

THE HINDU

Tamil university to develop farm

Tamil University is involved in preparing a book on the history of science in Tamil Nadu, said M.Thirumalai, Vice-Chancellor, Tamil University, here on Monday. Speaking at the senate meeting of the university, Mr.Thirumalai said that herbal farm in the university would be developed by planting hundred more saplings. For this, the university would sign an agreement with Tamil Nadu Agriculture University and Tamil Nadu Paper Mills Ltd, he said. The university would bring out publications on Tholkappiam, Bharathidasan's works, and Nalayira Divya Prabantham.K.M.Sekar, director, Tamil Development, said that a sum of Rs.81 crore has been allocated for 32 schemes this year. Of this, Rs. 45 crore has been allotted for Tamil University

'Nelli' fetches better price than mango here

J. PRAVEEN PAUL JOSEPH

Indian gooseberry, also known as amla, fetches better price than mango in the market in Tirunelveli district. The soaring price of the high medicinal value crop, being cultivated in Radhapuram, Alangulam, Pappakkudi and Cheranmahadevi blocks, has kept farmers happy. 'Nelli' is sold for Rs.30 to Rs.35 a kg, while mangoes (Neelam) are sold at Rs.20 to Rs.25 at the Alangulam market. Kerala is the major buyer of amla from Tirunelveli. 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 dried state, which is not possible in other fruits. Extracts of the fruit are mostly used in ayurvedic and homeopathic preparations to prevent grey hair and hair-fall. Tirunelveli district is blessed with a unique feature of having both tropical crops such as mango, guava, lime, sappota and amla and temperate crops such as mangosteen, rose apple, rambutan, pepper, arecanut, nutmeg and clove, contributing 31,431 hectares of horticultural crops. Flowers are also grown on 1,375 hectares.

Integrated farming in five blocks this year

Integrated farming system is to be introduced in five blocks in Tuticorin district this year. Collector M. Ravikumar said here on Monday that it would be launched in the dry areas of Kayathar, Kovilpatti, Ottapidaram, Pudur and Udangudi. Only one or two blocks had been identified for implementation of this system in other districts this year. It was implemented in Vilathikulam and Sathankulam blocks in Tuticorin district last year. Under this system, farmers would be exposed to cropping, animal husbandry, fishery, forestry etc., so that they could augment their income instead of depending on a single crop. Under the guidance of agriculture officials, vermicompost unit and sprinkler

unit would be installed on farmers' lands. Every beneficiary would get 11 goats and 30 country chicken and receive guidance from Animal Husbandry officials. A pond would be dug for farmers to rear fish. Every beneficiary would get agricultural inputs worth Rs. 1.35 lakh with 50 per cent subsidy, he said. Joint Director of Agriculture N.K. Dhakshinamoorthy said 60 per cent of activities had been completed in Vilathikulam block. Coconut farming had been taken up in Sathankulam block. Coconut seedlings were being kept for distribution. Farmers there were waiting for the monsoon to prepare the fields. Besides subsidy for the plants, tree climbing equipment and micronutrient mixture would be given to coconut farmers, he said.

Endosulfan victims not getting monthly pension

GANESH PRABHU

More than 300 persons affected by spraying of the insecticide endosulfan are not receiving their monthly pensions in Kundapur taluk, Ravindranath Shanbhag, president of Human Rights Protection Foundation (HRPF), has said. Addressing presspersons here on Monday, Dr. Shanbhag said that the volunteers of HRPF visited 27 villages of Kundapur taluk in Udipi district after more than 200 persons affected by endosulfan complained about not receiving pension and other issues connected to relief and smart cards, to Vaishali Hegde, *amicus curiae* appointed by the High Court of Karnataka, during her visit to Kundapur 10 days ago. The officials of the Health Department had promised release of the pending pensions by August 4 during Ms. Hegde's visit. But the department had failed to keep the promise. In June 2013, the Health Department officials gave in writing to the High Court that pension would be paid to the affected persons by the 10th of every month. But when volunteers of HRPF visited the villages in Kundapur taluk on August 7 and 8, there were more than 300 complaints about monthly pension. Most of them had received monthly pensions only for February 2014, while others had received pensions for two months. The HRPF volunteers could not find any person who had received his pension continuously from February 2014 to July 2014.

No smart cards

According to an agreement between the Health Department and Kasturba Hospital in Manipal, the hospital would provide free treatment to endosulfan victims who possessed smart cards. But many victims complained they had not received smart cards from the Health Department. As per the directions of the High Court, those with disabilities below 25 per cent were not entitled to any pension. Those with disabilities from 25 per cent to 60 per cent should get a monthly pension of Rs. 1,500, while those having disabilities over 60 per cent should get Rs. 3,000. There were differences in opinion between the Health and Revenue departments over the pension amount, with the latter stating that those with more than 60 per cent disabilities were entitled only to Rs. 1,500 per month. Some victims had even got letters stating that they were wrongly given Rs. 3,000 as monthly pension and that they were entitled to only Rs. 1,500.

Year of birth

As the spraying of endosulfan began in 1980, the officials were under the impression that only those who were born after 1980 were affected by spraying of endosulfan and entitled to get compensation. While this was true, some senior citizens too were affected due to this spraying, with diseases such as schizophrenia, skin diseases, cancer and hormonal imbalance manifesting in them, Dr. Shanbhag said.

Villages list

The Forest Department had given a list of 54 villages where endosulfan had been sprayed, to the health department. Both the revenue and health departments were considering the affected persons from these villages only. However, HRPF volunteers found that there were endosulfan-affected persons in other villages too.

High Court directs Agriculture Secretary to act on former MLA's plea

The Madras High Court on Monday directed the State Agriculture Secretary to consider former MLA M. Appavu's representation that crop insurance benefits should be extended to individual agriculturists in case of crop loss. A decision should be taken within two months. Mr. Appavu said there should be no condition to assess crop damages at firka or taluk level while sanctioning insurance claims to farmers. The First Bench, comprising Chief Justice S.K. Kaul and Justice M. Sathyanarayanan, said the decision taken should be duly communicated to the petitioner within a week. A three-time MLA, representing Radhapuram constituency in Tirunelveli district from 1996, Mr. Appavu claimed in view of the losses in cultivation and enforcement of recovery of agricultural loans by banks, nearly 86.50 per cent of suicides by farmers occurred. However, the governments did not take any action to protect farmers. A mere waiver of agricultural loans alone would not be a permanent solution and a multi-pronged strategy was needed. The former MLA said the Modified National Agricultural Insurance Scheme was disappointing. It was only a formal scheme and there was no real benefit to farmers. As per the scheme, the Tamil Nadu government paid 50 per cent of the premium and remaining was paid by agriculturists. Insurance reimbursement was being shared equally by the State and the Centre. The petitioner's grievance was that agriculturists would get the benefit only if the crop loss was total in a revenue firka (five villages.) There was no insurance cover for the loss sustained by individual agriculturists. The number of farmers benefitted under the Agricultural Insurance Scheme in Tamil Nadu from 2008-09 to 2011-12 and the sum distributed during the period clearly showed that the insurance scheme did not actually reach the poor families. While in 2008-09 the number of farmers who registered themselves under the insurance scheme was 9.98 lakh, only 5.51 lakh got the benefit. In 2011-12, 8.48 lakh insured themselves and only 97,000 were benefitted.

