

Monsoon to begin return journey from Rajasthan soon

INDIVIAL DHASMANA
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The monsoon has started showing signs of beginning its return journey from Rajasthan in a couple of days, according to private weather forecaster Skymet.

The rains remained six per cent below normal this season so far, said the India Meteorological Department (IMD). However, it was 23 per cent below the long-period average for the week-ended September 7.

Though the monsoon might start withdrawing from Rajasthan, it would be active-to-vigorous over Goa, central Maharashtra, Sub-Himalayan regions, West Bengal and Sikkim, Skymet said. There would also be no relief for flood-hit Assam as rains would continue to lash the Northeast, it said.

Coverage under kharif crops till Friday remained slightly below last year's, with only cotton and sugarcane bucking the trend.

Data issued by the agriculture ministry showed that acreage fell sub-one per cent to 104 million hectares till Friday, against 105 million hectares a year ago.

Cotton acreage rose to 12 million hectares against 10 million hectares over the period. Sugarcane cultivation increased, but the crop was largely a rabi one. Acreage of all other crops — rice, pulses, coarse cereals, oil seeds and jute — declined.

Though the share of agriculture has drastically come down in the country's

SOWING

As of September 8

■ 2016-17 ■ 2017-18 (mn hectares)

Rice	37.7	37.1
Pulses	14.5	13.9
Coarse cereals	18.6	18.3
Oilseeds	18.7	16.9
Sugarcane	4.6	5.0
Jute & mesta	0.75	0.7
Cotton	10.2	12.1
Total	105.05	104

Source: Agriculture ministry

gross domestic product (GDP) over the period, its importance has again re-surfaced after private investments in the country remained bleak.

GDP growth fell to 5.7 per cent in the first quarter of 2017-18, the lowest in the first three years of the Narendra Modi government. Agriculture was one of the factors that pulled down growth. Farm and allied activities grew only 2.3 per cent in the quarter, against 5.2 per cent in the fourth quarter of 2016-17 and 6.9 per cent in the third quarter of that year.

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