

Urban spread into agricultural land could cost India dear



LAND CONFLICTS Agricultural land is at risk from increasing urbanisation. Photo: K.K. Mustafah

The loss of agricultural land to urbanisation, combined with insufficient planning for food supply lines, places severe constraints on future food security for India's growing population, a UN assessment released on Monday has warned.

The assessment, which draws on contributions from more than 123 scientists worldwide, states that India's growing urban clusters such as the Mumbai – Delhi industrial corridor are likely to transform entire regions, with significant impact on habitat and biodiversity.

"India is experiencing a massive trend towards urbanisation. Currently, India's urban population is about 30 percent and is expected to become 50 percent by 2045. This will have significant implications for the country's environment, ecology and sustainability," it said.

The assessment highlights the need to factor in these implications into planning for development. "The rate of urban land expansion in India during the next 20 years is expected to be high, because the country is investing heavily in large scale infrastructure. Urban growth, especially in areas adjacent to forest land and protected areas, increases pressure on these ecosystems through habitat fragmentation, poorly regulated development and pollution," it said.

All is not gloomy as the assessment pointed that India has a cultural tradition of respect for wildlife, as well as for deliberative political processes, which in most cities include civil society groups and non-governmental organisations.

“This may offer a window of opportunity for adjusting development to accommodate biodiversity,” it said.IANS

Many parts of the country devoid of sugar mills

Even though there is an increase in the number of sugar mills from 30 in 1930 to 560 in 2012 in India, many parts of the country are still devoid of them, Swapan Kumar Dutta, Deputy Director General (Crop Science), Indian Council of Agricultural Research, said here on Monday.

Inaugurating a four-day International Symposium on ‘New Paradigms in Sugarcane Research’ organised by Sugarcane Breeding Institute, the DDG said necessary steps had to be taken to harness the benefit that sugarcane could provide in regional development in these areas.

“The sugar industry should take an active part in the sugarcane R&D activity so that the country can achieve new heights in sugarcane production and increased profitability for all stakeholders. Sugarcane researchers, farming community and sugar industry have played a major role in making India the second largest sugar producer in the world. However, there is a need for improving the productivity,” Mr. Dutta said.

K. Ramasamy, Vice-Chancellor of Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, pointed out that universities and research institutes such as the Sugarcane Breeding Institute should be capable of tapping the 58-crore youth population of the country who were engaged in productive activities. He urged industries to adopt green technologies so that development did not occur at the cost of environment degradation.

N. Vijayan Nair, Director of the institute, said the nearly 2,500 Co varieties of sugarcane developed by the institute had become popular in many other countries as well. Sugarcane genetics, which was virtually non-existent until recently, had achieved significance after the 1990s with the development of molecular technologies. Genetically Modified sugarcane too was a reality today.

“Sugarcane growing countries face common challenges that can be addressed through collaborative efforts. Foremost challenge is that the demand for sugar is likely to be 50 per cent more by 2030. Overcoming these need appropriate technological interventions. Climate change is likely to impact sugarcane productivity irrespective of the regions where the crop is grown. As much as 20 per cent reduction in productivity is predicted for every degree increase in temperature,” he said.

The symposium is being organised to provide a global platform for the sugarcane researchers to interact and share their experience and expertise in the relevant fields. Experts and scientists from 10 countries are participating and it is hoped that the deliberations during the next three days will provide an overview of the current status of research under different themes.

Set up cashew processing industry at Gandarvakottai'

The Gandaravakottai union wing of Tami Nadu Vivasayigal Sangam has urged the State government to set up a cashew processing industry at Gandarvakottai to ensure attractive returns for farmers. A resolution adopted at its meeting held at Gandarvakottai on Monday referred to the large area under cultivation in cashew in and around the belt. It said a cashew processing industry would benefit cashew cultivators .

Another resolution wanted the State government to fix the procurement price for paddy at Rs.2,000 a quintal taking into consideration the rise in the cultivation cost, price of fertilizers and labour wages. The agriculture department should ensure prompt supply of fertilizers and inputs through cooperative societies to samba cultivators. G. Sundaramurthy, State deputy secretary of the sangam, spoke on the potential of Gandarvakottai and surrounding villages in cashew cultivation.

He also introduced the newly-elected office bearers.

M. Sebastian, district president of the sangam, M. Subramanian, president of Gandarvakottai unit of the sangam, and P. Veerasamy, union secretary, also spoke on the occasion.

Go for short-duration crops, farmers told

10,000 out of 15,162 ha brought under direct sowing method in coastal areas



busy hours:Paddy cultivation has been brisk in areas where irrigation facility is available in Pudukottai district.

With just 15,162 of the normal 91,000 hectares having been brought under samba so far this season, the Agriculture Department has appealed to farmers to go in for short-duration variety, especially after the third week of this month when the monsoon is likely to be in its peak.

Even out of the 15,162 hectares brought under cultivation, only 5,162 hectares was in areas where farmers were assured of their irrigational facility through their bore wells.

The remaining 10,000 hectares had been brought under direct sowing method, particularly in the coastal regions of Avudaiyarkovil, Aranthangi and Embal.

The Agriculture Department has suggested paddy farmers to adopt System of Rice Intensification (SRI) technique and raise short-duration varieties, says S. Sivasankaran, Joint Director of Agriculture. Of the 5,162 hectares in Kundrandarkovil, Karambakudi, Pudukottai, Arimalam, Annavasal and other blocks in the district, 3,015 hectares had been brought under SRI technique. The varieties raised were BPT-5204, ADT-39, CR-1009 and improved white ponni.

With the delayed monsoon, the department has suggested SRI technique as it minimises period of raising nursery from the usual 30 days to just a fortnight.

Initiative to promote use of hi-tech machinery in farming

Farmers can now hire equipment in Bijapur



Laudable: The Regional Agricultural Research Station has set up the Custom Hire Centre at Kavalki village in Bijapur taluk to help farmers get access to modern agricultural equipment.

The Regional Agricultural Research Station in Bijapur in June set up the Custom Hire Centre on a pilot basis to hire modern agricultural equipment to farmers.

The Union government-sponsored project has been taken up with the help of the All-India Coordinated Research Project to reach out to small and marginal farmers.

The centre, set up at Kavalgi village in Bijapur taluk, has purchased 20 high-tech agricultural machines that are being given to farmers on hire. .

“This is a unique concept whereby farmers can hire expensive farming equipment at a nominal rate. In the absence of such equipment, farmers have to rely on traditional farming methods,” said P.V. Angadi, chief scientist of the project and senior official at the Regional Agricultural Research Station.

According to Mr. Angadi, custom hiring of agricultural machinery to farmers will encourage farmers to use less labour-intensive methods of farming so that it saves them time and other resources.

Listing out the machinery available at the centre for the use of farmers, Mr. Angadi said seed-cum-fertilizer drill, tractor-driven sprayer, and weed removing machine costs any where between Rs. 5,000 and Rs. 1 lakh. “Farmers can hire the equipment either on a daily or hourly basis at a nominal rate that does not exceed Rs. 200 a day,” he said.

Elaborating the concept, he said that Regional Agricultural Research Station has constituted a committee comprising local people and officials to monitor the functioning of the centre which

keeps the record of machines and collects the money that is later deposited into a joint account opened in a local credit society.

Explaining the importance of high-end equipment, especially in rain-fed areas such as Bijapur, Mr. Angadi said that rain-fed areas demanded quick sowing to get a better yield as even a day's delay could bring down the moisture level of the soil and affect germination. "Under the traditional farming method, sowing can be completed only on three acres of land in a day and the expenditure would be up to Rs. 3,000. But if farmers hired high-tech machinery from the station, they could complete sowing on eight acres of land in a day and their investment would be only half of what they do if they follow traditional farming method," he said.

The Custom Hire Centre is becoming popular and by hiring modern agricultural machinery to farmers, the centre was collecting Rs. 1,000 a day..

"As we are getting a good response, we are planning to introduce more agricultural machinery in the coming days to meet the demand," he added.

Drought searing into crops: report

What explains the erratic setting of pepper berries and reduced bunch size of banana in the State this season? Drought, says the Kerala State Disaster Management Authority.

The bizarre ways by which drought is searing into crops in the State can be found in its report seeking Central support for relief measures. The scanty rain has affected agriculture on 5.21 lakh hectares of land, causing an estimated loss of Rs. 181.99 crore.

Case of pepper

Pepper in Wayanad has been affected by erratic berry setting and shortened spike length. The rain deficiency will lower the pepper yield by 35 per cent. The vines on 6,300 hectares of land in Wayanad and Idukki districts have been affected, and the loss sustained by the farmers is estimated at Rs. 17.64 crore, the report says.

Immature nut fall and button shedding are the immediate impact of drought on coconut trees. The low fertilizer assimilation has been attributed as the cause for the two problems. Coconut production is expected to come down by 20 per cent during the next three years. Coconut

farming on 4,65,320 hectares of land has been affected, and the loss in the sector is estimated at Rs. 24 crore.

The dry spell has resulted in the splitting of banana stem and reduction in bunch size on 11,000 hectares, leading to a loss of Rs. 90 crore.

Cool-season vegetables are feeling the heat. The rainfall deficit has affected the crop on 1,490 hectare of Idukki. If the dry spell continues, standing crops of carrot and potato on another 100 hectare will be damaged in the district. The delayed rainfall has resulted in a considerable reduction of the area under farming. The dry spell has caused a loss of Rs. 10 crore, the report says.

Threat to paddy

The State authorities fear that the loss caused by the delay in the “Virippu” paddy crop will extend to the next season. The delayed first crop will eventually delay the second crop.

The dry spell, coupled with an increase in temperature, during the critical stage of tiller initiation will result in a significant drop in paddy productivity. Agriculture experts apprehend that there will be a further reduction in paddy yield as the dry spell and scanty rainfall may continue during the panicle-initiation stage. Excessive weed growth has been reported in many districts owing to the scarcity of water, the report says.

Public health

The State authorities are planning to conduct regular surveillance of drinking-water sources in the drought-affected areas. A campaign for disinfecting them with chlorine and potassium permanganate has been planned. Training programmes for communities in disinfecting water and checking the quality of drinking water will be undertaken.

Food Safety Day function

The Dietary Department of the General Hospital will be organising a Food Safety Day function on Tuesday with a seminar titled ‘Agricultural co-operation: Key to Feed the World’.

The seminar is based on the theme promoted by the Food and Agriculture Organisation. Dieticians from all hospitals are expected to participate in the function. The programme will also have a poster presentation competition for Home Science students.

Fishermen federation gets Rs.1.85-crore aid



HELP INDEED:Collecto S. Nagarajan distributing loan to a member of Kanyakumari District Fishermen Sangam Federation.

: The National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development has sanctioned Rs.1.85 crore as financial assistance to the Kanyakumari District Fishermen Sangam Federation (KDFSF) for expanding their activities. The federation, in turn, would support its members for meeting their asset purchase requirements as also the working capital.

The Assistant General Manager of NABARD R.Shankar said that the assistance to the members of the federation would be in the form of loan.

The project has been sanctioned under NABARD's Producer Organization Development Fund.

Eligible companies

He said that producer companies, co-operatives, registered federations, public or private limited companies set up by producers were eligible under this scheme.

The NABARD's contribution would be in the areas of financial, capacity building and market linkages.

The agencies seeking the support should submit the concept note containing details of activities, additional benefits, project management, proposed business plan, financial requirements, last three years audited financial statements, loans availed from the banks and financial institutions etc.

Once the concept note was accepted, the agencies could submit a detailed project report.

The federation aimed at achieving a loan of more than Rs.10 crore by 2016-17.

Further, as a developmental measure, NABARD has also sanctioned grant support of Rs.5.10 lakh towards purchase of IT equipment, software and training or capacity building support.

This was expected to improve their systems and procedures and improve the efficiency of administrative, operations of the federation or primary sangams.

In a function held to launch the programme, the Collector, S.Nagarajan handed over cheques to the tune of Rs.1 crore to 227 fishermen here on Monday.

He appreciated the initiatives of the NABARD in extending the financial support.

The Senior Regional Manager, IOB, Maria John, Chairman of the federation, S. Anthoni Adimai, chairman of SIFFS, A.P. Janardhanan, Chief Manager of Canara Bank, N. Gajendaranathan, Lead District Manager of IOB, V. Vivekanandan and others attended the programme.

