

This medicinal plant fetches a profit of Rs.4 lakh per acre in a season on an investment of Rs.1 lakh to Rs.1.5 lakh.

Despite good demand in the market throughout the year, medicinal plant growers had to transport the produce to Moolanur in Tirupur district to sell it. Middlemen guzzled up a sizeable portion of their profit because it is a major export product.

Farmers appeal to the district administration to establish a marketing facility within the district to draw buyers and importers.

Such a measure will create a common platform for farmers to meet the buyers directly eliminating middlemen, they add.

Hand pollination is the crucial part in growing this plant. It increases labour costs.

On an average, the farmers get 300 to 400 kg of Superbily seeds every season. Market for Superbily is also stable, according to horticulturist V. Dhanraj of Kothapulli village in Reddiyarchatram, who grows medicinal plants on 2.8 acres of land.

Drip irrigation helps in using minimum available water in the borewells to effectively raise the crop.

Even a few hours of pumping from borewells will suffice to irrigate the land and introduction of fertigation also reduces the cost, he says.

“But the initial investment is very high. We have to invest heavily for tubers (seeds) and for fencing and ‘pandhal’ to enable the creeper to grow and spread. The government has offered 50 per cent subsidy. Increase in subsidy will help more farmers raise medicinal plants,” Mr. Dhanraj adds.

Scope for growing medicinal plants is very high in Dindigul district, says Deputy Director M. Ramanathan.

Funds have been released under the National Mission on Medicinal Plants to increase the area under medicinal plant cultivation.

While interacting with farmers, Collector N. Venkatachalam assured them that Tamil Nadu Agro Produces Marketing Committee will take steps to establish a marketing centre on its campus to sell the seeds and help farmers get better price for their produce.

Drumstick leaves: harvest up

A private firm procures tender leaves for Rs. 5,000 per tonne



GREEN BUSINESS:There are ready takers for drumstick leaves cultivated organically near Sivagiri in Erode. —Photo: M. Govarthan

Organic cultivation of tender drumstick leaves is turning out to be a profitable venture for a farmer at rural Mangattupudur near Sivagiri in the district.

The farmer Moorthy has brought five acres under drumstick crop cultivation over the last one year. He has been applying a mixture of decomposed fish and sugar, besides cow dung to his crop that has adequate water supply, thanks to the LBP (Lower Bhavani Project) canal passing close by.

At periodic intervals, a private company exporting condiments procures the tender drumstick leaves for Rs. 5,000 per tonne.

The expenditure per acre is below Rs. 40,000 per acre, and the returns exceed Rs. 1.2 lakh, Mr. Moorthy said.

Farmers in the area keep the plucked leaves ready once in 50 days and the company transports the loads to its production unit for manufacture of the powder that is exported to several countries.

According to Horticulture Department officials, farmers in the area have been given micro-irrigation subsidy for raising the drumstick crop. There must be about 60 acres under drumstick leaves cultivation in the area, officials said

NCLP school students excel with project on climate change



Rescued child labourers who will be presenting their project on climate change at the state-level Science Congress later this month. —Photo: M. Govarthan

A project on ‘Climate and Changes in Agriculture’ won for a group of students of NCLP (National Child Labour Project) school run by SUDAR (Service Unit for Development Activities in Rural) at Kongadai in Anthiyur taluk an opportunity to exhibit their findings at the state-level competition of National Children Science Congress.

The students: P. Lakshmi, R. Rajkumar, K. Roja, M. Sakthivel, and M. Suriya carried out a door-to-door survey in Kongaadaai, Gyan Dhoddy, Sundaipodu, Periyur and Bore Dhoddy to determine why 70 per cent of the people were anaemic.

Food consumption

According to them, the climatic changes had affected their food consumption pattern of the villagers over generations, making them susceptible to illness.

Ancestors of the present generation of the villagers used to make the most of abundant rainfall to cultivate grains and greens, thereby fulfilling their basic food needs, besides clothing and shelter.

Inter-crop cultivation used to enable food security.

But now, the villagers are able to cultivate only one cycle of crop and the returns are meagre.

Debtors

Most of them have turned debtors, as the tapioca crop, to which they apply costly chemical fertilizers, has failed them repeatedly.

Ultimately, their health has been spoiled.

Competitions

The students who called on the District Collector, S. Prabakaran, to share their happiness over being chosen for participation in the state-level competition have conveyed in their project the scope for a positive outcome due to the awareness being created among the student community in Bargur hills on afforestation and organic cultivation.

They intend to document the traditional mode of cultivation adopted by their ancestors, grow trees on agricultural lands, create kitchen gardens, and preserve traditional seeds through seed banks, in future.

Agriculture training centre opened in Naganahalli

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Tuesday inaugurated an agriculture training centre, established at a cost of Rs. 4.5 crore, at Organic Agriculture Research Station premises in Naganahalli on the outskirts of the city.

In a statement, Mr. Siddaramaiah said the duty of Agriculture Department officials does not end with supplying seeds and fertilisers. “They should go to villages, interact with farmers, and give them appropriate advice on the agricultural practices they should adopt,” he said.

Favouring the setting up of a similar training centre in all districts of the State, Mr. Siddaramaiah said the centres should provide information on soil fertility, new technologies, the type of crops to be grown in different seasons, and the marketability of the agricultural produce.

Efforts should be made to make agriculture a remunerative occupation so that the younger generation do not move away from it. Mr. Siddaramaiah said the State government had purchased various food crops by paying a support price of Rs. 1,800 crore last year.

