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THE HINDU

World Wetlands Day to be celebrated today

On the Occasion of World Wetlands Day, observed annually on February 2, Environment Conservation Group, a city-based NGO has called for protecting the wetlands in the city. The theme for this year is 'Wetlands for our future'.

In a statement issued here, R. Mohammed Saleem, president of the group, said that the wetlands of Coimbatore were created centuries ago for mitigation of flood situations and agriculture.

Coimbatore, with just one per cent, has the least percentage of geographical area under wetland with the average area in Tamil Nadu being seven per cent. Yet, he claims, the wetlands are often viewed as wastelands and used as a dumping ground for debris, industrial and medical wastes besides poultry waste.

Wetlands support a number of plant and animal species including birds, butterflies, dragonflies and reptiles. Thousands of migratory birds flock to wetlands in the city during winter migration. Birds as far as Europe and Russia spend their winter in the lakes of Coimbatore.

More than 150 species of birds can be spotted in and around our wetlands.

Erode farmers unveil plan for 'neera' production

ERODE: Referring to the State Government's endorsement for tapping of 'neera' during 2010, farmers have decided to produce and market the beverage from February in the district. C. Nallasamy, president, Lower Bhavani Project Farmers' Welfare Association, said during the farmers' grievance meet chaired by the District Collector S. Prabakar last week that there was no bar on tapping of 'neera', considered a health drink. Unlike in the case of coconut trees for which chemical fertilizers have been used for growth, tapping of 'neera' from palm trees that grow naturally would have more value. The 'neera' would be tapped and marketed to other States and even abroad, Mr. Nallasamy said, handing over to the Collector a written

document conveying the Government's permission for tapping 'neera', deeming it an energy beverage.

Attempts would be made for replication of procurement and marketing practices in neighbouring Kerala, through formation of societies, federations and bottling companies, he said. The State Government had, during 2010, announced that 'neera' would be procured from the members of Palm Workers' Welfare Board for Rs. 10 per litre, and that Rs. one crore would be provided to the Board for installing chilling facilities to store the procured 'neera'. Mr. Nallasamy also drew the district administration's attention to underpayment to farmers at the Direct Procurement Centres.

Though the farmers ought to be paid Rs. 1,410 per quintal for coarse variety of paddy, and Rs. 1,470 for fine variety, they were paid Rs. 1 lesser per kilogram, Mr. Nallasamy charged.

The productivity had taken a beating this time due to pest attack, and increase in harvest expenditure. Also, the returns for hay was just one third of the rate that prevailed last year, he said. Replying to apprehensions raised by farmers about shortage of urea in certain parts of the district, Agriculture Department officials assured that the shortage would be rectified as the urea stock has been replenished with 2,650 tonnes. Farmers were critical of the Government's silence over the willingness of sugar mills to pay only Rs. 2,300 per tonne, which, they lamented was not only much below the State Advisory Price, but also lesser than the amount (Rs. 2,385) paid last year.

They wondered how private mills were permitted to underpay the farmers when the Cooperative and Public Sector mills complied with the Government's SAP recommendation fully. The Collector assured to look into their complaint.

Monsoon failure likely to trigger water scarcity in Rayalaseema region, Telangana: expert



P.V. Rama Rao

Delay in the southwest monsoon and weak monsoon conditions combined with associated break monsoon current resulted in the failure of southwest monsoon over Telangana and Rayalaseema regions.

The failure of monsoon rains caused significant depletion of groundwater levels in Telangana and Rayalaseema.

During the northeast monsoon season only 'Hudhud' cyclone had caused very heavy rains that too only in the three north Andhra districts of Srikakulam, Vizianagaram and Visakhapatnam. Though four low pressure systems had moved across south coastal A.P. and Rayalaseema, they had not contributed to normal rainfall during the season, says retired Director in the India Meteorological Department P.V. Rama Rao, who, along with assistant meteorologist P Radhe Syam, made an analysis based on data obtained from the IMD and from the websites of the Ground Water Departments of A.P. and Telangana States.

Wet period

June to November is considered the 'wet period' in India. It includes the principal southwest monsoon season (June to September) and northeast monsoon months (October and November).

Telangana is almost entirely dependent on groundwater for agriculture.

Exploitation of groundwater for irrigation during the Rabi season could lead to a further decline in the water levels. It could cause severe drinking water scarcity during the summer months in Medak, Rangareddy, Nizamabad, Hyderabad and Nalgonda districts.

