

Rainfall deficit comes down to 12 pc as July witnesses above-normal rains: Govt

NEW DELHI, July 8 (PTI)

THE Centre has said that the rainfall deficit has come down to 12 per cent, with the first week of July recording above-normal monsoon activity, and asserted that an El Nino year may not necessarily lead to below-normal rainfall.

The Prime Minister's Office (PMO) said on Tuesday that in the context of the progress of the kharif season and possible impact due to El Nino on other sectors of the economy, a high-level review meeting was held under the chairmanship of Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister PK Mishra to review and take stock of the preparedness measures undertaken in this regard.

At the outset of the meeting, officials of the India Meteorological Department (IMD) presented the overall rainfall situation from June to July 7, while its director general provided an update on the status of monsoon coverage in the country and the possible impact of



A worker prepares to plant the rice saplings in a field on the outskirts of Hyderabad.

(PTI)

El Nino.

There was a delay in the onset of monsoon by about 10 days in Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Maharashtra.

"However, with rainfall till July 7, the all-India deficit is down to -12 per cent. The first week of July has shown above normal monsoon. Weak to moderate El Nino is expected in July and August," the PMO said in a statement.

It was also mentioned that an El Nino year may not necessarily lead to deficient rainfall below normal during that year.

The situation is being continuously monitored since July receives more than 30 per cent of the monsoon season's rainfall, the statement said.

The Union agriculture secretary made a detailed presentation on the preparedness for the possible impact of El Nino dur-

ing the kharif season.

Weekly meetings of Crop WeatherWatch group, along with states, are being convened to monitor rainfall, reservoir storage, crop sowing, input availability, market trends, emerging pest and disease situations, to enable timely decision-making and contingency response.

District Agriculture Contingency Plans have been updated for 262 vulnerable districts and Standard Operating Procedures for "Managing El Nino Risks in Indian Agriculture" have been issued by the Indian Council for Agricultural Research for Krishi Vigyan Kendras in the districts.

It was also highlighted that foodgrain production has been maintained over the years despite deficient rainfall due to the climate-resilient varieties and technologies.

The Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying was asked to assess the availability of dry fodder, green fodder and cattle feed at both macro and micro levels.

Bilateral trade between India, ASEAN reaches \$128 billion

NEW DELHI, July 8 (IANS)

BILATERAL trade between India and ASEAN reached \$128 billion during 2025–26, reflecting the strong economic partnership between the two sides and providing further opportunities to expand trade and investment cooperation, an official statement said on Wednesday.

ASEAN remains one of India's key trading partners, accounting for around 11 per cent of India's global trade, according to a statement by Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

To further strengthen the relationship, India is hosting the 13th ASEAN-India Trade in Goods Agreement (AITIGA) Joint Committee (JC) and related meetings from July 6-10, to review the progress of negotiations under the AITIGA Review.

According to an official statement, the Joint Committee meeting pro-

vided strategic guidance to the Sub-Committees in their respective areas of work and urged them to expedite the finalisation of the outstanding chapters under the AITIGA Review.

To maintain the momentum of negotiations, the Sub-Committees were assigned time-bound deliverables and encouraged to work closely towards achieving tangible outcomes within the agreed timelines.

said the statement.

The statement further said that meetings of three of the eight Sub-Committees under the AITIGA Joint Committee are currently being held on the sidelines of the 13th Joint Committee meeting. These include the Sub-Committee on Customs Procedures and Trade Facilitation (SC-CPTF), the Sub-Committee on National Treatment and Market Access (SC-NTMA), and the Sub-Committee on Rules of Origin (SC-ROO).

India, Tajikistan agree to deepen economic ties

NEW DELHI, July 8 (IANS)

INDIA and Tajikistan reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening bilateral economic ties during the 12th Meeting of the India-Tajikistan Joint Commission on Trade, Economic, Scientific and Technical Cooperation, held via video conference recently, according to an article.

The Commission also reviewed potential collaboration across sectors including energy, hydropower, renewable energy, mining, critical minerals, textiles, digital economy, transport, logistics, and finance. These areas were identified as offering significant opportunities for future partnership, the article in Asia-Plus said.



Delivering the opening remarks, Commerce Secretary Rajesh Agrawal highlighted the evolving global trade, supply chain and technology landscape, stressing the need for both nations to translate their long-standing political goodwill and historical ties

into stronger economic outcomes.

