

Protecting biodiversity with rigour



A PRIORITY: “Keeping biodiversity and nature protection at the centre of climate action and growth strategy is a pressing requirement.” Picture shows a tiger in the Western Ghats. Photo: Kalyan Varma

To protect biodiversity, India must take hard decisions and set thresholds for environmental regulation and pollution

The Prime Minister recently reorganised his National Council on Climate Change and called on an indigenous answer, yoga, to alter consciousness and tackle climate change. The Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) is currently working on the National Democratic Alliance’s position on climate change, with two major United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change meetings coming up. While some say that these recent developments have rightly raised the profile of climate change in the new government, others believe that India needs to do more, particularly in the face of a new U.S.-China agreement on mitigating climate change. Voluntary action on climate change in India has centered around economic decisions, such as cutting

down on carbon intensity and increasing renewable sources of energy. But what is lacking in the discourse is an understanding of keeping the natural natural, or conserving biodiversity. Two important events have taken place in the past few months in the country, which are tied to climate change and the pressing issue of how we deal with it. First, the Convention on Biological Diversity, a Convention under the United Nations which seeks to regulate our use of the natural world, has reached important funding decisions. Second, a high-level committee set up to propose amendments in environmental laws in India has submitted its recommendations to the MoEF. Both developments set the tone for changing the character of growth.

Biodiversity and climate change

Biodiversity and wildlife protection is often termed as a 'co-benefit' of mitigating climate change. Other co-benefits, usually understood as secondary to economic decision-making, are clean air, potable water, ecosystem services and a stable microclimate. Conservationists have argued that biodiversity has become a low second fiddle to climate change in international negotiations, and decisions related to biodiversity are not yet part of the 'mainstream' decisions related to growth, trade and carbon emissions. At the just-concluded conference of parties of the Convention on Biological Diversity held in Pyeongchang, Korea, many stressed that biodiversity targets cannot just be 'stand alone' targets. "In order to move the biodiversity agenda forward, approaches and tactics must evolve. In the framework of the post-2015 development agenda, stand alone targets on biodiversity would not be useful. The principle of universality and integration must define the nature of sustainable development goals," said Achim Steiner, Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme, urging that the world could not "continue to be a mere librarian of extinction, threat and destruction." At the meeting, an important commitment for resource mobilisation was made. Parties have agreed to double biodiversity-related financial flow to developing countries, small island developing states, least developed countries, and economies in transition. The funding is for average annual biodiversity funding for the years 2006-2010, and is to be

delivered by next year. The way this funding is utilised when a part of it comes to India needs to be seen as more than just side efforts to climate change action.

For instance, climate change action in India is currently focussed on a lowering of carbon intensity in growth. But we are also seeking to peak emissions by a certain period, allowing growth to optimise by then, and then allow a tapering off of emissions. But this carbon space can also be consistently at odds with biodiversity protection efforts. For example, the concept of 'peaking' emissions holds no value for biodiversity, and may actively threaten it. A habitat once destroyed takes decades to be restored as we set up man-made infrastructure. So the question is: are we going to dismantle natural infrastructure and then restore it? If the answer is no, then this will mean taking hard decisions, such as identifying critical, inviolate areas in forests which cannot be mined or dammed, and setting thresholds for environmental regulation and pollution.

On the topic of regulation, a crucial review is currently underway. A high-level committee chaired by former Cabinet Secretary T.S.R. Subramanian has reviewed all the environmental laws of India including the Wildlife Protection Act, the Forest Act, the Forest Conservation Act, and the Environment Protection Act. While decisions related directly to biodiversity, such as species and habitat protection, are under the ambit of review, there are also indirect connections which bridge decisions for both climate change action and biodiversity protection. One of the most pressing questions is that of regulation. What will be revised thresholds for air and water pollution? The government has made moves to lift the moratorium for projects (and thus allowing more emissions) in critically polluted areas, such as Vapi in Gujarat. Further changes in these regulations will set the tone for levels of industrial effluents in seas, rivers, and the sky, and how much clustering of infrastructure and projects can be allowed in an area. The second question is one of environmental and forest clearances for projects. In public statements, including the one made when Environment Minister Prakash Javadekar accepted the environmental act review, the government says it wants the

environmental clearance process made “speedier” and “more transparent.” This sentiment is echoed in States too: for instance, Himachal Pradesh has a committee on ‘Speedy development of small hydro projects.’

Decision-making on environment should not be a question of time; rather it should be one of rigour. While developers want to believe that problems in environmental decision-making lie in time spent around getting a clearance, the issue really is one of technocratic discretion. The MoEF needs to have the forthright discretion to say ‘no’ to projects with deleterious impacts on biodiversity and climate action. While it is a Ministry meant to appraise projects and clear them, it is also one that is meant to halt projects which denigrate biodiversity and environmental conservation efforts.

Changing consciousness

The final question then is: in our development efforts, and in climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts, what rigour will the Indian government put in for capturing our hard-won climate quota, while simultaneously guarding a healthy environment? While conventional sources of energy will stay for a while, environmental regulation and post-project monitoring have to be strengthened and upheld because the country is a constituency wider than just developers who clamour for hasty clearances. Further, in creating a different scenario — that is new forms of energy and low carbon development pathways such as biogas, solar and marine, wind mill energy and energy efficiency — there is a real chance for new job creation.

Finally, keeping biodiversity and nature protection at the centre of climate action, and thus our growth strategy, is a pressing requirement. The World Bank estimates that India loses more than 5 per cent of its GDP each year to environmental degradation. A robust and growing biodiversity protected area framework will save money spent on pollution-related illnesses and buoy climate change mitigation work.