The situation could change for the better in July 2015 if southwest monsoon advances on schedule in June.

“Telangana received continuously deficit rainfall (less than -21 per cent) during the southwest monsoon season. Not even a single system moved over Telangana during the northeast monsoon season, resulting in a huge deficit rainfall of (-) 52 per cent during the season. It received 37 per cent deficit rainfall by the end of December 2014,” Mr. Rama Rao adds.

In Rayalaseema, the average deficiency in rainfall was (-) 28 per cent and region experienced a drop of 3.89 m (13 ft) in ground water level by the end of November 2014.

Exploitation of groundwater for irrigation during Rabi season may lead to further decline in water levels

Elephant foot yam yields good results in Tuticorin

There is demand for the tuber in TN and Kerala: Farmers



Horticulture Department officials inspecting elephant foot yam (senai kilangu) cultivated at Kuthiraikulam in Ottapidaram block of Tuticorin district.— Photo: N. Rajesh

Farmers, who raised elephant foot yam (senai kilangu), or *Amorphophallus paeniifolius*, were a happy lot in the district, as the yield and the price it fetched were good.

Arumugasamy, a farmer from Kuthiraikulam in Ottapidaram block, said he reaped an average yield of 16,000 kilograms per acre. The farmer, who owns two and a half acres, said this year's harvest fetched him Rs 20 per kg, thanks to the growing demand of this tuber in Tamil Nadu and Kerala.

He planted this crop by selecting small-size corms (seed material) after curing them for three months in shade.

The corms planted were cut into small bits in such a way that each pit had at least a small portion of the ring around the bud.

The cut pieces were planted with a spacing of 45 cm x 90 cm on his field. Sprouting region was kept above the soil.

About 1,400 kg of corms were planted on an acre.

This crop would be normally cultivated during June or July and would be ready for harvest during the first fortnight of January. “This eight-month-duration crop requires minimum inter-cultural operation and nutrients.

Hundred kg of urea per acre as basal with kadalai punnakku was applied to increase the vegetative growth of this crop under irrigation method. No pesticide or fungicide was used during cultivation. An expenditure of Rs. 40,000 was incurred per acre,” he said.

According to Deputy Director of Horticulture R. Avudaiyappan, yam contained potassium, phosphorus and magnesium. It also contained calcium, 18.24 per cent of carbohydrate and omega-3 fatty acids which were known to increase good cholesterol level in blood.

Besides, it had vitamin B and vitamin A, he said.

A total area of 150 acres was covered under yam cultivation in rainfed areas of the district in 2014-15, he told *The Hindu* .

C. Palanivelayutham, Assistant Director of Horticulture, Ottapidaram, said elephant foot yam farmers were provided with drip irrigation facilities at a subsidised cost.

Food business operators seek time for registration under Food Safety and Standards Act

FOOD BUSINESS OPERATORS’ PLEA

Food business operators have sought time till February 2, 2016, for registration under the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006. In a memorandum submitted to Nirmala Seetharaman, Union Minister of State for Commerce, Tamil Nadu Foodgrains Merchants Association has appealed to her to urge the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare to extend the current deadline of February 4 by a year. Its joint secretary M. Karthikeyan said the UPA government gave three extensions for registration and getting licence, after coming to know of the shortcomings of the Act. The association also wanted Ms. Seetharaman to give due representation to farmers, food scientists and food business operators in the two committees appointed to review the shortcomings.

Odisha losing 30 per cent of farm produce: NABARD

: Odisha is losing 30 per cent of produce due to poor handling of farm produces, says State Focus Paper for 2015-16 prepared by National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development.

The recently released Focus Paper says Odisha requires to create storage spaces for 12 lakh metric tonne of food grains and cold storage for 2 lakh MT.

The crisis is getting aggravated further on account of poor agri-marketing infrastructure, observed the bank.

Funds for Krishi Bhagya scheme to be doubled from next year



Minister of State for Agriculture Krishna Byre Gowda inspecting an agriculture equipment at Muddebihal taluk.— Photo: Rajendra Singh Hajeri
Minister of State for Agriculture Krishna Byre Gowda has said that the government would double the funds for the Krishi Bhagya scheme from next year.

Addressing a gathering after inspecting a storage tank, built under the scheme, at Bidarkundi village in Muddebihal taluk on Saturday, he said that the scheme had been implemented in 107 taluks in the State, including five in Vijayapura district.

