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Rains return, boost reservoir levels by 30%

Monsoon might take a break over central, west India over the next two weeks

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New Delhi, 12 July

A sharp improvement in rainfall since end-June has narrowed the shortfall from 33 per cent to only 12 per cent. It has also improved the water levels in 91-odd reservoirs across the country, especially in Maharashtra.

However, the rainfall deficiency could widen again as the monsoon is expected to go for a break in central and western parts of the country over the next few weeks. It will gain strength again in July end.

Sowing of kharif crops, too, has improved and the total acreage covered so far (till July 12) was 41.33 million hectares, which is 8.61 per cent lower than the area covered in the same period last year and 7.43 per cent less than the average area covered during the same period in the last five years.

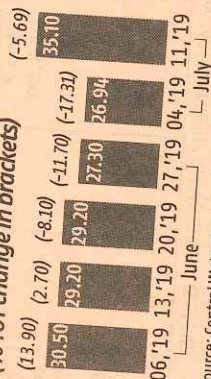
Till last week, this difference between the area covered under kharif crops this year as compared to last year was 27 per cent. This was 37 per cent less than last five years' acreage.

According to the Central Water Commission (CWC), water level in 91-odd reservoirs across the country was 35.1 billion cubic meters (BCM) as



WATER LEVEL IN RESERVOIRS

■ Current live storage (BCM); (% YoY change in brackets)



Source: Central Water Commission

of July 11. This is 5.69 per cent less than the storage level during the same period last year.

In early July, reservoirs had about 26.94 BCM, almost 17.31 BCM less than the corresponding period of 2018.

SOWING OF KHARIF CROPS

as on July 12, 2019 (million hectares)

Crops	2018	2019	% Change
Pulses	4.57	3.42	-25.16
Rice	10.98	9.77	-11.01
Oilseeds	8.37	7.56	-9.66
Coarse cereals	7.62	7.11	-6.62
Cotton	7.75	7.77	-0.27
Total	45.23	41.33	-8.61

Note: Total might not match as all crops haven't been included

Source: Ministry of Agriculture

The worry now is whether or not the levels can be sustained if the rains go for a break.

Till July 11, India received 230 millimeters of rainfall, 12 per cent less than normal.

So far this year, 53 districts in the

country have got deficient rainfall since the monsoon started in June. This is the worst monsoon since 2014, when 70 per cent of the country had got below-normal rain till July 9.

The shortfall is more than 30 per cent in Marathwada, Telangana, Rayalseema, Punjab, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh, along with some parts of east India.

The monsoon entered the country late this year. It progress across the peninsula was slow because of Cyclone Vayu.

The pick-up in monsoon might go for a lull in the next few weeks. News agency, Reuters in a report filed on Thursday said India may receive below-average rainfall in the next two weeks with a large deficit in the soybean and cotton-growing central and western regions.

Quoting an unnamed Met department official, Reuters said weather models are showing deficiency in rainfall over central and western India in next two weeks.

"The Northeast and the foothills of the Himalaya could get good rainfall," the official said.

Private weather forecasting agency Skymet's Managing Director Jatin Singh in a blogpost said a break in monsoon could commence after July 15.