

FAKE MEDICINES

In light of the serious issue of fake medicines being sold, it's crucial for everyone to be vigilant and take necessary precautions when purchasing medications.

Scan QR Codes: Many genuine medicines now come with QR codes that contain information about the supply chain. Before purchasing any medication, make sure to scan the QR code to verify its authenticity.

After purchasing medicine, it's advisable to show it to your doctor for confirmation. They can examine the medicine and determine whether it is genuine or fake.

Purchase medicines only from reputable and established medical stores. Avoid buying from unknown or unreliable sources, especially those offering suspiciously low prices.

Carefully examine the packaging of the medicine. Genuine medications are typically packaged professionally with clear labeling and seals. If the packaging appears to be tampered with or of poor quality, it could indicate that the medicine is counterfeit.

Be Cautious of Unusual Symptoms, if you experience any unexpected or adverse effects after taking a medication, consult your doctor immediately. Fake medicines may contain harmful ingredients that can pose serious health risks.

Report Suspicious Activity, if you suspect that a medicine you purchased is fake or if you come across any suspicious activity related to the sale of medicines, report it to the appropriate authorities, such as the local health department or regulatory agencies.

By taking these precautions and staying informed, you can help protect yourself and others from the dangers of fake medicines. Remember, your health is too valuable to compromise.

Tila Ashtami of Kashmiri Pandits

■ O.N KOUL

Maha Shivratri is the biggest festival celebrated by the Kashmiri Pandits. This festival of Shivratri has a special importance in the philosophy of Kashmir Shaivism and it is celebrated in a distinct, unique and special way by the Kashmiri Pandits all over the world. The observance of Tila Ashtami is associated and connected with the celebration of Shivratri. The Shivratri to KP'S commences on the first Tithi -day of Falgun Krishanpaksh in the first fortnight of this auspicious month, lasts for a fortnight and culminates or comes to close with Teela Ashtami. In all important festivals of Sanatan darma, there is the practice of giving of offerings to ones dead ancestors called Pitras in Hindu mythology and the observance of Tila Ashtami is concerned with offering light to dead ancestors on the eight day after mahashivratri and it is practice and norm with the Kashmiri Pandits that the Shivratri Prasad such as wet walnuts and bread made from rice flour is distributed among neighbors, relatives and friends only before the Tila Ashtami and on this occasion light is lit in the form of earthen divas and offered to the dead ones to satiate them. Therefore the observance of Tila Ashtami is connected with offering light to the dead ancestors and the day is dedicated to them. This year Tila Ashtami falls on Monday that is 27th February. On this day all KP households lit earthen divas and put these at important spots including at the entrance-gates in their compounds. In fact the tradition and ritual of making offerings to the dead ancestors on the occasions of festivals is part and parcel of all Kashmiri Pandit festivals and to repay the debt to ones dead ancestors by making various offerings is the important practice connected with the celebration of all important festivals and on the occasion of Teela Ashtami earthen divas are lit and light is offered to the dead ancestors and the celebrations of shivratri come to close with the observance of this day. Tila Ashtami is observed and dedicated to the dead ones to satiate the Pitras by offering them light. Tila Aetham -Teil Atham/Tila Ashtami is celebrated as a culmination of Shivratri Festival mainly by Kashmiri Pandits.Tila Ashtami is celebrated on the 8th day of the bright fortnight of Fhalgun month (Fhalguna Shukla Ashtami tithi). On this occasion puja is offered to Lord Shiva and any other favorite God and diyas are lit in temples and homes. 'Jaa Teen Teen' (tieng Kangri) was the old tradition associated with this festival. It is so disturbing that these days, the tradition has become extinct and it points towards the forgetting of this old tradition connected with this festival. There is need to revive the old traditions and customs and be connected to our rich cultural roots and preserve our rich and vibrant culture for the future generations so that it is not lost in oblivion due to afflux of time and its seemingly irrelevance in the modern age. In fact it is common among Kashmiri Pandits to remember their dead ancestors on festivals and make offerings to them in order to satiate them and repay the Pitar Rin-debt. The occasion of Tila Ashtami is celebrated and observed in honor of the dead ones by the Kashmiri Pandit community with great devotion and dedication. The celebration of Tila Ashtami continues even in these days of materialism and age of modernity among the exiled Kashmiri Pandits and the women folk of this community take special interest and initiative to observe this occasion with all humility in honor of the dead relatives. In north India or other Hindu calendars,the Tila Ashtami day is celebrated 'Masik Durgashtmi ' in Falgun month and 'Holashtak Aarambha din'.The religious festivals of the Kashmiri Pandits have Rigvedic roots.Tila Ashtami is the unique and distinct festival celebrated by the Kashmiri Pandits alongwith other festivals like Herath,Navreh,Hur Atham.Pan-Roth Puza ,Yinayak Tsoram,Khetsimavas etc. and the Kashmiri Pandits deserve praise and appreciation for celebrating these and other festivals even in the trying times of their displacement from their native Kashmir. It is a matter of satisfaction that Kashmiri Pandits have preserved their culture, traditions, customs, social mores even today and they are passing on their culture to the future generations without any adulteration but in pristine beauty.To be specific on Tila -Ashtami ,a number of earthen oil lit lamps are placed at different places starting from one's home to river bank (Yarbal) and also one of the oil lamps is made to float on the river with its base seated on grass ring or arie.The day of Tila Ashtami also signals the end of the severe cold and winter and advent of pleasant season of spring ,locally known as 'Sonth'. On this day, the changeover of the season is celebrated by children by burning old fire-pots (Kangris) ,stuffed with dry grass and tied with long ropes around in the air ,all the time uttering the words of 'Jateen-Tantah'. It marks the final good-bye to the holy festival of Mahashivratri which is called and celebrated as Hayrath by the Kashmiri Pandits. In brief the observance of Tila Ashtami is the culmination of the fortnight long festival of Mahashivratri by the Kashmiri Pandit community even in their exiled life away from Kashmir. The KP's deserve all kudos for celebrating their festivals and preserving these and passing of the festivals to the coming generations.