Agriculture Minister Krishna Byre Gowda, who was also present on the occasion, said agriculture training centres existed in 23 districts of the State. He urged extension officers of the Agriculture Department to visit the villages every day. Agriculture researchers should visit villages at least two days a month to familiarise farmers with the advancements made the field of agriculture and technology, he said.

Adopt modern technology in cultivation, farmers told

K.S. Puttannaiah inaugurates three-day Krishi Mela on ZARS premises



K.S. Puttannaiah, Melkote MLA, taking a look at various crops on display at the Krishi Mela in Mandya on Tuesday.

K.S. Puttannaiah, Melkote MLA, on Tuesday called upon the farming community to adopt modern technology and transform it into a remunerative occupation.

He was speaking after inaugurating the two-day Krishi Mela on the premises of the Zonal Agricultural Research Station (ZARS), V.C. Farm, on the outskirts of the city.

Effective utilisation of farm equipment and less use of fertilizers would boost farm productivity. Therefore, farmers should adopt modern technology in cultivation to improve their standard of living, Mr. Puttannaiah, who is also a senior leader of the Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha (KRRS), said.

He suggested to the farming community to interact with agricultural scientists and experts at ZARS, Krishi Vigyan Kendra and government departments concerned before planning their routine agricultural activities.

Agriculture equipment

“Use drum-seeder, mechanised paddy trans-planter, sprinklers and other equipment effectively. And, cultivate paddy through the SRI (Systematic Rice Intensification) method to increase rice yield,” he said. Several government departments and private agencies have put up stalls to disseminate information on research/modern equipment to farmers.

Nearly 3,000 farmers from different parts of the district visited the mela on the inaugural day.

The University of Agricultural Sciences (UAS-Bengaluru), the Zonal Agricultural Research Station (ZARS, V.C. Farm), Cauvery Command Area Development Authority, Krishi Vigyan Kendra and various government departments have organised the mela.

Officials from various departments were present.

· *Effective utilisation of farm equipment will boost productivity:*
Puttannaiah

· *Farmers told to interact with agriculture scientists before planning cultivation*

Procurement: amounts to be credited to ryots' accounts within 48 hours

Naidu asks officials to ensure MSP to farmers

HYDERABAD: Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu has instructed the officials concerned to credit the amounts relating to food grain procured from farmers in their respective accounts within 48 hours of the procurement.

The Chief Minister, who reviewed the functioning of the Civil Supplies department with senior officials on Tuesday, expressed dissatisfaction that the awareness levels among farmers on the procurement process were not up to the expectations. He directed the officials to ensure that harvesters and dryers were made available to SHG women and farmers' organisations at subsidised prices so that they could be positioned at the procurement centres.

According to officials, paddy cultivation was taken up in 2.18 lakh hectares during kharif and farmers anticipated yield of 11.07 lakh tonne in the season. Officials told the Chief Minister that as against 1069 procurement centres proposed to be opened. Over 100 centres already started functioning in West Godavari district alone.

In all, 16,973 tonne of food grain was procured so far at these centres.

The Chief Minister wanted the officials to ensure that farmers secured the minimum support price announced by the government for their produce.

Mr. Naidu asked officials to ensure that details of procurement were hosted online and towards, this end steps should be taken to equip SHG

women with tablets to post the details. Officials said of the 1,069 procurement centres proposed to be set up, 591 would be operated by Velugu groups, 433 by PACS and another 45 by the district agriculture marketing committees.

Civil Supplies Commissioner Rajasekhar informed the meeting that an official delegation had inspected the processes adopted in Chhattisgarh and accordingly, e-pass, e-weighing machines would be put in place in the State shortly.

NABARD to give Rs. 2,500 cr.to build warehouses in A.P.



THE HINDU Tribal people welcoming NABARD Chief General Manager Jiji Mammen in a traditional manner at Peddipeta in Burja mandal, Srikakulam district on Tuesday. Photo: Basheer

The National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) will provide around Rs.2, 500 crore to Andhra Pradesh for construction of new warehouses, according to NABARD's AP region Chief General Manager Jiji Mammen. Speaking at a programme on natural resources management organised by ARTS, a nongovernmental organisation, at Peddipeta in Burja mandal of the district, he hoped that warehouse facility would go a long way in helping get remunerative prices for their produce.

Applications invited

The University of Agricultural Sciences (UAS), Bangalore, has invited applications from eligible graduates to register as 'registered graduates'. Graduates of the university who have completed five years after receiving the degree, are eligible to apply. Applications can be downloaded from the UAS website, www.uasbangalore.edu.in. The forms, along with a DD for Rs. 500 drawn in favour of the Comptroller, UAS, Bangalore, should be submitted to the Registrar, UAS, GKVK Campus, Bengaluru, by December 31, 2014. Call 080- 23330984/23330149, a release said. — Staff Reporter

Scientists give tips to farmers on increasing yeild

Scientists gave tips to farmers on increasing the yield of sugarcane at a workshop in Krishi Vigyan Kendra in Bidar on Tuesday. R.V. Jadhav, resource person, said that planning for high yield started with soil health management. Farmers need to first test the soil for its contents and then decide on the nutrients needed for the crop. Secondly, they need to assess the availability of water in their fields. To supplement their sources, they should take up watershed development and rainwater harvesting by building farm ponds and bunds. Farmers should choose the most economic method to use water and opt for micro or sprinkler irrigation. They should use live manure like sunn hemp and other crops, he said.