Mining taking a toll on farming in Goa: Sawaikar

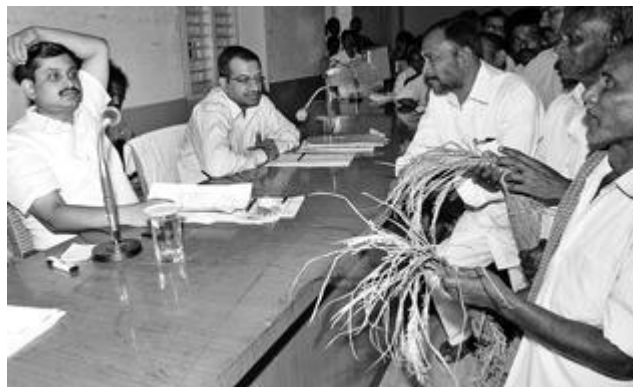
Chairman of Goa State Law Commission Narendra Sawaikar said on Monday agriculture activities were showing a declining trend in the State due to mining and disinclination of youth for agriculture. To top it, crops were being damaged by wild and stray animals.

Mr. Sawaikar, who heads the Agriculture Policy Committee, was addressing the first meeting of the committee on Monday. He advocated the need for a strong, effective and long-term agriculture policy for Goa. The committee will make recommendations for preparation of Agriculture Policy before in the first fortnight of February 2013.

The tenure of the committee to prepare the policy is six months. Datta Kholkar, deputy Chairman of Goa State Planning Board, S.D. Kulkarni, General Manager of NABARD, B.R. Salvi, Associate Director of Research Station, Vengurla, D.G. Halve, Regional Manager, Agriculture Insurance Company Ltd., Satish Tendulkar, Director, Agriculture Department, also participated in the deliberations.

Sagar ayacut farmers in jitters

Widespread concern over low water level in Palair balancing reservoir



Worried lot: Farmers of Kallur mandal showing damaged paddy crop to District Collector Siddhartha Jain and Joint Collector M.M. Naik in Khammam on Monday. —PHOTO: G. N. RAO

The farmers those who cultivated paddy under the Nagarjuna Sagar Project (NSP) ayacut in Kallur and a few other mandals are running from pillar to post seeking water to save their standing paddy crop.

However, the fate of their standing crops is hanging in balance in view of the low water level in Palair balancing reservoir situated in Kusumanchi mandal.

According to official sources, the water level in the reservoir stood at 17.6 feet as against its full capacity of 23 feet.

The reservoir is the prime source of irrigation to the ayacut under the NSP second zone. It irrigates an ayacut of over 2.51 lakh acres under the NSP left canal system in the district.

At a time when all the major reservoirs including Kinnerasani and Taliperu in the district are brimming with water, the Palair reservoir is facing a precarious situation.

The poor inflows from the Nagarjuna Sagar Project in the upstream in Nalgonda district to the Palair reservoir in the just concluded monsoon season shattered the hopes of the farmers in the NSP ayacut in the kharif season.

While several of them switched over to alternative crops as suggested by the Agriculture Department, still a considerable number of them cultivated paddy in Kallur and some other mandals.

Notwithstanding the pleas from the farmers for release of water for irrigation, the officials concerned are expressing their inability to discharge water from the reservoir citing the low water level.

A delegation of the paddy growers from Kallur mandal led by Panthulu Naik of Hanuma Tanda submitted a memorandum to Collector Siddharth Jain here on Monday.

They sought the intervention of the Collector to ensure release of water from Palair reservoir to protect their standing crops.

However, Mr. Jain apprised them of the low water level in the reservoir and the need to maintain the same to cater to the drinking water needs of Khammam town and 31 villages till June next year.

He also reminded them of the suggestions made by the Agriculture Department staff to cultivate alternative crops instead of paddy under the NSP ayacut much ahead of the kharif season.

Farmers lay siege to sub-station

Agitated over the alleged erratic power supply, farmers laid siege to the electricity sub-station at Mandalapalli village in Dammapeta mandal on Monday.

Aggrieved farmers staged a dharna in front of the sub-station on the outskirts of Dammapeta in the afternoon. They shouted slogans against the government accusing it of failing to ensure the assured seven hours power supply to agriculture sector. They lamented that their standing crops were facing serious threat due to inconsistent power supply.

Poor irrigation casts cloud over sunflower yield

Yield of sunflower seeds has registered a slump in and around Musiri following shortage of water for irrigation due to erratic power supply. Sunflower cultivators of villages in and around Tiruthalaiyur complain that the harvest this time was far less than the usual yield.

E.Gnanasekaran (55) a farmer of Tiruthalaiyur village says that he had incurred an expenditure Rs.4, 000 for raising the 'Lakshmi' variety in his fields of about 48 cents. The 90-day crop, raised in the Tamil month of 'Avani', was being harvested now. Normally, he used to harvest the seeds and sell it to the traders for Rs.10, 000 thereby registering a profit by about Rs.6,000.

But, this season, he had to incur extra expenditure for his irrigation . The farmer says that he 'purchased' water from an adjoining field by shelling out Rs.50 per hour for 15 15 hours for running the motor . Despite all these efforts, he could not register the usual harvest . On Sunday, he was seen harvesting the field along with his family members. "My wife and daughter assist me in harvesting the fields, as I could not afford to pay for agricultural labourers," he says.

Against the usual 400 seeds that could be harvested from a single flower he could harvest only 200-odd seeds. This season, he expects to register a meagre profit of Rs.2,000.

Farmers in a number of villages in and around Thuraiyur and Musiri take to sunflower at different seasons in the year.

Agriculture officials in a fix over inadequate rains

The State Principal Secretary to Government (Agriculture) Sandeep Saxena held discussions with the department officials on the possibilities of carrying on farm activities in the ensuing season in the region especially in the absence of adequate rains.

According to officials, Mr. Saxena, accompanied by Anil Meshram, Director TN Agri Business Marketing visited the Mattuthavani paddy complex, the Regulated Market at Tirumangalam and also held talks with Collectors of Madurai and Sivaganga districts.

The traders at the paddy complex wanted paver block tiles to be laid in the campus and in the flower market, the merchants made a representation for giving adequate sun shades in the premises. He also enquired about the functioning of the markets. The officials visited the

Agmark lab and enquired about the analysis and procedures adopted in sampling of food products.

At Thirumangalam, near here, Mr. Saxena was explained about the new buildings coming up in the Regulated Market by the Agriculture Marketing Secretary Thavasu Muthu. A godown with a capacity of storing 2,000 metric tons and a cold storage facility is being built. He wanted the engineers to expedite the works on time. He held talks with the farmers on the facilities provided in the Market and appealed to them to make use of the agriculture implements. The official informed that for the benefit of farmers across the State, a task force would be formed, to monitor the progress and help attain the maximum possible production in food grains.

Collector meet

The Agriculture Secretary held talks with Madurai Collector Anshul Mishra on the prospects of rain and water availability. According to Agriculture officials, the district which has 65,000 hectares of cultivable area under paddy had already lost 9,000 ha of kuruvai cultivation in Melur pockets due to insufficient water.

Though there is some hope of carrying out farm activities for single crop cultivation, the farmers are keeping their fingers crossed.

In Sivaganga district, the ITC developed novel concept of e-choupal, which informs on the price range of commodities to farmers was explained to the officials. On a trial basis, some select farmers are getting prices now through this facility.

The ITC authorities were suggested to come out with a project to buy back the millets on a large scale all over the State as it constituted a major ingredient in biscuit manufacturing. The farmers would also be keen to produce more millets as the buy back arrangement would be a motivating factor, officials said. District Collector V. Rajaraman, Joint Director (Agriculture) Chelldurai, Deputy Director (Agri Business) C. Moorthy and among others were present.

Kangayam cattle numbers dwindle in Andhra



Promoted by Pattakarakar family the elegant medium sized Kangayam breed of cattle known for their draught qualities and medicinal properties of milk were quite popular in the rain shadow region of Tamil Nadu two decades ago.

From over 11 lakh in 1990 their population dwindled to just over two lakh now and experts say the declining trend could see their disappearance from the landscape of the State, thanks to the 'invasion' by foreign cattle species like Holstein, Friesian and Jersey from Switzerland, UK and Australia.

"Introduction of some of these cattle consciously promoted by the government has led to situation where the native breeds are gradually disappearing to the detriment of the local communities," K.S.M. Karthikeya, managing trustee of the Senaapathy Kangayam Cattle Research Foundation told *The Hindu* after a making a presentation at a side event at the ongoing CoP11.

Shrinking grazing areas

He said it was not only this sturdy breed but even the grazing areas were shrinking. Mr. Karthikeya says the State lost more than 10 lakh hectares of agriculture lands between 1991 and 2003, quoting a report of the Committee on State Agrarian Relations and the Unfinished Task in Land Reforms. Rapid industrialisation and urbanisation was leading to conversion and shrinking of 'Korangadu' pasture lands or the uncultivated dry land set aside specially for grazing purposes.

An indigenous grass variety grows in these pastures and animals are let into the paddocks. Livestock keepers spend the entire day monitoring the animals and providing water in troughs fetched from a nearby water source. But all this is on the decline now. Apart from urbanisation triggered by formation of Tiruppur district, industrialisation process was not only eating into these lands but causing pollution. Textile bleaching and dyeing units in Tiruppur, Erode and Karur have contaminated the Noyyal, Amaravathy and other water bodies with Kangayam cows facing several problems including aborted pregnancies.

Promotion of foreign breeds, distress sale of cattle, shrinking of pasture land have all taken a toll on Kangayam breed, Mr. Karthikeya said and listed out various steps being taken by the Foundation to save the native cattle including 'in-situ' breeding centre and conservation centre. Pedigree bulls are offered for service in inseminating animals within 10 km radius of the farm. As part of the village livelihood programme, heifers of good quality animals are provided to landless poor.

Chugging away to Delhi, Thopramkudy bananas



When Kerala Express leaves Thiruvananthapuram Central station here for New Delhi on Tuesday, it will have on board a consignment of bananas cultivated by farmers of Thopramkudy, a small village in Idukki district.

The consignment weighing one tonne is part of an initiative launched by the Kerala State Horticultural Products Development Corporation (Horticorp) to supply ethnic farm produce to the north Indian cities at affordable prices. Horticorp has entered into an agreement with Indian

Railways to transport the produce. Named Haritha Kalavara, the project has been taken up with the support of the Department of Agriculture and the State Horticulture Mission.

Minister for Agriculture K.P. Mohanan is scheduled to flag off the consignment on Tuesday. Shashi Tharoor, MP, Southern Railway additional general manager B. Narayanan, Divisional Manager Rajesh Agarwal, and HortiCorp chairman Lal Varghese Kalpakavady will attend the function.

HortiCorp managing director Manoj Kurup said the procurement of banana for Haritha Kalavara would benefit farmers by ensuring them better prices. He said efforts were on to procure other crops such as pineapple, coconut, and tapioca for transportation to Delhi under the project.

Back to roots

HortiCorp is launching another major initiative to supply ethnic vegetables to residents of the capital city. Named Thanima, it involves a network of mobile vending units selling drumstick leaves, different endemic varieties of amaranthus, pumpkin leaf, banana stem, and banana flower.

The produce will be procured by the rural agricultural wholesale market from farms at Vamanapuram, Pallichal, and Kattakada in Thiruvananthapuram district, besides farmers' clusters in Wayanad, Palakkad, and Idukki.

Mr. Mohanan will flag off four vending vans at Kowdiar here on Wednesday and inaugurate the sale by handing over a packet to Aswathy Thirunal Gauri Lakshmi Bai, member of the ruling family of erstwhile Travancore.

Mr. Kurup said the project was aimed at promoting the cultivation and consumption of ethnic vegetables and tubers as a safe, chemical-free option.

The vehicles will tour the city from 8.30 a.m. to 6.30 p.m., a press note issued by HortiCorp said.

Coimbatore district witnesses heavy rain, storage improving in reservoirs



The second spell of rain on Sunday evening till late night after the October 9 downpour has come as an indication of the North-East monsoon setting in. Coimbatore district recorded a highest of 799.60 mm rainfall in 24 hours that ended at 8.30 a.m. on Monday and the average rainfall stood at 66.33 mm. Reports reaching the district headquarters confirmed heavy rain in the hills and catchment areas of various reservoirs bringing in copious inflow.

The body of Parvathy (51), a maid servant who fell into the open drain near Karunanidhi Nagar in Sivananda Colony and washed away in the floods in Sangapur canal was recovered near textool bridge on Monday morning.

However, the death of Karuppan (45) of Jeeva Nagar of Vellakinar and the recovery of the body of a child from the same area near a drainage had not been confirmed as caused by rain or resultant floods.

