

THE HINDU

Modi wants SAARC war against poverty

Building on his theme of giving India's neighbourhood priority, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said in his Independence Day speech on Friday that it was necessary for SAARC countries to tackle their "common enemy" of poverty together. "India's foreign policy has many facets," Mr. Modi said. "But I want to focus on our relations with our neighbours in my speech," he told the audience at the Red Fort, that included more than 140 diplomats, who were provided a live translation of the speech over headphones for the first time. Mr. Modi said the SAARC region had a common history relating to the freedom struggle. "Our common forefathers fought for freedom together. If we could defeat a powerful Sultanate [British rule] without weapons or resources, can't we defeat poverty? Can't we win against poverty together?" he said. "Pakistan agrees there is a need to inject energy into SAARC," Pakistan's High Commissioner Abdul Basit said, reacting to Mr. Modi's speech. "Poverty is a common challenge for all eight SAARC countries," he told *The Hindu*. Reacting to the speech, Bangladesh's High Commissioner Tariq Karim, who attended the event, called it "pragmatic and inspiring." "Prime Minister Modi focussed on issues that should unite, rather than divide," he told *The Hindu*. Mr. Modi made several references to his visit to Nepal, adding that India could learn from Nepal's example, where young men who had once "wielded a gun", were now part of mainstream democracy. Welcoming the remarks made by Mr. Modi, Nepal Prime Minister Sushil Koirala's adviser Dinesh Bhattarai told *The Hindu* : "By resolving internal conflict and allowing Maoists safe-return, the government has ushered in peace. We appreciate that Mr. Modi and the world realises it."

Millets more sought after now



People must take care millets are not polished as they lose their fibre that way.— Photo: M. Karunakaran

Have you tried making ‘thinai’ tomato rice or ‘varagupuliodharai’? These are really great preparations that are easy to cook, are healthy and taste great. “The recipe is simple. Cook the ‘thinai’ with water and some salt in a heavy pan, till it is three-quarters cooked. Crackle mustard, urad dhal and green chillies, sauté tomatoes, toss it all in with the thinai and cook till it dries. But be careful to not overcook the millets,” says food enthusiast JanakiLakshman, who likes to try out millet-based recipes. Millets such as ‘kuthiravali’, ‘saamai’ and ‘varagu’ are becoming quite popular, so much so that even rice wholesalers are stocking them as health-conscious customers ask for these varieties. D. Saravanan, who runs a rice wholesale store near Adyar bus depot, says that despite a recent increase in prices, sales have been good. “When I started stocking them about nine months ago, I used to sell just one bag each, but that has now increased to 15 bags a month. I have now placed orders for ‘maapillai samba’ since customers are asking for it,” he says. V. Suseela of Thoraipakkam is trying out millets, including ‘naattukambu’ and ‘cholam’, as they have more fibre and a lower glycemic index when compared to rice or wheat. “I am diabetic and have to cut down on my rice intake. I have now included millets in my diet. I mix

powdered 'kambu' and 'cholam' with dosa/idli batter along with some asafoetida powder, chillies, chopped onion and curry leaves. Though the colour of the idli and dosa changes, it is very tasty," she says. Ananthoo of Safe Food Alliance says people must, however, take care the millets are not polished as they lose their fibre that way. "Varagu' is supposed to be dark brown in colour, 'thinai' should be a strong yellow, and 'samai' and 'kuthiravali' look greyish," he says. However, with millets becoming more popular, department stores seem to be capitalising on the demand. Organic stores that directly procure from farmers are selling them at a nominal rate. Customers should check out various stores before buying them, says a consumer activist.

SIMA-CDRA suggests measures to boost cotton yield

The Cotton Development and Research Association of the Southern India Mills' Association (SIMA-CDRA) has submitted a proposal to the Tamil Nadu government to increase cotton production to 30 lakh bales from the existing five lakh bales. SIMA-CDRA chairman T. Rajkumar said the government announced in this year's budget a 'Tamil Nadu cotton cultivation mission' on an outlay of Rs. 50 crore. Textile mills required nearly 120 lakh bales a year, whereas the production was just about five lakh bales. The mills sourced most of the cotton they needed from other States. The association submitted a plan to the government to increase the area under cotton and production and had discussions with government officials. Mr. Rajkumar said textile mills were hit by a shortage of extra long staple and short staple cotton. The association suggested that the extra long staple variety be taken up on 2,500 hectares as a trial. The farmers could be given subsidy per acre. The association could also help farmers go in for high-density planting for higher production and income. The normal planting was 25,000-30,000 plants per hectare. This could be increased to 1.2 lakh plants. The association started supplying 1,600 kg of seeds for sowing this season across the State. He said cotton farmers in Tamil Nadu could go in for winter and summer crops. Sowing for the winter crop would go on till the end of the next month. Farmers should be encouraged to