“The government has earmarked Rs. 500 crore for the project and based on the success it proposes to double the funds allocation next year,” he said. The Minister informed that for constructing storage tanks under the scheme,

90 per cent subsidy was given to SCs/STs beneficiaries and 80 per cent to the general category.

Stating that around 70 per cent farmers in the country were dependent on rain for agriculture, he said that the scheme granted funds to conserve rain water for utilisation during scanty monsoon. “It would at least help farmers to save their withering crop due to insufficient rain,” the Minister said. Explaining that the farmers could store from around 1.60 lakh litres to 8 lakh litres of water in their tanks, Mr. Krishna Byre Gowda said that government would offer subsidy for purchasing pumpsets for taking water the tank. On the occasion, he also inaugurated a centre where around 40 agriculture equipment was being rented out.

M. Ahiraj reports from Koppal

The State government was committed to helping farmers cultivating on dry land to make them self-reliant, Mr. Krishna Byre Gowda said here on Saturday.

“The government has introduced schemes to provide agricultural inputs at subsidised rates to farmers cultivating on dry land.

The farmers too are striving hard to get good yield. Due to the vagaries of monsoon, we are not getting the desired results,” he said.

Take up pisciculture: Pocharam

Minister for Agriculture Pocharam Srinivas Reddy has advised the fishing community to take up pisciculture on a large scale stating that it would generate good revenue.

Addressing a gathering after releasing fish seed at Pocharam Dam bordering Medak and Nizamabad districts on Sunday, Mr. Srinivas Reddy said that the government was ready to supply feed free of cost and ready to establish sales centres at villages and mandal headquarters at an estimated cost of Rs 7.5 lakh and Rs. 15 lakh respectively. He said that four fish sale centres are being established in Hyderabad.

A farmers' company to be launched in Sullia

Hit by severe yellow leaf disease (YLD) on their arecanut plantations, farmers who switched over to oil palm cultivation in Sullia taluk have now gathered to float a company to promote it and other farm products.

A group of farmers who held two rounds of discussion to this effect recently have decided to launch the company, tentatively on March 9. An office of the proposed company would be opened in Sullia town on February 5, its president designate K. Vasanth Rao told *The Hindu* .

The company would be formed under Section 8 of the Companies Act, 2013. The section speaks about forming a non-profit company with all the scope of a limited company but not with a suffix 'limited'. Currently the process of forming the company was under way and a draft of the Memorandum of Association (MoA) has been prepared.

It would have nine directors who have been selected. The National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) has come forward to support the activities of the company through financial support and guidance, Mr. Rao said.

Oil palm in the State

The State government, through an order on January 4, 2012, appointed Godrej Agrovet Ltd. for promoting oil palm cultivation in Dakshina Kannada and Udupi under a Centre-sponsored scheme. The planting had begun in the same year.

According to an official of the company, 65 hectares (160 acre) of land had been brought under oil palm in Sullia taluk by 100 farmers till November 2014. Some palms have begun flowering.

Limitations of scheme

Mr. Bhat said that under the Central scheme, a farmer would have to cultivate oil palm on a minimum of one acre to get subsidy and other benefits. But the proposed company would aim to enable farmers who wanted to plant palms in smaller numbers — such as five or 10 — or in less than an acre.

Other objectives would be to promote value added products of fruits, arranging link between food processing industries and farmers, reaching villages where Dakshina Kannada Cooperative Milk Union Ltd. has not reached to promote the dairy industry due to transportation issues, and promote new agro-based income generating activities.

· *The company aims to help farmers who want to plant oil palms in less than an acre*

· *In Sullia taluk, 65 hectares of land is under oil palm cultivation by 100 farmers till Nov. 2014*

Stress on organic vegetables for healthy life

To lead a healthy, long and disease-free life, consumption of organically grown vegetables has become a necessity, according to M. Velraj, farmer of Puthiyamputhur, Ottapidaram block.

The fifty-year old organic farmer, who took Collector M. Ravikumar along with Agriculture officials on a visit to his field, said the vegetables being raised on his 30-acre land had been marketed at a reasonable price to help his consumers lead a healthy life and not for profit motive.

While the Collector interacted with the farmer, he said around one and half tonnes of vegetables were being procured by the farm fresh outlet in Tuticorin from Ottapidaram block. Around 200 to 600 kilograms of vegetables grown on his land were being procured by the outlet. Tomato (PKM variety), brinjal, chilli, (Ko 1) variety, bitter gourd, broad beans, cluster beans, baby corn, raised with biofertilizers, were catering to the needs of the government-owned vegetable outlet, regularly.