On yoga and its role in combating climate change, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said, “It is not about exercise but to discover the sense of oneness with yourself, the world and the nature. By changing our lifestyle and creating consciousness, it can help us

deal with climate change.” This change in consciousness and ‘oneness with nature’ has to be rethought now, at the cusp of our new climate and biodiversity action strategies. We cannot develop now to ask questions later.

Centre’s nod awaited for individual crop insurance scheme

The Tamil Nadu government awaits the Centre’s instructions for implementing an individual crop insurance scheme on a pilot basis. This has been communicated by the Director of Agriculture to the former MLA, M. Appavu, who moved the Madras High Court for a directive to the government to introduce an individual crop insurance scheme.

Court directive

Disposing of the petition, the High Court asked the government to examine his representation and give a reply. Accordingly, the Director of Agriculture, in a letter, agreed that there were inbuilt deficiencies in the Centre’s weather-based crop insurance scheme, modified national agricultural insurance scheme and coconut palm insurance scheme.

Hence, the State decided to implement an individual crop insurance scheme on a pilot basis during 2012-13 after getting the Centre’s approval. The implementation of the crop insurance scheme involved many agencies. Also, the Centre should obtain clearance from the Insurance Research and Development Authority before giving its consent. Several reminders were also sent to the Centre.

Officials of the Agricultural Insurance Company of India would visit the State this month. The individual crop insurance scheme would be implemented after the Centre granted administrative clearance, the letter said.

Centre should get clearance from the Insurance Research and Development Authority before giving its consent

Average rainfall mark reached in Tuticorin

More rains expected before monsoon withdrawal

The average annual rainfall mark of 662 mm has been reached in Tuticorin district.

Collector M. Ravikumar said here on Monday that early onset of northeast monsoon and bountiful rains had contributed to this achievement and more rains were expected before the withdrawal of monsoon. Of the 134 tanks maintained by the Public Works Department in the Tamiraparani, Korampallam and Vaippar divisions, 71 had reached full capacity. The level in seven other tanks had reached above 75 per cent of the capacity.

Among 53 system irrigation tanks, the level was up to the brim in 50 and the remaining tanks would reach full capacity soon, he said.

Of the four main channels under Tamiraparani irrigation system, water was being released from only one channel to tanks in Sadayaneri and Puthantharuvai. Check-dam construction work across Tamiraparani river in Mukkani had gained momentum and the project would be completed soon, the Collector said.

Joint Director of Agriculture N.K. Dhakshinamoorthy said the recent rains had proved to be much beneficial for farmers, especially those raising crops on rain-fed lands.

V. Ganapathi Raman, a farmer from Masarpatti, said black gram, green gram, cotton and maize had been sown in Pudur, Vilathikulam and Kovilpatti blocks. This time, maize crop had been raised on lands with irrigation facility as well as rain-fed lands, he said.

D. Jawahar, Head and Professor of Agricultural Research Station, Kovilpatti, said most of the crops had reached the vegetative phase of cultivation. Dr. Jawahar said first weeding of rain-fed crops such as cotton, sorghum, millets, green gram, black gram, maize and chillies and fertilizer top dressing had been carried out. Since farm implements could not be taken up on wet clay soil, many farmers had started hand weeding, he said.

Of the 134 tanks maintained by the PWD, 71 have reached full capacity

Ragi flakes, anyone?



Millet powerRagi in a new avatarPhoto: Special arrangement

The nutritious millet is now available as cereal to appeal to city folks

If ragi dosai, roti, puttu, and kanji are not your type, how does ragi flakes sound? Or ragi nuggets filled with chocolate and vanilla? An agro foods company has come up with a range of breakfast options made using the nutritious millet. Launched at the M.S. Swaminathan Foundation, it includes banana-flavoured ragi flakes and fills that are crunchy on the outside with a dollop of chocolate, vanilla, and strawberry cream on the inside.

Speaking at the launch, genetic scientist M.S. Swaminathan explained how India was once home to about 1, 50,000 rice varieties, 10,000 years ago. “Men went hunting and women collected plants and grew them,” he said. “This is the origin of agriculture.” As years went by, the ‘food basket shrunk’. The market gradually went down for pulses other than major crops such as rice, wheat, and soybeans leading to the ‘genetic erosion of a range of nutritional food,’ he said.

However, Swaminathan said that the minor millets, he called “nutri-cereals,” were important elements in the food basket, given their “climate-smart” nature and nutritional value. Only if there was a

market for them, can the nutri-cereals such as samai, thinai, kezhvaragu, among others, be revived. “Food and health security go together,” he observed. Swaminathan added that it’s for this purpose that “we are pressing the UN to declare one year as the year of nutri-crops.”

But it’s not just the millets, our traditional rice varieties are disappearing too. In Koraput, Odisha, for instance, rice varieties have come down over the years from 3,500 to 300. “These crops will have a sound future only if we assure farmers remuneration,” said Swaminathan. The consumer plays an important role in this — it could make all the difference to the farmer if consumers create a market for millets by including them in their everyday diet. Which is why “putting them in a form of contemporary value” is essential, feels Swaminathan.

The ragi flakes, for instance, were an attempt at this, according to Prashant Parameswaran, the Managing Director of Kottaram Agro Foods that manufactures the cereal. He explained how the dietary fibre-rich millet was much more nutritious than rice and wheat. However, bringing our traditional grains back to the fore is “not a one-man-show”, he explained. People and companies should come forward to do their bit.