adopt precision farming, and subsidy should be given for purchase of kappa-picking machines. The government should try for a stable price for farmers and the SIMA-CDRA could co-ordinate with ginners and mills to facilitate direct procurement from farmers. K.N. Viswanathan, vice-president of the Indian Cotton Federation, said the State was producing 4.5 lakh-five lakh bales a year. However, it increased to six lakh bales this year.

Onion auction on August 19 at Chettikulam

The onion market complex at Chettikulam has been attracting traders from not only the district but even those from Dindigul and other regions, forcing the district administration to re-schedule the open auction days at Chettikulam to suit the schedule in other districts. The auction was scheduled on Mondays and Thursdays but based on the plea by traders from Dindigul, Ottanchathiram, and nearby areas, the schedule has been revised to Tuesdays and Thursdays, said Darez Ahmed, District Collector. The next auction would be held on August 19.

Achievement

The complex has netted a sale turnover of Rs. 2.19 lakh through the sale of 270 bags of shallots, weighing 17.536 tonnes.

Farmer's tractor set ablaze

The tractor owned by Sathish (28), a farmer at Adur near Thiruvannainallur, was set afire and his house ransacked by an irate group on Thursday, protesting his extramarital affair with a college girl. Police sources said that Sathish was married to Meera and had two daughters. A few months ago he allegedly developed a relationship with a college student. Both of them went missing for some days. Accusing Sathish of abducting the girl, her relatives ransacked his house. On the complaint of Meera, the police have registered a case. — Special Correspondent

Sugar mill owners warned not to threaten shareholders in byelection

District Election Officer and Deputy Commissioner N. Jayaram has warned managements and officials of co-operative sugar mills in Chikkodi-Sadalga Assembly constituency against threatening shareholders to support a particular candidate in the byelection. He said in a release recently that the district administration would not tolerate any kind of influence, pressure or threats to the voters.

'Profitable agriculture a top priority'



The State government is keen on making agriculture more profitable, Deputy CM N. China Rajappa has said. Hoisting the tricolour here on Friday, he said loan waiver was extending benefits to over 4 lakh farmers' families, worth Rs. 4,000 crore. Input subsidy of Rs. 124 crore for those who lost crop to cyclones was under process, he said.

Training on millet, value-added products begins



Nutritional Science expert T. Swarnalatha explaining preparation of value-added products of pulses during the NABARD training programme at Ravivaripalem village in Krishna district.- PHOTO: T. APPALA NAIDU

The National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) in association with KrishiVignana Kendra, Ghantasala of Acharya N.G. Ranga Agricultural University is training members of the self help groups on value added products of pulses and millets at Ravivaripalem village in Krishna district. KrishiVignana Kendra, Kadapa Nutrition expert T. SwarnaLatha has trained the women in preparation of at least 23 value-added products made of pulses and millets during the first two-day demonstrations. The products are including of Ragi malt and laddu, which are traditional tastes in rural Andhra Pradesh. As many as 30 women representing Ravivaripalem-based SHG would be provided training until they master in it by the end of the programme on August 18. The agriculture science experts and Ms. SwarnaLatha opined that value added products containing high nutritional values have wide market options.

Collaboration

However, the women also advised to collaborate with education institutions for supply of their products within the district. Nestham, an NGO working with farmers providing market options for all kinds of food crops and flowers, has

also collaborated with the NABARD for the programme.

Solar pump set to the rescue of farmers

A solar pump set, claimed to pump 20 per cent more water than many of the existing pump sets, was displayed during the Independence Day celebrations at the district headquarters on Friday. Cybermotion Technologies Private Limited, a Hyderabad-based company, displayed the pump set which has HP motor, two HP/three HP controller and five HP/7.5 HP solar panels. “We are using Suryadhara, an award winning rugged, plug and play innovative solar pump controller. This unique technology enhances pump efficiency by about 20 per cent compared to other sets. We offer products ranging from one HP to 7.5 HP,” Praveen Jambholkar, director, Cybermotion, told *The Hindu* . The company has also used state-of-the-art extended Maximum Power Point Tracking (eMPPT) system that ensures auto adjustment of power parameters for maximum power output from solar PV panel. Stating that many of the pump sets need to pump water from more than 300 feet below, J. Satish Kumar, project manager, said that farmers need 5 HP solar pump sets which costs about Rs. 3.75 lakh. Contact Mr. Satish on 9676999795.

