

Now, farm equipment on rent

RAVIPRASAD KAMILA

Soon agriculturists in Dakshina Kannada will be able to take home farm equipment on rent as the Department of Agriculture will open five centres, in association with a non-government organisation, where they will be rented out. Called “custom hire centres”, they would come up at Panja in Sullia taluk; Uppinangady in Puttur taluk; Pane Mangalore in Bantwal taluk; Gurupura in Mangalore taluk and Kuvettu in Belthangady taluk. A committee would fix the rent on per-hour per-day basis to suit all types of farmers. It would be less than the market rent charged by private parties, according to sources in the Department of Agriculture. In addition to Dakshina Kannada, the Department of Agriculture would open the centres in all other districts in the State in association with non-government organisations (NGOs). A committee headed by the Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) of zilla panchayats would fix rent, decide on the equipment required by farmers and monitor the functioning of the centres. The committee would have farmer representatives as well. Shree Kshetra Dharmasthala Rural Development Project (SKDRDP), a non-government organisation, would manage the centres in 25 districts, including Dakshina Kannada and Udupi. The government and SKDRDP have signed an agreement, valid for six years, to this effect, H. Kempe Gowda, Joint Director of Agriculture, Dakshina Kannada told *The Hindu*. Mr. Kempe Gowda said that initially, the NGO would have to purchase equipment worth Rs. 2.50 crore, at Rs. 50 lakh per centre, for the five centres. In the first year, the government would give Rs. 37.50 lakh to each centre as subsidy. In the second year, the NGO would have to purchase equipment worth Rs. 25 lakh for each centre and the government would provide Rs. 12.50 lakh subsidy for each centre. From the third year, the government would not provide any subsidy and the centres would have to manage on their own. The rent collected from farmers would have to be utilised for paying the salary of the staff in each centre. The accounts of the centres are subjected to auditing for six years.

PM's remarks on food security 'misleading'

Congress will raise the issue in Parliament today: Anand Sharma

Anand Sharma

Refuting Prime Minister Narendra Modi's suggestion that the UPA government had compromised on the issue of food security at the World Trade Organisation (WTO), the Congress has said it will raise the matter in Parliament on Monday. "The statement of Mr. Modi, his claim of standing up for food security in the interest of farmers by taking up a stand in opposition to the one taken by the UPA government is misleading and given with the objective to confuse the people," former Commerce and Industry Minister Anand Sharma said in a statement. Mr. Sharma said the Prime Minister's remarks that India had disregarded the interests of farmers and the right to food security at the WTO's Bali Ministerial were "astonishing, factually incorrect and false". He said that on the issue of the WTO, Mr. Modi, in his address to the BJP's National Council meeting on Saturday, had contradicted statements that Minister of State for Commerce and Industry Nirmala Sitharaman made in Parliament last week. Mr. Sharma is the Deputy Leader of the Congress in the Rajya Sabha and had led the Indian delegation at the WTO's Bali Ministerial. "When both the Houses are in session, it becomes a question of privilege of the members to know what the truth is. Which of the two is true?" Without naming the UPA government, Mr. Modi on Saturday said "those who sought votes in the name of food security, signed the agreement [sacrificing the interests of poor people]." He said the NDA government "chose" to take a tough stand in the recent WTO talks to protect the interests of the poor people of the country rather than to look for good publicity in the international media. Mr. Sharma said the "Prime Minister needed to be reminded that it was India's strong and uncompromising stance that forced the issue of procurement of foodgrains for public stock holding and livelihood countries on the Bali WTO agenda despite stiff opposition from the U.S., European Union and other developed countries." He said India had succeeded in forming a coalition of developing countries of Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, forcing the developed countries to cede

ground and agree to negotiate a permanent solution to change the dated WTO rules which India rejected at Bali as inherently flawed and unjust. “India also secured for itself and other developing countries protection from any challenge at the WTO for any breach until a negotiated permanent solution was put in place,” Mr. Sharma said.

Pushpa Bhargava questions DBT guidelines on transgenic crops

MEENA MENON

Even as the Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee (GEAC) decided to constitute a sub-committee to review the toxicology data generated by two applicants for genetically modified brinjal, biologist and Padma Bhushan award winner Dr. Pushpa M. Bhargava has questioned the guidelines of the Department of Biotechnology (DBT) on transgenic crops. Dr. Bhargava and others had asked for the raw data on toxicity studies on rats using transgenic brinjal which were carried out by Dr. Sesikeran, former Director of National Institute of Nutrition at Hyderabad. He found statistically quite significant differences between rats fed on Bt Brinjal and those fed on a normal meal in respect of several important parameters, said Dr. Bhargava. However, Dr. Sesikeran had said that as all the values (both of the control and of the experimental animals) fell within the normal range of variation, the differences were not significant, and that there was no need to repeat the experiment. “Our point was that if on repetition the same differences are found again, they are bound to be significant,” Dr. Bhargava pointed out. Further, he used only 20 animals (10 female and 10 male) in both experimental and the control groups which is the minimum number for such tests. Dr. Sesikeran must explain why only a minimum number was used, he said.