Ragi facts

- Ragi is a rich source of calcium, iron, and amino acids***
- It helps keep sugar, and blood cholesterol levels in check***
- Since ragi is gluten and fat-free, it’s good for babies and people looking to lose weight***

Mango exports may bear 'capital' shock



[The Hindu](#) A felled mango tree in an orchard near Nuzvid in Krishna district. Photo: Ch. Vijaya Bhaskar

The rumours on setting up the State capital in Nuzvid during the mango season a few months ago may have a telling effect on mango exports from Andhra Pradesh, with many farmers disposing of their orchards to realtors of late.

The State exports horticultural products worth around Rs.40,000 crore every year in which mango has a bulk share. But, in the coming year mango production may come down as many farmers have sold away their lands.

Though the export figures this year suggest a good trend, officials feel the selling of orchards may have a deleterious effect on the exports in the coming years.

According to Deputy Director (Horticulture) B. Surya Subbarayudu, around 6,000 metric tonnes of mangoes are being exported to different countries from Krishna district every year. Mango export has increased by 5 per cent in the last few years. "*Banginapalli* is the most sought after variety. Farmers are raising Venisha (*Banginapalli*) in 1.2 lakh acres in Nuzvid, Agiripalli, Nunna, Reddygudem, Vissannapet, Mylavaram, Tiruvur and other mandals in Krishna district," said Mr. Subbarayudu.

However, many farmers have disposed off their mango orchards in Nunna, Nuzvid, Vijayawada Rural and other areas to realtors after being offered around Rs.2 crore and above per acre in the last few months. Many industrialists have also created 'land banks' in the region, expecting a realty boom.

"Mango gardens adjoining the main road were sold at Rs. 3 crore per acre and several farmers sold some thousands of acres. Later, capital location has changed to Guntur district. This year, the real estate activity will certainly affect the mango exports," says Ch. Venkata Rao, a mango farmer.

Mangoes are exported to Singapore, Japan, USA, Sri Lanka and other countries, apart from being sent to Maharashtra, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and other neighbouring States.

Scientists of Mango Research Station, Dr. Y.S.R. Horticultural University, Nuzvid, say that mango is being raised in about 4 lakh hectares in the State and the production is good in Krishna district.

Indian Society of Soil Sciences celebrates 79th anniversary


The four-day, 79th anniversary celebrations of the Indian Society of Soil Sciences that kicked off at the Professor Jayashankar Telangana State Agricultural University here on Monday was marked by felicitation to 92-year-old veteran Jasvanth Singh Kanwar, a scientist of eminence who spent 40 years in Hyderabad because of his work with the International Crop Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT).

Addressing the gathering comprising about 500 soil scientists from across the country, Vice-Chancellor of the Acharya NG Ranga Agricultural University, Alluri Padmaraju said soil was the equivalent of gold and it was imperative that scientists strive to preserve fertility of soil. Among others present were President of the society, R.K. Ratan and Secretary D.R. Biswas, apart from the Hyderabad chapter President, P.P. Rao

Bumper paddy yield expected in Krishna

Positive projection based on lack of impact of Cyclone Hudhud

HAPPY TIDINGS



A farmer transporting paddy on a bullock cart near Machilipatnam in Krishna district. — PHOTO: T. APPALA NAIDU

- 1 Yield estimated to cross **14 lakh** metric tonnes this kharif season
- 2 It will be the highest since **2010** kharif, say agriculture officials
- 3 Paddy production in kharif **2013** was around **11 lakh** metric tonnes
- 4 Total sowing area is above **2.52 lakh** hectares in Krishna district
- 5 Harvesting has been completed in barely five p.c. of sowing area
- 6 Crop cutting which began a week ago is likely to end by mid-December

“ The output is expected to be anywhere between 25 and 30 bags per acre
V. NARASIMHULU, Agriculture Department Joint Director

Paddy production in Krishna district in the 2014 kharif season is likely to go above 14 lakh metric tonnes. This is mainly due to lack of any impact of cyclone Hudhud on the crop in Krishna district. Paddy output in kharif 2014, according to preliminary estimates of agriculture officials, will be the highest this season since 2010 kharif.

Harvesting of paddy crop has just been completed in barely five per cent of the total sowing area of above 2.52 lakh hectares in Krishna district. However, crop cutting which began a week ago is

expected to be complete by mid-December. The harvesting was delayed by two weeks due to delay in sowing operations.

“Paddy fields witnessed no damage post-Hudhud cyclone. The output which will be anywhere between 25 and 30 bags per acre is a bumper yield,” Agriculture Department Joint Director V. Narasimhulu told *The Hindu*. In 2013 kharif, during which paddy fields were severely damaged due to repeated cyclones Helen, Phailin and Lehar, the total paddy production was nearly 11 lakh metric tonnes.

Availability of agriculture workers remains the prime hurdle for early completion of harvesting in the district. The migrant workers who are mostly engaged in North Andhra and Godavari districts are likely to join agricultural operations in Krishna and its neighbouring districts by mid-December, owing to huge demand and work there.

Harvesting of standing paddy crop is yet to begin in majority of the areas in eastern Krishna including Diviseema region, Machilipatnam.

It is also learnt that many big farmers are planning to go in for harvesting machines to meet the labour shortage.

Over 200 farmers selected under Krishi Bhagya

Over 200 farmers from four dry taluks — Mysuru, Nanjangud, T.Narsipur and K.R. Nagar — in Mysuru district have been selected to receive benefits under the Krishi Bhagya scheme.

As many as 4,955 farmers had applied, out of which 200 were shortlisted to get benefits for 2014–15.

