Topic of the week for discussion: 10th to 16th Aug 2017

Topic: Erratic Monsoons

Topic Introduction

This year, the rain hasn't been scanty but oddly scattered. Although the gross amount of water received by India in the form of rainfall did not fall short of the amount of water that the entire nation would need altogether, yet some regions faced the brunt of draught while the others, the wrath of flood. In our country, just like wealth, rain this year has not been distributed equally. I hope God, of all, does not start to follow the politicians' suite.

Where on one hand, Suryawanshi Marathwada has been complaining of 21% lower rainfall as compared to the average amount of rainfall in Marathwada as some southern regions of India face a similar situation at a shortfall of 34%, on the other hand, Rajasthan was flooded with rainfall accumulating to 126% more than the normal rainfall. In the **Southern states** Kerala, Karnataka and Tamil, the citizens are short of even drinking water as the rainfall was less than the drought-struck 2016 monsoon season. Only 58% of the nation received normal rainfall whereas the remainder got an excess or deficit of rain according to IMD (Indian Meteorology Department). Monsoons account for 70% of India's annual rainfall and are only source of irrigation for some of the farmers. India's 15% of the $2 trillion economy is driven by farms and 1.3 billion people are employed in agriculture.

The volatility of the monsoon season has brought dire consequences to the trade of crops. Despite a 3.3% increase in the planting area of the summer-sown crops, the *production* has fallen short and the *imports* have shot up. Due to the uneven distribution, crops were destroyed by too much rainfall in some areas whereas other crops did not get enough water to germinate, resulting in an *ascending* slope of **imports** of edible oils, sugar and pulses and a *descending* slope of **exports** of cotton, rice and feed ingredients. Some regions had enough rainfall at the time of sowing but were deprived of the follow up showers that the crops would need to flourish.

Both the **Rabi** (Wheat, Oat, Gram, Pea, Barley, Potato, Tomato, Onion, Oil seeds - like Rapeseed, Sunflower, Sesame, Mustard) etc. as well as the **Zaid** crops (Cucumber, Bitter Gourd, Pumpkin, Watermelon, Muskmelon, Moong Dal etc.) have suffered due to the unbalanced rainfall. This brought down the yields of rice, pulses and oil seeds. The price of onions has doubled and that of tomatoes has quadrupled in a fortnight and a month respectively.

Erratic monsoons don't just manifest out of God's pure spite for the human kind but out of the voracious human nature itself. The need for comfort, luxury, superiority and power has led the man to produce and consume evermore. The **carbon emission** and industrial waste lead to deposition of such elements on the surface of the earth which reflect the sunlight due to which, the land is not heated enough to vaporize the water; resulting in insufficient green house effect. **Global Dimming,** which is the result of pollution and excessive dust particles hindering the sun rays to create a strong enough impact to create the green-house effect, is another reason for less rainfall. As the oceans are absorbing more and more carbon, the temperature of the water is warmer. This phenomenon impedes the high pressure winds to flow from the Indian Ocean to the terrestrial area. This causes draughts too. Parts of India receive late showers when the western currents reverse the course of wind that was set off during the onset of monsoon. **El Nino** plays an important too. It is a phenomenon when the upper 200m of water has a higher temperature than the normal. If the temperature of the water in the ocean is high, the wind won't leave the surface until the temperature on the land is hot enough to push the dense air up and create room for the monsoons.

The Erratic monsoon has not only brought upon the commercial loss to the struggling farmers but has also been the impetus of displacing thousands of flood ridden households and shattering hundreds of families. 300 people in Gujarat were drowned to death and around 10,000 washed off to nowhere; to a place they can't call home.

It is high time that India detoxifies the laziness in its bones, ceases to be passive and begins to be proactive, so that we are prepared to deal with natural disasters and deflect the losses by having safety measures in place. We can construct better cities that can sustain some extra water through drainage in the flood prone areas, use Japanese construction methods in the earthquake prone areas and deploy efficient damage control and relief teams to help the people in such places. Countries like Australia do not waste but store the rain water and put it to various uses; we at least can keep it from wasting our people.

Read further:

http://in.reuters.com/article/india-monsoon-idINKBN1AI1VJ

http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/07/indian-monsoon-floods-hit-gujarat-rajasthan-170724133146371.html

https://in.reuters.com/subjects/monsoon

http://www.indiainfoline.com/article/economy-monsoon-watch-mansoon/erratic-monsoon-moves-ahead-114031000398_1.html

https://testbook.com/blog/crops-in-india-gk-notes-pdf/