District Collector M. Karunakaran said that there had been only one death so far as a result of the rain. Mr. Karunakaran said that the revenue machinery has been asked to commence the work relating to damages caused by rain.

Mayor S.M. Velusamy along with officials and elected representatives visited all rain-hit areas on Sunday and the rescue measures went on till 2 a.m. Uprooting of weak and old trees and choking of drains by dumped packaging materials and plastics led to overflowing in many places on Monday also.

Singanallur, Uppilipalayam, Ganapathy, Rathinapuri, Lakshmi Mills Junction, and Nanjundapuram Road witnessed inundation on Sunday night causing break down of motor vehicles.

Choked drains and clogged storm water drains made life miserable in many pockets. Uprooting of trees and falling branches caused damage to a house and a car besides snapping power lines, keeping the TANGEDCO personnel on their toes. The road from Nanjundapuram towards SNV Gardens which was laid recently started sinking. Mayor said that official machinery has been instructed to hire and install generators for flushing out flood water from low-lying areas.

In Annur area, a couple Manoranjitham (35) and her husband Selvaraj (45) from Mangalam area in Tirupur who were on their way to Kunnathur in a car for a condolence were washed away by flash floods in a low-lying bridge. However, the couple jumped out of the car and escaped by holding on to tree branches. The car went and hit the check dam. Two persons on a motorcycle also had a miraculous escape, after they were washed away by the flash floods.

According to reports reaching district headquarters, following is the rainfall recorded in mm at various places in the last 24 hours that ended at 8.30 on Monday: Annur - 25.40, Airport Peelamedu - 44.80, Mettupalayam - 62.40, Pollachi - 65, Periyanaickenpalayam - 38, Suler - 80.20, TNAU - 57.80 and Coimbatore South - 77.

The catchment areas of Parambikulam Aliyar Project recorded a heavy rainfall with Chincona recording 131, Chinna Kallar - 47, Valparai PAP - 84, Valparai taluk - 87, Thoonakadavu - 167, Peruvuripallam - 182, Lower Nirar - 118, Upper Nirar - 47, Bhavani Sagar - 69, Mettur - 55.6 and Manacadavu - 80.4. There is a steady inflow into the reservoirs improving the storage (*see graphics*) and rains continued on Tuesday also.

Siruvani, the city's major drinking water resource recorded the highest of 100 mm resulting in the storage going up by 30 cm. The storage in the reservoir on Monday was 25.5 ft as against the Full Reservoir Level of 49.54.

Nurture nature

Nature is the beauty of earth. The resources obtained from nature help us in many ways. We should not be careless or we may run out of nature's resources in the future. So, we should conserve nature in the following ways:

We should not cut down trees

We should conserve water

We should not let water run out from tap when not in use

We should not use plastic bags

Plant a tree at least weekly once

Rain water may be used for washing and planting which may conserve water.

Everyone on earth should start the practice of conserving nature's resources. If we start now, our future will be beautiful.

Talcher urea plant to attract Rs. 8,000 crore investment'

Union Minister of State for Chemicals and Fertilizers Srikant Kumar Jena said revival of urea plant of Talcher would help develop ancillary industry in the region and generate huge employment opportunities, both direct and indirect.

Inaugurating regional office of Talcher Urea Plant at Talcher, Mr. Jena said, "upon revival, the capacity of urea plant will be around 12.7 Lakh tonnes per annum, whereas that of Nitric Acid plant will be around 2.8 lakh tonnes per annum and that of Ammonium Nitrate Plant will be around 3.3 lakh tonne per annum."

Talcher unit is being revived by a special purpose vehicle being promoted by Coal India Ltd (CIL) and Rashtriya Chemicals and Fertilizers Ltd (RCF).

The Union Minister said that the revival of Talcher unit would bring an investment of about Rs 8,000 crore that would help boost State's economy.

The Board for Industrial and Financial Reconstruction (BIFR) has given a go-ahead for revival of closed urea units of Fertilizer Corporation of India Limited through joint venture and SPV routes. The decision would see opening of closed urea plants in Odisha, Bihar, Jharkhand, Chhatisgarh and West Bengal.

A new technology involving coal use would be applied to the Talcher Urea Plant, he said, adding RCF and CIL had joined hands to set up an Integrated Coal Gasification based Ammonia-Urea Complex along with Nitric Acid and Ammonium Nitrate Complex at Talcher site.

The urea plant would come up on 900 acres of land where 1000 quarters, hospital, school and guest house would be established. Mr. Jena sought cooperation of district administration for revival of the unit.

Global tenders

Global tenders have been invited for setting up of coal gasification plant.

“Tenders have already been invited for establishment of coal gasification plant. The bids will be opened in January, 2013,” Mr Jena said .

Stating that the Talcher fertiliser revival project was being implemented on a fast—track basis,

Mr Jena said tenders would be invited for setting up of urea and ammonia plants within the next three months.

The objective to revive the closed urea units of FCIL and Hindustan Fertilizer Corporation Ltd (HFCL) is now going to be accomplished, Mr Jena said. PTI

Cane crushing after finalising rate: Collector

Collector A. Dinakar Babu has suggested the managements of sugar factories to commence crushing only after finalising the purchasing price of sugarcane.

Presiding over a review meeting at the Collectorate on Monday with the farmers and management representatives of Trident, Ganapathi and Nizam Sugars, Mr. Dinakar Babu said the variation of price between sugar in the market and the price of sugarcane being purchased from farmers should not be more than Rs. 600.

Price

Stating that Rs. 2,400 per tonne being offered by the factory managements was not acceptable to farmers, he said they need to be paid an amount of Rs. 3,000.

Egg distribution stalled at Anganwadis

More than two lakh beneficiaries in the district are being denied the opportunity to have eggs for two days in a week due to non-finalisation of tenders. For the past one month, eggs are not being supplied in Anganwadi centres.

According to sources in Women and Child Welfare Department, 1.13 lakh children aged below three years, 61,000 children aged between three to six years, and 53,000 pregnant women and mothers of new born babies are being supplied with eggs twice in a week.

However, the egg supply to all of them was stopped for the past one month as the contract for the supplier was not yet renewed. Though the contractor came forward to supply eggs for the next one month till the tenders are finalised, the authorities have not responded positively so far.

JAC of Telangana farmers' organisations formed

A Joint Action Committee of Telangana farmers' organisations was formed here on Monday, with Venepalli Panduranga Rao, who has taken up various forms of people's agitations identifying himself as 'matti manishi', as the convener. A 12-member State Executive was formed.

Hunger strike

Mr. Rao told a press conference later that the JAC would launch 'Telangana rythu kanniti deekha' (indefinite hunger strike) in the first week of next month, demanding that water from Nagarjunasagar Left Canal be released for the rabi season.

He said that the JAC leaders would go on fast if the demand was not fulfilled by November 1.

Procurement of cotton begins on a sluggish note

Procurement of cotton began on a sluggish note though the farmers are pinning their hopes for better prices as the season progresses. Cotton prices continued to remain low in the second

week of October as global market players have shied away from Indian market citing inferior quality.

Cotton Corporation of India Deputy General Manager C.A.S.K. Panigrahi said the average price was hovering at Rs.34,000 per candy (a candy is equal to 3.56 quintals) in the open market though the prices were expected to pick up in November when better quality of cotton comes in the market. Farmers in Andhra Pradesh have pinned their hopes on cotton as deficit rainfall conditions poured cold water on the hopes of a normal kharif. Unlike paddy, cotton is not water intensive crop and can survive in scanty rainfall conditions.

Cotton acreage in the State has shot up to 22.69 lakh hectares this year when compared 18.54 lakh hectares in 2011, marking an impressive increase of 22.34 per cent.

With the Centre increasing the minimum support price of cotton to Rs.3,900 per quintal, an increase of Rs.600, farmers have gone in for sowing early in the season. But scanty rainfall conditions dampened their spirits and only a late burst of rain in the latter half of kharif revived their hopes again.

According to an estimate of Cotton Advisory Board, production of cotton is expected to touch 72 lakh bales this year when compared to 56 lakh bales in 2011.

With the Central government lifting the cap on exports, prices are expected to surge by the end of November. Cotton exporters can export under open general licence system, though a single exporter can place an order of 10,000 bales at a time.

After shipment of 50 per cent of the export order, the exporter can register an order for another 10,000 bales as part of a new policy announced by the Centre.

Cotton farmers seek increase in MSP

Over 200 cotton farmers from the neighbouring villages of Adilabad head quarters on Monday staged protests in front of the Collectorate demanding that the minimum support price for their produce be enhanced.

This is the third such agitation ahead of the start of trading season in the cotton-rich district.

Farmers belonging to Sunkidi and Umram in Talamadugu and Yapalguda in Adilabad mandal gathered for the demonstration. They submitted a memo to Revenue authorities urging them to intervene to get the MSP increased from Rs.3,900 per quintal to Rs.6,000 per quintal of cotton.

Monsoon affects yield

Farmers pointed out during the protest how the yield had been affected by a withdrawing monsoon. Excessive rainfall in the last few days of monsoon had actually caused much damage to the crop, they added.

Farmers in Nelliampathy being victimised, says K.M. Mani

Genuine farmers in the plantations of Nelliampathy were being victimised in the name of forest conservation, according to Finance Minister K.M. Mani.

According to him, not all settlers could be regarded as encroachers. "The demarcation between the definitions of the two usages must be clearly understood. There is a section among the population in the State who had toiled for years to develop plantations in lands that remained neglected. Their efforts in improving the usability of such areas must be recognised. Moreover, there is no difference between agricultural lands and forest areas in the State. Kerala has a total forest cover of approximately 20,000 sq.km, of which a total of 11,000 sq.km comes under reserved forests. The remaining area consists of agricultural lands including plantations. The destruction of agricultural lands must be considered tantamount to attempts made in destroying forest cover," he said.

Mr. Mani was inaugurating a seminar on agriculture organised here on Monday as part of the ongoing party congress of the Communist Marxist Party.

He also emphasised the importance of reinventing farming practices followed in the State in accordance with the changing times.

Value-addition of agricultural produce was necessary for the growth of the sector as well as to ensure that it did not suffer stagnation, he said.

He said the State government was considering the formation of coconut producing societies similar to that of Rubber Producing Societies. The proposed move would spur the progress of

the sector as well as benefit coconut farmers immensely, he said. Kerala State Planning Board member and CMP leader C.P. John presided over the seminar.

Cardamom farmers' demands

The Karshaka Union (M), the farmers' wing of the Kerala Congress (Mani), on Monday presented a ten-point charter of demands of cardamom farmers to the chairman of the Spices Board.

The demands include a support price of Rs. 1,500 per kg of cardamom, an exclusive labour bank for cardamom, interests on bank loans to be written off, bank loans of up to Rs. 5 lakh per acre at 4 per cent interest, opening up of cardamom market and allowing more auction agencies.

The charter of demands was presented by Kuruvila Mathews and Mathew Stephen, general secretary.

Infam for opening up cardamom market

The Indian Farmers Movement (Infam) has urged the Spices Board to open up the cardamom market.

In a memorandum to the Spices Board chairman, M.C. George, Infam trustee, said that the archaic and unfair trade restrictions imposed by the Spices Board hurt the interests of the cardamom growers who were put to great hardships by a handful of licensed auctioneers. He noted that there were only eight licensed auctioneers currently and that they were, in collusion with the traders, exploiting the farmers.

He pointed out that Rule 3 of Cardamom (Licensing and Marketing) Rules states that "no producer of cardamom shall sell his produce otherwise than through a licensed auctioneer or to dealer licensed to purchase cardamom from producers."

"It is quite surprising that such an archaic statutory provision exists against natural justice, human rights and fair play," he said.

Mr. George wanted the Spices Board to cancel the licences of the traders who abstained unilaterally from the auction centres in violation of the directions of the board. He urged that licences be given to all those who had applied in order to widen the marketing base of cardamom trading.

Area for medicinal plant conservation proposed



Forest Department plans to accord special status to the 200-hectare 'Kannimaar Shola.'

Rich in natural vegetation and comprising a large number of endemic, endangered and vulnerable plant species, the vast patch of 'Kannimar Shola' in the scenic Pachamalai hills has been identified as a zone of significant floral diversity by the State forest department.

The department has proposed to accord a special status to the nearly 200-hectare 'Kannimaar Shola' area and designate it as a Medicinal Plant Conservation Area (MPCA) for in situ conservation of medicinal plant species and other plant species in natural habitats by involving the local community in the hills.