Mr. Ravikumar said since the inception of the vegetable outlet, Rs.2.2 crore revenue had been generated through sale. On an average, vegetables worth Rs.1.50 lakh were being sold every day.

‘We are heading for a disaster’

Experts worried about condition of Vembanad

: The deteriorating condition of the Vembanad backwater system along with other Ramsar sites in the State are in focus as activists get together on Monday to observe World Wetlands Day, recalling the adoption of the wetlands convention in 1971 in the Iranian city of Ramsar.

Clams, a large number of fish species and the famed scampi are among the best known to have succumbed to pressure of human intervention and the devastating pace of shrinkage of the backwaters.

“We are heading for a disaster,” says K.G. Padmakumar, former associate director of research, Regional Agricultural Research Station. He was referring to issues like climate change, global warming and frequent flooding of Kuttanad as he raised the question why nobody was doing anything for the Lake. Nothing has been done for conservation of biodiversity in the backwaters or more particularly for the celebrated species of scampi. Once there was a talk about a Vembanad Development Authority. There are a lot of stakeholders but no owners for the backwaters, he said.

Activists and fishermen cite studies to claim that the Vembanad lake system has shrunk from 42,000 hectares to less than 13,000 hectares. Together with the lake are disappearing fish species central to Kerala’s food security, says Charles George, State president of Matsya Thozhilali Aikyavedi, a forum representing fish workers.

The Vembanad Lake, south of the Thannermukkam barrage, has turned into an “aqua desert”, affecting the livelihoods of those active in inland fisheries. The Vembanad Lake is virtually the lifeline for about a lakh fishermen in Alappuzha, Kottayam and Ernakulam districts.

A fisheries scientist who studied clam fisheries in the Vembanad extensively says that production had fallen to about 40,000 tonnes a year from the level of about 75,000 tonnes 10 years ago.

Rabi operations in full swing

Rabi operations are in full swing in eastern Krishna as water availability in canals has raised hopes of farmers to go for paddy.

“The normal paddy acreage in the district during rabi is 30,000 hectares. However, it is expected to go up this season,” said V. Narasimhulu, Joint Director, Agriculture Department. Meanwhile, land preparation and sowing operations have already begun. Farmers eyeing on commercial crops prefer maize, which is grown in nearly 18,600 hectares in the district this season. Maize is a prime crop that requires urea in January and February. “Nearly 20,000 metric tonnes of urea will arrive in the district by the month end. We are supplying the present stock to farmers,” Mr. Narasimhulu said.

Tobacco ryots press for viable alternative

Farmers at the CROSSROADS | FARMERS WANT DUE REPRESENTATION AT THE WHO-FCTC

- They say they should be heard before any decision is taken on phasing out of **tobacco cultivation**
- World leaders** at summit should come out with recommendations to **eliminate illicit trade** in tobacco products
- Illicit trade in cigarettes is as high as **17 billion sticks** i.e. **20 p.c.** of total tobacco trade
- Farmers seek sops from Centre and State to shift to Bengal gram cultivation

The infographic features a central photograph of a woman in a pink shirt working in a tobacco field. The text is arranged in a grid-like format around the image, with a green background for the statistic about illicit trade.

Farmers in Prakasam district keep their fingers crossed as India is set to host the seventh session of the Conference of the Parties (COP7) to WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO-FCTC) in 2016.

“We want the world leaders to come out with recommendations to eliminate illicit trade in tobacco products first and address the serious issue of providing sustainable alternative livelihoods to us,” some farmers coming under Ongole II auction platform told *The Hindu*.

Peasants representatives should be given due representation in the WHO-FCTC to plead their case before any decision is taken to phase out tobacco cultivation .

Having burnt their fingers by growing Bengal gram for three seasons due to import of cheaper pulse crop from abroad, the farmers have taken to tobacco cultivation in a big way this year. “We are eager to shift to other crops. But the Union and State governments are not showing a viable economic alternative to us,” says a Madala Ramanaiah, progressive farmer from Kandukur.

The Centre should come out with effective steps to curb the sale of contraband and counterfeit cigarettes, which contained cheaper tobacco grown elsewhere in the world, says another progressive farmer P. Venkateswarulu.

Illicit trade in cigarettes is as high as 17 billion sticks, around 20 per cent of the legal industry size, according to Indian Tobacco Association sources. Only 12 per cent of the tobacco consumption in India is through cigarette form and 88 per cent is in the form of bidis, cheroot and chewing forms.