Letter to GEAC official

In a letter to Dr. Ranjini Warriar, member secretary, GEAC, on July 23, Dr. Bhargava, who was responding to the two e-mails of July 20 from Dr. Sesikeran to all the members of GEAC, said, “According to Dr. Sesikeran, DBT guidelines of 2008 say the following in regard to “Interpretation of results of safety studies”: “The design and analysis of the

study should be kept as simple as possible, avoiding unnecessarily complex, sophisticated statistical techniques. If the design is simple, the statistics are likely to give straightforward results. Non-statistical knowledge must be applied in study design and proper interpretation of the biological significance of the results. Just because two treatments are statistically significantly different does not mean that the difference is large enough to have any biological importance or any practical significance.”Dr. Bhargava said he would like to know which international body endorsed this, as scientifically it does not make any sense. He said he didn’t understand what that meant and sought a clarification. The GEAC meets next in August.

Flower prices high at Mattuthavani market

S. POORVAJA



SELLERS' MARKET:A scene at the Mattuthavani flower market in Madurai on Sunday.— Photo: R. Ashok

Customers who visited the flower market at Mattuthavani here on Sunday were surprised to find jasmine flowers, the ‘Madurai malli,’ selling at Rs. 200 to Rs.250 a kilo.“This is nothing. Last week it was selling at Rs. 350 on Varalakshmi Puja eve, and during Ramzan,” a vendor said. Prices of flowers in the market have skyrocketed in the last one month. “Last year, during ‘Aadi,’ a Tamil month with many auspicious days, the maximum the ‘Madurai malli’ could command was Rs. 150 a kilo. Scanty rainfall in the

flower-growing areas has greatly affected supply of flowers, resulting in the prices shooting up this year,” said S. Ramachandran, president of Mattuthavani Madurai Flower Market.

The market used to receive 20 tonnes of ‘malli’ a day during ‘Aadi’ in the past. Now the supply has trickled down to a mere two tonnes. “The price of ‘sampangi’ flowers, which are used to make garlands for temples, weddings and other ceremonies, has shot up to Rs. 250 a kilo. The price of garlands is also high now,” said S. Nadandi, a flower vendor. “The total supply of all the flowers, including ‘malli,’ ‘sampangi’ and roses, to the market is hardly 10 tonnes,” he added. ‘Picchi’ flowers, which are grown near Alanganallur, Kodimangalam and Nagamalai Pudukottai, are selling at a high price of Rs. 150 a kilo.

Rain, deciding factor

With festivals such as Krishna Jayanthi and Vinayagar Chathurthi fast approaching, the vendors expect the demand for flowers to increase in the days to come. “However, some parts of the district received rain on Saturday. If the rain continues, the flower supply will increase and bring down the prices,” said L. Logeswari, another vendor. Flower sellers, who buy at these wholesale prices to sell them at different parts of the city, expressed their concern over the high prices. “We also have to increase our selling price as we have to incur cost of transport and other raw materials. Now, many customers have started coming to the Mattuthavani market to buy flowers and string them on their own,” said K. Meena, a flower seller from Melamadai.

Mettur dam opened

S.P. SARAVANAN



Water gushing out of Stanley reservoir which was opened for irrigation on Sunday. PHOTO: E.LAKSHMI NARAYANAN

With the water level at the Stanley Reservoir in Mettur crossing the 100-foot mark on Friday, 9,000 cusecs was let out in the Cauvery on Sunday for irrigation of samba (long-term paddy), benefiting 15.58 lakh acres in 12 districts. Chief Minister Jayalalithaa had initially directed that the water be released from August 15, but subsequently advanced it to August 10 following rapid rise in the dam level in the past few days. It is customary to release water on June 12 every year. But the release was postponed owing to poor storage

Minister for Finance and Public Works Department O. Panneerselvam, Minister for Highways and Minor Ports Edappadi K. Palaniswami, Minister for Industries P. Thangamani, Minister for Environment Thoppu N.D. Venkatachalam, Minister for Transport V. Senthil Balaji showered rose petals when the sluices of the Stanley Reservoir were opened at 4 p.m., in the presence of Collector K. Maharabushanam, MPs, MLAs and PWD engineers. Mr. Panneerselvam told reporters that as per the Chief Minister's orders, water was released and stocks of seeds and fertilizers had been ensured. At 4 p.m. on Sunday, the water level at Mettur stood at 109.11 feet and the storage level 77.500 thousand million cubic feet (tmcft), against its full capacity of 93.470 tmc ft. Inflow was 46,000 cusecs. Also, 170 MW of power generation began on Sunday against the installed capacity of 250 MW. Officials told *The Hindu* that the

generation would be increased if the quantum of discharge went up in the coming days. The district administration has issued a flood alert asking people living along the banks of the Cauvery and low-lying areas to move to safer areas. Vehicle traffic on the '16 Gate Ellis Surplus Bridge' was stopped from Sunday. At Biligundlu in Krishnagiri district where the Cauvery enters Tamil Nadu, the inflow started to recede as 35,000 cusecs was recorded on Sunday evening against 55,000 cusecs in the morning. The inflow continued to drop over the day, sources said.