The 'Kannimar Shola' area is a unique wet evergreen forest type in the eastern ghats with medicinal plants diversity, and other rare and endangered plant species.

The thick vegetation acts a central habitat for many birds and different species of butterflies.

Having identified the vast patch as a biodiversity hot spot and as an MPCA, the department will soon forward a detailed project to the National Medicinal Plants Board, a statutory body, seeking funds for in situ conservation of natural vegetation most of which were being used by the tribals for making traditional medicines.

The conservation strategy would be devised with active involvement of the local community by constituting joint forest management committees and protect the area from biotic factors of degradation such as illicit felling of trees, grazing, fire and destructive methods of collection of medicinal plants, says District Forest Officer I. Anwardeen.

The department has also proposed to carry out a floristic survey of the area to determine the species composition and identify rare, endangered and threatened listed plant species besides monitoring their regeneration status. Complete documentation of the species is also proposed to be done once the funds are sanctioned.

Linking farmers and labourers, the official way



One to one:MNREGS beneficiaries planting samba seedlings at a private farm near Manachanallur on Sunday.—Photo: M.Srinath

Samba cultivation, of late, has become synonymous with acute labour shortage . However, a few officials of the department of agriculture have taken it upon themselves to make a critical difference by forming a link between labourers registered under Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Scheme (MNREGS) and cultivators.

Whenever farmers approach the agriculture department for nurseries, the officials not only ascertain the number of seedlings they need but also the number of labourers required for transplanting them.

With adequate flow available in the irrigation channels of Peruvilai Vaikkal near Manachanallur now, farmers of Manachanallur have started planting samba paddy in their fields.

N.Manickam, a farmer of Manachanallur, says that he could get 10 MNREGS beneficiaries to work in his field, thanks to the coordination of agriculture department officials.

The labourers, who hail from Azhagiya Manavalam village, say that they have the skill in transplanting nurseries and they reached the fields on the advice of officials. They came to the fields as it was a holiday for them under MNREGS.

J.Sekar, Joint Director of Agriculture, says that a few agriculture officials, fully realising the difficulties of samba cultivators, liaise with the labourers and cultivators.

It has come as a solution to the problem of tiding over labour scarcity. "Our officials ensure that their endeavour does not disturb the execution of projects under MNREGS," he says.

Whenever farmers approach agriculture department, some officials not only ascertain the number of seedlings they need but also the number of labourers required for transplanting them

As gale fear looms, farmers look to insurance companies

Want individual compensation even if a few trees are damaged



Gone with the wind:Banana orchard at Pinnavasal village near Lalgudi that was damaged by the gale recently— PHOTO: R.M. RAJARATHINAM.

A number of banana orchards in Lalgudi taluk have suffered seriously due to the gale that swept the area recently.

K.Muthukumar, a farmer, who has raised banana in two acres in Pinnavasal village (Poovalur panchayat), lamented that almost his entire orchard was devastated causing a loss of about Rs.70, 000-80,000 per acre.

He estimated that at least 300-400 acres in his village should have suffered a similar fate.

Asked about insurance coverage, he said that he could not get even a paisa as the nationalised bank from which he has borrowed has not bothered to collect any premium from him.

Besides, even if he had insured, he is not certain whether he is entitled for any compensation. "The insurance company pays only if the entire firka was affected and not some fields," he contended.

This was the major issue haunting the banana growers of the district, known for its banana quality.

"We live in constant fear of high velocity winds as our survival might be swept out," laments S.A.Sukumar, State president, Tamil Nadu Banana Growers' Federation. It is the summer crop which fetches us good money, but it's also the same season when summer gale could blast our trees out of shape – virtually ruining us, he told *The Hindu* .

"We could not get a paisa from insurance companies despite more than six lakh banana trees, including some orchards completely, being devastated by the summer gale in Thottiam taluk of the district on March 25 last year," rues G.Ajeethan, general secretary of the federation. Ironically, despite banana being notified for insurance coverage in the area, most of the banana crops were not covered under the National Agricultural Insurance Scheme (NAIS).

"Though banks used to deduct five per cent of the loan towards insurance premium they rarely gave us any compensation whenever our orchards suffered due to gale," they alleged.

"We do not want compensation per taluk or block. We want individual compensation even if a few trees are damaged," they pleaded.

Level in dams on the rise

Water level in major dams in the district has been increasing steadily and in some dams rose sharply, thanks to heavy showers that rocked the district for several hours last night. Total rainfall was 344.5 mm and the average 28.71 mm.

Theni and nearby areas had torrential showers that continued for eight hours on Sunday night, flooding prime roads and low lying areas, and increasing flow in the Kottakudi river.

After a long gap, Vaigai dam has been receiving an inflow of 386 cusecs. Water level was 34.38 feet and the discharge 60 cusecs only. However, the storage was 573 mcft.

Water level in Sothuparai dam touched 61.68 feet, an increase of 33 feet within a week, thanks to heavy downpour on Kodaikanal hill. Inflow into Sothuparai dam was 106 cusecs. Storage level touched 41.6 feet in Manjalar dam also.

The level rose by one foot in Periyar dam within 24 hours owing to sharp increase in inflow into the dam. Inflow into the dam was 2,289 cusecs pushing the storage level up to 118.9 feet. However, the discharge was restricted to 400 cusecs. The storage in the dam was 2,430 mcft.

Dindigul

Dindigul and nearby areas received a total rainfall of 509.45 mm and average rain was 50.95 mm. Nilakottai, one of the grey areas of the district, experienced record rainfall of 157 mm, highest in the district and Natham, the lowest with 0.5 mm of rainfall.

Lower and upper Kodaikanal too received moderate to heavy rain. Flow in all forest streams was good.

Rainfall recorded at various places in Dindigul at 8 a.m. on Monday in mm: Dindigul 7, Kodaikanal observatory 68.4, Natham 0.5, Nilakottai 157, Palani 15, Vedasandur 34.06, Chatrapatti, 20.2, Vedasandur Tobacco Research Station 35.04, Kodaikanal Boat Club 80.25 and Kamatchipuram 92.

Rainfall recorded at various places in Theni in mm: Periyakulam 65, Periyar 10, Manjalar 28, Andipatti 29.6, Aranmanaipudhur 8.9, Thekkadi 42, Goodalur 13, Bodi 20, Uthamapalayam 18, Sothuparai 48, Shanmuganadhi dam 10, Vaigai dam 26 and Veerapandi 36.

Set up cashew processing industry at Gandarvakottai'

The Gandaravakottai union wing of Tami Nadu Vivasayigal Sangam has urged the State government to set up a cashew processing industry at Gandarvakottai to ensure attractive returns for farmers. A resolution adopted at its meeting held at Gandarvakottai on Monday referred to the large area under cultivation in cashew in and around the belt. It said a cashew processing industry would benefit cashew cultivators .

Another resolution wanted the State government to fix the procurement price for paddy at Rs.2,000 a quintal taking into consideration the rise in the cultivation cost, price of fertilizers and labour wages. The agriculture department should ensure prompt supply of fertilizers and inputs through cooperative societies to samba cultivators. G. Sundaramurthy, State deputy secretary of the sangam, spoke on the potential of Gandarvakottai and surrounding villages in cashew cultivation.

He also introduced the newly-elected office bearers.

M. Sebastian, district president of the sangam, M. Subramanian, president of Gandarvakottai unit of the sangam, and P. Veerasamy, union secretary, also spoke on the occasion.

Go for short-duration crops, farmers told

10,000 out of 15,162 ha brought under direct sowing method in coastal areas



busy hours:Paddy cultivation has been brisk in areas where irrigation facility is available in Pudukottai district.

With just 15,162 of the normal 91,000 hectares having been brought under samba so far this season, the Agriculture Department has appealed to farmers to go in for short-duration variety, especially after the third week of this month when the monsoon is likely to be in its peak.

Even out of the 15,162 hectares brought under cultivation, only 5,162 hectares was in areas where farmers were assured of their irrigational facility through their bore wells.

The remaining 10,000 hectares had been brought under direct sowing method, particularly in the coastal regions of Avudaiyarkovil, Aranthangi and Embal.

The Agriculture Department has suggested paddy farmers to adopt System of Rice Intensification (SRI) technique and raise short-duration varieties, says S. Sivasankaran, Joint Director of Agriculture. Of the 5,162 hectares in Kundrandarkovil, Karambakudi, Pudukottai, Arimalam, Annavasal and other blocks in the district, 3,015 hectares had been brought under SRI technique. The varieties raised were BPT-5204, ADT-39, CR-1009 and improved white ponni.

With the delayed monsoon, the department has suggested SRI technique as it minimises period of raising nursery from the usual 30 days to just a fortnight.

Benugondapuram registers maximum rainfall

The two districts registered heavy rainfall for the past two days. The rain that began on Sunday evening continued till Monday morning.

The rainfall registered in various centres in Krishnagiri district up to 8 a.m. on Monday were (in mm): Benugondapuram 132, Barur 120, Thally 100, Shoolagiri 92, Nedungal 90.80, Pochampalli 85, Krishnagiri 69.20, Anchetti 65.30, Uthangarai 65, Denkanikottai 50, Royakottai 43 and Hosur 38. The total rainfall registered was 948.5 mm. Rainfall registered in Dharmapuri district (in mm): Pennagaram 96, Dharmapuri 65, Marandalli 50, Hogenakkal 48.4, Palacode 34.8, Pappireddipatti 27 and Harur 12.2, Palacode 34.8, Hogenakkal 48, Collector Office 83 mm.

Rainfall in catchment areas were (in mm): Vaniyar 23.8, Chinnar 12, Thoppaiyar 36, Nagavathy 92, Kesarkuzhi Dam 46 and Kondaalaalli 45.

Talks on cardamom fruitless

A meeting convened by the Spices Board at its office in Kochi on Monday to end the ongoing crisis in the cardamom sector was inconclusive. Traders in the sector have been boycotting the auction centres since September 25.

Spices Board chairman V. Jayathilak met farmers organisations' representatives and sought their views before the meeting with traders' representatives. However, the two sides stuck to their stands and a joint meeting could not be held.

The boycott strike was started after the Spices Board raised the bidding rate from 50 paise to Rs.5, which was opposed by the traders. With the auction being stopped completely after the strike began, P.T. Thomas, MP, had convened separate meetings of the two sides last week at Kattappana and Kumily to find an amicable solution to the crisis.

The traders, majority of them from Tamil Nadu, had earlier blocked the auction when the bidding rate had been raised to Re.1. This had led to the decision being revoked.

K.S. Mathew, president, Cardamom Growers' Association, the main organisation of farmers, told *The Hindu* on Monday evening that the traders were adamant that any decision to raise the bidding price would not be acceptable to them.

Farmers' stance

Farmers' organisations will accept any fair decision taken by the Spices Board, he said. With the strike affecting the workers in cardamom plantations, various trade unions have announced agitations in front of the Spices Park at Puttady demanding that the auction be reopened. Trade union workers under the CPI(M) on Monday began a five-day dharna in front of the spices park.

The Kisan Sabha and the Udumbanchola Estate Workers Union will begin an indefinite strike on October 22 and Kerala Congress (Mani) will lead a public march to the Spices Park on Wednesday.

Drought searing into crops: report

What explains the erratic setting of pepper berries and reduced bunch size of banana in the State this season? Drought, says the Kerala State Disaster Management Authority.

The bizarre ways by which drought is searing into crops in the State can be found in its report seeking Central support for relief measures. The scanty rain has affected agriculture on 5.21 lakh hectares of land, causing an estimated loss of Rs. 181.99 crore.

Case of pepper

Pepper in Wayanad has been affected by erratic berry setting and shortened spike length. The rain deficiency will lower the pepper yield by 35 per cent. The vines on 6,300 hectares of land in Wayanad and Idukki districts have been affected, and the loss sustained by the farmers is estimated at Rs. 17.64 crore, the report says.

Immature nut fall and button shedding are the immediate impact of drought on coconut trees. The low fertilizer assimilation has been attributed as the cause for the two problems. Coconut production is expected to come down by 20 per cent during the next three years. Coconut farming on 4,65,320 hectares of land has been affected, and the loss in the sector is estimated at Rs. 24 crore.

The dry spell has resulted in the splitting of banana stem and reduction in bunch size on 11,000 hectares, leading to a loss of Rs. 90 crore.