After scrutinising the applications and conducting field visits to ascertain that the applicant had a minimum of one acre in a dry area, the department selected the beneficiaries through lottery system. A reservation of 30 per cent was maintained for those belonging to SC and ST communities.

The list will soon be put before the district-level committee for its approval and once approved, selected farmers will be asked to set up different facilities in their field to get 80 per cent reimbursement

from the government in case of general category and 90 per cent for SC/ST.

Facilities required

The five infrastructure facilities that farmers have to compulsorily build in their fields under the scheme are – in-situ moisture conservation, farm pond, diesel pump set, sprinkler or drip irrigation and cropping pattern, including any one of the following three — agriculture, horticulture and sericulture. Setting up of Animal Husbandry is optional for farmers. M. Mahanteshappa, Joint Director of Agriculture, said farmers planning to construct poly-houses in their fields to grow horticultural crops will get 50 per cent subsidy.

KVASU prepares to tackle bird flu threat

: The Kerala Veterinary and Animal Sciences University (KVASU) will soon launch measures to tackle the avian influenza threat reported from various parts of the State. The Directorates of Entrepreneurship and Academics and Research of the university, in association with the Department of Poultry Science, Public Health and Centre for One Health, will associate with the disease control team of the Animal Husbandry and Health Department, university sources said .

Minister for Agriculture K.P. Mohanan will lead the disease-control and containment team.

Officials of KVASU, including B. Sunil, Professor and Head, Department of Veterinary Public Health, and T.P. Sethumadhavan, Director of Entrepreneurship, will attend a high-level discussion convened by the Chief Minister on Tuesday.

Awareness programmes

The KVASU will launch awareness programmes for representatives of three-tier local administrative bodies, veterinarians, para-veterinarians and duck farmers in the affected areas. Knowledge dissemination process will be executed at the grassroots level.




A team of veterinary experts are closely monitoring the disease management strategies on behalf of KVASU, sources added.

Workshop on organic farming

A one-day workshop on organic farming – its prospects, possibilities and problems — will be held at Kerala Sahitya Akademi Hall on November 27.

The workshop, jointly organised by the Kerala Agricultural University and the State Horticulture Mission with the support of Centre for Studies on Technology Society Interface and Policy in Agriculture is meant to assess the impact of organic farming activities undertaken in the Kasaragod district and chalk out action plans to extend the successful practices to other parts of the State. Named 'Lessons from Organic Kasaragod', the event will present an overview of the implementation of organic policy in Kasaragod district, soil and plant relations in organic agriculture, and plant protection techniques in Kasaragod. According to KAU sources, the event is being organised to facilitate an analysis of actions to be taken to convert Kerala into an organic State.

Introducing a ready-to-install biogas plant

TURNING GARBAGE INTO GAS			
Ready-to-use biogas plant needs less space	Plant with two cubic-metre capacity yields one kg of cooking gas a day		
 IT CAN BE INSTALLED IN 3 HOURS	<table border="1"><tr><td>Two cubic meter capacity plant needs about 15 kg of waste a day</td><td>Experts say apartments and groups of houses can set up such plants with bigger capacity</td></tr></table>	Two cubic meter capacity plant needs about 15 kg of waste a day	Experts say apartments and groups of houses can set up such plants with bigger capacity
Two cubic meter capacity plant needs about 15 kg of waste a day	Experts say apartments and groups of houses can set up such plants with bigger capacity		
 It is portable, and prevents stench	IT IS POSSIBLE TO INSTALL POWER GENERATOR FOR BIG BIOGAS PLANTS 		

It takes only three hours to set up the compact model

The development of a compact and ready-to-use model of biogas plant, which can be installed in three hours, will ease the process of putting bio-degradable waste to good use.

The model caught the attention of visitors at the recent Krishi Mela of the University of Agricultural Sciences–Bangalore, and its advantage is that it is portable and comes in various capacities.

Developed by Sintex Industries and validated by IIT–New Delhi, a model with two cubic-metre capacity can yield one kilogram of cooking gas a day and requires a space of only 6x6 feet, as against the conventional dome model that requires brick work and takes up 12x18 feet, according to experts.

Kumara Goud, principal investigator, Biogas Development and Training Centre, UAS–B, notes that setting up of the conventional dome-type biogas plant requires about 15 days. Pointing out that skilled masons are required to build the dome, he says there is a possibility of leakage if work is not done by skilled workers.

Similarly, the metal drum model takes 30 days for installation and requires regular maintenance to prevent corrosion, he said.

Dr. Goud felt that the ready-to-install model will boost to efforts by experts and policymakers to turn waste into wealth owing to its convenient features.

The ready-to-use model has a spider spring mechanism to help maintain constant gas pressure which will ensure availability of quality flame.

The ready-to-use model with a capacity of two cubic-metre costs Rs. 36,000 as against the metal drum model of Rs. 40,000 and the conventional model of Rs. 30,000, the experts noted.

According to Dr. Goud, the model with two cubic-metre capacity requires 15 kg of waste a day.

It is also possible to opt for power generation if the plant is of a larger capacity, sources said.

INDIAN CITIES

INTERNATIONAL CITIES

Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather



Partly Cloudy

Rain: 0

Humidity: 58

Wind: normal

Tomorrow's Forecast

Tuesday, Nov 25

Max 30° | Min 24°
Cloudy

Sunrise: 06:12

Sunset: 05:39

Barometer: 1014

Wednesday, Nov 26

Max 30° | Min 24°

Extended Forecast for a week

Thursday
Nov 27



30° | 24°

Cloudy

Friday
Nov 28



32° | 26°

Cloudy

Saturday
Nov 29



33° | 27°

Cloudy

Sunday
Nov 30



33° | 27°

Cloudy

Monday
Dec 1



34° | 27°

Partly Cloudy

Sleep-deprived schoolchildren run obesity risk



Children of mothers who work full time may not be getting the amount of sleep they need each night, placing them at higher risk of being overweight or obese within a year, finds research.