Forest department vacancies will be filled this year: CM

Vacancies in forest department will be filled by this year, Chief Minister Jayalalithaa told the Assembly on Monday. In the forest department as well as its three corporations (Arasu Rubber Corporation, Tamil Nadu Tea Plantation Corporation and Tamil Nadu Afforestation Plantation Corporation), nearly 650 posts were lying vacant. The vacancies would be filled through the Uniformed Services Recruitment Board of the Forest Department. The Chief Minister announced the creation of 15th Wildlife Sanctuary in Tirunelveli. The new sanctuary is carved out of biodiversity rich areas in the district. The State already has 14 sanctuaries, five national parks, four tiger reserves, four elephant reserves, three biosphere reserves and one Protected Reserve Area. Ossudu lake in Villupuram district will be declared as the 15th birds sanctuary, she said.

Free goats distributed

Minister for Higher Education P. Palaniappan gave away free goats under the Chief Minister's Special Schemes to 83 beneficiaries at a function held in Noolaalli panchayat in Dharmapuri on Sunday. Addressing the function, Mr. Palaniappan said that the scheme was introduced by the Chief Minister with a view to improve the livelihood of the rural and poor women and also to pave way for another 'White Revolution'. As many as 450 milch cows worth Rs. 1.59-crore were distributed to rural people during the last financial year in Dharmapuri. It has been planned to distribute 150 milch cows during the current fiscal. 450 milch cows gave birth to 366 calves so far, Mr. Palaniappan added. The goats were given to 12,594 beneficiaries during the last three years. The minister assured that a compound wall of the Government school in Noolaalli panchayat would be built under the MLA Local Area Development Fund. Collector K. Vivekanandan presided. A. Shankar, District Revenue Officer among others participated.

Farmers sit on fast over move to acquire land

Government has proposed to set up an industrial complex in Pudukottai

Members of the Tamil Nadu Vivasayigal Sangam affiliated to the Communist Party of India and Communist Party of India (Marxist) staged a fast here on Monday against acquisition of land for the proposed SIPCOT industrial complex in the district. The agricultural fabric of the district would be disturbed and farmers would lose their livelihood if the lands were acquired for the project, they said. S. Ponnusamy, district secretary, Tamil Nadu Farmers Association, said that authorities have proposed to acquire land in a cluster of villages including Themmavur, Chinna Ooranipatti, Karadivayal, Vaduthavayal, Pappudaiyanpatti, and Rawoosapatti in Kundrandarkovil block for the purpose. As all these villages had fertile land areas, the administration should identify some other site for setting up the industrial complex, he said. M. Chinnadurai, district secretary of the CPI (M), said that farmers have been organising series of agitations over the past couple of months against the proposed

complex. Authorities should realise the sensitive nature of the issue and evolve an alternative and viable solution, he said.

58,000 hectares to come under samba in Pudukottai, Ariyalur

Various departments associated with farm-related services have been geared to draft and execute an action plan for extending assistance to bring the targeted 28,000 hectares under samba cultivation this year, said C.Manoharan, District Collector. The departments of Agriculture and Cooperation and the Tamil Nadu Generation and Distribution Corporation have drafted an action plan, the Collector said at the meeting convened to discuss the arrangements for the forthcoming samba season. The agriculture department has been directed to organise pre-season campaign in all villages. Adequate quantity of fertilizer and certified seeds would be stocked to help farmers access them without any delay, he said. The cooperative department has been directed to sanction farm loans to all eligible farmers expeditiously. Mr. Manoharan said that Revenue and Agriculture departments and Tamil Nadu Agricultural University would work in tandem for setting up the agricultural college and research centre sanctioned by the Chief Minister on the floor of the Assembly, he said. Santhosh Kumar, Project Director, District Rural Development Agency, was present.

ARIYALUR: At a similar meeting held here on Monday, E. Saravanelraj, District Collector, said that adequate arrangements had been made for bringing 30,000 acres under samba in Tirumanur, T. Pazhur, and Jayamkondam taluks. About 222 tonnes of certified seeds had been stocked at agricultural extension centres and arrangements have been made for distribution of seeds through cooperative depots and private units. The Collector said that system of rice intensification method could be adopted in 25 villages for improving the yield by four tonnes an acre. Motivation campaigns would be organised till the end of the month, he said and appealed to farmers to get maximum advantage of the same. He assured that banks would sanction farm credit expeditiously.

Implement Recognition of Forest Rights Act'



Wide variety: Millets and traditional products on display at an exhibition organised during the South Zone-level Tribal Meet 2014, in Salem.- PHOTO: P. GOUTHAM

Various tribal associations have demanded that Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006 be implemented in Tamil Nadu

and parts of South India without further delay. This was one of the resolutions passed during the South Zone-level Tribal Meet 2014 held here on Saturday. Organised by Tribal Development Programme (TAFSC), Collective for Action of Forest Adivasi in Tamil Nadu (CAFAT) and Tribal Adivasigal Amaipugalin Kootamaippu (TAAK), the meet discussed challenges tribals faced in the State and rights that were denied to them despite suitable laws being in place. Resolutions included one that said tribal areas in South India should be brought under the Fifth Schedule of the Constitution. They said that tribes and forest dwellers who are depending on the forest for their livelihood should not be evicted until the Forest Act 2006 is implemented. The right of collecting and selling small, minor forest produce should be given to the respective Grama Sabha as per the act, they urged. Members demanded that the government must immediately grant 10 acre of land to the dependents and two acre to the landless tribal people living in the plains. Members urged the government to stop allotting forest land for mining purposes as it exploits natural wealth. The government should cancel the lease of lands given to landlords and estate owners, they urged. Schemes like Modified Area Development Approach (MADA), Integrated Tribal Development Programme (ITDP), Hill Area Development Programme (Tribal Sub-Plans) are implemented only in areas where 50 per cent people live. The schemes should be implemented in all the areas, they demanded. Other resolutions include administration of educational institutions with tribal people, action against teachers, warden for not attending anganwadi, schools in hill areas, allotment of one parliamentary constituency for tribal people in the State.

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. "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 the release of water. "There has been an appreciable increase in the storage in the dam in the past five days. But, saving of water 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.