While tobacco control regulations have been successful in reducing the legal cigarette consumption, in order to have a tangible impact on public health, regulations need to proactively address the non-cigarette and illicit trade sector, said progressive grower V.Prasad.

Thanks to unimaginative EXIM policy, there are no takers for export quality KAK II bengal gram variety grown extensively in Prakasam district, laments Andhra Pradesh Rythu Sangam-led Kaulu Rythu Sangam State general secretary N.Ranga Rao.

The Centre should impose additional import duty on imported bengal gram and encourage ryots to grow bengal gram by providing additional subsidies on farm inputs, says former Tobacco Board member Ch. Ranga Rao.

Flue cured tobacco crop is cultivated in more than 85,000 ha under southern black soil and southern light soil in Ongole region by more than 35,000 farmers. It is 40 p.c of the country’s tobacco production of 270 million kg, according to Tobacco Board sources.

Even wild boars run away from castor oil

Castor-oil-based solution emits an odour that keeps off animals from crops

That one yucky spoon of castor oil that grandmas force down your throat as a powerful purgative has now been tweaked to help farmers.

A castor-oil-based solution that emits an odour is being touted as the best solution to keep wild boars away from crops. M.S. Prabhakara, senior manager, Pest Control of India Pvt. Ltd., which has introduced the product, said the solution also protects crops from porcupines, rodents and nilgai. He told *The Hindu* that farmers from Kolar, Goa and Lucknow had informed them that the solution was effective.

The company introduced the product to farmers at the three-day 'Krishi Yantra Mela', organised by (CAMPCO) at Puttur.

Two methods

He said that 500 ml of the solution should be mixed with 2.5 litres of water. A rope made of jute, coir or cotton should be immersed in it and left overnight. The rope should then be tied to poles or the fence around the field. The odour would keep the animals away for 45 days.

The other method is to mix 500 ml of the solution with 25 litres of water and sprayed around the field. This method kept the animals away for 25 days. The company says that as no chemical is used in the solution, it is safe for humans.

Castor oil-based solution emits an odour that keeps off animals from crops

APCC to honour three persons

Three Indians, including K.K. Haridas, who passed away in September 2012, will be honoured at the 51st session of Asian and Pacific Coconut Community (APCC) meet here for their contributions to the coconut sector. The APCC session will get under way here on Monday. The other two persons are O.V.R. Somasundaram, a farmer from Pollachi in Tamil Nadu, and C.R. Vijayakumar, a coconut farmer from Karnataka.

The three are winners of international awards and have made “immense contribution towards the sector,” said a statement issued by Coconut Development Board here.

Dr. Haridas had carried out a research on the impact of coconut oil as a cooking medium on cardiovascular risk factors. He was the principal investigator in a research study sponsored by the Coconut Development Board with a private medical institution here. The study was the first-of-its-kind in the world, which would lead to many clinical studies on coconut oil, the press release said.

Big businessmen call the shots in poultry industry

Many enterprising farmers are removing the sheds and selling land

Poultry industry in the district has been in the doldrums following the increasing costs of inputs such as feed, shed construction, bird price and also the frequent interruptions in power supply, besides low egg rate the farmers are getting from traders.

The industry has been in crises in the last three years and therefore many enterprising farmers who established the poultry units started removing sheds and selling land. The crisis began when the market slowly went into the hands of big businessmen who poured huge capital and set up large units. They allegedly pumped their black money into the industry only to make it white as this industrial activity has got tax exemption.

“In fact, given the market conditions and production, egg price must be around Rs.4. But, it is just Rs.2.88 which is not at all profitable to small poultry farmers. If it is Rs.3.30 per egg, it would be a break-even point. At this rate there would be no profit no loss situation given the fodder price and other costs,” said Siripuram Sayender, a small farmer who owns a single shed having 5,000 birds at Govidpet village in Armoor mandal.

Almost half of the poultry industry is located in Govindpet and surrounding villages. In other words, if there are over 11 lakh egg laying birds in the district, this village has about 6 lakh birds.

Earlier a few years ago, about 17 lakh eggs per day used to be exported from the district. However, the market has been a little bit encouraging in the last two months. Online trading system promoted by www.papaak.com and

contract system turned out to be a bane to small and middle-class poultry farmers as they were deciding the egg price. A small farmer can not survive the competition in the market, says Bantu Mahipal, a young poultry farmer.