"We looked at night-time sleep in particular, because studies show that the amount of nighttime sleep matters for regulating weight," said co-author Janet Liechty, a professor of medicine and of social work at University of Illinois.

"We think that it might be the more hours that mothers are working, the less time they have, and there may be some sort of tradeoff going on, 'Do I spend quality time with my child or do we get to bed early?'" explained lead author Katherine Speirs, a postdoctoral research associate.

"And then in the morning, when mothers leave for work, their children also wake up early to get to day care," Speirs added.

The researchers followed 247 mother-child pairs for one year.

The children, who ranged from three to five years old, were weighed, measured and had their body mass index (BMI) calculated at the outset of the study and again one year later.

At the second weigh-in, 17 percent of the preschoolers were overweight and 12 percent were obese, according to BMI-for-age growth charts.

Children whose mothers worked full time got fewer hours of sleep than peers whose mothers worked less than 20 hours per week.

The children of women who worked full time also tended to have higher BMIs at the second weigh-in.

The study appeared online in the journal Sleep Medicine.

Healthy breakfast ideas

You have heard all about the importance of a healthy breakfast. But between trying not to burn your clothes with record breaking ironing speed, and running for the 8am local, you hardly get time to eat something healthy for breakfast. Relax. Here are some quick and easy ideas for a healthy breakfast.

The healthy Indian breakfast: Idlis, sambhar, tea and fruit.

Things you will need:

1. Idli batter (pick it from your friendly neighbourhood grocery store)
2. Daal
3. Vegetables like potatoes, carrots, beans etc.
4. Sambhar powder
5. Asafoetida
6. Red chillies
7. Curry leaves
8. Turmeric and salt to taste.

Method:

For the idlis: Simply put the batter into the moulds of the idli cooker, steam for 10 minutes and they're ready. You can buy an idli steamer for steaming idlis over a flame or simply go in for a microwave idli dish. The microwave idli dish is, easily, one of the best time savers in Indian kitchens.

For the sambhar: Cook the dal and vegetable separately in water and for the tadka add mustard seeds, asafoetida, red chillies, sambhar powder, curry leaves and turmeric.

Finish with a fruit like chiku or banana and give yourself your daily dose of caffeine with a hot cup of tea or coffee, and you're good to go!

Nutritional benefits: Idlis provide you with the right kind of carbs and are non-fattening. The lentils are loaded with nutrients and proteins that'll energise you for the day's activities. Chikus and bananas are rich in antioxidants and keep you full for longer. You can alternate between idlis and dosas and grind some chutney if time permits, for variation.

The breakfast quickie: Cereal, nuts, fruit and tea

Things you will need:

1. Any kind of cereal
2. A cup of milk
3. Handful of dry fruits like dates, walnuts, almonds and raisins

This is probably the quickest breakfast ever. Heap in a couple of spoons of your favourite cereal, pour in a cup of milk, add the dry fruits and and soup's up! A breakfast of cereal with nuts, fruits and milk gives you the needed carbs, protein, essential fatty oils and calcium all in one go. Top it up with a fruit and a grab a cup of java on the go!

The Continental breakfast: Toast, eggs, fruits and coffee

Things you need:

1. 2 Eggs
2. Seasoning (pepper, chilli powder etc)
3. Salt to taste.
4. 2 slices of brown bread
5. A papaya or a pomegranate

Method:

Poach, scramble or simply boil two egg whites (including one egg yolk for daily breakfasts is permitted). Spread a little butter or cheese on the brown bread slices and include a fruit like papaya or pomegranate on the side. Wash everything down with tea or coffee.

Nutritional benefits: Eggs contain nutrients like phosphorus and magnesium. Consuming the yolk is not a bad idea either as it contains good cholesterol, which your body needs. But don't overdo it. Bread gives you the carbs your body needs for energy. Papaya is rich in antioxidants and a good source of vitamin E. Pomegranate is also a rich source of antioxidants and a good source of phosphorus. Read more Personal Health, Diet & Fitness stories on www.healthmeup.com

Healthy soups for winter

With winter whetting your appetite, food usually becomes the centre of attention.

When the ambient temperature drops, the body generates heat by increasing its basal metabolic rate in order to keep up the body temperature. There are two ways in which this metabolic feat is achieved - by increasing the breakdown of the body's stored fat, and by providing the body more fuel to burn in the form of food. Thus, in cold weather, the feeding centre is stimulated, increasing the food intake.

Another important reason for a noted increase in hunger is a marked drop in water intake during colder days. When the temperature is low, you don't really feel the need to drink more often, as you don't feel thirsty again and again. As the fluid intake reduces, you tend to confuse thirst with hunger, which leads to increased consumption of food and thus, a bigger appetite. So, focus on keeping the fluid intake constant throughout the year, not just in summer. Less hydration has many disadvantages. It is the underlying reason for cold sores, dry and flaky skin, itching, cracked lips and lacklustre hair.

If gulping down glasses of water doesn't appeal to you, try increasing the intake of other fluids like milk, juices and caffeine-free tea, like jasmine, chamomile and other natural flower extracts. Do remember that caffeinated beverages are never counted as liquid intake; instead, they sap your system of water. Soups are a healthy and delicious way to stay hydrated and warm during winter.