Farmers upset over Minister's declaration

Forty-six farmers were arrested on Monday when they tried to stage a protest against Revenue Minister R.B. Udhayakumar for declaring in the Assembly that Tamil Nadu was not drought-hit. Tamilaga Vivasayigal Sangam district secretary N.A. Ramachandra Raja said farmers of Virudhunagar district had been raising the drought issue and crop damage in several farmers' grievance redressal meetings in the last few months. "Besides, we

staged at least two protests,” he said. Mr. Ramachandra Raja said that not only paddy, but also sugarcane and hundreds of coconut palms had been affected by the prolonged drought. “Even the Collector said that he had sent his report to the State Government on the drought situation in a farmers meeting,” he added. However, it was shocking that the Minister, who represented Sattur Assembly constituency in the district, had said that the State was not affected by drought. “The Minister’s announcement that Tamil Nadu is not drought-hit will affect the farmers as they will not get any compensation through the National Agriculture Insurance Scheme. Besides, the Centre will also not provide any compensation to them,” he said. District secretary of Tamil Nadu Vivasayigal Sangam A. Vijayamurugan complained that at least 50 per cent of the paddy and rain-fed crops could not be raised due to drought. “Even lift irrigation has failed the farmers due to lack of adequate water resources,” he said. Stating that farmers across the district have faced crop loss due to the drought, he said any small compensation the farmers might get by declaring the district drought-hit will help in the form of seed money for the farmers to take up farming at least in the next season. Recalling that the enumeration of crop loss came under severe criticism in 2012, Mr. Vijayamurugan said that this year the officials had taken cautious efforts in the enumeration works.

Three farm equipment hiring centres in Udupi

GANESH PRABHU

In order to encourage farmers, agricultural equipment hiring centres would be started for the first time in three places in Udupi district, Anthony Maria Immanuel, Joint Director of Agriculture, has said. He was speaking at the monthly Karnataka Development Programme (KDP) review meeting at the Zilla Panchayat here on Monday. Mr. Immanuel said these centres would be started at Byndoor, Ajekar and Brahmavar in the district. The scheme was aimed at solving the labour problem faced by small farmers. The agricultural equipment would be available for rent at prices lower than those in the market. The department had entered into a six-year agreement with the Sri Kshetra Dharmasthala Rural Development Project (SKDRDP) to run these centres, he said. The maintenance of these centres would be the responsibility of the SKDRDP. Equipment worth Rs. 50 lakh would be purchased in the current fiscal year and provided to these centres.

Paddy target

The target for paddy cultivation in the district was 45,000 hectares. So far, paddy had been transplanted in 42,000 hectares. The deficit rainfall in June had affected agricultural activities. The normal rainfall in the district during the monsoon was 2,945 mm while it had so far received 2,405 mm of rainfall, Mr. Immanuel said. The department had distributed 1,433.5 quintals of paddy seeds. While there was adequate stock of fertilizers, organic farming was being encouraged, he said.

Rain damages houses, paddy

GANESH PRABHU

Three houses and two fields were damaged by rain and strong winds in Udupi district on Monday. According to the Udupi Taluk Office, a wall of a house belonging to Kamala Sherigarti in Chanthar village collapsed. The loss has been estimated at Rs. 25,000. Another house, belonging to Girija Markalti, was partially damaged in Yedthady village and the loss was estimated at Rs. 25,000. In Herady, Jalajamma Shedti's house was damaged and the loss was estimated at Rs. 50,000. According to the Karkala Taluk Office, half an acre of a field of paddy, belonging to Ratna Poojarti, was destroyed after it became flooded. The damage has been estimated at Rs. 5,000. A paddy field belonging to Siddu Poojarti was also inundated and the loss was estimated at Rs. 10,000.

'Failure to implement Kuttanad package led to widespread crop loss'

SARATH BABU GEORGE

The widespread loss of paddy crops because of floods can be attributed to the failure in implementing the Rs.1,840-crore Kuttanad package, according to Veliyanad Mathachan, vice-chairman of the Kuttanad Development Agency, constituted by the State government and chaired by the District Collector. As per the statistics gathered by the Agriculture Department, paddy cultivation in 2,406 hectares of land has been affected so far in the prevailing monsoon, thereby resulting in losses worth Rs.40 crore. As many as 42 instances of bund breaches have been reported in the Kuttanad region.

Worst-hit area

The region coming under the Kainakary Krishi Bhavan was the most affected with the cultivation of the additional crop (Kharif crop) in 731 hectares of paddy field being damaged. Three hundred and eighty four hectares of paddy land suffered crop losses under the Ambalappuzha South Krishi Bhavan.

Bund collapse

Mr. Mathachan pointed out that bund collapses had occurred in nearly 90 per cent of paddy fields where the second round of cultivation had commenced. "At the time of its conceptualisation, the Kuttanad package was meant to incorporate the strengthening of bunds of paddy fields where the additional crop was cultivated. However, the existing form of the package did not include constructing bunds to any of the paddy polders that have been currently affected," he said.

'No priorities'

According to him, the government has failed in prioritising projects on the basis of their immediate needs. He wondered why the authorities had chosen to spend a huge amount

in resuming cultivation in the Rani-Chithira kayal paddy fields after 22 years at a time when several fields under cultivation demanded greater attention. “One-fourth of the amount spent on the Rani-Chithira paddy fields would have been sufficient in constructing bunds for the affected fields,” Mr. Mathachan said. He added that the lack of coordination among departments had led to the current state of the projects included in the Kuttanad package. He proposed entrusting the Agriculture Department with the implementation of the projects with the Kuttanad Development Agency as the nodal agency.

NIT, agriculture varsity for West Godavari in the offing

G. NAGARAJA

Tadepalligudem, a trade centre in the district till now, is likely to emerge as a hub of educational institutions post-State bifurcation. Availability of government lands at different patches around the town has put it at an advantage. Collector Bhaskar Katamneni told The Hindu that the defence lands in an extent of 270 acres presently housing an airstrip of the World War-II period abutting the Kolkatta-Chennai National Highway was identified for establishment of a National Institute of Technology (NIT). A proposal was also forwarded to the government for consideration of the forest lands close to the Horticulture University for setting up an agriculture university, Mr. Bhaskar informed. The Andhra Pradesh Horticulture University was established a few years ago on a patch of 300 acres of the Forest lands after de-notification by the government. A file for de-notification and allotment of 800 acres is pending with the Central government. The Collector said an extent of 500 acres from this patch was enough to establish the university as per the norms. Land has become the biggest constraint for premier institutes and major industries to come up in the district. Average land price in the district is anything less than Rs 20 lakh per acre and the government cannot afford to procure private lands by spending huge amounts for acquisition to establish educational institutions of national stature. Tadepalligudem is said to be in a better place on this account as it was endowed with availability of defence and forest lands. According to the Collector, Kamavarapuka area in the upland region was identified as an ideal location for coal-based industries in the wake of studies of the Geological Survey of India (GSI) which suggested availability of coal deposits. Mr. Bhaskar said Dwaraka Tirumala and Tallapudi areas were under consideration for establishing ceramic industries as they were rich in clay mineral deposits. He said the government was keen to set up another 5-6 aqua food parks with private participation in Narsapur and Bhimavaram areas in addition to the one near Bhimavaram which hit a roadblock in view of protests from local villagers.