He spoke of the need for plant nutrition and asked farmers not to burn sugarcane tops. They should be reused as manure, farmers should also consider using in situ vermicomposting, mulching, and bio-fertilizers, he said.

He spoke about choosing the right time of plantation by studying crop cycles, plant protection by using integrated pest management methods, optimum mechanisation and choosing the right varieties.

Ravi Deshmukh, training coordinator, said farmers should stop the practice of planting the crops for decades. They should switch between crops, and choose less water-consuming crops and remunerative crops like fruits and vegetables, he said.

Vitamin D reduces lung disease flare-ups



Vitamin D as an adjuvant to conventional breast cancer therapy (PTI)

Vitamin D supplements can reduce lung disease flare-ups by over 40 percent in patients with a vitamin D deficiency, show a clinical trial.

Flare-ups are when a COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease) patient's usual symptoms (coughing, excess mucus, shortness of breath, tightness in chest) get worse and stay worse, sometimes resulting in hospitalisation.

“Our research has shown how an inexpensive vitamin supplement can significantly reduce the risk of flare-ups for patients who are vitamin D deficient, which could have a major public health benefit,” said lead author Adrian Martineau, professor at Queen Mary University of London. This is the first clinical trial to investigate the impact of vitamin D supplementation on severity and duration of COPD symptoms.

The trial included 240 patients with COPD in and around London.

Half of the patients received vitamin D supplements and the other half received an equivalent placebo.

Patients with a vitamin D deficiency benefited dramatically from taking the supplements but the striking reduction in flare-ups was not seen among patients who had a higher vitamin D status at the start of the trial.

However, researchers did find vitamin D supplementation modestly reduced the severity and duration of flare-up symptoms in all patients in the vitamin D group.

“Our findings suggest that patients with COPD should have their vitamin D status tested and should begin taking supplements if their levels are found to be low,” Martineau added.

The findings appeared in the journal Lancet Respiratory Medicine.

Chef's Choice: How to make Gulkand Shahi Tukda



Gulkand Shahi Tukda

Portion- Serves 4 people

INGREDIENTS

Milk (5 cups)

Rose gulkand (50 gms)

Cardamom powder (1/2 tsp)

Saffron (few leaves)

Sugar (1 1/2 cups)

Ghee (1 cup)

Bread (8 slices)

FOR THE RABRI (Thick Sweet Milk Cream)

Milk (2 litres)

Sugar (75 gms)

Cardamom powder (1/2 tsp)

Saffron (few leaves)

Almonds (10 gms)

Pistachios (10 gms)

Silver Vark (1 leaf)

METHOD

* Bring the milk to the boil in a heavy-bottomed pan. Add green cardamom powder and saffron. Remove from heat, add sugar. Keep aside.

* Heat the ghee in a pan; fry the slices of bread lightly. Remove from flame, drain the excess oil. Soak the fried bread in the milk mixture for 10 minutes.

* For the rabri, heat the milk and cook till it is reduced to 1/3rd. Add sugar, green cardamom powder, and saffron to the milk and stir. Remove the pan from heat and keep aside to cool.

* Carefully lift the slices of bread from the milk and arrange the rose gulkand with the help of spoon, place on a serving platter.

* Pour the rabri on top and garnish with almonds, pistachios, silver verk and gulkand.

* Serve at room temperature.

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weather

Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather



Sunny

Rain: 0

Humidity: 62

Wind: normal

Tomorrow's Forecast

Wednesday, Dec 3

Max
29°


Min
22°
Partly Cloudy

Sunrise: 06:16

Sunset: 05:40

Barometer: 1014

Thursday, Dec 4

Max
31°

Min
24°

Friday
Dec 5



30° | 25°

Partly Cloudy

Saturday
Dec 6



31° | 26°

Partly Cloudy

Sunday
Dec 7



32° | 26°

Sunny

Monday
Dec 8



33° | 26°

Partly Cloudy

Tuesday
Dec 9



33° | 27°

Partly Cloudy

THE TIMES OF INDIA

Myths about 10 'healthy foods' busted

Most of us, in a bid to eat healthy and stay fit head straight to the "Health" or the "Diet food" section of supermarkets.

These products, which are heavy on the pocket promise to be really light in calories. But have you ever tried to read the food labels to understand if they are really healthy or is it just another marketing gimmick? Sheryl Salis, a senior registered nutritionist, naturopath, certified diabetes educator and wellness coach busts some of the common myths associated with popular health products.

Sugar-free chocolates

"We often hear people say "I am a diabetic, therefore, I only buy sugar free products". I have come across many people who eat an entire bar of chocolate thinking it is sugar free. Beware! The sugar free market is booming thanks to our ignorance", points Sheryl. Do not fall prey to the sugar free scam assuming it won't affect your blood sugar levels. 'Sugar free' does not mean carb, calorie or fat free. When manufacturers remove sugar, they often add fat to the product making it higher in fat content than the product with sugar. Why eat the nasty sugar free cookies when you can have the good ones with less carbs in it. It is advisable to check the food label on the product for the total carbohydrate and fat content before consuming it.

For eg: if you look at the food label above, there is hardly any difference in the carb content in both the products but the saturated fat content in the sugar free product is more than that with sugar.

Brown bread

Those of us watching our waistlines choose brown breads over white breads thinking we are making a smart eating choice. Beware!

"The truth is that the so called brown bread may not necessarily be made with whole wheat flour or whole grain. Some manufacturers add caramel colour to the dough to give the brown colour to bread. The soft texture of the brown bread is maintained by adding 3/4th refined flour (maida) to 1/4th wheat flour. So it is actually white bread in disguise," informs Sheryl.