Another farmer A. Rajeswar Reddy says that the industry is in the hands of big traders who dominate the market and even blackmail poultry unit owners. Following a rare disease which spread over in the recent past, farmers lost many birds. A farmer, Chinnaiah, alone lost 25,000 birds at once. Ever increasing feed cost is neutralising the profits and with this farmers are not benefitting and it is beneficial only to traders, he says, and deplores that banks refuse to give loans to small farmers. Hence, in the last few years, no new farmer entered the poultry industry. Those who set up poultry units in the beginning could reap profits, he adds. Unless government encourages giving subsidies and other exemptions in a big way to small and middle class farmers, they cannot exist in the field, he says.

Many enterprising farmers are removing the sheds and selling the land



Recipe: [Garlic fried rice](#)



A favorite Indo Chinese rice preparation loved all across the country.

Preparation time: 30 minutes

Cooking time: 20 minutes

A favorite Indo Chinese rice preparation loved all across the country.

Serves: 4

Recipe Ingredients:

300g rice

10 cloves garlic

2 spring onions

2 medium carrots

1 medium capsicum (green bell pepper)

1 ½ tbsp. refined oil

1 tsp light soya sauce

1 tsp vinegar

1 ½ tsp salt

1 tsp white pepper powder

Recipe Method:

Wash and soak the rice for ten minutes. Meanwhile put 2 liter water to boil in a pan. When the water comes to a boil, add the rice and cook the rice.

Remove the rice when $\frac{3}{4}$ th cooked. Drain and set aside to cool.

Finely dice the carrots and the capsicums. Finely slice the spring onion bulbs and the greens separately. Mince the garlic.

Heat oil in a wok. Add the crushed garlic and saute till golden brown in color. Add the sliced onions, carrots and the capsicums and stir fry over high

heat for 2 minutes. Add the rice, oniongreens, soy sauce, vinegar, white pepper powder and stir fry over high heat for 3 minutes.

Serve hot.

Recipe: Egg-less banana cake



This traditional yet conventional recipe is catching up with a lot of households. It's easy to bake and delicious at the same time.

So this time make this scrumptious banana cake for that house warming party or kitty party or even your kids birthday.

Ingredients:

½ cup curd
50g butter, melted
2 cups flour
1 tsp baking powder
½ tsp baking soda
1 tsp Vanilla essence
2 ripe bananas, mashed
200g condensed milk

Method:

- Pre heat the oven to 180 C and grease and dust the baking dish.
- Beat the condensed milk, curd and butter together till smooth.
- Sieve the flour, baking powder, baking soda and fold into the wet mixture.

- Once it's completely mixed add the mashed bananas and the vanilla essence and mix well.
- Pour this mixture into the dusted baking dish and bake in the pre heated oven for about ½ hour. Check if baked fully by poking in a tooth pick.
- Let it cool then slice it and serve with tea.

Recipe: [Healthy breakfast poha](#)



Nothing matches the magic of having a hot Indian breakfast

Variety is the spice of life. And it rules the Indian platter too. In India breakfast or 'nashta', as it is popularly known, varies from region to region. You will never get bored as the choice is varied. From idli, upma, aloo paratha to poha, the choice is immense. Even though most people in urban India these days are happy with their share of oats, cornflakes or sandwiches for breakfast, there's nothing like a traditional hot Indian breakfast. And it doesn't take long to prepare too.

Here's the recipe of poha which is a very common breakfast item in many Indian households especially in western Indian states like Gujarat and Maharashtra.

Poha

Ingredients:

- 2 Cups poha
- 1 Potato, small cubes
- 2 Green chillies, sliced
- A jandful of peanuts

1 tsp lemon juice
2-3 tsp sugar
Salt to taste
1 tbsp oil
2 tsp mustard seeds
2 tsp turmeric powder
Curry leaves
Coriander leaves for garnishing

Method:

Wash poha and rinse well. Drain all the water and keep aside for 15 minutes. Heat oil in a pan. Add mustard seeds. When they splutter, add curry leaves, peanuts and green chillies. Take care not to burn the peanuts. After the peanuts are fried, add the small cubes of potato. Allow the potato to cook well. Then add the poha. Mix well and add the turmeric powder. Once it gets mixed well, add sugar, salt, lemon juice. The poha shouldn't be too dry. Garnish with coriander leaves. In some Gujarati households, they also garnish it with pomegranate seeds.