TS releases Rs. 404 crore input subsidy to farmers

Telangana Government has issued instruction for release of Rs. 404 crore towards input subsidy to the farmers, who agriculture crops were damaged due to natural calamities from 2009 to 2014. A Chief Minister's Office press release said, additionally, Rs. 75.48 crore would also be released towards input subsidy to the affected ryots for the crop

damage due to hail storm and heavy rains between 2009-2013. The total amount to be released is Rs. 480.42 crore. The payment would be directly transferred to the bank accounts of farmers within 90 days.

Plea to develop farm sector

D. SREENIVASULU

M. Geyanand, CPI(M) MLC, urged the government to create more employment in the farm sector in order to address the growing unemployment issue. Addressing the educational and scientific workshop, sponsored by Democratic Youth Federation of India (DYFI) here on Monday, he said the 20 universities and 2186 colleges in 13 Seemandhra districts were producing four lakh fresh graduates every year. The governments at the state and centre were unable to provide employment to the young people. He asked the governments to explore the possibilities of exploiting the farm sector for productivity as well as jobs. At present, 65 per cent population was dependent on farm sector and the sector contributed 19.22 per cent to the state GDP. The sector was plagued by lower wages and short cycle employment. He said modernisation of agriculture sector was the panacea for all ills of the society. He said the centre would grossly fail to fulfil its promise of creating one crore jobs every year. He said the UPA government could succeed in creating only 5.52 lakh jobs despite the tall claims. Also, Mr. Geyanand suggested that local and smallscale industries should be encouraged for more employment.

Major sops for women, farmers in budget

SUSHANTA TALUKDAR



SCHEMES GALORE

- **Rs 50,000 each** to as many as one lakh women Self Help Groups
- Sewing machines for unmarried women and widows
- **20 power tillers** to farmers in each Assembly constituency
- Yarn and blanket to **20,000 poor** beneficiaries in each Assembly segment
- **Rs 5,000 each** to **1000 families** of poor farmers in each Assembly seat.

Assam Chief Minister Tarun Gogoi going to present the Budget on Monday. Photo: RITU RAJ KONWAR

Assam Chief Minister Tarun Gogoi on Monday presented Rs 2,357-crore deficit budget with a plan outlay of Rs 21,811 crore for 2014-15 financial year and announced a host of schemes to be taken up during the year. The proposed schemes include Rs 50,000 each to as many as one lakh women Self Help Groups; sewing machines for unmarried women and widows; 20 power tillers to farmers in each of the 126 Assembly constituencies; yarn and blanket to 20,000 poor beneficiaries in each Assembly segment; and Rs 5,000 each to 1000 families of poor farmers in each Assembly seat. In his 39-page budget speech, Mr Gogoi proposed to construct 1000 km all-weather roads and 500 new bridges. He also proposed to launch, in collaboration with the Central Government, a comprehensive programme for revival of the tea industry and a scheme for rehabilitation of the erosion-affected people. He announced that his government is ready to implement the National Food Security Act with effect from September 1 subject to clearance by the Centre. It is targeted to benefit 2.52 crore people in the State. The government will consider a proposal for creation of separate development council for the Bengali and Hindi speaking people in the State. In the agriculture sector, the government has proposed to take up creation of one lakh water harvesting structures, 25,000 vermi-compost units, 27,000 dairy related structures, 5,000 nurseries, and issuing two lakh "Soil Health Cards" to farmers. For Guwahati city, the Chief Minister proposed a sewerage project costing Rs. 1700 crore, affordable housing to ten thousand urban poor, road under bridges at five places of level crossings between Guwahati and Kamakhya railway stations. Mr Gogoi said in his speech that the next two years will be "years of consolidation of the fruits of development" and maximum emphasis will be given for timely completion of the schemes already announced. Assam will go to poll in 2016 to elect a new assembly. For the tea sector he also proposed to extend the deduction allowed at the rate of Rs. 6 per kg of tea exported through Inland Container Depot for another year and to make necessary amendment in the Plantation Development Fund Scheme, 1994 so to allow withdrawal of fund from the Plantation Development Fund for meeting the expenditure in regard to construction of houses for tea workers.

Mettur level crosses 110 feet

Water level in the Mettur dam has reached 110.71 feet, said sources in the water resources organisation of the PWD. The level stood at 110.71 feet on Monday against 108.700 feet on Sunday and the storage was 79.422 tmc against 76.576 tmc. The inflow into the dam had come down to below 50 per cent. The ban on coracle operation and bathing in main and cine falls in Hogenakkal would continue.

Chennai

Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather



Partly Cloudy

Tuesday, Aug 12

Max Min

34° | 25°

Rain: 0

Humidity: 84

Wind: normal

Sunrise: 05:56

Sunset: 06:31

Barometer: 1007

Tomorrow's Forecast



Partly Cloudy

Wednesday, Aug 13

Max Min

35° | 25°

Extended Forecast for a week

**Thursday
Aug 14**



37° | 26°

Partly Cloudy

**Friday
Aug 15**



36° | 25°

Partly Cloudy

**Saturday
Aug 16**



36° | 25°

Partly Cloudy

**Sunday
Aug 17**



35° | 25°

Cloudy

**Monday
Aug 18**



35° | 25°

Cloudy

Airport Weather

Delhi

Delhi

Rain: 0

Humidity: 100

Wind: normal

Sunrise: 05:47

Sunset: 07:05

Barometer: 1002



THE  NEW
INDIAN EXPRESS

CM's Proposal on Integrated Botanical Garden Hailed

Chief minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu's new proposal to set up an integrated botanical garden (IBG) in Araku Valley in the district has drawn good response. Experts on Ayurveda medicine and pharmaceutical sectors lauded the state government's initiative and expressed confidence that the IBG would generate good revenue and employment opportunities. Chandrababu Naidu, during his two-day visit recently, directed Visakhapatnam collector N Yuvaraj to study and plan to set up the IBG at Araku in association with the Ayurvedic Board. There are a large number of medicinal plants, shrubs, barks, roots and creepers in and around North Andhra region, especially in the agency and forest pockets. Some of the Ayurveda medicine manufacturing companies pay the tribals and deploy their staff to collect some rare medicinal plants and leaves from the agency areas. The Andhra University pharmaceutical department, on its own, had conducted a study on the medicinal plants and their history in North Andhra region, and found that a large number of tribals still use Ayurvedic medicines, prepared by themselves, for curing several diseases. "There are a huge number of medicinal plants in the region. There are plants which have commercial value. For example there is 'Bixa Orrellana' from which a powder 'Bixin' compound is prepared. The compound is used in the textile industry for colour combinations. The chief minister's proposal is a very good idea," said S Ganapathy, former professor of Andhra University and current principal of GITAM Institute of Pharmacy. Meanwhile, during the past one decade, the usage of Ayurvedic medicines has increased. Ayurvedic medical shops have also registered good sales. "Ayurveda is seeing a rise not only in health-related medicines, but also in beauty parlour products, dental care and hair fall etc., Special medicines for alcoholic addiction are also manufactured from several medicinal plants and herbs. The Araku and Paderu dense forest areas are the best places to set up an integrated botanical garden. The IBG should be set up with an aim to promote academic research and commercial sales of the products," K Yamuna, an Ayurvedic doctor and owner of an Ayurvedic medicine shop, opined. An integrated medicinal plant is a welcome move by the government and there is good scope for developing the existing botanical garden at Araku as the nearby areas are suitable for cultivation of medicinal plants, Prof Ganapathy said.