To ensure that you are buying the most nutritious bread option, read labels and check to see that the first ingredient listed is either whole wheat or whole meal flour and there is no caramel colouring mentioned on the label. Choose breads labelled as "whole wheat, multigrain, 7 grain, 5 grain or high fibre".

An easy way to check for the authenticity of brown bread is to hold it and see if it crumbles under pressure. If it is white bread, it will not crumble easily because of its sticky consistency.

Multigrain high fiber biscuits

When we are struck with hunger pangs in between meals or for some of us as soon as we wake up with our morning cup of tea, we often reach out for the biscuits labeled "multigrain /high fiber" and finish almost the entire packet in a jiffy assuming it's a healthier option...Think again!..Biscuits, even the low sugar, high fiber variety are not very healthy and not the best option when it comes to snacking. To make the biscuits crunchy and crispy, manufacturers add fats and sugar.

It is ironic that when hunger pangs strike in-between meals, we reach out for the biscuit jar thinking of it as a healthier alternative to other snacks. In reality, most biscuits are not very healthy, and this includes the high-fiber, low-sugar variety as well. Surprised? Well then, you must not forget that while some biscuits may have low-sugar, they still contain a large amount of unhealthy fat, without which they can't be crispy and crunchy as we enjoy them. These fats can increase the risk of diabetes, heart disease and sudden cardiac death. Skip the biscuits and munch on khakra or roasted chana for a satisfying mid-day meal instead.

Fat free cereals

In today's modern times due to paucity of time and busy lifestyles, breakfast cereals are gaining immense popularity. Manufacturers are marketing them as low fat meal replacers asking us to replace two of our traditional home cooked meals with these highly processed cereals loaded with additives. In our fight against our bulging waistlines, we fall prey to these the tall claims in a bid to achieve quick weight loss.

Usually products marked as low fat or fat free can be misleading as they may be high on the sugar content. In order for the fat-free food to maintain its taste, the fat has to be replaced by either sodium, sugar, or something else that will give it a similar flavour and texture. For example, if you have a look at the list of ingredients mentioned on the cereal packet, it has honey, malt extract and sugar (8.4 gms in 30 gms cereal) making the product problematically high in simple carbs/sugar. This means you are consuming sugar coated cereal which can induce increased appetite and be detrimental to your sugars. Studies have shown that the body utilizes more energy metabolizing a meal from less-processed foods than highly processed foods, which means lesser calories leftover for the body to store as fat.

Light/ Lite butter

Some years ago, the use of lite butter surged in popularity as people began to understand the dangers of cholesterol and saturated fat present in regular butter. There is no debate over which one is a healthy option. Lite butter is definitely better than regular butter as it is cholesterol free. Lite butter is made from vegetable oil whereas regular butter is made from cow's milk. One word of caution here is; even though lite butter is cholesterol free, it is not fat free. It has saturated fat and sodium which puts you at a risk of heart disease if not taken in moderation. Our human tendency is to go overboard with the quantity when we know it's a healthy option. Moreover some margarines available have trans fats which are harmful. Suggest you read food labels carefully and look for total fat, sodium and trans fat.

Remember, whichever product you select, limit your overall consumption. Do not overdo even if it's healthy - portion control is the key.

Nutrition /Energy bars

In today's "on the run" busy times, energy bars are fast becoming a rage especially with athletes, health conscious people, workaholics or busy moms all opting for these as a quick nutritional fix. They are being marketed well under the guise of convenience and good nutrition. Most of us ditch our regular snacks like fruit, yoghurt or muesli and turn to these sophisticated energy or "power" bars.

Watch out! Have a good look on the food label of the wrapper before you make a choice. Many of these are simply enhanced sweets with as much sugar, saturated fat and calories as a snicker bar. Generally, if bars are labeled "low carbs" they may also be low in fiber and high in fat especially saturated fat. And if a bar tastes good, it probably has at least 12 grams of sugars per serving. You have to decide, what means most to you - taste, fat, fiber, protein or sugars.

Being heavy on the pocket , these bars are also small and compact in size leaving you unsatisfied and hungry for some more (one may not be enough). There are different types of bars available in the market today. There are high-carbohydrate bars, protein bars, energy bars, breakfast bars, brain-boosting bars, meal-replacement bars, diet bars, and women-only bars. To complicate matters, you may not be able to judge every bar by its wrapper. In October 2001, when ConsumerLab.com announced the findings of its independent laboratory tests of 30 nutrition bars, 18 did not meet the claims of ingredient levels on the label. More than any other misrepresentation, about one-half of the nutrition bars exceeded the carbohydrate levels stated on the wrapper (one bar promoted as a low-carbohydrate diet product claimed it had just 2 grams of carbohydrates, but testing showed it actually contained 22 grams)

When choosing bars, keep the following points in mind:

- less than 200 calories
- less than 5 gms of fat
- at least five grams of fibre
- And more than 15gms of protein

Diet foods

Here comes another popular fad- roasted/baked or diet snacks. We see an entire section dedicated to these roasted/diet snacks on the shelves of supermarkets and we mindlessly head straight to that section picking up stuff for our guilt free snacking.

And to make matters worse, most of us end up finishing almost the entire packet sitting in front of the television thinking it's healthy. Think again...roasted does not mean its calorie free. There are two options available "low fat" or "fat free". The low fat version is the one which is deep fried but the oil is drained out and the fat free is where there use refined edible oil to spray seasonings and enhance flavor. One quick exercise you could do is crush some in a blotting paper and see if it stains with oil.