‘Government declared unofficial crop holiday’



PCC chief Raghuveera Reddy, party leader Botcha Satyanarayana and others

during the Independence Day celebrations at Andhra RatnaBhavan in Vijayawada on Friday.- Photo: Ch. VijayaBhaskarTurning up the heat on the State government over the loan waiver scheme, Andhra Pradesh Congress Committee president N. Raghuveera Reddy on Friday said that the TDP government had literally declared an “unofficial crop holiday”, by providing limited relief to debt-ridden farmers with just 15 days left for closing of the kharif season.The PCC chief, along with other Congress leaders, took part in the 68th Independence Day celebrations here. Speaking on the occasion, he said the government order (GO) on the loan waiver scheme came like a bolt from the blue on the eve of Independence Day. “Limiting of the waiver to the extent of Rs 1.5 lakh only for crop loans is a treacherous move. Not a single rupee has been waived for members of women self-help groups. One lakh is being given as a corpus fund to them,” he said.

Insurance

Mr. Raghuveera Reddy alleged that the government was taking away insurance amounts meant for farmers. “What right does the government have to take away insurance money for which farmers have paid premium from their own pockets?,” he asked.He said that banks were auctioning gold every day and farmers were getting notices from banks asking them to pay interest or else they would forfeit their gold. “Loan re-scheduling has now become loan renewal. The State government has not even come forward to pay the interest, forget about the principal amount,” he said.“If this is the way the government is trying to fulfil its promise made in Hindupur, one can imagine what is going to be the future of the State,” he said. Former Ministers BotchaSatyanarayana, J.D.Seelam and others also participated in the celebrations.

Veggies are important for adults too

A new research highlights a significant shortfall of key ingredients in people's diets



New global research has revealed that most adults need to double their fruits and vegetables intake to get key nutrition benefits. The new research featured in the just released Global Phytonutrient Report highlights a significant shortfall of these key ingredients in people's diets throughout the world. Commissioned by the Nutrilite Health Institute of Amway, the research found the majority of adults worldwide would have to at least double their current consumption of fruits and vegetables to meet the World Health Organisation's minimum recommendation of five servings (400 grams) per day. Additionally, the vast majority of adults worldwide – 60 to 87 per cent across 13 geographic diet regions – are falling short of this recommendation and missing out on crucial nutrition and health benefits.

Indraprastha Apollo Hospitals organised a unique event recently to commemorate International Youth Day (August 13). The event showcased importance of healthy mind and witnessed attendance by cancer patients and their family members for an interactive session with motivational speaker Devika Malik. Devika is an international para-athlete and is representing India as International Youth Peace Ambassador, 2014. The session started with a rapport building with the audience followed by a discussion on mental health. Patients and their family members were involved in fun games based on theme – 'Mind Health'. The event is to be one in a series of events to be hosted by the hospital to involve patients and their families and provide health with a human touch.

Ethics among doctors has recently come under review of the Indian Medical Association (IMA), the largest non government organisation of doctors and the Medical Council of India. Speaking

about recognising the importance of doctor-patient relationship IMA office bearer Dr. K. K. Aggarwal said: “The doctor–patient relationship has been and remains a keystone of care.” Doctors agree that the medium in which data are now being gathered calls for more discipline on the part of both patients and doctors to optimise the end result.

Aim to turn agriculture into a profitable venture: Chouhan



Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan at the Independence Day function in Bhopal on Friday.– Photo: A.M. FAROUQUI