(The author is a columnist, social and KP activist).

Fluctuations in Agriculture: Effects of Climate Change

■ DR. RAJKUMAR SINGH

Climate change significantly affects agriculture, as it influences growing conditions such as temperature, rainfall patterns, and the frequency of extreme weather events. These changes can have both positive and negative impacts on crops, livestock, and fisheries, depending on the location and the type of farming systems in place.Key impacts include: a. Changes in Crop Yields: Certain regions may experience increased yields due to longer growing seasons and increased carbon dioxide levels, which can enhance photosynthesis in some crops. However, in many areas, the negative effects such as heat stress, drought, and flooding are likely to outweigh any benefits, leading to reduced yields. b. Water Resources: Changes in precipitation patterns and the melting of snow and ice affect the availability of water for irrigation. In some areas, water scarcity is becoming more acute, while in others, excessive rainfall can lead to flooding, both of which threaten agricultural productivity. c. Pests and Diseases: Warmer temperatures can lead to the expansion of pests and diseases to new areas, affecting crop health and yields. Changes in humidity and temperature can also affect the prevalence of plant and animal diseases.d. Soil Fertility: Climate change can affect soil health and fertility through changes in rainfall patterns, increased temperatures, and the frequency of extreme weather events, leading to soil erosion, degradation, and changes in nutrient cycles. e. Adaptation and Mitigation Strategies: Farmers are adapting to climate change through various means, such as changing planting dates, selecting more resilient crop varieties, improving water use efficiency, and adopting sustainable agricultural practices. There's also a significant focus on mitigation strategies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from agriculture, such as improving feed efficiency in livestock, adopting no-till farming, and implementing agroforestry practices.In the context,sustainable agricultural prac-

tices are crucial for both adaptation to and mitigation of climate change impacts.