So, go slow on these fat free snacks which can jeopardize both your health and wealth as they are prized high. Most of us fall prey to the tall claims made on the front of the package without reading the nutrition label on the back. Look out for "partially hydrogenated vegetable oil" listed among the top three ingredients on the label. This could have Trans fats which are harmful for health. You will also be able to tell, by looking at the label what the company calls a portion of that food. Prepare to be amazed: What they say is a serving and what you actually eat may be completely different. The Nutrition Information label lists the calories; grams of fat, saturated fat and Trans fat; and, sometimes, grams of sugar. So if the label says a serving is a serving of chips and you eat 2 or 3 servings, double or triple the nutrition information numbers.

Flavoured yoghurt

Most flavoured yogurts which come in a variety of mouth watering flavours don't contain the real fruit but have added fruit concentrate, making it high in its sugar content. They are often marketed as health foods and are surely better than if not the best when compared to the other processed foods available in the market.

People who have blood sugar problems could experience a sudden increase in sugar levels with flavoured yogurt. Read the nutrition label at the back of the flavoured yogurt content and avoid if it contains alternative sugars like fructose, glucose, sucrose as they are not healthy.

If you compare the nutrition label of regular yogurt and flavoured yogurt, you will see that 150 gms of regular yoghurt gives you approx 81 calories with no added sugar whereas 150 gms of flavoured yoghurt gives you 130 calories with 20 grams of added sugar alone contributing 80 calories. Sugar provides instant energy and no nutrition.

Even the frozen yoghurts which are now fast replacing the desserts with their "healthy tag" are a suspect. Flavoured versions of yoghurt contain more sugar (by virtue of added flavour) in the form of canned fruits, syrups containing HFCS (High Fructose Cane Sugar,) and synthetic flavouring than plain versions. You can swap the flavoured yoghurt with Greek yoghurt/low fat yoghurt and mix it with sum freshly chopped seasonal fruits (not canned fruits)

Ready to eat foods

A boon to today's working women and yes some men too who are looking for some quick and easy convenience food. You get almost everything from ready to eat idlis, dosas, upmas, dal makhani, noodles, soups, paneer palak etc. It's instant! Heat the contents in a micro for three minutes and its ready to eat.

While all this looks really good and convenient, is it really healthy? Read the food label carefully. The manufacturers need to add fat and sodium to increase the shelf life of the product. And that's why if you have a look at the food label above, it is loaded with sodium. If you eat 100 gms of ready to eat upma, it gives you 1300 mg of sodium which is your requirement for the entire day. We all need some sodium, but most of us eat about 3400 mg per day. This is more than double the amount of sodium we need. Healthy adults need only 1500 mg of sodium per day. Healthy children need only 1000-1500 mg of sodium per day.

Choose low sodium foods. When reading food labels, low sodium is defined as 140 mg of sodium per serving.

Cholesterol free oil

This is one of my favourites. My overweight clients always try to justify the excess oil consumption by telling me that they are using cholesterol free oil or the more expensive olive oil. Often hear people say "we use only olive oil" or "But I use only cholesterol free oil for frying, then why are my cholesterol levels high?" Most of us are slaves to our tongues and love tasty food. And if we have cooks, the matter just gets worse. They have no control on the oil consumption; their only goal is to serve you tasty food.

Remember all vegetable oils are free of cholesterol. Cholesterol is only present in non veg foods like meat, fish, eggs, butter, milk and milk products. It is a great marketing gimmick of the manufacturers to boost sales. Remember quantity is important. One gm of any oil gives you 9 calories. Oils are calorie dense and hence we need to use them in portioned amounts. Keep this in mind when choosing oils "heart-friendly oil should be cholesterol- and trans-fat free, low in saturated fats and high in monounsaturated fat (MUFA) and polyunsaturated fat (PUFA), it should have an ideal omega 6 to omega 3 acids ratio and a high smoking point". Speak to your nutritionist who will guide you on which oil is best for you.

10 best foods to reduce cholesterol

Have a salmon fish dinner. Snack on a handful of nuts. Pour a dash of olive oil in your salad.

And bite into that sinister chocolate. Now you can do all this guilt-free! All these foods help in fighting bad cholesterol. According to the American Heart Association, 'You can reduce cholesterol in your blood by eating healthy foods'. So, here we are today with our list of top 10 cholesterol fighting foods.

Oats: If you change your morning meal to oats then you can do your cholesterol level a whole lot of good. Do note that two servings of oats can lower LDL cholesterol by 5.3% in only 6 weeks. Essentially, oats contain a substance called beta-glucan which absorbs bad cholesterol.

Red Wine: Here's yet another reason to toast to your health. The red grapes used in the manufacturing of red wine have an important effect on cholesterol levels. Two glasses of red wine in a week can do you a whole lot of good.

Salmon and fatty Fish: Full of Omega-3 fatty acids, salmon is a natural health wonder, which helps in keeping heart conditions such as heart attacks, stroke and high cholesterol levels at bay. Fishes such as salmon, sardines and herring help in raising good cholesterol levels by 4%.

Nuts: Mono-unsaturated fats (found in nuts, seeds etc.) have the lowest fatty acid molecules and are the best of the three fats, namely poly-saturated fats, saturated fats and mono-unsaturated fats. Nuts are the best way to get those required healthy fats into your body without feeling guilty. Since the fats that come from nuts are natural and are not chemically processed, this makes them heart healthy, filling, and nutritious options.