Farmers welcome release of water

G.SRINIVASAN

Farmers of the Cauvery delta districts of Thanjavur and Tiruvarur welcomed the release of water from Mettur dam on Sunday evening for samba cultivation this year. "Increased inflow into the dam augurs well for this samba season and we hope to take a good samba crop", they said. S. Ranganathan, Secretary, Cauvery Delta Farmers Welfare Association, expressed happiness over release of water from the Mettur dam. "There has been an appreciable increase in the storage in the dam in the past five days. But water saving and efficient use should be practised by farmers. In Vennar area, farmers should go for more direct sowing as a means of saving water. Blend of direct sowing and conventional cultivation through transplantation should be followed by farmers", Mr. Ranganathan said. The Government's thrust was also on direct sowing and Food Minister R. Kamaraj has said that there would be direct sowing on 1.92 lakh acres in the Vennar region, Mr. Ranganathan said. V. Jeevakumar, Vice-President, Agriculture Labourers Association, Thanjavur district, said that water should reach the last-mile areas. For that more water should be withdrawn from Mettur dam and given without turn system. System tanks in the delta districts should be filled up. The Public Works Department should take up dredging well before the release of water and complete it in time so that water might reach the last mile areas when released. Swamimalai Vimalanathan, president of Thanjavur District Farmers' Welfare Association, said that wastage of water into Kollidam river should be

avoided during northeast monsoon. Surplus water from Mettur dam should be utilised to fill system tanks. Last year, the dam was opened on August 2.

'Nelli' fruit fetches better price than mango

J. PRAVEEN PAUL JOSEPH



S. Raja Mohammed (right), Deputy Director of Horticulture, Tirunelveli district, inspecting an amla farm at Puduppatti in the district.

The soaring price of Indian gooseberry (Nelli), also known as amla, has kept farmers happy here. Currently, amla, a horticulture crop, fetches them better price than mango in market. The high medicinal value crop is being cultivated in Radhapuram, Alangulam, Pappakkudi and Cheranmahadevi blocks of Tirunelveli district. A progressive farmer, K. Nala Ravindran of Puduppatti in Pappakkudi block, is jubilant over the price of amla — Rs.30 to Rs.35 per kilo — whereas mangoes (Neelam variety) fetched Rs.20 to Rs.25 per kg at Alangulam market. He said here on Sunday that Kerala was the major buyer of amla from Tirunelveli. Under the National Mission Micro Irrigation scheme, 600 amla trees and 300 trees of mango and sapota had been cultivated on his wasteland with the assistance of National Horticulture Mission (NHM). All the trees were drip irrigated. According to S. Raja Mohammed, Deputy Director of Horticulture, Tirunelveli district, amla (*Emblica officinalis* or *Phyllanthus emblica*), is a drought-resistant crop and grows in variable soil conditions. It withstands water stagnation too. The special feature is its capacity to retain vitamin 'C' even in a dried state, which is not possible in other fruits. He said the extracts of amla fruit were mostly being used in ayurvedic and homeopathic preparations to prevent grey hair and hair fall. Among fruit crops, cultivation of amla has increased considerably. Prior to the launch of NHM in 2005-06, the district

saw 900 hectares of amla cultivation. But, its cultivation area increased gradually to 2,600 hectares during 2013-14 after the launch of the NHM, through which subsidy was offered. With a considerable allocation of funds through the NHM in this current fiscal, thrust would also be given on post-harvest management of horticulture produces, including amla. The official said Tirunelveli district was blessed with a unique feature of having both tropical crops such as mango, guava, lime, sapota and amla and temperate crops such as mangosteen, rose apple, rambutan, pepper, arecanut, nutmeg and clove contributing 31,431 hectares of horticultural crops. Of the total field area, 19,530 hectares were under fruit crops, 3,680 hectares under vegetables crops, 2,530 hectares under spices and condiments, 115 hectares under medicinal crops, and 4,200 hectares under plantation crops, he said. Flowers were also grown on 1,375 hectares, Mr. Mohammed said.