[Heard of beetroot laddoo and sweet potato puri?](#)



As they say, the best is always kept for last, we all love digging our teeth in sumptuous desserts all the. How about a twist in taste! Why not try some innovation in your kitchen by preparing these sweets that are sure you kick your taste buds.

Beetroot Laddoo

Ingredients:

Beetroot- 1
Coconut- 1
Semolina- 2 cups
Sugar- 1.5 cup
Ghee- for frying the mixture
Cardamom- 2-3 nos.

Method:

Boil the beetroot first and grate it finely.
Grate the coconut and keep it aside.
Then mix grated coconut and semolina, and saute the mixture in ghee till it turns golden brown.
Take a pan, add 1.5 cup sugar, 1 cup water, then add the grated beetroot, and boil it for some time.
Then add the coconut-semolina mixture that has been sauted along with cardamom.
Then make them in round shapes, and garnish with raisins and cashewnuts.

Sweet Kachori

Ingredients:

Stuffing:
Grated coconut- 1 cup
Sugar- 4 tbsp
Khaskhas (poppy seeds)- 2 tbsp
Oil for frying
Ghee
Cashewnuts- 4-5
Raisins- 10
For the cover:
Wheat flour- 2 cups
Potatoes- 2
Sweet potato- 1
Salt
Sago (Sabudana) flour- for binding

Method:

Take a pan and then add finely cashewnuts, khaskhas, raisins in oil for tadka. Then mix this tadka in coconut.

Wrap this mixture in the coating made of potatoes, wheat flour, sago flour and sweet potato and shape them like kachoris and deep fry it in oil.

Serve with yogurt.

Recipe: Ghee rice

Ghee rice is one preparation that has so many things going for it-it is a very simple recipe, tastes delicious and can be prepared very quickly. And remember, it needs a spicy gravy to go along with it, if you want to taste this dish at its best.

Ingredients: Two onions, four green chillies, cumin seeds, about three nutmegs, one clove mashed garlic, a small ginger piece (mashed), three tbsp ghee, one cup basmati rice.

Method: Cut the onions into small pieces and fry in ghee along with chillies, cumin seeds, nutmeg, garlic and ginger. Wash rice and fry for a couple of minutes along with the preparation and add two cups of water. Add salt and lemon, serve with raita.

Variations: You can add a handful of peas or mint leaves along with the rice while cooking, in case you feel it is too plain. You can also fry cashew nuts and raisins in ghee and garnish it with fried onions. But it strictly

depends on individual tastes and how you would want it.

Note: You can pressure cook rice or cook it in a rice cooker, or in a pan with a tight lid.

Drinks Recipe: Grape juice

Ingredients: One cup seedless purple grapes, fresh mint leaves, half tsp each of chopped ginger and roasted cumin, one tbsp sugar, black salt (one-third tsp), one can of aerated lemon drink.

Method: Wash the grapes and mint thoroughly, and add all ingredients (other than the lemon drink) in the blender. After a smooth paste has been made, sieve with a juice strainer and fill one-third of the serving glasses with this syrup. Add some crushed ice and then pour some aerated lemon drink in the glass. Garnish with mint leaves, serve chilled.

4 unusual benefits of coconut water



There is nothing like sipping on some fresh coconut water on a warm summer day, but did you know that drinking coconut water has a multitude of health benefits too? Here are some of them...

- 1. For clear skin:** Suffering from acne or blemishes on your face? All you need to do is apply some coconut water on your face. It has the same effect as a toner and works as a moisturiser too!
- 2. Helps with your hangover:** After a wild night of partying, all you might

want to do is try not to hurl. Consuming coconut water helps settle the stomach and replaces the electrolytes the body loses while drinking.

3. Prevents muscle cramps: Deficiency of potassium leads to the cramping of muscles. Coconut water is rich in potassium and thus helps prevent muscle cramps.

4. As a hair conditioner: Both drinking and washing the hair with coconut water conditions the hair perfectly from within.

How to lose stomach fat with right diet plan

The key to losing stomach fat is a healthy and balanced diet plan that doesn't leave out any nutrients, and respects portions. Exercise, too, can not be discounted in your quest to lose stomach fat. Today, we give you inputs from Priya Kathpal - Nutritionist at Birla Research & Life sciences, Mumbai, about what is a good diet plan to lose stomach fat.