Cool-season vegetables are feeling the heat. The rainfall deficit has affected the crop on 1,490 hectare of Idukki. If the dry spell continues, standing crops of carrot and potato on another 100 hectare will be damaged in the district. The delayed rainfall has resulted in a considerable reduction of the area under farming. The dry spell has caused a loss of Rs. 10 crore, the report says.

Threat to paddy

The State authorities fear that the loss caused by the delay in the “Virippu” paddy crop will extend to the next season. The delayed first crop will eventually delay the second crop.

The dry spell, coupled with an increase in temperature, during the critical stage of tiller initiation will result in a significant drop in paddy productivity. Agriculture experts apprehend that there will be a further reduction in paddy yield as the dry spell and scanty rainfall may continue during the panicle-initiation stage. Excessive weed growth has been reported in many districts owing to the scarcity of water, the report says.

Public health

The State authorities are planning to conduct regular surveillance of drinking-water sources in the drought-affected areas. A campaign for disinfecting them with chlorine and potassium permanganate has been planned. Training programmes for communities in disinfecting water and checking the quality of drinking water will be undertaken.

Livestock Census, a non-starter in State

While the 19th Livestock Census has been completed in all other States, it remains a non-starter in Karnataka.

The reason: a boycott by veterinary surgeons who have been demanding revised pay scale on a par with doctors working in the Health and Family Welfare Department, time-bound promotions, and rural allowance.

The census was to have been conducted between September 15 and October 15. The census data will be used to frame government policies and distribute various benefits to farmers.

An official in the Animal Husbandry Department told *The Hindu* that all the demands of the veterinary surgeons would be placed before the Cabinet meeting to be held on October 18 in Gulbarga.

Karnataka Veterinary Association president T. Sreenivasa Reddy, said Chief Minister Jagadish Shettar and Animal Husbandry Minister Revu Naik Belamagi had given a commitment that their demands would be conceded.

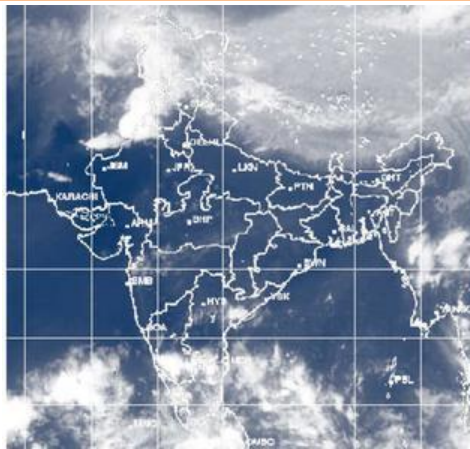
The former Chief Minister B.S. Yeddyurappa had constituted a high-powered committee headed by the former Additional Chief Secretary Meera Saxena that recommended the reorganisation of the Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Services Department.

Mr. Reddy said that the panel, which submitted its report a year ago, recommended upgrading of veterinary hospitals, clinics and also increasing the pay scale and allowances of veterinary surgeons.

He said the veterinary surgeons would cooperate in conducting the census only if the government met their demands.

Mr. Reddy said the entire exercise could be completed in two weeks. "As data entry will take place in December/January, there is still plenty of time to take up the census work," he said.

weather



INSAT PICTURE AT 11-30 hrs. Observations recorded at 8-30 a.m. on Oct. 15.

The columns show maximum and minimum temperature in Celsius, rainfall during last 24 hours (tr-trace) and total rainfall in mm since 1st October.

Rainfall

Rain/snow has occurred at one or two places over Jammu and Kashmir. Weather was dry over rest of the region.

FORECAST VALID UNTIL THE MORNING OF 17th OCTOBER 2012: The minimum temperatures changed little over the region. They were normal over the region. The lowest minimum temperature in the plains was 16.2°C recorded at Adampur (Punjab) and Sarsawa (Uttar Pradesh).

FORECAST FOR DELHI AND NEIGHBOURHOOD VALID UNTIL THE MORNING OF 17th OCTOBER 2012: Rain/snow would occur at a few places over Himachal Pradesh and Jammu and Kashmir during next 48 hours and decrease thereafter and rain/thundershowers would occur at a few places over Uttarakhand and Punjab and at one or two places over north Rajasthan and Haryana during next 48 hours and decrease thereafter. Weather would be mainly dry over rest of the region.

Chittur ryots at the receiving end

Thousands of paddy farmers under the Chitturpuzha irrigation project may have to abandon the second crop of paddy as they may not get even one-third of the annual share of the 7.25 tmcft water from the inter-State Parambikulam Aliyar Project (PAP). The Joint Water Regulatory Board (JWRB) officials of Tamil Nadu have informed Kerala officials that they will be able to release 2 tmcft of water as against the 6 tmcft water released to the Chitturpuzha for the second crop of paddy annually.

A formal announcement will be made at a JWRB meeting in Coimbatore on Tuesday, the Kerala officials said. As per the PAP agreement, the Chitturpuzha should get 7.25 tmcft water in a water year starting from June.

The Tamil Nadu officials had said there was not enough water in the Parambikulam group of reservoirs to fulfil the commitment this year. They had released 1.18 tmcft water last month for the first crop of paddy.

Muthalamthode Mani, general secretary of the Deesheeya Karshaka Samajam, said the 'advisory committee on irrigation projects' for Palakkad district had advised farmers to take up paddy cultivation only in one-third of the 18,000 hectares in Chittur because of the non-availability of PAP water.

He said Irrigation Department officials had informed the farmers that they would be able to supply water from the Moolathara right bank canal (RB canal) up to Vempura and from Pemparamada canal to Chandanappuram and from Kunnamkattupathy to Kuttippalam. The water would be made available only up to January 31 as against the usual supply till March 31 for the second crop. He said the farmers would be able to cultivate only short-duration paddy,

which would bring down the yield by one-third. Mr. Mani said it would be unviable for the farmers to take up the second crop of paddy.

He said besides the annual commitment, Tamil Nadu should provide a share of the surplus yield of water from the Parambikulam group of reservoirs. But Kerala did not get the share of the surplus water generally which it was entitled to as per the PAP agreement, Mr. Mani said.

Hindustan Times

TODAY FARM NEWS

16.10.2012 A.M

Weather

Chennai

Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather



Partly Cloudy

Tuesday, Oct 16

Max Min

34.0° | 24.0°

Rain: 0

Humidity: 84

Wind: normal

Sunrise: 05:59

Sunset: 05:49

Barometer: 1014

Tomorrow's Forecast



Cloudy

Wednesday, Oct 17

Max Min

32° | 25°

Extended Forecast for a week

Thursday Oct 18	Friday Oct 19	Saturday Oct 20	Sunday Oct 21	Monday Oct 22
30° 25° Rainy	29° 25° Rainy	29° 25° Cloudy	28° 26° Rainy	32° 25° Overcast

Airport Weather

Delhi

Rain: 0

Sunrise: 06:22

Humidity: 54

Sunset: 05:50

Wind: normal

Barometer: 1017



THE HINDU Business Line

TODAY FARM NEWS

15.10.2012 P.M

16.10.2012 A.M

15th oct 2012 P.M

Cotton rules flat on muted offtake by mills



Following limited buying by mills, cotton prices remained unchanged in Gujarat on Monday.

According to brokers, arrivals of cotton are increasing and ginning activity is likely to start after Navaratri.

A cotton broker said: "Cotton price may not increase in near future as there is not big demand. Exporters are absent in the market and mills' buying is limited. Price may decline as arrival is increasing."

According to a Gondal-based ginner, buying activity is slow and limited as arrival of quality cotton is not enough. The market will be regular after October.

Most of the ginneries have not yet started their units as demand is limited and ginneries are waiting for arrival to be regular.

In Gujarat, new cotton was offered at Rs 32,200-32,800 a candy of 356 kg. A grade S-6 cotton was at Rs 33,000-33,500 and B grade at Rs 32,800-33,000.

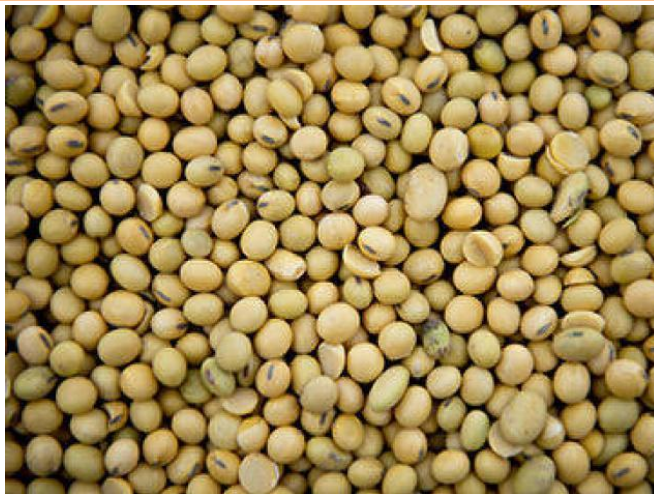
Prices of V-797 ruled at Rs 27,000-27,500.

About 12,000-13,000 bales (of 170 kg each) arrived in Gujarat and 27,000-28,000 bales arrived in India.

In Maharashtra, A grade cotton of low micronaire quoted at Rs 32,500-32,800 and A grade high micronaire cotton (29+ MM) was at Rs 32,800-33,500.

The new crop was quoting Rs 32,000-32,500.

Slack purchase drags soya complex



Soya oil that had been ruling firm in the last three trading sessions declined on weak foreign market and buying support.

On Monday, soya refined slipped to Rs 635-40 for 10 kg (down Rs 5).

Similarly, soya solvent declined to Rs 595-97 for 10 kg (Rs 600-605) on weak global cues and decline in buying support at higher rate.

Currently, soya oil prices in the physical market are being influenced by the global market and according to prevailing trend, prices may go either way, said a trader.

In the futures market also soya oil was mixed.

On Monday, soya refined October contract on the NBOT closed at Rs 666.20 for 10 kg, while its final cut closed at Rs 670 for 10 kg.

On the NCDEX, soya oil October contract closed down Rs 2.15 at Rs 663 for 10 kg, while its November contract closed Rs 2.70 higher at Rs 646.65.

Though local mandis remained closed on account of 'Amavasya', in private trading soyabean ruled at Rs 3,050-3,125.

Last week, soyabean prices had gone up to as high as Rs 3,200 a quintal but a rise in arrival and buying of soyabean at lower prices by crushers dragged its prices by about Rs 100 a quintal in the past few days.

Plant deliveries of soyabean also declined to Rs 3,150 (down Rs 50-60).

In futures also, soyabean traded lower on weak global cues and CBOT projections with its October and November contracts on the NCDEX closing at Rs 3,133 a quintal (down Rs 36.50) and Rs 3,109 (down Rs 59.50).

Soyameal ruled at Rs 27,200 a quintal on scattered demand in domestic market.

Arrival of soyabean in Madhya Pradesh remained negligible.

Rice loses steam on sluggish demand



Lack of buying interest at all levels pulled a few aromatic and non-basmati rice varieties down by Rs 25-100 a quintal on Monday.

Amit Chandna, proprietor of Hanuman Rice Trading Company, told *Business Line* that sluggish domestic demand mainly led to the decline in prices.

Rice market is likely to rule range-bound for the next few days and is unlikely to see any recovery at present, he said.

Pusa-1121 (steam) eased by Rs 100 and settled at Rs 5,700 a quintal while Pusa-1121 (sela) sold at Rs 4,700-4,725 . Pure basmati (raw) quoted at Rs 5,500 while pure basmati (sela) sold at Rs 4,600 .

PR-11 (sela) went down by Rs 50 and sold for Rs 2,450-2,500 while PR-11 (Raw) quoted at Rs 2,400-2,500 .

Sharbati (steam) was at Rs 3,800 and Sharbati (sela) at Rs 3,700.

Paddy Arrivals: Around 2.35 lakh bags of different paddy varieties arrived at the Karnal grain market terminal.

About 2 lakh bags of PR variety arrived and went for Rs 1,220-1,280 a quintal; Sharbati arrived with a stock of around 10,000 bags and quoted at Rs 1,650-1,780 while just around 2,000 bags of Sugandha 999 variety arrived and sold at Rs 1,700-1,800.

Around 20,000 bags of PR14 arrived and sold for Rs 1,250-1,345 while DB arrived with a stock of 1,000 bags and quoted at Rs 1,950-2,200.

Coriander prices recover on pick-up in spot demand

Coriander prices rebounded from last week's bearish trend with the December futures topping Rs 4,850 a quintal.