Beans: Excellent for the heart, ½ a cup of beans added in our diet (in the form of any dish or soup), helps in lowering cholesterol levels by 8%. You should try black, kidney, or pinto beans; each one of them supplies about one-third of your day's fiber needs.

Tea: Tea has antioxidants and less amounts of caffeine than coffee. An eight-ounce cup of coffee contains around 135 mg caffeine; tea contains only 30 to 40 mg per cup. Tea helps in protecting your bones because of the presence of phytochemicals in them. It is also a great defense against LDL cholesterol levels.

Chocolate: Chocoholics can celebrate with a healthy dose of dark chocolate as it is full of antioxidants and cholesterol-reducing properties. According to a Spanish study published in 2010 in the "Journal of Hepatology," "the antioxidants in dark chocolate reduce the damage that can occur to blood vessels, which can further threaten the health of people with cirrhosis. The dark chocolate can help prevent the blood vessels in the liver from rupturing". Medical experts suggest that munching on 100 grams of chocolate every day helps in reducing the occurrence of cardiovascular mishaps by 21 percent.

Spinach. Popeye the sailor was quite right when crediting his muscle power to this green leafy vegetable. It is believed that spinach contains around 13 flavonoid compounds which keep us away from cancer, heart diseases and osteoporosis. 1/2 a cup of this lutein-rich food, daily, guards us against heart attacks.

Olive oil: This oil has many health benefits. It contains mono-unsaturated fatty acids which lower bad cholesterol and triglycerides, without lowering good cholesterol levels. Different stages of pressing and processing yield different varieties of olive oil.

Extra virgin, Virgin, Pure, Pomace

Top 5 rules for cooking fish

Sure, fish is healthy and delicious. But there are rules to ensure it stays moist and maintains a delicate flavour, as overdoing fish can spoil it. Here's more...

Pan frying or grilling

Grilling is a fast and easy technique and the high heat can seal in the flavour. When you do so, always brush it with a little oil to prevent it from sticking, then season. When frying, let it cook on one side then flip it.

Poaching

Poaching works well for fish. Just pour water, milk or court bouillon (mixture of salted water, half milk and herbs), in a bowl with some butter. Poach this on the gas or in the oven for just a few minutes (or until done).

Steaming

Steamed fish is light and ideal for the summer. To start, marinate your fish for 20 minutes with spices, ginger or lemongrass. If you're using a bamboo steamer, use a lettuce leaf to prevent that 'wood' smell from entering the fish. For a thick fish fillet, steam for just 6 minutes. Take care that the water does not touch the steamer. Do not use any oil.

Baking

To bake, place the fish in foil, with a slice of lemon, some ginger and olive oil as well as herbs such as fresh parsley. Bake in a moderately hot oven for 5-10 minutes.

Stir-frying

To stir fry fish with ginger and chillies, add the ingredients to the iron skillet and stir-fry for three minutes.

Recipe: Baigan ka bharta



A roast Aubergine dish from Punjab.

Preparation time: 20 minutes

Cooking Time: 30 minutes

Serves: 4

Recipe Ingredients:

3 medium sized aubergines

2 medium onions

4 plump cloves of garlic

1" piece ginger

4 large tomatoes

2 green chilies

Salt, to taste

1tsp cumin seeds

1tsp Kashmiri red chili powder

½tsp chili flakes

½tsp garam masala

3tbsp refined vegetable oil

2tbsp coriander leaves, finely chopped

Recipe Method:

Roast the Aubergines over an open flame or in the oven at high temperature till the skin is charred. Wash the Aubergines under the tap to remove the charred skin. Coarsely mash the roasted Aubergines.

Finally chop the onions, green chilies and the garlic. Finely chop the tomatoes and the ginger.

In a non-stick pan, add the oil.

Saute the onions and garlic until soft, then add the tomatoes and the ginger. Cook for 5-7 minutes.

Add all the spices and mix through. Add the aubergine, followed by the green chilies. Reduce the heat and toss the mixture for 15-20 minutes until well reduced.

Add salt to taste.

Garnish with finely chopped coriander.

Recipe: Tomato gazpacho with basil yoghurt



A good cold soup to go begin your meal

Preparation time: 15 minutes

Serves: 4

Ingredients

100g ripe tomatoes

½ small onion, chopped

½ small red pepper, chopped

1 clove garlic

½ slice white bread

1 tbsp virgin olive oil

1½ tbsp red wine vinegar

1 tsp lime juice

For the basil yoghurt:

25g fresh basil leaves

40ml olive oil

4tbsp thick yoghurt

Method

-Place the tomatoes, onion, red pepper, garlic and bread in the food processor and blend in until smooth. Mix remaining ingredients together and stir into the gazpacho. Chill until ready to use.

-For the basil yoghurt, mix together all the ingredients and chill until ready to use.

-Serve the gazpacho with a spoonful of the basil yoghurt on the top.

Recipe: Methi Pulao

It's easy to make mouth-watering methi pulao

It's a mouth-watering dish, to say the least. There are very few who don't like methi pulao, it is good for your health and pretty easy to cook.