Soups need not be loaded with cream and grease; opt for recipes that contain chicken or vegetable broth and a variety of vegetables, beans, and lean meat - the kind of ingredients that make you feel light and healthy.

Soups are a great way to incorporate nutritionally-rich foods in your diet. Plus, they work as a wonderful option for picky eaters. You can cook your soup longer or shorter to vary the crunchiness of the vegetables. You can also puree the ingredients to add a creaminess.

CHICKEN TOFU LEMON CORIANDER SOUP

Ingredients: Olive oil: 1 tsp, Garlic cloves: 2, Green chilli (small, crushed): 1, Oil: ½ tsp, Vegetable or chicken stock: 500 ml, Coriander leaves (finely chopped): 2 tbsp, Cornflour: 2 tsp, Fish sauce: ½ tsp, Boneless chicken or tofu (small pieces): 50 gm, Carrots and beans (finely chopped): 50 gm, Egg: 1, Salt and lemon juice to taste

Method: Take one tsp olive oil and saute garlic and green chillies in it for 1 min. Add tofu chicken pieces and saute further for 2 mins. Add stock and boil for 10 mins. Add salt. Turn off the gas and add coriander leaves. Just before serving, bring to a boil and add fish sauce. To thicken the soup, take two tsp cornflour in a bowl and dilute it in little water. Add this diluted cornflour to the soup and stir it well. Add the beaten egg as well. Add lemon juice as per taste. (Vegetarians need to do away with fish sauce and egg; the soup tastes delicious without them too). It is a healthy, nourishing soup that tickles the tastebuds with chillies and garlic and hydrates the body.

POTATO AND MUSHROOM SOUP

Ingredients: Boiled potatoes (medium, grated): 2, Mushrooms (sliced): 50 gm , Garlic cloves (crushed): 1 to 2, Vegetable stock: 2 cups, Celery (finely chopped): 1 tsp, Dash of butter, Salt and pepper to taste

Method: Saute garlic in a dash of butter. Add grated potatoes, 1 cup water and boil it till it becomes smooth. Add the vegetable stock and sliced mushrooms. Boil for 5 to 7 mins. Add salt to taste and coarsely ground pepper. Garnish with finely chopped celery. This thick, smooth soup is very filling and warms you on cold winter nights.

By PoojaMakhija, Consulting Nutritionist & Clinical Dietician

[Recipe: Shrimp Pakoda](#)

Ingredients:

200 gms of shrimp (clean it properly and then de-vein it very carefully)

¼ tbsp lime juice

¼ tbsp roasted cumin powder

Salt to taste

Garlic paste

Red chilly powder

One cup besan/chickpea flour

A pinch of baking powder

¼ cup finely chopped onions

2 finely chopped green chilli

Method:

1. Toss the shrimp with ¼ tsp of lime juice, ¼ tsp roasted cumin powder, garlic paste, red chili powder and salt. Leave it aside to be marinated for about 10 to 15 minutes.

2. Mix 1 cup of besan/chickpea flour, a pinch of baking powder, 1/4 tsp of red chili powder, salt to taste, 3/4 cup or 1 cup of water to make a smooth batter.

3. To the batter add about 1/4 cup of finely chopped onions and 2 green chili, finely chopped (this is optional).

4. Heat oil in the kadhai and deep fry them. The samosas are ready to be served

Mirchi ka Salan: the side kick in the main drama



For most Hyderabadis, mirchi ka salan is the perfect accompaniment to biryani. Nothing more. But for many people who savour this spicy, tangy and mellow dish, it appears like a dish that can stand on its own. However, not many know that this spicy chilli curry was once upon a time eaten with rice or chapati. Yes, the Nawabs of Hyderabad relished it that way.

A dish by itself

For the Shah Alam Khan family, the preparation of mirchi ka salan is considered to be an art and like biryani, this dish is also lavished as much attention in cooking. Nawab Shah Alam Khan, connoisseur and the final word on Hyderabadi gourmet

cuisine, shares his tale about this spicy Hyderabadi dish. "I belong to an old order, a jagirdar family and have moved with lot of jagirdars. I don't remember ever having biryani with any kind of curry or mirchi ka salan. Biryani itself is a meal with flavours of spices and should be eaten separately. Similarly, mirchi ka salan is also a dish in itself which has been there for centuries and the nawabs used to have it with chapatis or plain rice," he reveals and adds, "In our time, we had only one way of making mirchi ka salan, the brownish one, which is still made in our houses. It has fried onions with well pounded chironji and almonds. Then the paste of ginger, garlic and garam masala is added along with tamarind with long fat mirchis. It's simple, yet tasty. Then, gradually another recipe was discovered, the whitish one which did not have tamarind but kharna, a bigger citrus fruit which is rarely found these days.

"However, in both the recipes, there shouldn't be too many chillies, they spoil the taste. Moreover, I feel, over a period of time, people have developed a taste and mirchi ka salan has become a part of biryani now and everybody has started making it differently," says Shah Alam Khan.

Well, this nawabi family has a huge list of recipes to share, which many would love to rustle up. "We also make a dish called muchambar, it's a better version of mirchi ka salan and nobody knows about it except our family. The ingredients are almost the same, but the procedure of making it is different and it contains more onions. It's tastier than our regular mirchi ka salan," he reveals.

