

SCIENCE TIT BITS**T. SABARATNAM***Daily News, Lake House
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This column is a compilation of some of the recent research findings - national and international.

Back to Home Child Births

Hospital surveys in Sri Lanka show that only one in 100 children are born in home. This is due to the belief that having a baby in hospital is safer.

A recent conference on child birth in New York has concluded that it is safer for women to have their babies at home. Reason: experts say the high-tech equipment used in hospitals damage one in seven babies.

They cited figures from Holland in their support. In Holland where a third of all babies are born at home - in the simple, old fashioned way - the death rate among babies and mothers is the lowest in the world.

A caution: induced births are generally bad for babies.

Oil Fires may Bring more Rain to Sri Lanka

Two studies now show that smoke from burning oil wells in the Gulf may bring more rain in monsoon countries and the earlier fear that the monsoon will be weakened is not correct.

The first study is by the London Meteorological Office. It concluded that "there will be a slight enhancement of the Asian summer monsoon due to increased precipitation caused by smoke particles."

The second is by the Max Plank Institute in Hamburg, Germany. It says in the report published in a British science journal: "There is no indication of a weakening of the Indian summer monsoon as has frequently been speculated. There is even a region of enhanced rainfall over

India during the onset phase of the monsoon in early June in response to the anomalous heating over Tibet. The enhanced rainfall region shifts further north during the following two months".

These studies have been proved correct. The South West monsoon which broke in Sri Lanka during the last week of May was accompanied with furious winds and intense rain. The massive waves the winds blew on to the coast had caused heavy sea erosion.

Liquid Nitrogen Drops do the Trick

A British firm now puts a droplet of liquid nitrogen into the packs of food stuff to keep them in good condition for a longer time. The liquid nitrogen vapourises the moment it is dropped, increasing its volume 700 fold. The nitrogen gas rapidly displaces the air inside the packs. Thus the pack is freed of the polluting micro-organisms. This method prevents roasted coffee powder, roasted pea nuts and potato crisps going rancid, peanut butter changing colour due to oxidation and milk products losing colour and flavour due to oxidation.

Butter Fruit to Combat Malnutrition

Indian researchers are now pushing for the popularisation of the growing of butter fruit trees (Avocado) as a means of combating malnutrition. Butter fruit, now a rich man's delicacy, is harmful to fat saturated rich people, researchers say. It is better suited for the poor as its fat content ranges from 20 to 25 percent. It grows well in the hill country and its cultivation should be popularised.

Science's Three Cs

Science thrives on controversies, confrontations and conflicts of opinion, not personal but related to the subject.