Ingredients:

Two cups of basmati rice

Two tablespoons of ghee or oil

Half tablespoon of cumin seeds (jeera)

Two tablespoons of chopped green chillies

Two medium tomatoes puree

Three-fourth cup of chopped fenugreek (methi)

Eight to 10 mint leaves

One-fourth cup of coriander (chopped)

Four cloves of garlic

Turmeric powder

One tablespoon of coriander and cumin powder

Salt to taste

Method:

1. Clean and soak the rice for 20 minutes using enough water in a deep bowl. Keep aside.

2. Heat the ghee or oil in a deep pan, add the garlic cloves and fry for a bit.

3. Add the methi/ fenugreek, coriander and mint leaves and saute for another 5 minutes till the water dries.
4. Add the tomato and saute for two minutes on a medium flame.
5. Add the rice saute for two minutes on a medium flame.
6. Add four cups of water, salt, and all the other spices, mix well and simmer till the rice is cooked.

Recipe: Mushroom curry



Preparing yummy mushroom curry isn't that difficult after all

Ingredients:

The following need to be ground into coarse paste:

One tbsp roughly chopped mint leaves (phudina)

One tbsp roughly chopped coriander (dhania)

One chopped tomato

One chopped onion

Five cashew nuts (kaju)

Three green chillies

Other ingredients:

One cup of mushrooms, cleaned and finely chopped

One-fourth tsp mustard seeds (rai/sarson)

One-fourth tsp cumin seeds (jeera)

Four tsp oil
Salt to taste

Method:

Heat one tsp oil in a pan, add the mushroom and toss till tender is removed, then keep aside. Heat the remaining oil in the same pan, add the mustard seeds and cumin seeds. When they splutter, add the ground paste, mix well and simmer for 10 minutes. Add little water, but only if it is required. Add the salt and tossed mushroom, mix well, cover and cook for a couple of minutes. Serve hot with rice or rotis.

DECCAN Chronicle

Erratic food habits lead to acidity attacks



Erratic food habits lead to acidity attacks

Hyderabad: Over 50 to 80 cases of acidity are being reported every month in the city's super specialty hospitals, where more and more young people in the age group of 20 to 30 years are complaining of acidity.

Patients are walking in with severe abdominal pain, burning sensation in the stomach and also heart burn and severe chest congestion. Pradeep Kumar (name changed), a 25-year-old was rushed to the cardiology unit of a super specialty hospital because of severe chest congestion.

Experts claim that often they are mistaking it for chest pain or heart attack and later after evaluation it is found that it is a severe acidic attack. The major reasons for the increasing incidences are irregular eating hours, working in shifts, heavy snacking and also indulging in binge eating.

Dr Kiran Kumar Peddi, consultant interventional gastroenterologist, said, “The problem among college going youths or even employees with various companies is that there is too much of gap between meals.

They often end up skipping meals due to work and these long hours can also cause acidity. Eating at the proper time is very important. Even if they are taking a small meal in the middle they must ensure that it is not a heavy snack.”

The problem is also found when people indulge in too much of coffee, tea, carbohydrate drinks, ice-creams, spicy foods, lemon-based foods and tamarind foods. Those into high-stress jobs also have major issues of acidity and must have a regime of exercise and meditation.

Dr Nagarjuna Yarlagadda, consultant gastroenterologist, said, “It is important to evaluate a patient as to what is triggering the acid attack. It can be different for different individuals. But the worry is that if at 25 years, there is chronic acidity than it can lead to severe ulcers and also inflammation of the oesophagus.”

THE HINDU BusinessLine

25% Coonoor tea unsold in last week's sale

Coonoor, December 2:

Nearly 25 per cent of the 17.29 lakh kg offered at Sale No: 48 of Coonoor Tea Trade Association auction worth Rs. 2.67 crore remained unsold for want of buyers at the asking price.

When the asking price was raised to an average of Rs. 63.33 a kg from last week's Rs. 61.95, demand froze.

Among CTC teas, Vigneshwar Estate topped with Rs. 185 a kg followed by Deepika Supreme Rs. 184, Hittakkal Estate Rs. 177, Homedale Rs. 174 and Navilkal Estate Rs. 173.

In all, 47 marks got Rs. 125 and more per kg.

Chamraj topped the Orthodox market at Rs. 238, followed by Glendale Rs. 235, Kairbetta Rs. 215 and Kodanad Rs. 213.

In all, 35 marks got Rs. 125 and more per kg.

Quotations held by brokers indicated bids ranging Rs. 40-44 a kg for plain leaf grades and Rs. 90-145 for brighter liquoring sorts.

They ranged Rs. 42-48 for plain dusts and Rs. 120-180 for brighter liquoring dusts.

Exports

The export purchase spread to plainer and medium bolder varieties.

Pakistan bought in a wide range of Rs. 45 to Rs. 113 a kg.

H1 spices export up at 4.21 lakh t

Kochi, December 2:

Spices export earned \$1,152 million in the first half of the current fiscal, up from \$1,073 million during the same period a year ago.

A Spices Board press release said that 4.21 lakh tonnes of spices were exported during the period, up from 3.76 lakh tonnes. While the volume of exports increased by 12 per cent, the value grew 9 per cent. Chilli continued to top as the largest exported spice, accounting for 1.61 lakh tonnes in quantity and Rs.1,547.30 crore in value during the first half. Exports grew 17 per cent in quantity and 23 per cent in value compared with the corresponding period a year ago.