Rooting for oil palm trees

A.V. RAGUNATHAN



Appraisal: Collector V. Sampath inspects the post-harvested oil palm fruits at a farm in Vittalapuram near Tindivanam. With a view to increasing indigenous production of edible oil and to enable farmers to earn substantial income, the State government has launched the Oil Palm Development Programme. As of now 5,000 acres has been brought under the cultivation of oil palm trees in Villupuram district. Given the yield level the farmers who have taken to the cultivation of the crop would be happy, according to V. Sampath, District Collector. The Collector recently inspected the oil palm plantation raised on 20

acres by a progressive farmer Ramadas Nainar at Vittalapuram near Tindivanam. He also assessed the quality of the oil palm fruit bunches. Later, he told reporters that the country had attained self-sufficiency in the cultivation of paddy, wheat, millets, vegetables, fruits and dairy products. But as far as the production of edible oil was concerned, it was far from meeting the domestic demand. To attain self-sufficiency in edible oil production and to save the foreign exchange outgo, the Tamil Nadu government had launched the programme. To encourage the farmers to take to oil palm cultivation it was extending a total subsidy of Rs. 28,100 per ha for a period of four years, the gestation period the plant would take to come to fruit-bearing stage. Mr. Sampath further said that during the four-year period the farmers could go in for intercropping of sugarcane, banana and tapioca. The government would be extending 50 per cent subsidy for the intercropping too. The Collector underscored the point that Villupuram district had the ideal agro-climatic conditions to raise oil palm plantations.

CM to attend farmers' meeting on August 22



Ministers and farmers at the 'bhoomi puja' held at the meeting venue in Madurai on Sunday.— Photo: G.Moorthy

Chief Minister Jayalalithaa will visit Madurai on August 22 to participate in a public meeting organised by farmers of five southern districts to thank her for State's victory in the Mullaperiyar dam issue. She would address the farmers and public at 3 p.m. A 'bhoomi puja' was performed at the meeting venue on Sunday morning in which six Ministers from five southern districts, led by party treasurer O. Pannerselvam, Mayor

V.V. Rajan Chellappa, MPs and MLAs took part.R. Arul Prakasam, a member of Periyar Irrigation System Planning Committee, said the British engineer, Col. Pennycuick, constructed the dam to alleviate hunger in southern districts.However, farmers and people of the districts suffered for the last 35 years for want of adequate water.“It is Chief Minister Jayalalithaa who has helped us by courageously downing the shutters of the dam (and raising water level to 142 feet). For us she is the living Pennycuick.”

Hassan farmers shifting from coconut to pomegranate cultivation

SATHISH G.T.



Many farmers in Arsikere taluk are cutting the coconut trees to go for alternative crops.— PHOTO: PRAKASH HASSAN

Earlier, Arsikere taluk was known for coconut farms	Now, farmers say pomegranate is a lucrative crop	Trend was set in by Ambinakere Rudresh in 2010	He claims to have earned a profit of Rs. 29 lakh this year	Over 11 lakh coconut trees withered in Hassan district in the last three to four years
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Continuous drought and low returns stated to be the reason

Arsikere taluk, which was once known for coconut farms, is gradually losing that distinction as farmers are shifting to the cultivation of pomegranate and other crops which are more lucrative. In recent days, many farmers are getting attracted to pomegranate, considering its high price in the market. Many of them have cut the coconut trees only to grow pomegranate in the last few years.Ambinakere Rudresh of Ambinakere in Arsikere taluk was the first among farmers to cut coconut trees to grow pomegranate in 2010. “I have a few friends in Chitradurga district, where many farmers are growing pomegranate and earning well. I cut three-year-old coconut trees in my 3.5-acre plot and cultivated pomegranate. In the first year, I earned a net profit of Rs. 29 lakh,” he said.In

the first year, he reaped 3,000 boxes of 12 kg. each. “I had to spend about Rs. 9 lakh to grow pomegranate. The net profit was Rs. 29 lakh. In the second year, the yield was about 4,000 boxes. This year, I have already sold about 4,000 boxes and another 2,500 boxes are in stock,” Mr. Rudresh said. His successful venture has inspired many farmers in the taluk. “Initially, I was the only farmer to grow pomegranate. I used to carry fruits to Bangalore to sell. Now, merchants come to farms and purchase the fruits on the spot,” he said. He shares his experience with other farmers interested in following him. He is happy that after he started growing pomegranate, his lifestyle improved and he could provide good education to his two children. Lokesh, a farmer at D.M. Kurke, a village in Arsikere taluk, recently cut the coconut trees in his land to take up floriculture. It is not the horticulture crops alone that the farmers have shifted to. Many have cultivated ginger in the erstwhile coconut fields.

Central team’s visit

More than 11 lakh coconut trees have either withered or damaged in Hassan district in the last three to four years owing to continuous drought. A Union government committee, headed by Gorakh Singh, visited the farms in Hassan and Tumkur districts and submitted a report to the government, recommending ways to promote alternative crops in the region. The State government has announced a financial package of Rs. 12,000 a hectare, for each farmer holding up to a maximum of two hectare of land, to promote alternative farming.

