

Take SWEETENERS with pinch of salt

- ❑ Sugar-free eatables do not mean risk-free
- ❑ Artificial stuff have permissible limits

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Chennai, Feb 10:

With the scare of diabetes growing in the State and particularly the city, people are finding a new way to cash in on the need for sugar-free sweets. With more and more shops selling sugar-free or sugar-less sweets, experts warn that patients must not get addicted to them due to various reasons.

All India Medical Laboratory Technologists Association (Tamilnadu - secretary) S Pugalendi, explains that 'Sugar-free sweets or sugar-less sweets mean the products contain less or no calories. In real terms, sugar means carbohydrates which are present in almost all vegetable and fruits except for a few, like *naaval pazham*. Millets like *kelvaraghu* contain very less carbohydrates. These sugar-free sweets are produced keeping in mind the diabetic and obese population. Moreover, one must note that blood sugar or blood salt is quite different from actual sugar or salt.'

There are many shops that make or sell sugar-free sweets in the city, but before buying them, we have to make sure they contain the permissible amount of artificial sweet-

ener, warns a consumer rights organisation. Consumer Association of India, food division - director, G Santhanarajan, says, 'When we buy such sweets, it must declare on the cover or package the name of the sweetener used. Since most sweeteners are synthetic chemicals, their long-term usage can cause severe damage to mind and body. For diabetic patients who have been



Dr B Muthukumar

avoiding sweets, this will increase their intake which will indirectly increase the level of chemicals in the body. So, caution is needed both in terms of permissible limit and addiction.'

Accepting the concern regarding artificial sweeteners, Central Council for Indian Medicine - executive committee member, Dr B Muthukumar, says, 'Artificial sweeteners such as Aspartame can affect people with genetic disorders like PKU

(Phenylketonuria). There is a permissible limit for taking artificial sweeteners per kg body weight. Aspartame, Saccharin and Sucralose are a few common artificial sweeteners available in the market under various trade names. But there is a permissible limit.'

Experts from the food industry say that there is no supportive evidence to prove the toxicity for most sweeteners. When asked about the toxic effects of the sweets, Dr Muthukumar says, 'These sweeteners have been tested after many years of research. But no large-scale studies are conducted and proved that such sweeteners are dangerous and might have ill-effects. But when you ask questions like: How much can be given to a diabetic or a child? Can a person eat more such sweets with artificial sweeteners? I can say that everything must have its limit.'

Association of Health Food Nutrition and Dietics (AHFND) founder Radhika Ganesan said, 'I approach the case as a psychologist and nutritionist. Most diabetic patients are psychologically unhappy due to various food restrictions. When they see such sugar-free sweets, they will definitely be tempted

to eat more. If we stop them, it could have a psychological effect on them.'

AHFND, an NGO which works for spreading knowledge on nutrition among the public, focuses on creating awareness in various sectors. Stressing on self-consciousness, Radhika says, 'One needs to be aware of what he eats, what is the effect of food on his body. So, when a diabetic patient takes sweets, he must realise that nothing comes for free. When they say sugar-less sweet, can it be made without oil? They will definitely contain some calories. Moreover, the effect of the sugar will be made out by the fat present in the sweet.'



Radhika Ganesan

'Most diabetic patients are psychologically unhappy due to various food restrictions. When they see such sugar-free sweets, they will definitely be tempted to eat more. If we stop them, it could have a psychological effect on them'

Sevabharathi gives aid to differently-abled

NT Bureau

Chennai, Feb 10:

As many as 148 differently-abled people received kits like tri-cycle, hearing aids, wheel chair and special shoes at a function organised by Sevabharathi, an NGO in association with North Tamilnadu Chapter of Saksham, an all India based voluntary organisation which is into serving the differently-abled persons here on Tuesday.

Presenting the kits, Justice V Kanakaraj praised Sevabharathi for its services and especially during the December deluge.

Sevabharathi state president K Vedagiri said about 5,500 volunteers



from their organisation took part in the rescue, relief and rehabilitation measures. The NGO gave iron-boxes and tools for carpenters and electricians who lost all their belongings in the floods. 'We even honoured armed forces personnel who took part in the rescue work during the heavy rains,' he said.

RSS south India secretary S Rajendran was also present.

TN objects to Centre move on NEET

- ❑ It will affect rural students, CM tells PM

NT Bureau

Chennai, Feb 10:

The Tamilnadu government on Tuesday 'strongly' objected to any move by the Centre to introduce National Eligibility Entrance Test (NEET) for medical courses, saying any form of common entrance test 'by design favour the urban elite' and rural students cannot compete with them.

In a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Chief Minister J Jayala-

ithaa said her government has consistently been of the view that common entrance exams 'by design favour the urban elite' and rural students and students from poorer socio-economic background are unable to compete with students from such urban elite background in the examinations.