The meeting was co-chaired by Mohit Yadav, Joint Secretary in India's Department of Commerce, and Nuriddinzoda Ahliddin Nuriddin, Deputy Minister of Economic Development and

Trade of Tajikistan. Senior officials from various ministries and agencies of both countries have also participated.

India highlighted its robust economic performance, noting a GDP growth of 7.7 per cent in FY 2025-26 and 7.8 per cent in the final quarter of the same fiscal year.

Bilateral trade showed positive momentum, with India's exports to Tajikistan reaching an estimated \$58.12 million in 2025-26, marking a 27.23 per cent increase over the previous year. Key export items included pharmaceutical products, pulses, dairy machinery, medical instruments, tea, herbal products and refrigeration equipment, indicating growing opportunities for Indian businesses and farmers.

President Trump threatens trade action on Spain

WASHINGTON, July 5 (IANS)

US President Donald Trump on Wednesday threatened to cut off trade with Spain, accusing the NATO ally of failing to contribute enough to the military alliance and warning that Madrid would face economic consequences if it did not change course.

Speaking alongside NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte ahead of a meeting with alliance leaders in Ankara, Trump singled out Spain while renewing his



long-running criticism that some NATO members rely too heavily on US defence spending.

"Spain is a wasted cause. We don't wanna do any trade business with Spain anymore," Trump said.

He went further, telling aides: "I'd like you to cut it out. Spain is a terrible partner in NATO. They don't participate. They don't pay. I don't want anything to do with Spain. Cut off all trade with Spain, please, including visits."

Trump argued that the United States had spent heavily protecting European allies while receiving little support in return.

"We spent over a trillion dollars over the last short period... in order to protect these countries from Russia," he said.

'Greenland not for sale, ready to defend'

■ By Lorne Cook and
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ANKARA, July 8 (AP)

DENMARK'S Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen on Wednesday rejected President Donald Trump's renewed demands that the US should take control of Greenland from NATO ally Denmark, saying that "Greenland is of course not for sale."

"We hope that all, including all allies, will respect the Greenland people's right for self-determination," Frederiksen said ahead of a meeting of the leaders of NATO member countries in Turkey. "We are sovereign states and we need everybody to respect our territorial integrity and our sovereignty."

Trump reopened old wounds

over Greenland on the eve of the meeting by insisting that the United States should control the semiautonomous island. NATO is founded on the principle that its 32 members will defend each others' territory, not threaten to seize it.

Frederiksen said Denmark is "ready to defend every inch of NATO including our own terri-



Denmark PM Mette Frederiksen



NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte speaks with President Donald Trump during a group photo of NATO heads of state and Government at the NATO summit in Ankara, Turkey. (AP/PTI)

tory" in the event of an attack, and would rely on NATO allies to honor their commitment to defend each other.

Iceland's Prime Minister,

Kristrunn Frostadottir, said Greenland "belongs to the people of Greenland," and called for unity among the NATO allies in the face of external dangers.

Iran targets Bahrain, Kuwait as US launches strikes, limits oil sale



A mourner holds a portrait of the late Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei during a funeral procession in Najaf, Iraq on Wednesday. (AP/PTI)

DUBAI, July 8 (AP)

THE US launched strikes on Iran early on Wednesday, hours after it revoked a licence authorising the sale of Iranian oil in retaliation for what it said were Tehran's attacks on ships in the Strait of Hormuz. Iran hit back with strikes on Bahrain and Kuwait.

US President Donald Trump said later that the interim agreement with Iran was "over" but he would allow talks to continue.

That raised concerns that the wider conflict in the Middle East could resume - and oil prices shot up. The attacks on shipping threatened efforts to resume fuel shipments in the strait that are crucial to the global economy.

The crossfire came during the dayslong funeral for Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who was killed in the war's first moments.

Trump also threatened to strike Iran's civilian infrastructure and to seize Kharg Island, with its oil infrastructure, as his ceasefire with Tehran appeared to be in tatters. He made the threats after announcing that the US was preparing for a second night of strikes against Iran after Iranian attacks on American military sites in the Gulf. If the US has to, Trump said, it will take out Iran's electric plants and desalinisation plants. He said Tuesday's strikes included attacks on Kharg Island but not its oil facilities.

"Maybe we'll take over Kharg Island. We may take over Kharg Island."