With an aim to turn agriculture into a profitable venture, the Madhya Pradesh government on Friday announced that it will organise and celebrate “Krishi Mahotsav” annually beginning this year onwards. “We will celebrate Krishi Mahotsav every year from September 25 to October 25 and also in future with a target to increase not only agriculture growth rate but also to ensure that fruits of this development will reach those farmers who are at the lowest strata,” State Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan said in his Independence Day speech at Lal Parade Ground after unfurling the Tiricolour. “Through this mahotsav, agriculture will be turned into a social revolution to ensure higher

productivity and diversification in crop pattern,” he said. In the area of milk production also, the State’s growth rate is 8.5 per cent which is highest in the country, he said. Mr. Chouhan said the State has been bagging Krishi Karman Awards since last three years for enhancing agriculture production. The irrigation potential which was just 7.5 lakh hectares in 2004-05 has risen to 27 lakh hectares in 2013-14. “We have set a target of raising this irrigation potential to 40 lakh hectares in 2018 as stated in the vision document 2018,” the Chief Minister said. The State has successfully implemented the Narmada-Kshipra-Sindhast river linking scheme in a record time of 14 months and is now working on connecting the Narmada with the Gambhir river. The government is also working on a plan to link the Parvati-Kalisindh scheme to enhance irrigation potential of the State. – PTI

Centre’s help sought to clear farmers’ dues

Uttarakhand Chief Minister Harish Rawat on Friday asked the Centre to extend adequate help to the State government to help clear the dues of sugarcane growers saying that showing regard to farmers was tantamount to honouring the country’s Independence. Unfurling the national Tricolour at the Parade Ground here to mark the country’s 68th Independence Day, the Chief Minister said: “We are committed to improve the lot of our sugarcane growers and expect that the Centre will lend a helping hand to achieve this mission. After all honouring farmers means honouring the country’s independence. Mr. Rawat recently wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi seeking a financial package of Rs 400 crore to help clear the dues of sugarcane growers. He also put on hold recovery of bank dues from sugarcane growers for the next three months. – PTI

Water released into New Kattalai, Pullampadi canals

The 133-km canal will irrigate about 20,662 acres of land



GOOD TIMES:PWD workers releasing water into the New Kattalai high-level canal at Mayanur in Karur district on Friday.— PHOTO: B. VELANKANNI RAJ

Amid cheer and hope among farmers, water was released for irrigation into the New Kattalai High Level Canal (NKHLC) and Pullampadi canal from the Cauvery river at the Mayanur on Friday. The water would help irrigate the samba paddy crop and standing banana and other cash crops. Special pujas were performed before the water release. Collector S. Jayandhi, MLAs S. Kamaraj and A. Pappasundaram, and officials of Public Works Department were present when the shutters were opened for irrigation. D. Kalaiselvan, Executive Engineer, PWD, River Conservation Division, Tiruchi, told *The Hindu* that the 133.80-km canal would irrigate 20,662 acres in Tiruchi and Thanjavur districts. While 11,198 acres would get water directly from the canal, remaining 9,464 acres would be irrigated through tank irrigation. It would carry water to 107 tanks in both the districts. Expressing hope for sustainable supply during the season, he said 10,930 cusecs was realised at the Mayanur barrage on Friday morning. Initially, 400 cusecs was let into the South Bank Canal and 350 cusecs in the Kattalai High Level Canal (KHLC). In NKHLC, 411 cusecs was

released. Around 10,000 cusecs was flowing in the Cauvery. Mr. Kalaiselvan said there was a chance for stepping up the release in the days to come. Meanwhile, water has been released into the Pullampadi canal, which irrigates 22,114 acres in Tiruchi and Ariyalur districts. Twenty eight tanks would get water from the Cauvery through the canal.

Water level at Mettur

The water level in Mettur Dam stood at 111.98 feet on Friday against its full level of 120 feet. The inflow was 19,938 cusecs and the discharge 12,000 cusecs.



Crop Loan Waiver Will Benefit 4 Lakh Ryots in EG: Deputy CM

Deputy Chief Minister and Minister for Home Nimmakayala Chinarajappa unfurled the tricolour at the Police Parade Grounds on 68th independence day celebrations here Friday. Later, addressing the people he said, "The government is giving priority to farm mechanisation to combat shortage of agriculture labour. Under Rastriya Krushi Vikas Yojana Scheme (RKVYS), 5,600 farmers will be given combined harvesters, power tillers, rotoveters, wielders and rice harvesting machines at subsidised rates in the district. The government has allotted Rs 14 crore for this." Under the National Food Security Scheme (NFSS) red gram will be raised in 9,000 hectares on bunds of paddy fields and 3,600 hectares will also be covered under Drip Irrigation Scheme, he added. "Indira Sagar Project (ISP) will be completed as early as possible which benefits the districts of East Godavari, West Godavari, Krishna, Visakhapatnam. At about four lakh farmers in the state will get crop loan waiver benefit and 80,000 DWACRA groups in the district," the minister said. He also said that the government had decided to handover sand reaches to

women groups as well as the NTR SujalaSravanthi scheme. Surveillance cameras will be installed at important junctions in Rajahmundry and this would also be extended to all junctions. 'Surakasha', a helpline to help women in cases of emergency, would be introduced in Rajahmundry with a toll free number 119. "The State Disaster Relief Centre is also coming up in Peddapuram with funds of `10 crore dedicated to it," he said and added that Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu would launch a temple tourism project at Sarpavaram for which `2 crore had been sanctioned.ZP Chairman NamanaRambabu, MLA V VenkateswaraRao, collector Neethu Prasad, superintendent of police M Ravi Prakash, joint collector R MutyalaRaju and others were present.

