

Beat the heat with grain storage, fire audits: Modi

PM chairs review meeting ahead of summer months, tells IMD to prepare daily weather forecasts that are easy to interpret and disseminate

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Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday called for optimal grain storage and detailed fire audits and mock drills in hospitals as preparations for a harsh summer forecast by the met department.

He directed the Food Corporation of India to ensure optimal storage of grains in extreme weather conditions, asking officials to track the availability of fodder for animals and water levels in reservoirs on a regular basis even as he stressed the need for a coordinated effort to combat forest fires.

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) was also told to prepare daily weather forecasts that were easy to interpret and disseminate, an official statement said.

The directions were issued by Modi during a high-level meeting chaired by the PM in the national capital to review preparations for the hot summer months. Officials also apprised him of the impact of weather on the standing rabi crops and the expected yield of major crops.

Modi also reviewed the preparedness of states and hospital infrastructure in terms of the availability of required supplies and for emergency readiness.

He urged officials to prepare awareness material separately for various stakeholders that include citizens, medical professionals, municipal and panchayat authorities, and disaster response teams such as firefighters.

The prime minister also advised them to incorporate multimedia lecture sessions in schools to sensitise children to ways of coping with extreme heat.

The officials suggested that TV news channels, FM radio, etc. could devote a few minutes daily to explain the weather forecast in a manner that would allow citizens to take any necessary precautions. The participants included senior officials of the Prime Minister's Office such as principal secretary to the PM and cabinet secretary, besides secretaries to the ministries of home, health and family welfare, agriculture, earth sciences and member secretary of the National Disaster Management Authority.

Late last month, the IMD, in its seasonal outlook for the months of March to May, predicted that maximum and minimum



India can become 3rd largest economy, says PM

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday said skilling the youth held the key to India becoming the third-largest economy in the world from the fifth now, and asserted that his government was committed to ensure benefits of skill development reach all sections including Dalits and tribals.

Virtually addressing a "Rozgar Mela" or employment fair, organised by the Gujarat government in Gandhinagar, Modi said nearly 1.5 lakh youth were given

government jobs in the state during the last five years and 25,000 more such positions will be made available in 2023.

The PM emphasised the need to create a skilled workforce on a large scale to tap growing opportunities in various sectors. "For the new opportunities being created in the country, we need to create skilled manpower on a large scale. India can achieve the target of becoming the third-largest economy only by skilling its youth," he said.

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temperatures over most parts of East, Northeast, Central and North West India to remain above normal.

Only in the Southern peninsular India, both the maximum and minimum will remain normal to below normal, the met department had said.

In February, according to the IMD, the monthly averaged maximum temperature over the Indian region was the highest since 1901 while the monthly averaged minimum temperature was the fifth highest for February since 1901.

Region-wise, the IMD said that the average minimum temperature was the second highest in February over North West India, third highest for East and

Northeast India, and fifth highest for all of India since 1901.

Experts fear that a sharp spike in temperatures this month could have a damaging impact on the yields of the standing wheat crop, especially in areas where sowing has been late. These include Punjab, Haryana and West Uttar Pradesh, where the crop has reached the grain filling stage. Dry winds and extremely high temperatures are considered to be damaging for the wheat crop at this stage.

High temperatures during March to May could also push up demand for electricity and have a negative impact on inflation, which was only just showing some signs of moderation.