Historical background

The history of climate change and agriculture is a complex narrative that spans centuries, reflecting the evolving relationship between human agricultural practices and the Earth's climate. This relationship is marked by both the impact of climate on agriculture and the influence of agricultural practices on the climate. a. Pre-Industrial Era: Ancient Civilizations: Early agricultural societies were highly dependent on the climate, with civilizations like the Maya, the Indus Valley, and Mesopotamia experiencing the impacts of climate variability and change. Periods of drought, for example, are thought to have contributed to the decline of some of these civilizations.Medieval Warm Period (900-1300 AD): This was a time of relatively warm temperatures in some regions of the world, which allowed for the expansion of agriculture into areas that were previously too cold for cultivation, such as parts of northern Europe. b. Industrial Era to Early 20th Century: Little Ice Age (approximately 1300 to 1850 AD): A cooler climate period that saw glaciers advance and shorter growing seasons, impacting agriculture by reducing crop yields in parts of Europe and North America.19th Century: The onset of the Industrial Revolution marked the beginning of significant human-induced impacts on the global climate through the increased emission of greenhouse gases from the burning of fossil fuels.

The impacts on agriculture were not immediately recognized, but the foundations of modern, industrialized agriculture began to take shape. c. Mid to Late 20th Century: Post-World War II: The period saw a significant increase in agricultural productivity known as the Green Revolution, which involved the adoption of new technologies, crop varieties, and farming practices.

However, these advances also led to increased use of fossil fuels, fertilizers,

and water resources, contributing to greenhouse gas emissions and environmental degradation.1970s-1990s: Scientific understanding of human-induced climate change grew, with the establishment of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in 1988 marking a significant step in international cooperation on this issue. The impacts of climate change on agriculture, such as shifts in growing seasons and increased frequency of extreme weather events, began to be more widely recognized and studied. d. 21st Century: Early 2000s to Present: The effects of climate change on agriculture have become increasingly evident, with more frequent and severe droughts, floods, and heatwaves affecting crop yields and food security. At the same time, the agricultural sector's role in contributing to climate change has been acknowledged, leading to efforts to promote more sustainable and climate-resilient farming practices.

Effects of climate change

Climate change has profound effects on agriculture, influencing crop yields, water resources, pest and disease patterns, and soil health.

These impacts can vary widely depending on the geographical location, local climate conditions, and the type of agriculture practiced: a. Changes in Crop Yields and Production Patterns: Temperature Increases: Higher temperatures can accelerate crop maturity, reducing the growing period and leading to lower yields, especially in warmer regions where crops are near their maximum heat tolerance.Carbon Dioxide Fertilization: While higher CO2 levels can stimulate plant growth and yield for some crops (like wheat and rice), this benefit can be offset by other climate-related stressors such as high temperatures and water scarcity.Shifts in Growing Seasons: In some regions, warmer temperatures may extend the growing season, allowing for multiple crop cycles in a year or the introduction of new crops. However, in already hot climates, increased heat may reduce

crop viability. b. Water Resources and Irrigation: Altered Precipitation Patterns: Changes in rainfall patterns, with some areas experiencing more droughts and others facing increased rainfall or flooding, can disrupt agricultural practices and water availability for irrigation.Glacier Melt and Snowpack Reduction: In regions dependent on meltwater from glaciers and snowpack for irrigation, reduced snowfall and faster melt can lead to water shortages during the growing season. c. Soil Health and Fertility: Soil Erosion and Degradation: Extreme weather events like heavy rainfall can lead to soil erosion, while higher temperatures increase the rate of organic matter decomposition, reducing soil fertility.Salinization: In coastal agricultural lands, sea-level rise can lead to saltwater intrusion, affecting soil and freshwater resources. d. Livestock: Heat Stress: Livestock can suffer from heat stress, leading to reduced fertility, milk production, and weight gain, as well as increased susceptibility to diseases.Forage Quality: Changes in precipitation and temperature can affect the quantity and quality of pasture and forage crops, impacting livestock nutrition.e. Fisheries and Aquaculture: Ocean Acidification and Temperature: Climate change affects marine and freshwater ecosystems, impacting fish stocks and aquaculture productivity through changes in water temperature, oxygen levels, and ocean acidification.f. Adaptation and Resilience: Farmers and agricultural communities are adopting various adaptation strategies to cope with these changes, such as developing drought-resistant crop varieties, altering planting dates, employing water-saving irrigation techniques, and adopting integrated pest management practices.