Four Shutters of Chimmony Dam Opened Owing to Rising Water Level

Four shutters of the Chimmony dam, one of the biggest irrigation dams in the district, were opened by 5 centimetres on Monday morning as the water level crossed 75.8 metre

following heavy rain in the catchment areas of the reservoir. The maximum water-level or the Full Reservoir Level (FRL) of the dam is 76.4 metre, the Chimmony irrigation project officials said. The dam shutters were opened previously in the month of July in 2011 and 2013. They were not opened at all in 2012 due to the scanty rainfall. The dam authorities also issued a statutory warning the other day saying that the shutters could be opened any time as the water-level was on the rise following heavy rain. People living on the banks of the Kurumali river and close to the irrigation canals were asked by the district administration to be vigilant about the rising water-levels following the release of water from the dam. The shutters of Vazhani Dam, another major earth dam built for irrigation purpose and promoting tourism across the Vadakkancherry puzha, one of the tributaries of Keecherripuzha, will be opened any time soon as they water-level in the dam has reached close to the full reservoir capacity. Vazhani Dam helps irrigate an area of about 3,560 hectares during summers. Two Drown Meanwhile, two people drowned in two separate rain-related incidents in Thrissur. The body of 35-year-old Reji, of Ollur, who went missing the other day, was found in a pond near Ollur on Monday morning. He reportedly slipped into the pond while fishing. The body of another man, Mahin, 48, of Vadookkara, was also found in a pond near Vadookkara crematorium. He is believed to have fallen into the pond accidentally on Sunday night, the police said.

Sea Turns Rough
Panic gripped the coastal areas of Thrissur as high tidal waves lashed the coastline from Saturday evening. The sea turned rough in parts of Kodungallur and Chavakkad taluks wrecking havoc along the coastline. Huge waves advanced to houses close to the sea, uprooting Coconut and Casuarina trees, a bio-shield against rough seas. The worst-hit areas were the Ethayi and Pokkencherry in Chavakkad taluk where the sea water entered into around 13 houses on Monday. Following such reports, C N Jayadevan MP visited the area and assured the people that the matter would urgently be brought to the attention of the Chief Minister and representatives of the Union government.

Water Level in Arch Dam Dips

Even as rains have been creating havoc in different parts of the state, the largest arch dam of Asia here has received insufficient rainfall and the water level is just 51 per cent of its total capacity as on Monday. The dam having a collection area of 60 square kilometres holds water with the help of the three dams of Idukki, Cheruthony and Kulamavu. Last year on the same day, the dam had an excess of 40 feet water at 2,397 feet against 2,356 feet recorded on Monday. The dam was inching toward the full level mark of 2,403 which was short by six feet last year. With the monsoon in its final phase, the power managers are worried over the discouraging storage in the dam. With the weather report about the monsoon on its way out, hopes of the dam touching the desired mark have been shattered, an official said. Last year, failure of the North East monsoon led to depletion of water level in the dam. The power managers are hoping that the North East Monsoon would bring an encouraging inflow to the reservoir at least this time.

Odisha Government Clueless on Potato Crisis

More than 24 hours after West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee backed out on her promise, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik appears to be clueless as how to deal with the potato crisis haunting the State. Naveen seems to be struggling to find ways to retaliate in kind after Mamata managed to effect onward movement of supplies of fish, eggs and vegetables from Andhra Pradesh through Odisha. Mamata was up to her old tricks after the ruling BJD lifted the blockade on the National Highway which they had staged in retaliation to the former's curbs on movement of vehicles carrying potato into Odisha. Meanwhile, the West Bengal Government seems to have been caught on the wrong foot for the unofficial ban on inter-State movement of trucks carrying potatoes. Protesting the unethical ban, hundreds of Bengal traders launched an agitation on Monday and threatened to intensify it, if the matter is not resolved soon. They claimed to have lost more than `100 crore in the last few days due to the unofficial ban on the supply of potatoes to outside State. The loss is expected to rise further resulting in escalation of potato prices.

Bengal Potato Traders Stand against Mamata 'Betrayal'

The West Bengal Government has been caught on wrong foot for the unofficial ban on inter-State movement of trucks carrying potatoes. Protesting the unethical ban, hundreds of Bengal traders launched an agitation on Monday and threatened to intensify it, if the matter is not resolved soon. They claimed to have lost more than `100 crores in the last few days due to the unofficial ban on the supply of potatoes to outside State. The loss is expected to rise further resulting in escalation of potato prices. Though the traders are ready for transportation of the tuber to Odisha, illegal detention of vehicles by the Bengal police at various locations and bribe demand by patrolling staff has forced them to remain unmoved. A trader, on condition of anonymity, said he had sent three trucks which were checked at least five times en route before being detained at a toll gate. "The truck drivers managed to cross the check posts paying `2,000 each at two places but they failed to convince the cops and transport officials when they demanded `5,000 at the last toll gate," he said. Meanwhile, the Bengal Government has intensified patrolling along the roads to Odisha to check movement of potato carrying trucks. An eyewitness said the police are checking each and every truck and those carrying potatoes are being returned to cold storages. On Saturday, Bengal Government led by Mamata Banerjee agreed to allow inter-State movement of trucks carrying potato after Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik spoke to her over phone on the issue. The neighbouring State apparently relented after 500 trucks carrying vegetables, eggs, fishes and other perishable items from Andhra Pradesh were detained by BJD activists at various places in Balasore. But the Bengal Government again resorted to unofficial ban after the Andhra trucks entered its

territory. Balasore Collector Aravind Agrawal, who had a talk with his West Midnapore counterpart, said the Bengal Government was yet to instruct its officers to allow the movement of trucks to Odisha. "Though after the CM-level talks, we released all the detained trucks to West Bengal, they took back all the potato-laden trucks to their State," Agrawal said. The local traders, however, said the Bengal Government will have to pay a heavy price for betraying the Odisha Government. President of District Perishable Goods Association, Ajay Biswal, said it was nothing but betrayal. "When the Bengal traders are ready to supply potato, why is the Government imposing a ban on them?" he questioned. Balasore administration said there is no reason to worry. The district has a stock of over 20,000 quintals of potato, which will be sold through PDS outlets. Civil Supply Officer DK Sahu said potato was being sold at `20 a kg through five outlets in the town and two in Soro and Nilagiri.