Fresh positions by speculators, a pick-up in spot demand, and restricted arrivals from the main growing State, Rajasthan, are seen as reasons for the uptrend in coriander prices.

On the National Commodity and Derivative Exchange, coriander for October delivery gained 3 per cent at Rs 4,505 and the November series was up 2.66 per cent at Rs 4,713.

The total daily arrivals of coriander declined to 1,500 and 2,000 bags in the Kota and Ramganj mandis in Rajasthan.

In the spot market in Kota (Rajasthan), the spice was quoted at Rs 4,402 a quintal.

Turmeric traders turn cautious, await orders



Spot turmeric shed Rs 200 a quintal for want of quality crop arrivals.

Spot turmeric decreased on Monday for want of demand and also quality.

Only the medium variety arrived for sale.

Even the Salem Hybrid variety declined by Rs 300 due to poor quality .

“Further, farmers brought only 1,850 bags of turmeric for sale, the stockists and some local traders have procured the turmeric. But the prices rose by Rs 250 a quintal in the Gobichettipalayam Cooperative Society due to the arrival of fine variety turmeric,” said traders.

They said that till date no upcountry orders have been received by exporters.

Stockists, with an intention to sell the spice at higher price in later days, purchased the stocks. Traders adopted a cautious approach as the futures market also ruled low.

Bulk buyers are waiting for fresh orders from North India.

At the Erode Turmeric Merchants Association Sales yard, the finger variety was sold at Rs 4,011-5,661 a quintal, the root variety at Rs 4,011-5011.

Salem Hybrid Crop: The finger variety fetched Rs 4,869-6,006 and the root variety Rs 4,696-5,311.

Of the 611 bags that arrived, only 25 per cent was sold.

At the Regulated Marketing Society, the finger variety was sold at Rs 4,369-5,699 and the root variety Rs 4,099-5,090.

All the 369 bags found takers.

At the Erode Cooperative Marketing Society, the finger variety was sold at Rs 4,819-6,006 and the root variety Rs 4,429-5,320.

Of the 665 bags, 629 were sold.

At the Gobichettipalayam Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Society, the finger variety was sold at Rs 5,249-6,109, the root variety Rs 4,939-5,129.

All the 48 bags were sold.

Festival demand sweetens sugar



The sugar market was firm on Monday, tracking higher mill tender rates and improved local demand ahead of Navaratri festival.

On the Vashi wholesale market, spot prices for S-grade increased by Rs 30, while for M-grade they moved up up by Rs 10 a quintal.

Naka rates for both the grades edged up by Rs 20-30.

Mills tender rates were up by Rs 10-30 on higher volumes.

Jagdish Rawal of B. Bhogilal and co., said market sentiment was positive on improved local demand in spot market and at mill level ahead of Navaratri – Dashara festival starting from Tuesday.

Steady rise in demand from retailers and confectionery/sweet makers are expected to continue till next month for Navaratri – Dasara and Diwali festivals.

He said though there is ample supply in market mills continued selling at market rates.

Under selling pressure mills tender rates dropped higher than physical market this month so prices at mill level may bounce back speedily.

The Government has declared total 40 lakh tonnes free sale quota for Oct – Nov. Demand from neighbouring States was missing in Maharashtra till last week but is now expected to improve soon, he said.

In Vashi market, arrivals were about 70-72 truckloads (each of 100 bags of quintal each) and local dispatches were about 68-70 loads.

On Saturday, about 19-20 mills offered tenders and sold more 1.25 lakh bags (each of 100 kg) to the local traders in the range of Rs 3,380-3,440 (Rs 3,350-3,440) for S-grade and Rs 3,470 - 3,580 (Rs 3,460 - 3,550) for M-grade.

The Bombay Sugar Merchants Association's spot rates: S-grade Rs 3,542 – Rs 3,592 (Rs 3,512 – Rs 3,591) and M-grade Rs 3,572- 3,711 (Rs 3,572- 3,711). Naka delivery rates: S-grade Rs 3,490 -3,550 (Rs 3,490 -3,530) and M-grade Rs 3,550-3,680 (Rs 3,570-3,650).

Veg oil imports rise 18% to 92 lakh tonnes in Nov—Sep

Vegetable oil imports rose by 18 per cent to almost 92 lakh tonnes (LT) in the first 11 months of the current oil year on the back of rise in inbound shipments of refined palm oil, sunflower and canola oil.

The country imported 89,63,353 tonnes of edible oil and 1,93,104 tonnes of non—edible oil in the first 11 months of the 2011—12 against 74,93,660 tonnes of edible and 2,79,524 tonnes of non—edible oil in the year—ago period.

“During November, 2011 to September, 2012, the import of RBD palmolein is up by 84 per cent at 15,15,812 tonnes compared to 9,61,936 tonnes during the same period of last year,” Solvent Extractors Association of India (SEA) said in a statement.

The share of refined oils increased to 17 per cent, while that of crude oil decreased to 83 per cent during the November — September period of 2011—12 oil year, it added.

SEA said that import of sunflower oil rose to 10,49,181 tonnes in the November—October of 2011—12 compared to 7,39,173 tonnes in the year—ago period.

“Sunflower oil is a major contributor in meeting demand for soft oil, as sunflower oil prices have been attractive compared to soybean oil. Currently the premium on sunflower oil over soybean oil is just \$11 per ton and also sunflower oil is a preferred oil by housewives in India,” it added.

“Also, India has started importing canola oil and bought about 90,000 tonnes during last 8 months compared to 3,601 tonnes during same period of last year, mainly due to lesser local crushing of rapeseed due to disparity,” SEA said.

The import of vegetable oils increased by 9 per cent in September this year at 9,93,912 tonnes compared to 9,12,341 tonnes in the same month last year.

The total stock of vegetable oil, both at ports and in pipelines decreased by 1,00,000 to 14,50,000 tonnes as of October 1 due to reduced local production and festival demand compared to last month, SEA said.

Nilgiris tea production down 19% in Jan-Sept

P.S. Sundar



Tea production in the Nilgiris, the largest tea growing district in the South, has fallen by 18.7 per cent in the first three quarters of current calendar compared to the same period of 2011.

Production data from corporate sector shows the total output till September as 9.30 million kg (mkg) against 11.44 mkg last year.

This reduction of 2.14 mkg posts a decline of 18.7 per cent.

The production has been lower than the average trend as well because the five-year mean output for Jan-Sept period was 10.84 mkg.

Almost every company has posted a reduction in its yield.

Prolonged dry condition is said to be main cause for lower output.

Rainfall

Meteorological data shows that the cumulative rainfall received in the nine months was less than last year in all the agro-climatic zones in the Nilgiris.

Udhagamandalam received the highest cumulative rainfall of 54.7 cm (last year: 85.4 cm), followed by Kundah 48.4 (90.2), Kotagiri 45 (67.6), Coonoor 39.4 (69) and Kullakamby 32.3 (56.1).

Tea estates around Coonoor received heavy downpour this weekend totalling 18 cm.

Consequently, the total rainfall received in the first half of October was 29 cm against 8 cm last year.

However, the cumulative rainfall received continues to be lower because of earlier dry months.

Collectively, from January 1 till mid-October, tea estates in Coonoor received 77 cm against 100 cm last year.

Based on these, companies have projected a 16 per cent reduction in their overall production this calendar over last year's output of 14.82 mkg.

Malaysian palm oil exports to India may top 2 mt this year



Malaysian palm oil exports to India will touch a record high of over two million tonnes in calendar 2012.

The export duty cut announced by Malaysia from January 1 may prompt India to buy more from the second-largest palm oil producer next year. "India is a traditional market, where palm oil exports are growing fast. We expect our exports to cross two million tonnes this year" said Lee Yeow Chor, Chairman, Malaysian Palm Oil Council (MPOC).

He was speaking on the sidelines of Malaysian Palm Oil Trade Fair and Seminar 2012, organised by MPOC, on Monday.

Till September-end, the Malaysian palm oil exports to India registered a 58 per cent growth at 1.84 million tonnes (mt) over 1.11 mt in the corresponding period a year ago.

In 2011, exports stood at 1.66 mt. Exports have doubled in the past five years. B.V. Mehta, Executive Director, Solvent Extractors Association of India, expects further rise in Malaysian oil palm shipments to India next year on duty cuts and abolition of quotas.

“The move will benefit buyers in India as it will give them an opportunity to evaluate where they will get a better price. This is provided Indonesia does not change its present duty structure,” Mehta said.

India currently buys 20 per cent of its requirement from Malaysia and the rest from largest producer Indonesia.

“We expect that ratio to change going forward,” Mehta said.

Malaysia is looking at traditional large buyers such as China and India to drive its exports as its palm-based products face negative labelling in countries such as France.

The non-governmental organisations in Europe and Australia have stepped up campaign against palm cultivation on environmental grounds. Terming the stance adopted by Europe and Australia as an unfair trade practice, Malaysian Minister for Plantation Industries and Commodities Bernard Dumpok said that his Government is looking to get into a dialogue and strengthen the existing partnership with these countries, especially France.

“Though the prices are not upbeat over the past few weeks, demand is quite strong” said Dumpok.

Palm oil prices, which have crashed by about 30 per cent in the past few months, have led to an inventory build-up in Malaysia. The country had stocks of 2.48 mt as of end September and its storage capacity stood at 5.2 mt, Dumpok said.

Solvent extractors seek import duty on crude palm oil

Despite India’s edible oil imports rising, solvent extractors have urged the Government to impose Customs duty on crude palm oil and refined oil imports.

Such a move would help encourage farmers to plant more acreage under rabi oilseeds such as rapeseed/mustard, said B.V. Mehta, Executive Director, Solvent Extractors Association of India (SEAI).

In a recent memorandum, SEAI has urged the Government to levy an import duty of 10 per cent on crude palm oil (CPO) and increase the duty on refined palm oils to 20 per cent.

Currently, there is no duty on CPO imports, while the refined, bleached and de-odourised (RBD) palm oil attracts a duty of 7.5 per cent, Mehta told reporters on the sidelines of Malaysian Palm Oil industry conference on Monday.

“Prices of soyabean have crashed by about 30-35 per cent in the past few months as harvesting has commenced. Such a decline in commodity prices during harvest will discourage farmers to go in for expanding the rabi acreage. So this is the right time for the Government to intervene. The Government should not hesitate to protect the farmers’ interests,” Mehta said.

Such a move would not have any impact on consumers as even the edible oil prices have crashed by about 30 per cent in recent months, Mehta said.

Besides, the strengthening of rupee in recent weeks is aiding importers. The country’s edible oil import is poised to touch a record high of 10 million tonnes for the year-ending October 2012. For the November 2011-September 2012 period, imports have already crossed 9.15 million tonnes, a growth of 18 per cent over previous year.

Edible oil imports bill is estimated at Rs 55,000 crore, he said. For the current year, domestic edible oil requirement is pegged at 16.7 million tonnes and is expected to grow by five per cent to 17.4 mt next year, Mehta said.

The annual growth in India’s edible oil requirement is around eight lakh tonnes. Of the projected imports of 10 million tonnes for the current year, palm oil accounted for three-fourth of imports at 7.5 million tonnes, while the rest is sunflower and soyabean.

The prospects for rabi oilseed cultivation have improved due to late rains in August and September.

“The rabi sowing is starting soon. If farmers get good price, then acreage will expand in North India,” Mehta said stressing on the need to increase domestic production to curb imports.

Coffee body's market development strategy to benefit growers



The International Coffee Organisation's (ICO) new market development strategy with a focus on agronomical practices is expected to help growers. The shift is for value creation and differentiation instead of traditional promoting coffee consumption strategy.

The new strategy has been professed by Andrea Illy, Chairman of ICO's Promotion and Market Development Committee, and is currently in circulation among the ICO-member countries for their approval.

“Illy's proposal is to help small producers (growers) get higher income by helping them to improve their agronomical practices,” Jawaid Akhtar, Coffee Board Chairman, told *Business Line*. Akhtar represented India at the recently-concluded ICO's International Coffee Council (ICC) meet in London.

In the draft plan, presented to the International Coffee Council (ICC), Illy has kept in mind the development of the coffee sector in the 10 years since the crisis of low prices in 2001 and ICO's role. He also recommended that the committee's efforts should continue, with renewed objectives and a holistic multi-stakeholder approach be planned. Illy has presented two-pronged approach for coffee promotion and market development. First is to promote value through quality, health and sustainability. Possible actions such as measuring the impact of the main value components on coffee consumption. Continuing existing knowledge dissemination programmes,

such as the healthcare professions–coffee education programme (HCP-CEP) and stimulating new programmes.