The effects of climate change on agriculture underscore the need for sustainable and resilient agricultural practices that can adapt to changing conditions while minimizing negative impacts on the environment.

(The author is a youth motivator).

Food Security in Modi's Regime

■ OMKAR DATTATRAY

We are living in a welfare state and it is the responsibility of the government to see that people do not suffer due to hunger and no one should go to bed without food .It is a fact that under the previous UPA government some poor people faced hunger and they go to sleep with empty stomach .Realizing the importance of food security for the country ,Modi government has made scientific provisions for the food security of citizens so that there is hunger in the country and everyone will have security of food .Modi government deserves all appreciation for making provision of food security to its citizens .In this connection Food Security Act has been passed by the Modi government and under the law every citizen is guaranteed food security so that there is no hunger death in the country and all the citizens are ensured two square meals.

At least eighty crore people will be benefitted,and BJP is likely to use the commitment to underline its welfare politics in the Lok Sabha election campaign .What is the food security act and what was the PM -GKAY ? Prime minister Narendra Modi has announced the extension of the central government's free food grains scheme under the National Food Security Act(NFSA) ,2013 for next five years .He made the announcement at election rallies in MP and Chhattisgarh .The Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PM_GKAY) ,the pandemic -time relief measure under which an additional 5 kg of food grains was supplied free to all benefi-

aries of the NFSA from April 2020 onwards ,was stopped with effect from January 1,2023 .However it was again extended for five years and it is a big public welfare and food security measure .The cabinet led by prime minister has decided that the central government will provide free food grains to about 81.35 crore beneficiaries under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY) for a period of five years with effect from 1st January 2024.This is a historic decision that places PMGKAY amongst the world's biggest social welfare schemes aimed at ensuring food and nutrition security for 81.35 crore persons ,at an estimated cost of Rs 11.80 lakh crore over a 5 years PM Modi said climate change is causing extreme weather events more and more frequently ,and these challenges are felt most by global south .Stating that the agriculture sector is facing several challenges globally ,PM Modi on June 16 urged the G20 agriculture Ministers meeting to deliberate on how to undertake collective action for achieving global food security ."Globally ,agriculture provides livelihood to over 2.5 billion people In the global south ,agriculture accounts for almost 30% of the GDP and over 60% of jobs and today this sector faces several challenges.

The supply chain disruption caused by the pandemic has worsened by the impact of geopolitical tensions .Said PM Modi .Free ration scheme to be extended for five years .The scheme provides 5kg of free food grain per month to 81 crore NFSA beneficiaries, and ,PM reiterated

that poor are the biggest caste group in the country .The Pradhan Mantri Garib Anna Yojana was introduced in 2020 as a pandemic relief measure ,providing 5kg of free food grains per beneficiary per month in addition to the 5kg of subsidized food grains they were entitled to under the National Food Security Act. "Today I want to tell the poor brothers and sisters of the country from the land of Durg that I decided that BJP government will now extend the scheme of providing free ration to 80 crore poor people of the country for next five years" he said .He stated that poor are the biggest caste .The PM said that he took such a decision because he himself came from a poor family ,claiming that his government has taken 135 crore people out of poverty across the country and was empowering them .Referring to the poor as "the biggest caste in my country ,"he alleged that some political parties were dissolving the poison of casteism in the air ,an oblique reference to demands for a cast census made by congress and its allies in recent times.The

cabinet led by prime minister has decided that the central government will provide free food grains to about 81.35 crore beneficiaries under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Anna Yojana (PMGKAY) for a period of five years with effect from 1st January 2024.

The National Food Security Act 2013 (NFSA 2013) converts into legal entitlements for existing food security programs of the government of India .It also includes the Midday Meal Scheme ,integrated child Development Services

scheme ,and the public distribution system .Food security has been a major concern in India .In 2022,the Global Food Security index ranked India at 68th out of the 113 major countries in terms of food security .In 2023,the Global Hunger index ranked India at 111th out of 125 countries .According to United Nations ,there are nearly 195 million undernourished people in India that makes up a quarter of the worlds undernourished population .In addition ,roughly 43% of children in India are chronically undernourished .Though the current nutritional standards meets 100% of daily food needs ,India lags behind in terms of a quality protein intake at 20% ,this shortcoming can be alleviated by making available protein -rich food products such as soybeans, lentils, meat, eggs, dairy, etc more readily accessible and affordable for Indian citizens.