Good rainfall has spurred sowing of paddy in Mysore region

LIAQH A. KHAN

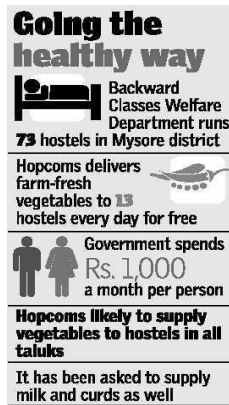


Sowing is in full swing in paddy fields across Mysore region.— Photo: M.A. SRIRAM

Good rainfall in the Cauvery catchment area and the discharge of water from Krishnaraja Sagar (KRS) and Kabini reservoirs has spurred paddy sowing in Mysore and adjoining regions. Agriculture Department officials said that paddy farmers, who had been preparing their fields for cultivation over the last few weeks, had begun sowing operations after the authorities recently released water from the reservoirs. Sowing operations appeared to be in full swing in paddy fields of Mysore region on Sunday. Shivananjegowda, a farmer from a village near Belagola on the outskirts of Mysore, who was overseeing sowing operations on his two acres of paddy fields, appeared a bit concerned over rising labour costs. “Nowadays labourers demand Rs. 300 for each day of work. If they bring a pair of bullocks to plough the land, they will charge Rs. 600 per day. I convinced them to accept Rs. 250 per day, but I am arranging for their lunch, tea and beedis. They start their day by 7.30 am and end by 1.30 pm,” he said. The discharge of water from the reservoirs has also seen several farmers seeding sugarcane. “Unlike crops in rain-fed areas, cultivation of paddy and sugarcane is dependent on water from irrigation canals,” said Kurubur Shanthakumar, president of the Sugarcane Growers’ Association. Sowing of ragi, jowar, groundnuts and other crops in rain-fed areas had started several weeks ago, said Agriculture Department officials. According to Joint Director of Agriculture, Mysore, Mahanteshappa, the district had received 372.7 mm of rainfall till the last week of July this year, which was 93 per cent of the average of 401 mm rainfall (till the last week of July). The annual average rainfall in the district is 801.4 mm. For the season 2014-15, the department had targeted sowing operations in 4.19 lakh hectares of the district, comprising 3.01 lakh rain-fed area and 1.18 lakh of irrigated land, during the monsoon. Sowing operations were completed in 2.21 lakh hectares, including 2.13 lakh hectares in rain-fed areas. Sowing operations in irrigated areas began only since the last week of July when water was released from the reservoirs. Barely 8,000 hectares, or 7 per cent of the total 1.18 lakh hectares of irrigated land, had been sown till the last week of July, the official said.

Backward class hostels in taluks likely to get farm-fresh veggies

SHANKAR BENNUR



The Backward Classes Welfare Department is planning to give the contract of supplying farm-fresh vegetables and fruits to hostels run by it in taluks to the Horticultural Producers' Co-operative Marketing and Processing Society (Hopcoms), as it is satisfied with the quality of vegetables supplied to the hostels in the city. The Hopcoms delivers vegetables to 13 hostels every day in the city. "Vegetables are supplied based on the orders made by hostels," said T. Jaware Gowda, District Officer, Department of Backward Classes, Mysore. He told *The Hindu* that earlier, there were complaints about the quality of vegetables being used. Wardens had been given the freedom to purchase vegetables and fruits as per the needs of each hostel, he said. In the wake of these complaints, the department consulted Hopcoms, which agreed to supply vegetables directly to hostels without additional delivery charges. Mr. Gowda said, "There have been no complaints after Hopcoms started supplying vegetables. If vegetables are not purchased, the money set aside will go back to the government. It is up to the hostel wardens to purchase them and provide nutritious food to those in the hostels." The government spends Rs. 1,000 a month (barring expenses on rice) per person in the hostel and 30 to 40 per cent of the money is spent on vegetables, fruits and eggs. "Door delivery of vegetables at no extra cost is an advantage for us," he said. Mr. Gowda said the department asked Hopcoms to supply vegetables and fruits to hostels outside the city. "Initially, it expressed its inability as it involved reaching out to hostels located in

remote areas of the district, but it later agreed to consider the proposal.”The department runs 73 hostels in the district with over 5,000 people. “We have asked the Hopcoms to supply milk and curds as well,” he said.

E-learning centre wins award

The Centre for E-Learning (CEL) of the Kerala Agricultural University (KAU) has won the prestigious World Education Summit Award, 2014 and the South West India Digital Empowerment Foundation (DEF) Award, which were announced and distributed over the weekend. While the World Education Summit Award-2014 for the best educational ICT (Information and Communication Technology) initiative in public sector was presented in a function held in New Delhi on August 8, the DEF award was presented in a ceremony held at Raj Bhavan, Pune, on August 7. The CEL project team - P. Ahamed, A. Sakeer Husain and Nithin K.M. - received the award.