Second is to support producing countries in de-commoditising coffee through programmes to increase income, with a particular focus on small growers, with the ICO acting as a facilitator and knowledge provider.

Spot rubber skids on cues from futures



Rubber prices declined sharply on Monday. Reacting closely to the heavy losses in the domestic and international futures, the local market surrendered further to register another lowest level in October.

According to analysts, the wide gap between the domestic and global rates also seemed to be putting immense pressure on the sentiments as it might pave the way to fresh imports.

Sheet rubber weakened to Rs 183 from Rs 187 and Rs.188 a kg respectively, according to traders and the Rubber Board.

The arrivals continued to be dull.

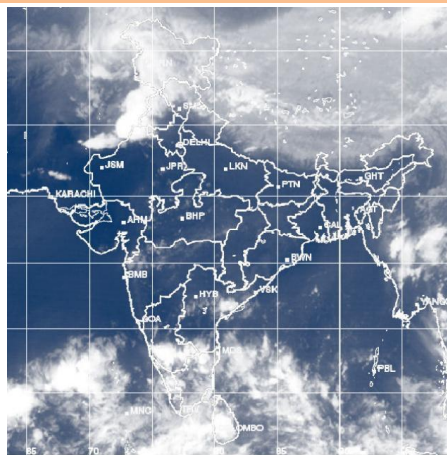
October futures expired at Rs 180.75 (Rs 188.07) a kg, while the November series closed at Rs 181.38 (Rs 182.49); December at Rs 181.73 (Rs 181.36); January Rs 183.40 (Rs 183.43);

February Rs 185.60 (Rs 185.26) and March at Rs 188.56 (Rs 191.43) a kg on the National Multi Commodity Exchange (NMCE).

RSS 3 (spot) declined to Rs 170.30 (Rs 173.62) a kg at Bangkok. October futures nosedived to ¥249.8 (Rs 168.43) from ¥257.5 a kg during the day session but then recovered partially to ¥250.8 (Rs 169.09) in the night session on the Tokyo Commodity Exchange (TOCOM).

Spot rates in Rs/kg were: RSS-4: 183 (187); RSS-5: 178 (179); Ungraded: 169 (173); ISNR 20: 164 (169) and Latex 60%: 120.50 (122).

North-East monsoon may set in by Friday, says IMD



Conditions are becoming favourable for commencement of North-East monsoon (monsoon in reverse) over peninsular India over the next four-five days.

This will happen as predecessor South-West monsoon exits the land mass, a process resumed on Monday.

EXIT PHASE

On Monday, it withdrew from entire Bihar, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra, parts of West Bengal, Sikkim, Odisha, Telangana, north interior Karnataka, entire Goa and more parts of central Arabian Sea. The India Meteorological Department (IMD) said that conditions were favourable for its withdrawal from the land mass over the next two to three days.

This will set the stage for the North-East monsoon to commence over Tamil Nadu, Kerala, adjoining Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka by Thursday/Friday.

An early forecast from the Climate Prediction Centre of the US National Weather Services had said that the rains are not expected to strengthen before October 23.

TROUGH IN PLACE

An elongated area of lower pressure (which causes ascending motion of air, helps moisture to lift, form clouds, cooling and rain down) lay extended from Nagaland to Tamil Nadu.

Cyclonic circulations hovered in readiness over Tamil Nadu and Lakshadweep to receive the easterly flows.

A weather warning from the IMD said that heavy rainfall would occur at one or two places over Tamil Nadu during the next two days. A similar warning has been held out for Kerala and Lakshadweep during the next three days.

HEAVY FALLS

An extended outlook valid for the next seven days said that rain or thundershowers would occur at many places over extreme south peninsular India.

Heavy falls are likely at one or two places over coastal Tamil Nadu, it added. Meanwhile, the run-up to the transition of the monsoon saw overnight rain, heavy at many places in Tamil Nadu, being reported until Monday morning.

The IMD said rainfall occurred at most places over Kerala and Tamil Nadu; at a many places over south interior Karnataka; and at a few places over Odisha, Rayalaseema and Lakshadweep.

COOL IN NORTH

To the north of the country, seasonal western disturbances have begun arriving one after the other carrying cool air.

In the hilly regions of north-west, these disturbances are setting off rain and snow, ahead of the advent of the winter chill.

The IMD said that a prevailing western disturbance has called at north Pakistan, and has started affecting the hilly regions of Jammu and Kashmir across the border. A follow-up system is expected later this week, a forecast outlook said.

Business Standard

TODAY FARM NEWS

16.10.2012 A.M

Sugar imports hurtful for local farmers and factories

For smart traders, arbitrage is a commonly used tool for simultaneous buying and selling of shares and commodities, taking advantage of differences in



prices in two markets. Countries like India, having radically reformed their global trade practices, particularly by giving free access to foreign products and services to their markets, automatically come within the pale of arbitrageurs. We are now witness to arbitrage play in sugar involving our country. This is because sugar in India commanding a nice premium over the

world market is an incentive for traders to import and sell it here. At this point, Indian import duty of 10 per cent is no barrier to sugar of foreign origin travelling to our shores. For the reason that imports are taking place, export interest has ebbed away despite local surplus.

In the past, India, the world's second largest producer but biggest consumer of sugar, exercised the import option to cover domestic supply shortfall and also to ensure that the new season would open with reasonably comfortable stocks. So we imported 2.4 million tonnes (mt) in 2008-09 when domestic production collapsed to 14.54 mt from the previous season's nearly 26.4 mt. Again in 2009-10, we imported sugar of a much larger volume of over 4 mt, anticipating another season of setback in output. In a pleasant surprise, however, for both the government and industry, production that year turned out to be close to 19 mt. Unlike those two years when imports helped in overcoming the domestic supply deficit, foreign sugar is now coming in times of plenty. After all, the 2012-13 sugar season, which began this month, opened with stocks of at least 6 mt and production aided by the late spurt in the monsoon supporting growth of sugar cane will be between 24 mt and 24.5 mt.

Therefore, for three years in a row, Indian production will be ahead of consumption. The country's requirements for the current year are an estimated 22 mt, or at least 2 mt more than production. In fact, the certainty of enough sugar to go by during 2012-13 led Indian Sugar Mills

Association (Isma) to say “there might be an opportunity to export some of the surplus.” At the same time, it felt the need to request the government to ensure that imports did not materialise. Incidentally, in an attempt to tackle overflowing stocks, the country exported 3.2 mt of sugar last season. Had not at a later stage of 2011-12, domestic sugar prices started commanding a hefty premium over London sugar futures, our exporters would have signed and executed some more deals. Moreover, there would not have been an occasion for factories to cancel some export contracts. Uncertainty about monsoon behaviour, which has a significant bearing on cane output and speculation about crop loss in the country’s largest sugar producing state Maharashtra was the main reason for sugar prices to climb to a level much improving cash flow of factories.

In support of imports, the argument, which though appears specious to many industry officials, is advanced that in a season when Maharashtra’s sugar cane production could fall close to 60 mt from 78.93 mt in 2011-12, availability of foreign origin raw sugar would allow better local factory capacity utilisation. An argument like that was, however, never heard in the past. Whatever it is, the fact remains that some factories in Maharashtra and Karnataka have signed contracts for import of 450,000 tonnes of raws. India’s advance authorisation scheme (AAS) under grain-to-grain formula allows import of raws at nil duty, provided the white sugar derived on processing is exported in full. No one is going to make an issue if raws imports come through this route. But the present set of importers, instead of shipping out the processed white sugar, want the export obligation redeemed in three years. Are they not thereby trying to take advantage of a loophole that the government unwittingly left in import rules? Whatever that may be, the fact that raws are coming from Brazil and white from Pakistan, to start with 5,000 tonnes and more deals likely to follow, has sent local ex-factory sugar prices down by about Rs 1,800 a tonne.

Since the first set of import contracts, world prices of the sweetener have improved. Most brokers are not, however, sure for how long ICE March raw and Liffe December white will be held at their current levels in view of the world going to have another surplus sugar year. In any case, importers now have the benefit of an appreciated Indian currency vis a vis the US dollar. What could New Delhi possibly do when foreign sugar comes in when the nation has surplus to manage? “The issue is to protect our turf. Against 10 per cent now, sugar earlier would invite customs of 60 per cent. Considering grave implications of imports, the duty should be 30 per cent. The Rangarajan committee has recommended sharing of profit on sugar sales between

factories and cane growers. The recommendation is intended to make cane growing for 50 million farmers a rewarding pursuit and the industry a thriving proposition,” says former Isma president OP Dhanuka. But imports could be a devastating experience for farmers and factories.

Edible oil prices might fall up to 10% on bumper seed output

Record-high soybean output this kharif season, coupled with a bumper rapeseed/mustard seed crop forecast for the coming rabi season, is set to pull down edible oil prices by five to 10 per cent this oil year (November 2012-October 2013).



The Indore-based Soybean Processors' Association has estimated output at 12.68 million tonnes (mt) during the ongoing kharif harvesting season, compared to 11.65 mt in the previous year. Similarly, experts have forecast a bumper rapeseed/mustard seed crop for the coming rabi season on favourable climate following late rainfall leaving adequate soil moisture, the basic need for growing rabi crops.

The price cut is set to provide a major relief to Indian consumers, who have been facing rising inflationary pressure from all sides. Edible oil consists of 10-15 per cent of the cost of daily food. Leading the roost, the Ruchi Group of Industries is considering cutting the price of branded products by 5-10 per cent. Other players are set to follow suit. Indian edible oil producers are currently facing a dip in market sentiment due to falling crude palm oil (CPO) prices in major producing countries, including Indonesia and Malaysia. Apparently, in another dampening price sentiment, a massive CPO inventory has been reported in Indonesia, the world's largest producer.

Indicating the trend, refined soy oil futures for delivery in near-month on the National Commodity & Derivative Exchange (NCDEX) has fallen 14.25 per cent in the last one month to Rs 665.15 per 10 kg. Similarly, soybean futures on NCDEX have also witnessed a steep fall of 17.75 per cent to Rs 3,169.50 per quintal over the last month.

“The Indian edible industry cannot be in isolation being 60 per cent dependent on the world market. Currently, CPO in global markets is lower. Hence, the edible oil price in India may also

come down,” said Atul Chaturvedi, chief executive officer of the Adani Wilmer Ltd, producer of ‘Fortune’ brand of edible oil.

Rubber demand-supply gap widening

The consumption of natural rubber rose 5.6 per cent in the first half of the current financial year, while production rose only 1.1 per cent. Experts say this would exert pressure on supplies and prices of the commodity in the local market. Currently, user industries, especially the tyre industry, address the supply crunch through imports, which have risen to 1,12,640 tonnes in the April-September period, against 91,186 tonnes in the corresponding period last year.



Total consumption in the April-September period stood at 5,01,940 tonnes, compared with 4,75,485 tonnes in the year-ago period, while production stood at 3,95,700 tonnes, compared with 3,91,400 tonnes in the corresponding period last year. The demand-supply gap is widening on a monthly basis.

The increase in production of automotive tyres is the primary factor behind the rise in consumption. Good demand from original equipment manufacturers and the replacement segment aided the rise in tyre production. Despite the current global slowdown, exports, too, have risen. The consumption of natural rubber by the tyre sector rose 5.7 per cent. The increase in production of automotive tyres is the primary factor behind the rise in consumption. Good demand from original equipment manufacturers and the replacement segment aided the rise in tyre production. Despite the current global slowdown, exports, too, have risen. The consumption of natural rubber by the tyre sector rose 5.7 per cent.



THE TIMES OF INDIA

TODAY FARM NEWS

16.10.2012 A.M

State government to fast track distribution of Rabi crop seeds

RANCHI: Owing to scanty rainfall during monsoons this year and estimated loss to net yield of Kharif crop, directorate of agriculture, government of Jharkhand is taking proactive steps to ensure the distribution of [Rabi crop](#) seeds in advance. It was towards the end of September that the directorate announced 50% subsidy on Rabi seeds and directed the district agriculture officers to ensure distribution of the seeds. The pre-Rabi workshop was organised by the directorate on last Wednesday to give tips to the agriculture officers and other associated with the extension programme so that the initiative reaches ground level on a fast track.

Director agriculture KK Soan said that the decision to distribute Rabi seeds was taken so as to compensate for the losses of Kharif season.

Farmers' group supports FDI in retail

PUNE: A national-level consortium of farmers has said the farming community is in favour of [foreign direct investment](#) (FDI) in retail and export of vegetables, fruits and foodgrains. Besides they said that farmers should be treated as entrepreneurs.