Mint products, cumin, spice oils and oleoresins, pepper, turmeric, coriander, curry powder/paste and fenugreek contributed substantially to the good performance.

bl03 com turmeric

Erode, December 2:

TURMERIC PALES WITH QUALITY

Spot turmeric prices decreased in Erode markets on Tuesday due to the arrival of inferior quality turmeric. “Many traders were in a quandary whether to buy though they have received some upcountry orders due to the arrival of degraded turmeric. Turmeric prices are a tad compared with last year price and rates at Erode are almost the same as in Nizamabad, Sangli and other places,” said RKV Ravishankar, President, Erode Turmeric Merchants Association. He said on Tuesday 2,200 bags of turmeric arrived for sale and 50 per cent of the stocks was sold. At the Erode Turmeric Merchants Association sales yard, the finger turmeric was sold at Rs. 3,229-6,469 a quintal and the root variety at Rs.3,169-5,791. Salem Hybrid: The finger variety went for Rs. 5,374-6,669, the root variety for Rs. 5,169-6,269. Of the 1,027 bags that arrived, 290 were sold. Our Correspondent

‘4 out of five cold storages can only store potatoes’

Kolkata, December 2:

Some 75-80 per cent of the 6,300 refrigerated warehouses in the country can only store potatoes, a commodity that makes up only 20 per cent of agricultural revenue in the country.

According to a report by the Institution of Mechanical Engineers (IME), a professional organisation of the UK, investment in the country’s cold chain is projected to be 15 billion over the next five years.

Based on 2012 statistics, it said that the country needs to expand its cold storage infrastructure in an affordable, reliable and sustainable way to increase the contribution of agriculture to the economy.

The report said that approximately 60 per cent of the facilities is located in just four States: Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, West Bengal and Punjab.

Only four million tonnes of the 104 million tonnes of fresh produce are transported through cold chains.

Patit Paban De, former President of the West Bengal Cold Storage Association, told *BusinessLine* that cold storage for potatoes in West Bengal account for around 80 per cent.

“As the State is one of the top producers in the country, private sector has contributed about 85 per cent of the investment in cold storage infrastructure in the State,” he said.

New cold storage facility for onion, carrot, beetroot and apple are now being proposed, De pointed out.

The organisation found that cold storages are used only for 10-11 per cent of fruits and vegetables produced in the country. The storage capacity needs to increase 40 per cent to avoid wastage, the report said.

Huge quantity of fruit and vegetable is wasted in southern and western regions due to the tropical and humid climate.

In 2013, West Bengal was India's leading horticulture producing State and accounted for over 10 per cent share across the country.

However, the State had only 5.682 million tonnes of functional cold storage capacity.

According to Tim Fox, Head of Energy and Environment at IME, establishment of supply chains required prioritisation of investment in affordable, reliable and sustainable cold chain infrastructure.

“This includes combining renewable energy with innovative technologies for producing both power and cooling, such as for example cryogenic energy storage using liquid air or nitrogen,” he said.

Cabinet nod for hike in support price for copra

New Delhi, December 2:

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs on Tuesday approved a Rs.300 increase in minimum support price (MSP) for fair average quality of ‘milling copra’ for the 2015 season to Rs. 5,550 a quintal.

The MSP of ‘Ball Copra’ for 2015 season will be Rs. 5,830, up Rs. 330 over last year's MSP.

“The approved prices are as per the recommendations by the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices,” an official release said.

Boosting output

Higher prices are expected to ensure appropriate minimum prices to farmers and step up investment in coconut cultivation, production and productivity.

The National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India Limited would continue to be the Central nodal agency to undertake price support operations at the MSP in coconut-growing States.

In addition, the Central Warehousing Cooperation, the National Cooperative Consumer Federation of India Limited and the Small Farmers Agri-Business Consortium are also allowed to participate in procurement operations, it said.

Cotton Corpn to buy via 341 centres: Govt

New Delhi, December 2:

With the price of cotton falling below the minimum support prices (MSP) in parts of southern and western India, Mohan Kundaria, the Minister of State for Agriculture, informed the Lok Sabha on Tuesday that the Cotton Corporation of India (CCI) would procure cotton across 92 districts in 11 States through 341 centres at support prices.

The Minister said that there will be no hike in the MSP. “During the current cotton season that began in October, prices are ruling below MSP in Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Maharashtra,” he said.

The nodal procurement agency is likely to procure about 6 million bales (of 170 kg each) from the open market. As of November 24, about 8,00,000 bales had been procured by the body. Depending on the variants, Cotton MSPs are fixed between Rs. 3,750 and Rs. 4,050 a quintal according to the variants.

Slowing Chinese demand is likely to hurt Indian exports even if the latter is set to surpass China as the world’s largest cotton producer, according to the International Cotton Advisory Committee.

The price of the key Shankar-6 variety fell below Rs. 35,000/candy (of 356 kg) last month from rates above Rs. 40,000 a year ago.

“Currently, cotton prices in international markets are ruling lower than prices during the corresponding period a year ago, primarily due to lower demand from China and increased supply from the US,” he said.

The Cotton Association of India estimates domestic production in the 2014-15 season at over 40 million bales but it is believed that exports could slide by as much as 40 per cent this year.

Seed subsidy

Junior Agriculture Minister Sanjeev Kumar Balyan informed that the ceiling for seed subsidy would be revised upwards to compensate farmers for additional expenditure incurred in re-sowing and purchasing appropriate seeds in drought notified or deficit rainfall districts. The revised figures – between Rs. 1,500 and Rs. 7,500 – across hybrid rice, wheat, coarse cereals, pulses and oilseeds, will be valid till March 31.

To increase the availability of animal feed ingredients, Balyan also stated that import duty had been waived for de-oiled soya extract and oil cakes made from groundnut, sunflower, canola, mustard, rice bran and palm kernel.