'Examine Agri Insurance'

Madras HC directed the government to examine suggestions made by former legislator M Appavoo with regard to introduction of agricultural insurance scheme for individual farmers, covering all crops without restricting to firka or any revenue division. The suggestions might be considered and a decision taken within two months, first bench of Chief Justice said.

THE HINDU **BusinessLine**

Coonoor tea prices plummet to year's low

Prices plummeted to a new low at Sale No: 32 of Coonoor Tea Trade Association. The average of Rs. 64.52 a kg was the lowest so far in 2014 calendar year. Even after prices were reduced, teas worth Rs. 3.79 crore remained unsold as there were no takers for 28 per cent of the offer. Homedale Estate tea, auctioned by Global Tea Brokers, topped the CTC market when RJ Tea Corporation bought it for Rs. 196. In all, 54 marks got Rs. 125 and more. Among orthodox teas, Kairbetta got Rs. 235. In all, 29 marks got Rs. 125 and more. Quotations held by brokers indicated bids ranging Rs. 43-48 a kg for plain leaf grades and Rs. 100-150 for brighter liquoring sorts. They ranged Rs. 41-49 for plain dusts and Rs. 120-180 for brighter liquoring dusts. On the export front, Pakistan bought in a wide range of Rs. 46-110 a kg.

Girnar Food to cut use of plant protection chemicals fully over 6 years



Mumbai-based Girnar Food and Beverages will reduce its usage of plant protection chemicals totally by 2020. This is part of recent initiatives taken by firms producing and marketing tea. Firms such as Hindustan Unilever and Tata Global Beverages have initiated plans to evaluate environmental friendly methods for tea crop protection in the country. Both the companies have announced their plans to produce all agricultural raw materials through sustainable crop practices by 2020. “Girnar welcomes and supports initiatives of public interest and for long-term benefits of consumers, environment and stakeholders. It is a step in the right direction for the entire tea industry,” the company said in a statement. Ongoing scientific research by the Tea Research Institute, in cooperation with the Tea Board of India, along with the inter-governmental not-for-profit organisation CABI will go a long way in improving people's lives by applying scientific expertise to improve practices in agriculture and improve the environment. In the coming weeks, authorities would review existing crop practices and the limitations of current techniques in India, according to Girnar. In cooperation with the Tea Board of India, Tea Research Institute, key industry partners Indian Tea Association and United Planters Association of South India, they will then design protocols for pilot field-trials aimed at investigating novel approaches for biological, non-pesticide management of pests aiming at a holistic rejuvenation of the eco system. These field-trials will be run in partnership with the Tea Board and tea growers on selected estates and will commence during the next growing season.

Cardamom gains flavour as demand outstrips supply

Cardamom prices gained last week as demand outstripped supply at auctions held in Kerala and Tamil Nadu. Arrivals continued to remain thin as the harvest is yet to pick up. Current arrivals are only 50 per cent of what came to the auctions at this time of the last season, market sources told *Business Line*. They said the growing regions did not receive

rains during April-June and that has resulted in a late crop. The capsules take 90 days to mature and the absence of timely rains has delayed fruit setting and its maturity. Added to this, there is not much carryover stock. Upcountry buyers are actively covering, while exporters are picking up whatever exportable grade material arrived in the market. The latter bought an estimated 30 tonnes of cardamom last week. At the Kerala Cardamom Processing and Marketing Company auction on Sunday, arrivals were 37 tonnes against 28.6 tonnes the previous Sunday. The entire quantity was sold out. The maximum price was Rs. 1,044 a kg and the minimum Rs. 404. The auction average increased to Rs. 789.16 (759). "The entire cardamom arrived at the auction was from the current crop," PC Punnoose, General Manager, KCPMC, told *Business Line*. During the current season that began this month, arrivals stood at 275 tonnes against 467 tonnes as on August 10 during the last season. Sales were 268 tonnes against 462 tonnes. The weighted average price was Rs. 767 against Rs. 585.18 the same date last year. Prices of all graded varieties (Rs./kg): AGEB 1,005-1,015; AGB 830-840; AGS 800-810 and AGS -1:780-790.

Commodities price ease as monsoon advances

Acreage catching up			
	Normal Area	2014	2013
Rice	39.10	26.73	27.31
Corn	7.00	6.67	7.73
Pulses	10.74	7.60	8.90
Tur	3.81	2.77	3.31
Urad	2.31	1.82	1.99
Oilseed	15.62	15.22	17.37
Soybean	10.11	10.31	11.88
Groundnut	3.71	3.19	3.77
Cane	4.84	4.72	5.03
Cotton	11.45	11.22	11.01

Area in million hectares; Between June 1 to August 7
Source: Agriculture Ministry



With the monsoon deficit shrinking and the Government keen to crack down on hoarders, prices of most essential commodities such as edible oil, sugar and wheat are showing signs of softening in the wholesale market. After a lacklustre start, the South-West monsoon has recovered since mid-July. The rainfall deficit has shrunk to 19 per cent currently. The deficit in central India is six per cent compared with the normal rainfall.

Sugar slips

The drop in commodity prices is rather timely, with the market expecting higher demand for the festival season. Sugar prices in the Mumbai wholesale market dropped to Rs. 3,200 a quintal on Monday from Rs. 3,280 on July 23, despite festival demand kicking in. M-grade sugar was down at Rs. 3,360 from Rs. 3,390, as most of the demand from the eastern States was being met from Tamil Nadu and Karnataka which had a good season last year, said Ravikant Narne, a Mumbai-based sugar trader. Sugar prices, however, are expected to remain under pressure as mills try to offload their inventory with the new crushing season beginning from October. Export options are less lucrative even with an export subsidy of Rs. 3,371 a tonne, as Brazil and Thailand are reporting to coming up with a bumper crop this year. Though the mills in Uttar Pradesh are exerting pressure on the Government to bring down cane prices, the country has enough stock to meet any eventuality, said Narne. Groundnut oil prices have dipped to Rs. 775/10 kg from Rs. 825, while refined soya oil was down to Rs. 630 from Rs. 660 and palmolein slipped to Rs. 553 from Rs. 580. The revival of the monsoon has resulted in the area under soyabean cultivation inching closer to last year's level.

Sowing improves

As on August 8, the area under soyabean planting was at 10.31 million hectares compared with the normal area of 10.11 million hectares. The overall oilseed planting including groundnut has improved to 15.22 million hectares, inching closer to the normal area of 15.62 million hectares. Cotton prices have also fallen sharply as the coverage has improved substantially. Gujarat Shankar 6 prices dipped to Rs. 40,000 a candy (of 356 kg) on Monday, from Rs. 42,000 on July 23. The area under cotton cultivation was at 11.22 million hectare against the normal area of 11.45 million hectare. Besides cracking down on hoarders, the Government has taken steps to improve the supply of key vegetables such as onion, potato and tomato.