Rural students were at a disadvantage as they lacked the resources to enroll in training institutes and coaching classes and did not have access

to study materials available to their urban counterparts, she said. Recalling her consistent opposition to any such examination, Jayalithaa said she had conveyed to him in October last her government's 'strong objection' to the Centre seeking a review of Supreme Court judgement on the issue of NEET for medical admissions proposed in 2013 during previous UPA regime.

It had been quashed by the Supreme Court but the then Central

government had filed a review petition even as her government had moved the apex court against that, she said.

'I had also strongly cautioned against any attempts to introduce such a common entrance test in any other manner or by any other name, as it infringes upon the State's autonomy and right to regulate the admission policies to medical educational institutions in Tamilnadu,' she said.

Know about science

- ❑ Speakers to highlight different aspects on 14 Feb

NT Bureau

Chennai, Feb 10:

The Institute of Mathematical Sciences, as part of its ongoing programme is organising a set of four public talks on different aspects of science at The Music Academy (TTK Auditorium) on 14 February, between 4 and 7.30 pm.

According to a press release, the programme is free and open to all, although web registration is required in advance. Details concerning the programme, the schedule and how to register are available at:

<http://www.imsc.res.in/triveni>

The topics to be discussed are: **A cloudy future by Rama Govindarajan, TCIS, Hyderabad**

Chennai has recently been a victim of the vagaries of rain. Rama Govindarajan will speak on how



climate change affects cloud cover and importance of the science of fluid flow.

Compute, compute, compute - how hard can it get? by Meena Mahajan, IMSc, Chennai

As computers have dramatically altered our lifestyles, Meena Mahajan will speak whether computers can solve all problems of science and engineering.

How do insects fly? by Sanjay Sane, NCBS, Bangalore

The wings of most insects flap hundreds of times every second, and their brains must acquire and process information at correspondingly rapid rates. Biologist Sanjay Sane will touch on the evolution and the challenges the insects face.

How the sun shines by D Indumathi, IMSc, Chennai

The sun has been shining for a long time now. All life on earth has emerged from this single key fact. Indumathi will highlight milestones in our understanding of sun and how and why it shines.

LINES OF CONTROL



Lions Club of Central Madras honoured Exnora International joint general secretary R Govindaraj with 'Noble Soul For Service' Award for his service towards green and clean environment at a function held in Chennai recently. Justice P Jyothimani of National Green Tribunal - Southern Zone Chennai presented the award in the presence of Tamilnadu Principal Chief Conservator of Forests S Balaji, Lions Club International past district governor G V Raman, Exnora International founder M B Nirmal and T Nagar MLA V P Kalairajan.

Taking affordable Internet to rural India

- ❑ IIT-M teams up with Nokia for research

NT Bureau

Chennai, Feb 10:

A day after the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India put an end to the 'Free Basics' debate by way of endorsing Net neutrality, the Centre of Excellence in Wireless Technology (CEWIT), IIT-Madras, on Tuesday divulged its research plan aimed at providing last-mile, affordable, broadband connectivity to villages across India.

The research, which will be headed by chief technologist of CEWIT, Babu Narayanan K J, is being funded by Nokia under the company's corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiative.

According to Babu, the research, in tune with the Central government's vision of 'Digital India', would take around three years to be implemented.

'Initially, 10 research scholars will be part of the team but the number of researchers is only set to expand in the coming days,' Babu told *News Today*, speaking on the sidelines of a slideshow presentation, 'Design and Development of Cost Effective Wireless Broadband Solutions for Rural India', on the institution's premises.

Emphasising that the research may benefit a sizeable population, Babu said, 'Despite 200 million people across villages having telephone connectivity, only around 100 million people have connection to the Internet. This apart, only one-fourth of the total rural subscribers use the Internet.'

The project, according to vice-president of Nokia's India region, Sandeep Gigotra, is said to incur a low-cost

input due to CEWIT's plan of using unlicensed spectrum.

According to Babu, wireless technologies would be leveraged for the research process and connectivity would be provided through fibre optic cables.

'Researchers would focus on extending the latest technology, including 4G, to 6,38,000 villages by way of middle-haul and back-haul,' he said, adding, 'Villages will, therefore, be connected to the National Optical Fibre Network located in the nearest gram panchayat. The majority of villages around gram panchayats are within 20-km radius, and there are over 2,38,000 gram panchayats that are set to be provided with fibre connectivity by the Central government. Our project will focus on 6,38,000

villages associated with gram panchayats.' IIT-Madras director Bhaskar Ramamurthi, said the main aim of the research was to provide Wi-Fi connectivity to village folk at a cost they could afford.

Recalling research projects undertaken by IIT to provide Internet connectivity to rural India, Bhaskar said, 'IIT-M has been a pioneer as far as taking Internet to villages is concerned. But the focus now has shifted from just providing Internet connection to providing cost-effective connection,' he told reporters, clarifying that the research is only the first step and that the researchers had a slew of challenges to face. 'The focus of the research will be on leveraging the power of Internet,' he added.