P Chengal Reddy, secretary general of the Consortium of Indian Farmers Associations, on Monday said that in the upcoming convention at Hyderabad, all farmers' organizations in the country would extend support to [FDI](#) and use of genetically modified seeds for increasing foodgrain production.

Reddy told TOI, "So far, farmers have been treated as beggars. We want assured supply of electricity, water, good seed and technology to produce a dynamic market where there are no controls on prices of agricultural commodities. A lot of knowledge-based investment is taking place in many sectors but it is very slow and low in the agriculture sector. Farmers want modern technology in their hands with sufficient income to afford it."

Reddy said genetically modified crops present another opportunity for Indian farmers to take a leap in foodgrain and cash crop production and dominate the trade in international market. The consortium is in support of research in GM crops. Reddy suggested that more and more varieties should be introduced for the benefit of farmers. If GM crops are saving farmers' expenses on pesticides, it should be encouraged, he said.

Rice production in India is increasing and in coming years we can export it in large quantity, he said. If the Union government continues to intervene in this business, it will ensure loss of farmers and lack of confidence about our country in the [international trade](#), Reddy said.

Modern technology is required to cut losses in foodgrain during handling and transport, Reddy said. "Today, one third of the total production of foodgrain or vegetables goes waste because our farmers do not have training for smart handling of the produce. Once such losses are controlled, the gap of demand and supply will narrow and major ups and downs in prices can be controlled," he said.

Cane growers want ban on sugar export lifted

PUNE: Nearly a thousand [sugarcane farmers](#) held a rally at the office of the sugar commissioner on Monday in support of their five demands, which includes lifting ban on export of sugar. The rally was led by farmer leader Raghunath Patil.

Among the other demands were mandatory blending of ethanol with petrol and diesel, allowing inter-state molasses trade, cancellation of levy quota and payment of dues by sugar factories.

The rally had started from Junnar on October 1 and culminated at the sugar commissioner's office on Monday. A delegation of farmers will meet chief minister Prithviraj Chavan in Mumbai on Wednesday.

Farmers' representatives from Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Punjab were also present at the rally, who blamed the Union government and agriculture minister [Sharad Pawar](#) for being slow on reforms in agriculture and sugarcane sectors. The farmers will again gather in New Delhi on December 12 to press for their demand to decontrol sugar and allowing free trade of agriculture produce.

Along with farmers' representatives from other states, all farmers demanded lifting ban on sugar export as it will fetch more revenue and farmers can get more returns for their sugarcane.

Patil claimed that many sugar factories in the state have not declared the final rates of sugarcane purchase in the last two years as they sat on a pile of cash. The sugar commissionerate has not taken any action against these factories so far, he said.

Farmers also pressed for speedy processing of ethanol blending with petrol and diesel, suggesting the decision will bring down petrol prices in the retail market. "It will carve out a new business where earning of the factory will go up and eventually farmers can earn more from sugarcane," Patil said. The farmers submitted their demands to sugar commissioner Vijay Singhal. Patil said,

"So far, 41 sugar factories have not declared the final rate of sugarcane purchase hence they have not paid the dues of the farmers. Many of these factories are in negative worth hence their bills cannot be dispatched. The state government will take up this issue and find some solution."

No curbs on sugar export, says Food Minister KV Thomas

NEW DELHI: Days after the Rangarajan committee's recommendation to free export and import of sugar, the government seems to accede to its suggestion. Food minister [KV Thomas](#) said that the government will continue free export sugar policy in the current 2012-13 sugar marketing year that started this month.

"We have decided to extend the time for sugar export under open general licence for another year," Thomas told reporters after discussing the Rangarajan committee's recommendations on sugar sector in a meeting with agriculture minister [Sharad Pawar](#).

The decision will be effective once the food ministry issues formal notification in this regard.

"It means that like wheat and rice, there would be no quantitative restriction on sugar export as well. Mills won't have to take any permission from the government to export sugar and can ship as much as they want," said a food ministry official.

This year the country so far has exported around 3.5 million tonne sugar, 10 million tonne of rice, 2.5 million tonne wheat and 40 lakh bales of cotton after record production. The decision has come at a time when the country is again likely to have a surplus production of sugar after last year's record production of over 26 million tonne.

"We expect to have a production between 23 and 24 million tonne as against the domestic consumption of 22 million tonne keeping the doors of export open," Thomas said. Meanwhile, food minister also said that the government will take a time-bound decision on the Rangarajan committee's recommendations.

"Its report will not be put on backburner. It will not meet the fate of earlier reports. A time-bound decision will be taken after receiving views from the PMO," he said. The committee, set up by the prime minister in January this year with the chairman of his economic advisor C Rangarajan as its chief, released a report last week recommending scrapping of major government controls on the sugar sector to move towards the reform process.

It has also recommended doing away with government control over sugar distributed through ration shops and release order. The panel has suggested that state governments should buy sugar from the open market to supply to ration shops through instead of asking mills to sell 10% of their production at a loss to the government and then extend subsidy as per their financial strength.

"The central government would continue to incur Rs 3,000 crore annual subsidy in selling sugar through the ration shops," the panel says.

30 agriculture dept officers suspended

HYDERABAD: In a major clean-up operation initiated by the [agriculture department](#), 30 agricultural officers of various ranks have been suspended for embezzlement of funds collected

from farmers for the past two years. Agriculture [commissioner](#) K Madhusudan Rao issued the orders on Sunday suspending 24 agriculture officers, three assistant directors and three agriculture extension officers.

According to sources, these officers have not remitted the money collected from farmers for supply of seeds for the past two years. The total amount unremitted to the government is around Rs 2 crore. Repeated reminders to these officers failed to yield any response. After reviewing the situation, commissioner K Madhusudan Rao issued suspension orders against them, sources in the department said.

Every year, the government supplies seed to farmers at subsidy rates and for that, farmers need to pay the non-subsidy price of the seed. Later the department remits the money to the seed companies along with the subsidy amount. But, the officers failed to remit the amount they collected from farmers.

This is the first time the commissioner initiated disciplinary proceedings against officers in one go.

Now, farmers embrace technology to prevent thefts and monitor labour force

BANGALORE: Widely in use by commercial enterprises and law enforcement agencies in urban centers, [Closed Circuit Television](#) (CCTV) systems is slowly catching up in countryside areas as [farmers](#) are increasingly using the technology for surveillance of their [work force](#) and to prevent thefts.

The transition has given way to a tactical change of letting the dogs loose and grabbing the rifle method farmers traditionally employ to secure their assets. Now when I hear the dogs barking I can go to my office and flick on the screen and see who's out there. And it's useful for spotting labour force and monitoring the stock as well," said M N Ganapathy, a planter in Virajpet taluk of Kodagu.

CCTV Systems have become a staple addition to several coffee estates in Kodagu and farmhouses off Bangalore and Mysore cities that need security protection to prevent [thefts](#) and

monitor labour force.

But now small and marginal farmers, who grow crops like rice and jowar too are adopting the technology. Nagaraj, a farmer in Kudilgi taluk of Bellary district took to the technology to catch slothful labourers in the act. He has installed surveillance cameras in his five-acre property spending more than Rs 1.5 lakh so that he can keep watch by using his latest smart phone. Nagaraj said the latest security system installed can capture images at a distance of 100 meters at any time of the day.

Prabhakar N Singhi, a manager of Eagle Eye security systems, Bangalore said: "Over the last six months we've probably had over a dozen inquiries each month from farmers about putting in cameras. Before that there was nothing. Previously we had two or three inquiries."

He said another reason why cameras are becoming popular because the technology was getting cheaper and farmers are realizing that CCTV recordings can prove invaluable where there are issues around working hours and time keeping and so forth. A lot of the old-school farmers stick to their own methods, but the young ones who are techno phobic are more prone to the idea and I believe a lot more people will be heading down this path. It's about securing your assets, live stocks and utilizing workforce effectively, which is a real hassle for the rural folks these days," Singhi added.

Alagiri says no to hike in urea price

In a major jolt to the UPA's fiscal consolidation drive, Fertilisers Minister M K Alagiri has struck down the proposal to raise urea prices by 10 per cent, which would have reduced the subsidy burden by about Rs 2,400 crore.

His ministry's revised note for the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs removes a paragraph from the CCEA note of August 2012 which had proposed raising the maximum retail price of urea by 10 per cent during 2012-13.

The new proposal of October 8, 2012, says changes in the retail price may be considered "from second year onwards" to compensate fertiliser units, and that too for increase in pool price of fuels or fixed costs like wages, selling expenses and repair.

Even on these hikes, Alagiri wants final say. "The Department of Fertilisers with the approval of the minister, after recommendations from the Inter-Ministerial Council, may decide MRP increase before every financial year," it says.

Last year, a panel headed by then finance minister Pranab Mukherjee approved a new draft urea policy proposing partial freeing of retail prices, allowing firms to hike prices by 10 per cent in the first year of policy implementation.

A committee of secretaries had proposed complete deregulation of the urea sector, but the finance, agriculture and fertilisers ministries opposed this. The Department of Expenditure, then under Mukherjee, also opposed freeing prices but supported a 10 per cent hike every year for three years.

Alagiri's move reflects the DMK's position, which had demanded that the Kelkar Committee's recommendation, endorsing increase in urea prices by 10 per cent, be shelved. Alagiri wrote to the PM that this would affect farmers, but Finance Minister P Chidambaram recently asked Alagiri to raise the price of urea and work out a plan for direct cash transfers of fertiliser subsidy.

Wal-Mart faces sourcing challenge



As Wal-Mart Stores Inc ramps up its operations in India, it needs to find more farmers like Yogesh Todkari.

His acre of cauliflowers is big, leafy, and a deep shade of green, thanks to modern irrigation and quality nutrients and seeds - all provided by the world's largest retailer.

"They train us and assist us right from when the crop is sown to when it's harvested. They give us a higher price than the market for better quality", said Todkari, 29, who works the field in western India with his elderly father.

Investing in farmers to help them improve quality and efficiency, and getting around the army of costly middlemen, will be key to whether global chains like Wal-Mart and Tesco Plc succeed where local operators have failed to make a profit. It will also be a test of whether India's politically fraught decision to allow in global supermarkets in order to modernise its food supply chain proves to be the right one.

"We plan to procure as much as we can via direct farming so the procurement from traders in local markets is as little as possible", said Krishnakant Reddy, who is in charge of direct farming in south and west India for Wal-Mart, which already operates in India through 17 wholesale stores.

Under the reforms, foreign retailers must source at least 30 percent of their goods from local, small industries.

India recently let in global supermarkets, despite heavy political opposition, in the hope of improving the supply chain and bringing down wastage and costs in a country where one-third of fresh produce rots and food inflation is persistent.

Mentha oil futures fall 1.03% on profit-booking

Amid profit-booking by speculators and subdued spot demand, mentha oil prices fell by Rs 12.50 to Rs 1,205.60 per kg in futures trade today.

Adequate stocks position in the physical market following increased arrivals from major producing region also put pressure on mentha oil prices.

At the Multi Commodity Exchange, mentha oil for delivery in November fell by Rs 12.50, or 1.03 per cent, to Rs 1,205.60 per kg in business turnover of 67 lots. Similarly, the oil for delivery in October shed Rs 11.90, or 0.99 per cent, to Rs 1,191.10 per kg in 453 lots.

Marketmen attributed the fall in mentha oil futures to profit-booking by speculators at prevailing higher levels and sluggish demand from consuming industries in the spot market.

Sugar futures prices up 1.29% on Rangarajan committee recommendations

Sugar futures prices today surged 1.29 per cent to Rs 3,434 per quintal as speculators enlarged their positions after the Rangarajan Committee suggested de-control of the sector.

Besides, strong demand in the spot markets for the festive season too influenced sugar prices.

At the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange, sugar for delivery in October spurted by Rs 44, or 1.29 per cent, to Rs 3,434 per quintal, with an open interest of 3,280 lots.

Similarly, the sweetener for delivery in November gained Rs 11, or 0.33 per cent to Rs 3,370 per quintal in 33,920 lots.

Market analysts attributed the rise in sugar prices at futures trade to the Rangarajan Committee's recommendation de-control of the sugar sector by giving freedom to mills to sell their produce in open market and removing the obligation on the industry to supply the sweetener at below market price for ration shops.

Further, strong demand in the market for the festive and marriage season, also gave push to rising sweetener's prices at futures trade, they said.