Jaya Orders More Water for Samba from Mettur Dam



Chief Minister J Jayalalithaa has ordered further release of water from the Mettur Dam for irrigation purposes, this time for the benefit of 87,736 acres of agricultural lands from August 15. "I had received representations from farmers' organisations for the release of water for irrigation. I have ordered the release of water from Mettur Dam to the benefit of areas served by the Pullambadi, New Kattalai and the East and West Bank Canals. This will bring benefit to 87,736 acres of land in Tiruchy, Thanjavur, Ariyalur, Salem and Erode districts," Jayalalithaa said in a statement on Thursday. The announcement comes on the heels of an earlier one by the Chief Minister,

when she had told the Assembly on August 7 that water would be released from the Mettur Dam to irrigate around 12 lakh acres of agricultural land from August 15. Meanwhile, water was released from the Grand Anaicut on Thursday for samba crop in the districts of Thanjavur, Tiruvarur, Nagapattinam, Pudukkottai and Cuddalore.

Potato Crisis: Yes to Pakistan, No to Odisha



Even as West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee “generously” agreed to supply potato for a week to the State on her Odisha counterpart Naveen Patnaik’s pleadings, she continues to export the tuber to Bangladesh and Pakistan. The West Bengal traders, who have been opposing tooth and nail Mamata’s decision to prevent transportation of potato to Odisha and other neighbouring States, have claimed that they have not received any instruction so far to curb their supply to Bangladesh and Pakistan. Mamata has threatened the West Bengal traders who are opposing the unethical ban with detention under National Security Act (NSA). Undeterred, the trader community, both in Odisha and West Bengal, have accused the TMC Government of creating an artificial scarcity of potato to prove Mamata’s supremacy. Potato is an essential commodity and a producing State cannot impose such restriction, they held. Potato trading, a Rs 2,500 crore business in West Bengal, seems to be in

crisis as Mamata is trying to keep the price of the vegetable between Rs 12-14 a kg in the retail markets of the State. While West Bengal traders and the TMC Government are at loggerheads, potato farmers said export or no export, they are always on the losing side since traders reap all the benefits. If West Bengal traders are to be believed, there is no need for imposition of restriction on inter-State movement since the existing stock of potato in the State is adequate to sustain till the new crops arrive. Meanwhile, the repeated requests by Naveen on Wednesday resulted in Mamata agreeing to release 5,000 tonnes potato a day to Odisha from August 17 to 23. In the last four days, inflow of potato from West Bengal drastically fell due to intensified patrolling on major routes connecting Odisha. The Bengal police is reported to have seized 400 potato laden trucks carrying 6,500 tonnes during this period.

‘Artificial Scarcity’

Undeterred, the trader community, both in Odisha and WB, have accused the TMC Government of creating an artificial scarcity of potato to prove Mamata’s supremacy. Potato trading, a Rs 2,500 cr business in WB, seems to be in crisis as Mamata is trying to keep the price of the vegetable between Rs 12-14 a kg in the retail markets of the State. Mamata has threatened the WB traders who are opposing the unethical ban with detention under NSA



Jute manufacturers seek Centre’s help to check imports from Bangladesh

With domestic demand for jute bags shrinking, local manufacturers have asked the Centre for concessions to export for countering competition from Bangladesh in global markets. Manufacturers have also demanded that penal duties be imposed on jute imported from across the border to nullify the impact of export subsidies given by Bangladesh, making its products cheaper here in

the absence of import duty. “We met the Textiles Secretary and put across the acute demand crisis that the industry is going through and the steps that can be taken to address the situation,” Indian Jute Mills Association Chief Raghavendra Gupta told *BusinessLine*. The jute industry, which provides direct employment to 3.7 lakh workers and supports livelihood of 40 lakh rural families, is going through a turmoil, as domestic demand dropped drastically during the Rabi Marketing Season 2014-15 due to higher carryover stock from the previous year. The industry expected the situation to improve from May this year, with the start of procurement of jute bags for the Kharif Marketing Season, but Punjab, a major buyer, has not delivered on its commitments.