Hoarding under control

The National Agriculture Co-operative Marketing Federation of India has floated a tender to import 40,000 tonnes of onion from Pakistan. The Government has already approved the import of 70,000 tonnes of onions from other countries such as Iran, Egypt and China to bridge the supply gap. "Hoarders of perishable commodities are already on tenterhooks. Tomato prices are already down to Rs. 40 a kg in the wholesale market, and it is time

other vegetables also fall in line,” said R Kishorechand, a dealer at the Vashi wholesale market near Mumbai.

Tea output to remain at last year’s level on delayed showers



Having lost crop for first four months of this fiscal due to delayed rains, the tea industry is expecting to maintain production at the last year’s level in August. The crop loss has been severe in April and May and started declining since June. According to Kamal Kishore Baheti, CFO of McLeod Russel, if the current weather trend continues, the company may not lose any production this month. McLeod is the world’s largest tea producer. What is more heartening for the industry is, notwithstanding a dip in the last week, tea prices are ruling way above the last year’s level. In Kolkata auction, CTC teas were prices were down by approximately Rs. 3 to Rs. 164.87 a kg last week (sale 32). However, when compared with the same period last year, CTC is costlier by nearly Rs. 18 a kg (approximately 12 per cent). Baheti does not foresee any downside in his earnings from large domestic sales; provided prices remain firm and, there is no further drop in quantities.

Export under pressure

The same, however, does not hold good about the exports, where volumes are now down by 15-20 per cent compared to last year and teas are fetching a wafer thin margin over last year. Following a sharp (Rs. 11 a kg) decline in prices last week, orthodox teas are now fetching Rs. 224.76 a kg, merely 2.5 per cent higher than last year. Majority of the Indian orthodox teas feed the overseas markets. The indication is strong that low realisation coupled with lower volumes sales may impact India’s export earnings from tea.

Low pressure area off TN to beef up monsoon in South

Forecasts indicate that rains may dry up over the entire northern half of the country from Sunday (August 17) except over the North-eastern States. In fact, they are forecast to get heavier as peninsular India shapes up to receive a fresh spell of moderate to heavy rain during the week starting Sunday.

Good run

Alongside, the West Coast will continue to have the good run with the monsoon even as the spell gets sparked off by a likely churn off the Tamil Nadu-Andhra Pradesh coast. Some models indicated that this could lead to the development of a low-pressure area, which is a rarity at this time and for the specific latitude for the year. Most parts of peninsular India are forecast to receive moderate to heavy (heavier on north-coastal Tamil Nadu and adjoining coastal Andhra Pradesh) as a result. At least one model suggested that the 'low' could grow into a depression; but this has failed to gain currency among peers during these as-yet early days.

Typical pattern

Rains generated by the system are forecast to grow west-northwest, as is the typical monsoon pattern, into Vidarbha, Telangana and Marathwada/Maharashtra as per indications. Alongside, the East will continue to witness rainfall as befits what would be a largely lull phase in the monsoon over the rest of the country into the third week of August. On Monday, the 'low' over east India stayed parked over south Bihar and adjoining Jharkhand, sustaining an active phase over east Uttar Pradesh and Jharkhand and, away to the west, over east Rajasthan. The track of the 'low' closer to the foothills takes the rains also into the region and parts of adjoining plains with Haryana, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar.

Persisting whirl

A remnant circulation from an earlier deep depression refused to give in and sprayed in sharp showers at times over northwest Madhya Pradesh and adjoining southwest Uttar Pradesh. The westerly to north-westerly winds blowing in from a cyclonic circulation over north Pakistan may also have helped by interacting with the system. Delhi got moderately heavy rains yesterday from a spill-over from the foothills of Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand. Otherwise rains have weakened over rest of North-West with a core now seen shifting to the South during the latter part of the week.

Business Standard

Vegetable prices surge again, put pressure on CPI inflation



Despite the prices of a number of primary vegetables remaining subdued in wholesale mandis, these are being sold at more than Rs 100 a kg in retail markets. For many of these, the prices have risen 150-200 per cent since June, putting pressure on Consumer Price Index (CPI)-based inflation. Vegetables account for 5.44 per cent of the CPI. Cauliflower and okra (bhindi) are being quoted at Rs 120 a kg here, as well as suburban markets, while ginger is priced at Rs 150 a kg and green peas Rs 160 a kg. Data compiled by Agmarknet, under the Directorate of Marketing & Inspection, Ministry of Agriculture, showed the prices of these vegetables at the wholesale market here stood at Rs 15 a kg, Rs 37 a kg, Rs 72 a kg and Rs 90 a kg, respectively. “The dramatic rise in retail prices is understandable in some cases such as cauliflower and cabbage, where weight loss stands at 50 per cent and 30 per cent, respectively. Arhatiyas procure these vegetables from farmers and sell to stockists as full plants, with big leaves and stems. Stockists remove leaves and stems, along with the unwanted portion of the plant, to make the flower attractive, resulting in a huge loss in weight. That apart, arhatiyas pay mandi tax, loading and unloading, as well as to local authorities, including municipal corporations, which costs them Rs 5-7 a kg extra. Considering this, stockists should not sell these vegetables 150 per cent higher than the wholesale price,” said Avinash Patil, deputy director of the Vashi Agricultural Produce Marketing Committee (APMC), responsible for the vegetables segment.

NO RESPITE

Vegetables model price (₹/kg), Mumbai market

Particulars	Jun 2	Augt 8	Variations (%)
Little gourd (Kundru)	10	38	280
Green chilly	14	41	193
Potato	16.25	43	165
Tomato	8	20	150
Bitter gourd	20	42	110
Bhindi(Ladies finger)	21	37	76
Carrot	14	24	71
Cabbage	7	11	57
Brinjal	13	20	54
Onion	14.5	18	24
Drumstick	33	36	9

Source: Agmark

For vegetables such as aubergine (brinjal), bitter gourd and capsicum, there’s no weight loss, though a small quantity is lost in transportation. Therefore, while selling to stockists, mandi arhatiyas often offer a marginal discount to market prices, keeping in mind the loss. “The retail price of more than Rs 100 a kg, five-six times higher than the wholesale price, is unjustifiable,” said Patil.

While the prices of cauliflower are a staggering eight times higher in the retail market (against wholesale prices), okra and peas are priced at four times and twice the wholesale market rates, respectively. Union Food Minister Ram Vilas Paswan has attributed the rise

retail prices to middlemen (arhatiyas). Speaking to Business Standard recently, Paswan had said the government would do everything possible to keep food and vegetables prices under control. "There is no government control on local retailers. Consequently, retailers first create rumours such as supply shortage and crop damage to create fear in the minds of consumers and justify the price increase. So far, they have been successful," said a senior official with a public sector vegetables monitoring company. "The government must ensure its measures reach consumers." Sanjay Bhujbal, a vegetable vendor at Vashi APMC said that the initial euphoria created due to the deficiency of the monsoon rainfalls continues in retailers mind despite situation normalizes in mandis. Interestingly, latest spells of rainfalls in major growing regions narrowed in the last two weeks.