Lose stomach fat tip # 1: Improve your eating habits

Give away all your temptations for unhealthy food, if you want to lose stomach fat. Many of us eat junk due to temptation, but this cannot be a regular habit for a diet plan aimed at a leaner stomach. Priya says, "the biggest cause of a flabby stomach is indulgence in junk food and sugar items. Watch your calorie consumption for a flat stomach."

Wondering why this junk food is bad? Priya helps us with an answer, she says: "Due to high sugar content, the level of glucose in the food increases and reduces the fat burning speed due to the presence of enhanced carbohydrates and sugar. So watch what you eat, because you are storing that food in your body, which will surely show some effect."

Lose stomach fat tip # 2: Add omega-3 fatty acids in at least one meal

If you love fish and want to lose stomach fat, then hop into foods containing omega-3 fatty acids. The key is moderation. Priya says, "Foods with omega-3 fatty acids not just help to lose stomach fat, but are also good for your heart health. Besides, it also prevents weight gain and maintains good health. Choose foods like salmon, tuna, flaxseeds, soybeans and walnut to get adequate omega-3 fatty acid."

Lose stomach fat tip # 3: Choose good carbs

Pick a diet filled with fruits and vegetables to lose stomach fat. Integrate this in your lose stomach fat diet plan, because fruits and vegetables have good carbs. Avoid donuts, desserts and cookies as far as possible. Again, keep in mind that though good carbs help reduce fat naturally, over indulgences will make your journey toward a flat stomach a lot longer and tougher. In fact, if you go beyond the limit, it can increase your insulin level, and reduce your metabolic rate, because your body cannot process too many carbs.

Choose, a low cereal carb diet approach to lose stomach fat effectively. Your diet should be a mixture of good carbohydrates, proteins and good fats.

Lose stomach fat tip # 4: No late night food

Get into the habit of finishing your dinner by 8pm. We know it is difficult to finish dinner so early, but if you can't do this then Priya suggests that you "eat a small evening meal and don't eat too many evening snacks. Late night or evening munching slows down our digestions process and causes high blood sugar levels, which further results in abdominal fat. Hence, if you want to lose stomach fat, avoid emotional cravings for evening snacks and follow a strict low glycemic diet.

Lose stomach fat tip # 5: Choose nuts as snacks instead of regular chips

Include nuts as evening snacks to lose stomach fat. Nuts and seeds are high in fiber, protein and monounsaturated fats, which are good stomach filling fats. Include nuts like almonds, Brazil nuts, hazelnuts and peanuts. To consider it as a healthy snack pick a handful or two tablespoons of nuts and seeds. Anything more, and your body will store it as extra fat.

Lose stomach fat tip # 6: Breakfast is important

If you are planning a fat loss diet plan, then eat breakfast every single day. It is the most important part of a fat loss diet plan, because it helps to maintain your metabolic rate, blood sugar which keeps you full for a long time and full of energy. "Choose whole grain for breakfast; examples: Bulgar, to keep your stomach full for a long time. The fibre present in this whole grain helps your stomach stay fuller with less food," says Priya.

DECCAN Chronicle

Better diet and nutrition critical in maintaining mental health



Representational picture. (Photo: visualphotos.com)

London: Scientists claim that a good diet and proper nutrition is essential in maintaining mental health.

A new international study led by the University of Melbourne and Deakin University has stated that as with a range of medical conditions, psychiatry and public health should now recognise and embrace diet and nutrition as key determinants of mental health.

Lead author, Dr Jerome Sarris said that while the determinants of mental health were complex, the emerging and compelling evidence for nutrition as a key factor in the high prevalence and incidence of mental disorders suggested that nutrition was as important to psychiatry as it is to cardiology, endocrinology and gastroenterology.

In the last few years, significant links have been established between nutritional quality and mental health. Scientifically rigorous studies have made important contributions to our understanding of the role of nutrition in mental health, he added.

Findings of the review revealed that in addition to dietary improvement, evidence now supports the contention that nutrient-based prescription has

the potential to assist in the management of mental disorders at the individual and population level.

Studies show that many of these nutrients have a clear link to brain health, including omega-3s, B vitamins (particularly folate and B12), choline, iron, zinc, magnesium, S-adenosyl methionine (SAME), vitamin D, and amino acids.

"While we advocate for these to be consumed in the diet where possible, additional select prescription of these as nutraceuticals (nutrient supplements) may also be justified," Dr Sarris said.

It was time for clinicians to consider diet and additional nutrients as part of the treating package to manage the enormous burden of mental ill health, he said.