Many other States, including West Bengal, where most of the jute mills are located, are now increasingly using cheaper plastic bags to pack agriculture produce, especially sugar. This has forced several jute mills to close down while several others are working below capacity leading to workers’ unrest. “To make things worse, we are swamped with growing imports of jute bags from Bangladesh, which has increased to 2.25 lakh tonnes and is eating into our share,” Gupta said. India’s average annual jute production is 15.75 lakh tonnes of which about 13 lakh tonnes is consumed domestically while it exports about 1.8 lakh tonnes. The IJMA has asked the Centre to impose a 10 per cent countervailing duty on imports to take away the advantage of the 10 per cent cash subsidy given by the Bangladesh Government. “The Centre should also implement the External Market Assistance Scheme for the jute sector pending for the last three years so that we can compete against Bangladeshi goods in the export market,” Gupta said. IJMA also wants the Centre to ask the Punjab Government to source the entire seven lakh bales of jute bags that it had initially promised.

Mahyco pins hopes on new Government to speed up regulatory approvals

From a humble beginning in 1964 as a seed production company, Mahyco has

come a long way to become the country's leading agri-biotech company today. It was the first Indian company to commercialise transgenic bollgard cotton hybrids (Bt technology) in India, under a license from its innovator Monsanto. Mahyco's hybrid portfolio today covers a wide range of food and vegetable crops. "We realised how important it is to offer products that farmers and consumers really want," says Usha Zehr, Chief Technology Officer, Mahyco. The consumers' apathy to red seed sorghum triggered Mahyco's investment in creating a white coloured sorghum. "When you make roti with the red seed sorghum, it will seem as if there is some dirt on the roti. Hence, this product found little favour among consumers. This prompted Mahyco's move to create a cream coloured sorghum grain which will be high yielding yet without the red colour," explains Zehr. Apart from sorghum, the company's hybrid offering today spans across crops such as rice, cotton, wheat and vegetables – cauliflower, chilli and lady's finger among others.

High acceptance

Barring rice, a new entrant in the hybrid space, the acceptance of hybrid varieties is significantly high in other crops. For instance, hybrid cotton account for 95 per cent of the total acreage under the crop, followed by sorghum (90 per cent) and bajra (85 per cent). In most vegetables, the acreage under hybrid seed varieties is in excess of 50 per cent of the total acreage. "As the country moved from local varieties to high-yielding ones and thereon to hybrid and now to technology products either genetically engineered (GM) or non-GM varieties, there has been tremendous increase in productivity," she says. Though the opening up of foreign investment in the agricultural space also necessitated additional investment in technology to survive the competition from multinationals, the industry's approach has also changed since the adoption of Bt technology in cotton. "The benefit that farmers realised from this technology was something they had not even imagined. As a result, the shift from hybrid to transgenic varieties such as Bt was very fast," says Zehr. Technologies which have been cleared by experts to be safe and have been

given the go ahead by regulatory agencies are sitting on shelf and farmers have been denied access, she says. Mahyco's Bt brinjal is one example. Despite the product securing bio-safety clearance from the regulatory body – Genetic Engineering Advisory Council (GEAC) and completion of review by two expert committees – commercial release has been delayed due to imposition of a moratorium by the Environment Ministry. It has been four years now since the moratorium was imposed and the company is still awaiting communication from the GEAC. Meanwhile, the Bangladesh Agricultural Research Institute (BARI) which in-licensed Bt Brinjal technology from Mahyco has released four varieties of Brinjal in 2013. "With the new Government at the Centre, we hope that these committees will meet more regularly now and move forward applications that have been pending for many years now," says Zehr. However, regulatory hurdles have not deterred the company from investing in research. Mahyco spends almost 15 per cent of its total revenues (about Rs. 100-150 crore) annually towards research and development initiatives. The company is currently working on a technology which will enable efficient use of phosphatic fertilisers.

Fertiliser use

"We've been able to identify a gene from a bacterium which can quickly dissolve phosphatic fertilisers and can help farmers rationalise fertiliser usage. We have put the gene into rice now," says Zehr. In addition to their in-house programmes, Mahyco has also partnered with global technology providers such as the US-based Arcadia Biosciences and Canada-based Performance Plants to license technology. The company will soon commence trials for rice and cotton with nitrogenous fertiliser use efficiency technology licensed from Arcadia Biosciences; GEAC approval and permission from various State Governments to conduct trials are already in place.