Sugarcane growers threaten stir over non-payment of dues

ATIQ KHAN

As the stalemate over payment of cane price arrears in Uttar Pradesh grows with the private mill owners locked in a dispute with the State Government, the sugarcane growers have threatened to launch a protracted agitation over non-payment of dues. Unlike in the past when dharnas and agitations were staged at the gates of the defaulter sugar mills, the farmers this time round have threatened to lay siege and force the closure of units, other than sugar factories, owned by the mill owners in Noida, Greater Noida, Modinagar and Ghaziabad. Similar protests would be held in Gorakhpur and Bareilly districts. A dharna will be staged at the U.P. Ganna Kisan Sansthan in Lucknow. Sugarcane price dues amounting to Rs. 5,380 crore has been pending on the private sugar mills and action by the State Government has also been taken against the defaulters. In fact, the Chief Secretary, Alok Ranjan has made it clear that in the interest of the sugarcane growers arrears will have to be paid by the mill owners.

Suspend operations

Matters have come to a head with the UP Sugar Mills Association (UPSMA), an affiliate of Indian Sugar Mills Association, serving a notice to the State Government on August 4 to suspend the cane crushing operations in 2014-2015 sugar season. The sugar season normally begins in October-November. Accusing the State Government of betraying the industry's cause, the Association has questioned the rationale of "arbitrarily, unilaterally and unreasonably" increasing the State Advised Price (SAP) of cane.

The UPSMA has claimed that while the SAP in the last four years has gone up by 70 per cent, the sugar price has increased by seven per cent. The Association, in its release dated August 5, has said the problem of cane price arrears will come up again next season. "The mill owners want the growers to give up sugarcane farming which would enable them to import sugar from outside the State and sell it at a premium," alleged Rakesh Tikait, the spokesperson of Bhartiya Kisan Union (BKU), which has given a call for the agitation from August 12. He alleged the mill owners took all the benefits from the Government, but when it comes to the payment of sugarcane price dues different types of excuses are given. "It has been over five months since the 2013-2014 sugar season ended in March this year, but the dues have not been paid, the farmers are debt-ridden", he said. The BKU spokesman told *The Hindu* from Shamli on Sunday that beginning August 12, the farmers will force the closure of non-sugar factories, showrooms and other utilities owned by the mill owners in Noida, Greater Noida and Ghaziabad. These units have been set up from the money earned from the sugar industry, the BKU spokesman alleged. "The dharna phase is over," Mr. Tikait said. Schools and hospitals managed by the mill owners have been kept out of the proposed protests, he added. Interestingly, the Sugar Mills Association has blamed the State Government for disturbing the "cordial symbiotic relationship between the 40 lakh farmers and the mills". The Association has warned the Government that if the sugar mills are not able to operate, State's rural

economy will face a serious setback, including to the 40 lakh farmers, workers, labourers and sugar consumers.

RBI's scheme of rescheduling farm loans comes with riders

RESTRICTED RELIEF RELIEF ONLY TO SHORT-TERM PRODUCTION LOANS IN SRIKAKULAM, VIZIANAGARAM, NELLORE AND KRISHNA DISTRICTS

- Rescheduling of loans will be limited to a period of **3 years**
- If the loan remains overdue after three years, banks will recover them from farmers
- RBI says it has taken a "considered and sympathetic" view to enable flow of credit to farmers

Government should deposit cash directly in farmer's account

The Reserve Bank of India has finally agreed for rescheduling of crop loans for which the Andhra Pradesh government lobbied hard but with several riders that include restricting the coverage to “some farm loans” in four districts and not including those taken against gold. In a letter sent to the Chief Secretary, I. Y. R. Krishna Rao on August 7, the RBI further restricted the relief only to short-term production loans extended by commercial, cooperative and regional rural banks in the four districts of Srikakulam, Vizianagaram, Nellore and Krishna which it said, was based on normative criteria. Loans taken for allied agriculture activities would not be eligible. The other loans not eligible for “crop loan scheme for reschedulement” include advances against pledge or hypothecation of agriculture produce other than standing crop, “tied loans” and closed crop loan accounts. The reschedulement will be limited to a period of three years, comprising one -year moratorium and two years reschedulement. The RBI has also made it clear that the banks will not forego the right to recovery from farmers if the loan remains overdue after the lapse of three years. The eligible amount for reschedulement would be limited to the amount of crop loan together with applicable interest which is disbursed between April and October 2013, as of March 31 or Rs. 1 lakh per farmer, whichever is lower. Where the amount is paid by the government, it must be deposited in cash directly in the farmer’s account. The RBI said it had taken a “considered and sympathetic” view to enable unimpeded flow of credit to the farmers in the ongoing kharif season and to ensure that the present agricultural operations are not hampered.