DECCAN Chronicle

Tamil Nadu: Water level in Mettur dam at 110.71 feet



The water level in the Mettur dam on Monday stood at 110.71 feet against the full level of 120 feet. The inflow receded from 89,723 cusecs to 42,252 cusecs, while the outflow was maintained at 9,000 cusecs, Public Works Department sources said. Yesterday, the sluice gates that commonly control water levels and flow rates of the dam were thrown open for irrigation in the Cauvery delta region even as a flood alert was sounded with the water level touching 110 feet. With the dam receiving copious inflows in the past few days, Chief Minister Jayalalithaa had on Aug 9 ordered release of water for irrigation from Aug 10 instead of August 15 as announced earlier. Power generation was also started in the Mettur old power house, tunnel power house and six barrages.



Farmers appeal for release of water from Vaigai dam

A group of farmer leaders representing Periyar - Vaigai Water Users Association submitted a petition to the district collector, L Subramanian appealing to the state government to release water for irrigation during public grievance redressal day meeting held on Monday. Around 20 farmer leaders came down to the collectorate with the petition. Addressing reporters, Puthisigamani, one of leaders said that water could be released from Vaigai dam once combined water credit of Periyar and Vaigai dams exceed 4,000 mcft. As on Monday, the water credit has exceeded 4,000 mcft mark, and standing at 4,300 mcft, hence they have decided to appeal state government through district administration for water release, he said. The water released from dam will irrigate 45,000 acres land between Peranai and Kallanthiri area of Madurai district benefitting 20,000 farmers, he pointed out. After there was no water in dam by June 1 - scheduled date for water release for double crop areas - the farmers have decided to forego double crop cultivation. However, their hopes were rekindled when Periyar dam started receiving steady flow after mid-July. Hence, double and single crop farmers came together recently deciding to seek water in a phased manner. According to their logic, water could be released to double crop areas by August 15 and single crop farmers will get their due after September 15, thereby raising single crop with maximum success. The leaders from farming community have approached district administration and public works department recently with the proposal. But the district administration has decided to give a thorough study before suggesting state government on water release. A N M Thirupathi, one of the leaders said they wanted to appeal again through grievance redressal petition since they have not heard from district administration over their previous appeal. "We may have to resort to demonstrating if there is no reply still," he quipped.

Govt to set up veterinary and agri varsities in state

The state government has decided to set up two new universities in the state — a veterinary and an agriculture varsity. Preliminary work for the agri university is over and cabinet approval is awaited, said agriculture minister Pradeep Maharathy. "The state government has taken an in-principle decision to set up another agriculture university and allocated fund of Rs 200 crore for it in the budget. It will be set up in the KBK region for development of the backward districts though the exact location is yet to be decided upon

while the veterinary university is in the preliminary stage," said Maharathy. The College of Veterinary Science and Animal Husbandry under the Orissa University of Agriculture and Technology (OUAT), however, has been unable to meet the growing demands of veterinary experts and dairy technology in the rural cooperatives, sources said. "OUAT was set up in 1962 with a huge variety of subjects and branches like agriculture, horticulture, fisheries, technology and home science. But over the years, the demand, scope and prospects of all departments has increased so there is a need for another university," said Maharathy. He pointed out that the Xavier University, Bhubaneswar, which had started functioning this year, would open a college of agriculture from the next academic session. "Keeping in view the growing demand of agriculture courses, the private university is opening the college in which farmers and rural women will be given priority during admission," said the minister. The minister also felicitated 37 students of OUAT, who have qualified the all India PG entrance conducted by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) 2014, the highest number from any university in India. "For the success and hard work of these students, the university got Rs74 lakh grant for various developmental works. I hope the students will apply their education on the field as well," Maharathy said.

THE ECONOMIC TIMES

Nirmala Sitharaman to take stock of commodity boards in boosting exports

The Narendra Modi government plans to take stock of boards set up to promote commodities such as coffee, tea and spices, upset with their performance, especially in boosting exports. "I am going to look at all commodity trade promotion boards sitting for years. Be it tea, coffee, spice, marine, tobacco, rubber... what value addition are they doing? Nothing," said commerce & industry minister Nirmala Sitharaman. "They have offices in London, Geneva, Sydney to promote tea. We are not able to sell one sachet more. What is the role of these people? I would not mind asking, do we need these boards? What are we getting out of them?" Sitharaman had told ET in an interview last week. Exports of coffee, tea and spices combined declined 0.04 per cent to \$2.7 billion in 2013-14, accounting for 0.8 per cent of outbound shipments. "The minister is right," said a member of the Coffee Board who did not wish to be identified. "Though the board is able to support development domestically, it is not really able to promote coffee in the international market. It is working like any other governmental organisation without a vision."

Hoarding in check, onions price move to a more comfort zone



Recent tenders floated by the National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India (Nafed) to import onions have found lukewarm response, but the need to import the vegetable itself has probably eased, with its price moving to a more comfortable zone. With speculators out of the picture with the government taking steps to prevent hoarding, and ample supplies coming to the market, prices are expected to remain stable for at least three-four weeks, say traders. The price at Nashik's Lasalgaon wholesale market, India's largest for onions, averaged Rs 16 a kilogram this month, compared with Rs 37 this time last year. In the retail market, onions are selling for Rs 20-30 a kg. To improve local supplies and rein in prices by preventing hoarding, the government had in July imposed stockholding limits on onions and potatoes. The Centre also increased the minimum price for onion exports to \$500 a tonne from \$300, making Indian onions costlier in the international market, and said it would import the edible bulb to bridge any local supply shortfall. These measures have helped keep onion prices largely in control, but have also led to agitation by farmers as they didn't get the price they were looking for. "Imports were required to check speculative price rise rather than to meet any shortages," a Mumbai-based trader said, requesting anonymity. Nafed received just three bids for onion import tenders, including one from India. "Conditions like delivery of customs-cleared cargo and payment after 15 days of delivery have made traders stay away from the tenders," the trader said. Nafed had said that it could require importing onions any time after August 15. But there is plenty of stocks across the country because of record onion production during the 2013-14 rabi, or winter season, say traders. Rajasthan onion, which usually gets over by mid-August is expected to last until the first week of September this year due to higher production. Farmers, expecting to get prices similar to last year, were holding on to the crop in May and June. "However, as the

government controlled the prices, there is now more stock coming to the markets everywhere in the country," said a wholesaler in Delhi. Farmers could have made better profits by selling onions in April and May. Though the current price at Rs 15-16 a kg is higher than Rs 12-13 in May, they have lost about 25-30% of the crop because of damage caused in storage. The trading community, which is sure that the Narendra Modi government will not let prices escalate, wants the authorities to consider the current situation with farmers agitating over falling prices. "This government will do anything to tame inflation as it has come to power promising to control it. But exports have declined significantly as Pakistan onion is selling cheaper than Indian onion due to our high minimum export price," said an onion exporter from Mumbai.