The Human Rights Measurement Initiative finds that India is operating at only 56.8% of its capacity based its economic power to ensure its citizens have adequate food security.

In brief Modi government is making concerted efforts to provide food security to its people mainly the poor through its various schemes and programs so that people are provided quality and nutritious food grain and to ensure that no one goes to bed without food and this is a big achievement of the BJP rule and it needs to be acknowledged and appreciated by one and all.

(The author is a columnist, social and KP activist).

YOUR COLUMN Election Commission and Lok Sabha Elections

Dear Editor,
Lok Sabha election dates, to be conducted in 7 phases beginning from April 19 and ending on June 1, have been announced with results to be announced on June 4. Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar has warned against hate speeches. But unfortunately, even in normal course, hate speech rules the roost whereas attack on faulty policies and programmes has been taking back seat. Warning has been issued against spread of fake news and personal attacks. The warning must be translated into action to punish those who violate the warnings. Unless exemplary punishment is given to the violators, the warnings will be taken in lighter vein. All the warnings issued now were there in the previous elections. But no tangible progress in the reduction of violations has been seen. After February 14, the three-member Election Commission had been functioning with Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar and another Election Commissioner Arun Goel. After the resignation tendered by Anup Chandra Pandey on March 8, the Commission was left with the Chief Election Commissioner alone till March 14. Now it is full-fledged Commission with the vacancies filled up on March 15 and with the two retired bureaucrats Gyanesh Kumar and Sukhbir Sandhu reporting for

duty. Earlier the Election Commission was one-man Commission. It was made multi-member body to checkmate T.N. Sheshan. The law enacted in 2023 excluded the Chief Justice of India from the Selection Committee in the appointment of Election Commissioners. Under the new law, the panel comprises of the Prime Minister as head, his cabinet minister and the leader of the opposition. Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) moved the Supreme Court to get stay order for the appointment of election commissioners to the existing vacancies without the Chief Justice in the selection committee. But the Supreme Court refused to pass stay order. What is noticeable is that the law makers do not think what is advantageous to them today as ruling party may be disadvantageous to them tomorrow when they occupy the opposition benches. They also do not think what is disadvantageous to them today may be advantageous to them tomorrow when they take over as ruling party. It is natural for the public to think that the Prime Minister and his cabinet minister generally have the same view in the appointment of a person and the opposition party leader stands isolated. The dissenting view of the opposition party leaders is bull-dozed. Therefore the inclusion of Chief Justice of India in the panel gives no room for adverse comments in the appointment. Even though the panel is headed by the Prime Minister, it is ultimately the writ of the Chief Justice that runs large because the Prime Minister is committed to appoint a person shortlisted and the opposition party leader is 'always' committed to oppose it. Favour for a particular person is offset by the dis-

favour by the opposition party leader. Finally, it is the decision of the Chief Justice that stays and results in the appointment. The reason for the resignation by Arun Goel has not been made known by him. Speculation is rife that he had differences of opinion with the Chief Election Commissioner and there is also rumour that he is about to join BJP. The opposition parties tried to make political capital out of the resignation of Goel. Since Goel has not aired his views in public on his resignation, the opposition parties are disappointed that they could not get the chance to slam the government. The appetite of the opposition parties is always to find issues to criticize the government and not to take their criticism on the issues where the government really goes wrong. Issues are required for criticisms and not criticisms are made on issues. Election commissioners have to act with responsibility whoever is appointed. They cannot do any favour to any particular party while announcing the results. In the case of orders to be passed on the disqualification of members, there may be interpretations and misinterpretations. When the aggrieved parties feel injustice, they have the access to approach the courts and get their grievances redressed. Election Commission in the past has faced many criticisms by the opposition parties. Even if the appointment of election commissioner is by the selection panel with Chief Justice as one of the members, the opposition parties find fault with the Election Commissioners on one pretext or the other. In any and every case, it is ultimately the Supreme Court that would have the last word.

K.V. Seetharamaiah