Chennai

Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather



Monday, Aug 11

Max Min

Partly Cloudy

36° | 26°

Rain: 0

Sunrise: 05:54

Humidity: 40

Sunset: 06:34

Wind: normal

Barometer: 1002

Tomorrow's Forecast



Tuesday, Aug 12

Max Min

Partly Cloudy

36° | 26°

Extended Forecast for a week

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

Saturday

Sunday

Aug 13

Aug 14

Aug 15

Aug 16

Aug 17



34° | 25°

34° | 25°

34° | 26°

34° | 26°

34° | 26°

Cloudy

Cloudy

Partly Cloudy

Partly Cloudy

Cloudy

Airport Weather

Chennai

Chennai

Rain: 0

Sunrise: 05:55

Humidity: 84

Sunset: 06:32

Wind: normal

Barometer: 1007



THE NEW INDIAN EXPRESS

Parliament Braces for WTO Storm After PM Dig

Parliament is likely to witness a major uproar on Monday with the Congress all set to raise the issue of WTO agreement following Prime Minister Narendra Modi's remark that the UPA government had compromised on the food security issue at a ministerial conference in Bali. Former commerce minister Anand Sharma said the Prime Minister's argument was misleading, and since Parliament is in session, the Congress would raise the issue to clear the air on the Bali accord, signed by the UPA government last year. "Modi's claim of standing up for food security in the interest of farmers by taking a stand opposed to the one taken by the UPA government is misleading and aims at confusing the people," Sharma said. He added that the PM's statement differs from the one given by Commerce Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on August 5. Sitharaman had told the Lok Sabha that India had sought a permanent solution on subsidies on account of public stockholding for food security purposes. Sharma, who is the Deputy Leader of Congress in Rajya Sabha, said in a statement that when both the Houses are in session, it becomes a question of privilege of the members to know what is the truth. Addressing the BJP National Executive on Saturday, Modi had slammed the Congress for double speak on the WTO agreement. He said the NDA government chose to take a tough stand in the recent WTO talks as it has to protect the interest of the poor rather than look for good publicity in the international media. "During the (Lok Sabha) poll campaign, the Congress was seeking votes in the name of food security. But they had agreed to the pact in WTO which ensured that the poor won't get food," he said. Sharma countered that the PM's statement was confusing as food security is a sovereign right and has never been a part of the WTO agenda. "It is embarrassing that the Prime Minister is confusing the right of public stockholding issue with the sovereign right of food security," he said. On July

25, Nirmala Sitharaman made a statement in the WTO General Council conveying that the adoption of the Trade Facilitation Protocol must be postponed till a permanent solution on public stockholding for food security is found. Justifying India's stand of not joining the agreement, she had argued that the developing countries are finding themselves hamstrung by the existing rules in running their food stockholding and domestic food aid programmes. She added that a permanent solution on food security is a must for India and the country cannot wait endlessly while the WTO engages in an academic debate on the subject. "Without a permanent solution, public stockholding programmes in India and other developing countries will be hampered by the present ceiling on domestic support which is pegged at 10 per cent of the value of production and is wrongly considered as trade-distorting subsidy to farmers under existing WTO rules," Sitharaman had said.

Inspiring Tales of 101 Successful Farmers in Thiruvananthapuram



Farming is not something that every Tom, Dick and Harry can do, but only by those who have a soul that is passionate towards the soil. The success stories of those with the soul have now taken the form of a book. Agriculture Technology Management Agency (ATMA) Thiruvananthapuram has published 'Saphalyam - 101 Success Stories' profiling the lives of 101 farmers in the district. The book, published recently, has descriptions on agriculturists who have made farming a way of, rather than a means of, life. "It took around six months to collect and compile the information and publish the book. It was the first time that a special fund was allotted to bring out such a unique publication," said ATMA state coordinator V Vinod. Farmers from 11 block panchayats

have found a place in the book. There is the story of a group of women led by Shereefa Beevi of Anachal in Vamanapuram who cultivates paddy on three acres of leased land, apart from tapioca, plantain and vegetables. The story of Geetha, from Nandiyode, will inspire anyone who has a heart to listen as she cultivates paddy, vegetables and grows coconut on five acres. Geetha, who has won many agricultural awards, is an advocate of integrated farming method and proves its benefits through her own experiments. Sajith Kumar of Tholicode in Kattakkada panchayat has tasted success in dairy farming. He supplies 80 litres milk per day to Panaykkode Milk Society. Sajith Kumar has built a cow shed with a biogas plant, adjacent to which is a rainwater harvesting tank. 'Saphalyam' tells about Santhosh D S of Vellamkettupara, Tholicode, a school dropout in seventh standard who has achieved big success in beekeeping. Reji of Aryanad has been featured in the book for growing rabbits in a commercially successful way, while Gopakumar of Kottur has found his place among the 101 for fruitfully experimenting with hi-tech farming. A women's group of 16 members in Vattiyoorkavu presents a model that can be emulated. When Vattiyoorkavu was merged with the City Corporation, there arose a shortage of land for farming owing to the effects of urbanisation. Then, 35 residents' associations joined together and stressed the need to start farming. They prioritised the requirements, like accessibility of farming equipment, seed and organic manure. A group of 16 women was formed and given guidelines for producing saplings, distributing high-breed seeds and earthworm compost, among other things, which they have been doing in a commendable way now. Raveendran from Kochulloor, who holds a Limca Book record for producing a giant yam, is among the 101 farmers of 'Saphalyam'. Similar books have already been published in Kozhikode, Kannur, Wayanad and Kottayam with successful stories of local farmers. The publications from the rest of the districts will follow soon.