Different flavours

If the Alam Khan family is proud about its exclusive recipe of this Hyderabadi dish, architect Renu Siraj is happy to share her one as well. "Mirchi ka salan and biryani go hand-in-hand and I can't imagine having biryani without it. I'm sure every family has its own recipe to share and the taste as well as flavour is different. However, I really love the one we make at our place. It's greenish in colour with flavours of til, khus khus, imli, khada masala and long chillies," she shares. Lawyer Shazia Khan, adds, "Biryani and mirchi ka salan is a perfect combination like dal makhani or dal bati churma. They both compliment each other very well and add more flavour to the cuisine. Even my family members and I relish the salan with biryani, and make it in three different ways. There is a greenish one which has dry coconut, cumin seeds, coriander seeds, onion and green chillis. Then there is the one which is white in colour and has tamarind, turmeric, coconut, green chillies. The third is the regular brown one. However, we make the green one mostly, it's like a delicacy with dahi-ki-chutney."

Favourite of all

Whether a Hyderabadi or a non-Hyderabadi, this spicy curry is a favourite. Dr Romy Azad, who's a non-Hyderabadi, says, "I'm a Punjabi, and I did not know about haleem and mirchi ka salan until I shifted to Hyderabad. Later, I started liking them both, and today, I cannot think of biryani without the salan. It's a perfect combination. I wait to relish them whenever I get the chance. I like the pista green one — the authentic one made in Muslim families. In fact, at times, I prefer having the salan with rotis and we can preserve it for a few days as well. It reminds me of bharwan mirchi, a Punjabi dish."

The Nawabi recipe

Raffath Jehan shares her authentic family recipe of mirchi ka salan, which has been handed down to her by her father-in-law, Nawab Shah Alam Khan.

Ingredients

100 gm big green chillies 10 gm jeera powder 10 gm dhania powder 5 gm sesame powder 5 gm coconut, grated 5 gm peanuts, roasted and ground 1/2 medium onion, roasted and ground 10 gm tamarind, soaked and ground 2 tsp ginger-garlic paste 1 tsp chilli powder 1/2 tsp turmeric powder 100 ml refined oil 2 tsp sugar 5 gm kalonji (onion seeds) 5 gm methi seeds 5 gm mustard seeds Salt to taste

Method

Mix all the roasted and ground ingredients with jeera and dhania powders. Add the chilli, turmeric powder to it and add salt to taste. Keep aside. Heat oil in a pathela, put the kalonji, methi seeds and mustard seeds, cook until they start to splutter and then add the green chillies and cover with the lid and cook for five minutes. Now lift the lid and cook further for five minutes and then remove the chillies from the oil. Now add the roasted, ground mixture to the hot oil and keep stirring till the oil separates from the mixture. Then add about 2 tsp sugar to the mixture. Now add the fried/cooked green chillies to the mixture with some water and simmer for another 10 minutes and remove from the fire.

THE HINDU BusinessLine

Environment controlled poultry houses

Hyderabad, November 24:

ECO-CONTROLLED POULTRY HOUSES

Vijay Raj Poultry Equipment Private Limited, which manufactures welded mesh and poultry cages for the poultry industry, has launched 'environment controlled poultry houses'. "Environment controlled poultry houses are now gaining popularity as it is very important to keep air and floor temperature under control," Uday Raj, a top executive of the company said here in a statement on Monday. The company has tied up with pre-engineered buildings contracting company Kishore Infratech Private Limited (KIPL) for technology support. "We are targeting to sell 60 units in one year," he said. KIPL has produced 100 pre-engineered sheds for the agriculture and allied sectors. The two companies are going to showcase the technology and its advantage at the upcoming Poultry India Expo scheduled to be held here next week. Our Bureau

Planters body worried over sliding Kochi tea prices

Kochi, November 24: The Association of Planters of Kerala has raised serious concern over the continuous fall in tea prices at the Kochi tea auction.

The planters' body urged the Kerala government to encourage State Civil Supplies Corporation (Supplyco) to purchase a minimum one lakh kg per week of teas produced in Kerala from the Kochi auction market.

APK cited the geopolitical instability in the traditional markets such as West Asia, CIS and some South Asian countries and the glut of cheaper Kenyan teas in the world market as the immediate reason for the price decline.

Meanwhile, tea prices declined at the Kochi auction this week amidst subdued upcountry demand and low arrivals for dust varieties.

Of the quantity of 12,12,000 kg on offer in CTC dust, the market for Good Liquoring teas was steady to firm and sometimes dearer.

Others were irregular and lower by Rs. 2-3 a kg and occasionally more. In sale no 47, there was good demand for Good Liquoring Teas with 82 per cent sold.

However, the demand was fair for other varieties. Improved export enquiry witnessed on Grainier varieties, the auctioneers Forbes, Ewart & Figgis said. In Cochin CTC quotation, good varieties fetched Rs. 97-146, medium grades quoted Rs. 64-95 while Plains stood at Rs. 53-60.

In the Orthodox leaf, the market for Nilgiri all varieties was firm to dearer with longer margins of Rs. 5-10 and sometimes more following quality. The Whole Leaf showed strong feature and recorded some attractive prices. The quantity on offer was 160,500 kg.

Cotton wilts on weak buying by mills

Rajkot, November 24: Cotton price moved down on the back of poor demand from domestic mills at higher level. *Kapas* or raw cotton too declined marginally as ginning demand was weak.

Gujarat Sankar-6 cotton lost Rs. 100-200 to Rs. 33,200-400 per candy of 356 kg. About 25,000 bales (of 170 kg each) arrived in Gujarat and 1.90 lakh bales arrived in India. *Kapas* was down by

Rs. 5 to Rs. 800-815 for a *maund* of 20 kg and gin delivery kapas was Rs. 815-830. Cottonseed was quoted Rs. 345-352.