Floor price for areca imports hiked by Rs. 60 a kg

The Directorate-General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) has increased the minimum price for the import of arecanut by Rs. 60 a kg. In a notification issued late on Thursday night, the DGFT increased the minimum price for the import of arecanut from Rs. 110 a kg to Rs. 170. This comes 15 months after the DGFT increased the floor price on May 13, 2013. Thanking Union Minister of State for Commerce and Industries Nirmala Sitharaman and DGFT Pavir Kumar for this notification, K Padmanabha, President of Central Arecanut and Cocoa Marketing and Processing Cooperative (Campco) Ltd, told *BusinessLine* that a delegation of the cooperative along with the MPs from arecanut-growing region had submitted a memorandum to the Union Government on August 11. The Government has taken swift action on their request, he said. Quoting the government statistics, Padmanabha said arecanut worth \$47.08 million was imported to India during January-December 2013 (\$46.98 million). Of this, the export of arecanut from Bangladesh to India was \$46.13 million (\$45.63 million) during the period.

Increased production

Padmanabha said that the cost of production of arecanut has increased significantly in the past few years. In such a situation, the import of arecanut was affecting the interests of farmers in the country. Terming DGFT's notification as a timely decision by the Union Government, Srinivasa Achar, president of All-India Areca Growers' Association, said consumption-based estimate suggests the country produces six lakh tonnes of arecanut a year. The increase in minimum price for the import will serve as a deterrent for large-scale import of arecanut into the country, he said. Supply shortage stokes domestic potato prices

Business Standard

The price of potato has risen 20% in the past month. They're now Rs 25-40 a kg in the retail market across India



Potato prices in the country are high and expected to remain so, due to an output decline in the major growing states. This was exacerbated by West Bengal earlier this month banning movement outside the state. The government here has temporarily re-allowed supply but if it stops, prices elsewhere will rise again. The price of potato has risen 20 per cent in the past month. They're now Rs 25-40 a kg in the retail market across India. Traders say production in Uttar Pradesh is down 10-20 per cent and in West Bengal by 20 per cent. The two states account for nearly 60 per cent of India production. In Bihar, the third largest producer, output is down 10 per cent. UP produces about 15 million tonnes and Bengal about 12 mt every year. Nearly 65 per cent of West Bengal's total production is consumed outside the state. In addition, the early crop, harvested during August-September in southern India, is down nearly 50 per cent, according to traders. The autumn crop accounts for nearly 20 per cent of the total output. "Potatoes are expected to remain at Rs 25-30 a kg in the near future, as overall production is low," said Sukumar Samanta, a trader based in West Bengal. On August 5, the state government here sealed the borders for movement of potato, while instructing traders to sell the commodity at no more

than Rs 14 a kg. However, after traders threatened a a three-day strike, the state government on Wednesday allowed sending 5,000 tonnes a day for a week to neighbouring states. Last week, prices in Odisha, Jharkhand, Bihar, Assam and Chhattisgarh are said to have touched Rs 40 a kg, with Bengal not allowing supply to them. Nearly 70 per cent of the demand in the eastern states are met by Bengal and the rest by UP. However, with supply from UP nearly zero, prices in these states had shot up abruptly when the Bengal government stopped the supply. West Bengal sells potatoes worth nearly Rs 3,000 crore every year to neighbouring states. In November 2013, the state had for the first time had put a restriction on the inter-state movement.

Cardamom down 0.3% on profit-booking



Cardamom prices were down by 0.28% to Rs 922 per kg in futures trade today as speculators booked profits at prevailing higher levels. Besides, adequate stocks in the physical market on increased arrivals from producing belts against subdued demand put pressure on cardamom prices. At the Multi Commodity Exchange, cardamom for delivery in far-month October declined by Rs 2.60, or 0.28%, to Rs 922 per kg in business turnover of 2 lots. Likewise, the spice for delivery in September contracts traded lower by Rs 2.50, or 0.27% to Rs 935.10 per kg in 85 lots. Market analysts said the persistent fall in cardamom futures was mostly attributed to profit-booking by speculators at existing higher levels and subdued demand in the spot market.