Tomato Prices Finally Come Down



After tomato prices hit through the roof last month, people of this city can finally heave a sigh of relief as tomato prices in Hyderabad have come down to their lowest level in the past few weeks. A kg tomato which cost around Rs 37 on Saturday has come down to `33 on Sunday. According to Laxmi Naryana, Supervisor at Mehdipatnam Rythubazar the supply of Tomatos has increased to the city from last Friday. “There has been continuos supply from Adilabad district from Friday. We are expecting more supply in coming weeks” said Laxmi Narayana. Even after the reduction in prices at Rythubazar, tomatoes continue to extremely expensive in retail shops. They are being sold at Rs 40 at retail shops in the city. However, the reduction of the price from Rs 37 to Rs 33 has come as a welcome sign for the citizens. Even as tomato prices have reduced, the price of carrot (the only vegetable to have a price hike) has shot up significantly. Cost of carrot has increased from Rs 47 to Rs 58 over the past couple of days. The prices of the rest of the vegetables, though, has remained constant. Some other vegetables like brinjal and ladies finger also saw a slight decrease in their prices. Subsidised onions in government Rythubazars are being sold for Rs 18.50 per Kg while Brinjal costs Rs 11. Officials of Mehedipatnam Rythubazar have hinted that the prices of other vegetables might also go down in next few days. Earlier, the skyrocketing of tomato prices resulted in several protests. Some youngsters also took part in the Annual Tomatino Festival using fake balls rather than real tomatoes to display their angst over the increase in prices.

Business Standard

Odisha traders want waiver of VAT on pulses, wheat products



Traders in the state have threatened to go on strike if the state government fails to withdraw five per cent VAT (value added tax) on sales of pulses, wheat and wheat products by August end. "Odisha being a consuming state, VAT on flour, suji, maida and pulses should not be levied. The levy is not there in 23 states of the country," Sudhakar Panda, secretary of the Odisha Traders' Association told media persons on the side line of launching of fortified wheat flour by Shree Jagannath Flour Mills and Subhalaxmi Industries in association with Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN) and Roller Flour Millers Federation of India (RFMFI). Consumption of pulses in the state stood at about nine lakh tonnes with a business turnover of about Rs 4,500 crore. Odisha manages to produce only 10 per cent of the total demand. State government collects about Rs 30 crore VAT on pulses against the target of Rs 225 crore due to unfair business practices adopted by the traders, he added. Traders said, five per cent VAT is making the price of food items less competitive compared to their counterparts in other states resulting in rise of unfair practices to avoid the levy. In pulses alone the price difference comes to about Rs 300 per quintal. Instead of VAT, the state government can levy one per cent entry tax, which would earn it about Rs 50 crore per annum, Panda said. "The association has taken up the matter with the government many times. If no corrective measure is taken by the government by August end, we will take a final call on the issue. We may even go for strike," he warned. Flour mills generally depend on Bihar

and West Bengal for procurement of wheat. Due to non- viability, only 20 mills out of 50 mills in the state are in operation, said a miller. State consumes about three lakh tonne of wheat and wheat products. With the imposition of one per cent of entry tax and removal of VAT, the state can earn more revenues as the neighbouring states are relying on Andhra Pradesh and West Bengal ports for import of pulses, traders said. India imports about Rs 80,000 crore worth of pulses annually.

THE ECONOMIC TIMES

Kamrup Chamber of Commerce wants withdrawal of Agriculture tax in Assam



For encouraging the organic farming in Assam, Kamrup Chamber of Commerce (KCC) sought withdrawal of tax on the agricultural farming. It has sought cropping on the dry lands on the River Brahmaputra. In the pre budget meeting with the Chief Minister, Tarun Gogoi who is also in charge of the finance department, KCC has sought withdrawal of tax on agriculture. "This will encourage investment in this sector." To develop Northeast India into organic exporting zone, the Union budget has proposed Rs 100 Crore for development of commercial organic farming. KCC sought development of cold storage in all the districts of Assam. It has pointed out that West Bengal has over 500 cold storage and in Assam there is just 17 such storage. KCC president, M.P Jain said that the river bank of Brahmaputra becomes dry in major part in between November

to March." Contract farming can be encouraged for cultivation of perishable crop during the dry period. This land is suitable for potato cultivation." Assam heavily depends upon import of potato from outside the region to meet its requirement. Northeast region requires around 8000 tones of potatoes per week.