The Cotton Corporation of India has been actively buying under a market intervention scheme and has bought 2.5 lakh bales.

Seasonal demand pushes up cashew exports in October

But still lagging last year's despatches

Kochi, November 24:

Strong winter demand appears to have resulted in an upsurge, after a continuous decline for about six months, in exports of cashew kernels and other cashew products in October.

The country shipped 11,325 tonnes of cashew kernels in October this year valued at Rs. 526 crore at an unit value of Rs. 464.44 a kg against 10,439 tonnes of cashews worth Rs. 434.68 crore at Rs. 416.40 a kg same period last year.

However, the total shipments during the first seven months of the current fiscal continued to be far below exports during the same period the previous financial year.

The country shipped 68,719 tonnes of cashews in April-October 2014 valued at Rs. 3,000.29 crore at an average unit value of Rs. 436.60 a kg.

In the corresponding period last year it stood at 72,230 tonnes valued at Rs. 2,954.58 crore at the average unit value of Rs. 409.05 a kg.

Raw nut exports

Interestingly, Indian export of raw cashew also soared during the period under review.

Export of raw nuts in October rose to 10,572 tonnes valued at Rs. 91.64 crore from 989 tonnes valued at Rs. 5.84 crore in the same period last year. The unit value realised in October this year was Rs. 86.68 a kg (Rs. 59.09).

India shipped 11,130 tonnes of raw cashew nuts during April-October this year valued at Rs. 114.35 crore at the unit value of Rs. 102.74 a kg against 3,063 tonnes valued at Rs. 17.89 crore at the unit value of Rs. 58.39.

Much of the shipments of raw nuts were to Vietnam, where Indian cashew processors have established processing facilities.

They are believed to be shipping out from the imported raw nut stocks to their units in Vietnam, trade sources said.

Imports soar

Imports of raw nuts during April-October stood at 7,63,548 tonnes valued at Rs. 5,172.59 crore and the unit value paid was at Rs. 67.74 a kg.

Imports in the corresponding period last fiscal were at 6,02,298 tonnes valued at Rs. 3,279.04 crore at the unit value of Rs. 54.44 a kg, Sasi Varma, Executive Director and Secretary, Cashew Export Promotion Council of India, told *BusinessLine*. He attributed the rise in exports of cashew kernel, of late, to the demand for winter/Christmas and New Year season.

Price outlook

Meanwhile, Pankaj Sampat, a Mumbai-based dealer, said that cashew continued to be the most reasonably priced nut moving in a relatively narrow range when compared with other nuts.

Therefore, "it would be reasonable to expect prices to remain in this range and maybe even move up a bit – depending on buyer behaviour. The cashew kernel prices are likely to be in the range of \$3.40-3.70 for next 3-4 months and maybe more," he said.

Ragi in white would still be as nutritious!

UAS station in Mandya to release white variety for commercial cultivation next kharif

Bengaluru, November 24:

For those of you who have stayed away from ragi or finger millet just because of its brown and darkish appearance, the University of Agricultural Sciences Bengaluru's regional research station in Mandya has developed a new variety of the nutritious cereal that's white in colour.

To be released for commercial cultivation in the next kharif season, the white ragi variety is targetted at bakers and makers of biscuits, vermicelli, pasta and cereal-based snacks.

"We have developed a white ragi variety – KMR 340 – over the past seven years after cross breeding several existing varieties. We expect to release it for commercial cultivation during the next kharif season," said CR Ravishankar, Ragi Breeder and Head of All India Co-ordinated Research Project for Small Millets at the VC Farm, Mandya, the regional research station of UAS, Bengaluru.

"Small kids and even some grown ups don't eat ragi due to the reddish brown and blackish colour. The development of the white variety will help bakeries to make their products better in terms of appearance," Ravishankar said.

Ragi, he said, has seen a newfound demand in recent years with health conscious consumers waking up to the nutritional benefits of the cereal even as lifestyle diseases are on the rise.

With its high calcium, protein and fibre content, compared to cereals such as wheat and rice, ragi has found favour even among biscuit makers, including companies such as Britannia.

The rising awareness of the nutritional benefits of ragi and

development of value added products -- in the form of biscuits or cakes, malt and even porridge mix is driving the consumption of small millets.

Ragi is a staple food in the southern States where it is largely consumed in the form of porridge, bread and dumplings or balls along with curry. This finger millet is grown both as main crop and also as inter-crop in the State, largely under rain-fed conditions.

However, the acreage under the ragi has seen a decline in recent years. It is estimated that ragi is grown on about 7.5 lakh hectares and its total production in Karnataka is estimated at 1.5 million tonnes annually. "The white variety will enable ragi to move to the next level and can bring in a new set of consumers. Colour has been a deterrent to consumption," said Prashant Parameswaran, Managing Director of Kottaram Foods Pvt Ltd, which markets ragi-based products under the 'Soulfull' brand.

A white ragi variety, which will help change perception of its colour, has to be commercially viable. But the challenge is how to communicate to the consumer that the white variety retains all its goodness, Parameswaran said.

A senior scientist at the Food & Nutrition section of the Home Sciences Department, UAS Bengaluru said that while the white variety has almost all nutritive values that a black ragi has, it may not be as rich as the latter in terms of nutraceuticals and polyphenols, a type of anti-oxidants which the brown coating lends to the traditional finger millet.

Karnataka has the largest area under ragi, mainly in the southern districts. The finger millet is also grown in parts of Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Orissa and even Chhattisgarh.