Potato pangs hit Port City

After tomatoes and onions, it is now the turn of the humble potato to act pricey in the city. The prices of potato, which were around Rs 10 per kg till March-end this year, have trebled to Rs 30 a kg in the Rythu bazaars and quadrupled to Rs 40 a kg in the open market due to short supply of the ubiquitous vegetable, said rythu bazaar officials. And while consumers blame it on the inability of the government to control prices, agricultural marketing department officials attribute it to the ban on potato exports imposed by the West Bengal government to prevent prices from rising in the potato cultivating state.

According to officials from the department, the city requires nearly 600 quintals of potato per day, but is able to procure only around 350-400 quintals from other parts of the country. According to R Laxmanudu, regional joint director, agriculture marketing, Visakhapatnam, the ban had hit potato supply in Andhra Pradesh, with nearly 10 trucks carrying potatoes, which were scheduled to reach Vizag from West Bengal over the past one week, being stopped due to the ban. "We are making all possible efforts to procure potatoes from other parts of the country, particularly Agra, though it is nearly 1,600 km from the city. We have already sent some officials from our department to various potato growing areas in the country, including Agra, to boost imports to Visakhapatnam," Laxmanudu added. Though the West Bengal government on Thursday partially relaxed the ban for Odisha and Jharkhand for one week, there seems to be no end to the crisis in sight for potato-loving consumers in Andhra Pradesh, particularly Vizag. With consumers feeling the heat of the skyrocketing prices of the essential veggie, many feel that the state government should immediately pursue the matter with the West Bengal government to ensure that the ban is lifted and prices normalised. "On Thursday, West Bengal

lifted the ban for a week for Odisha and Jharkhand upon requests by the chief ministers of the two states. I think the AP government was not successful in pursuing the matter with MamataBannerjee," complained a consumer at the MVP Colony Rythu Bazar.Sunit Kumar Panja, who hails from West Bengal and runs Hotel Nimantran on railway station road in the city, said he was against the West Bengal government's decision to ban potato exports. "We live in India where no state is independent. All states depend on each other for various goods. The government must take bold decisions to safeguard the interests of people in the entire country," said an angry Panja.However, when contacted, Andhra Pradesh deputy chief minister Nimmakayala China Rajappa said: "The state government has already started its efforts to control the prices of not just potatoes, but also onions and tomatoes. However, regarding the potato ban by West Bengal, I will once again bring the issue to the notice of the civil supplies minister."

THE ECONOMIC TIMES

Record harvest to help government face rain deficit



Thanks to a good monsoon last year, India improved its record of highest ever food-grain production for the crop year 2013-14 a bit further with the

government's latest estimate on Thursday revising it to 264.77 million tonnes. Releasing its latest estimate of food-grain production for the crop year 2013-14 ended in June, the agriculture ministry said, "India has produced 264.77 million tonnes of food-grain this year as compared to 257.13 million tonnes in the previous year". The latest estimate has, in fact, revised its previous estimate which was released on May 16 when the agriculture ministry had expected to touch the record figure of 264.28 million tonnes. The revised production figures of rice, wheat, maize and coarse cereals may give a sense of relief to the government at a time when it has been on its toes preparing a contingency plan to ward off an expected deficit in production during 2014-15. "Good food-grain production will give the government enough elbow room to deal with shortage in the face of 'deficient' monsoon rainfall this year. Fresh figures will help in further expanding the existing buffer stock beyond 57.38 million tonnes", said an official. Though the Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) has, so far, ruled out the possibility of drought due to "deficient" monsoon this year, less rainfall will certainly have its impact on production of Kharif crop (primarily rice). Sowing of Kharif crops, however, showed a steady increase with improvement of rains this week. But the total sown area is still less than the corresponding period last year. The ministry's report on Thursday said, "The total sown areas as on August 14 stands at 876.70 lakh hectare as compared to 928.03 hectare at this time last year". Though the gap is not much at this juncture, the fate of the standing crops will depend on distribution and intensity of rains during remaining 45 days of the current Monsoon season.

The ministry in its latest estimate revised the wheat production to 95.91 MT as against 95.85 MT in the previous estimated released in May. Similarly, rice output has been raised to 106.54 MT from 106.29 MT pegged in May. "Record production has also been achieved in the case of pulses like tur (3.29 MT) and gram (9.88 MT)", said the ministry while pegging the overall production of pulse at 19.27 MT. The revised production took into account Kharif crops of the year 2013 and Rabi crops of the year 2013-14.

