

THE HINDU

India confident of solution to food security issue at WTO

India on Tuesday said both the issues of permanent protection for its minimum support prices for food grain procurement from farmers against dated caps of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and a Trade Facilitation deal were likely to be resolved with talks resuming in Geneva next month. “The WTO is still alive and talks are due to resume in September with proposals for satisfactory solutions on the food security clause are on the table,” high-level Commerce Ministry sources told presspersons on Tuesday. “India has placed all options before the WTO... if it wants the food security issue can be ironed out within a month.” India will remain firm on its stand that the setting up of a work programme for finding a permanent solution on the food grain stock pile issue should be the pre-requisite for approving the trade facilitation agreement (TFA). Despite the missed TFA protocol deadline, the officials clarified, the interim Peace Clause (PC) will continue to be in place. The PC provides protection against the WTO farm caps until a permanent solution is found. WTO talks on a TFA protocol collapsed on July 31 after India refused to ratify it, discontent with the lack of progress on the food security clause. India’s worry is once they have the TFA in hand, the developed countries will “run from the table” without ironing out the food security issue. The fears arise from the fact that the developed countries ensured that the TFA protocol was placed before the WTO General Council for adoption on July 31 as per the scheduled agreed to in Bali, without initiating the food security work programme. “Developed countries wanted to re-interpret the WTO Bali deal to extract from developing countries more than the TFA in return for agreeing to a food security permanent solution,” said the officials. They blamed the developed countries’ “greed” for unsatisfactory pace of progress. India wants the WTO to update its caps for farm subsidies as they are benchmarked to the food prices of the 1980s. The TFA and food security clauses were both agreed to in a WTO Ministerial in Bali last December. The officials also said that there were no studies to show that the TFA would give a \$ 1-trillion boost to global GDP. India had faced severe global criticism following its veto of the TFA. One of the points of censure was that India is holding up the expansion of the global economy.

Modi announces new irrigation scheme



Prime Minister Narendra Modi is being received by Haryana Chief Minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda in Kaithal on Tuesday.— PHOTO: PTI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced the Pradhan Mantri Krishi Seenchayi Yojana to meet the irrigation needs of all farmers across the country. This announcement came after he laid the foundation stone for the four-laning of a 166 km stretch of the Kaithal-Siwani national highway in Haryana. Mr. Modi's visit to poll-bound Haryana comes close on the heels of two public meetings in Haryana by BJP president Amit Shah. The BJP, which won seven of the ten Lok Sabha seats in Haryana, is for the first time aiming to form the government on its own in the State. The crowds cheered loudly at the PM's speech particularly when he referred to corruption and sought the people's support to eradicate it. Haryana Chief Minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda, who also spoke on the occasion, was booed down by the crowd. Mr. Modi said his government would clear all the pending Central projects for Haryana and get them implemented at the earliest. Mr. Hooda urged Mr. Modi to do away with the system of expensive toll charges on national highways and to replace it with a one time payment on purchase of a vehicle.

Hooda slams BJP

Mr. Hooda, lashed out at the BJP, accusing the party of converting an official function of the prime minister into a political rally. He described it as a planned conspiracy and said: "If the BJP continues to behave in this manner, I will not attend any such function of the Prime Minister in future."

Rain brings cheer to farmers in Karur

C. JAISANKAR

The continuing rains for the second day on Monday across Karur district brought much cheer to the farmers of the district. Except K. Paramathi that registered zero rain, many parts of the district received heavy to moderate rainfall during the last 24 hours that ended at 8 am on Tuesday. Besides Karur town, areas such as Mayanur, Krishnarayapuram and Palaviduthi also recorded heavy rain. The maximum rainfall of 81 mm was recorded at Palaviduthi in the district. While Krishnarayapuram received 74 mm, Mayanur recorded 67 mm. Mylampatti and Kadavur recorded 57 and 35 mm respectively. Areas such as Aravakuruchi, Anaipalayam, Thogamalai and Panchapatti recorded moderate rainfall. However, Kulithalai, one of the major cultivable areas, received just 5.3 mm rainfall. The average rainfall recorded in the district was 34.61 mm. M. Deivendran, Joint Director of Agriculture, told *The Hindu* that the rain would be highly beneficial to farmers as it had come at a right time for starting the preparatory works for raising samba crop. Besides ploughing their paddy fields, it would facilitate farmers to raise community nurseries. While stating that widespread rain was reported in many parts, he said that groundnut raised on about 200 hectares in Kadavur and Krishnarayapuram would be benefitted. The rain would also help farmers to start rain-fed

cultivation. It was expected that pulses would be raised on 20,000 hectares in the district during the current season. The rain has also brought relief to the water managers of the district. They said the drinking water scarcity, accentuated due to a long dry spell for more than 2 months preceded by summer period, would ease a bit.

Onion auction fetches Rs. 1.70 lakh



Farmers selling their onions at the market complex at Chettikulam near Perambalur on Tuesday.— Photo: DIPR

The open auction at the onion market complex at Chettikulam near here registered a turnover of Rs. 1.70 lakh on Tuesday. Forty six traders from different parts of the State participated in the auction. While the onion under conventional storage (pattarai) fetched an average price of Rs. 21 per kg, the crop which was harvested this season brought Rs. 25.50 per kg, said S. Subramanian, Deputy Director, Agriculture Marketing and Agri Business. Farmers from Chettikulam, Naatarmangalam, Perumathur, Irur, Alathur, Chathiramanai, Bommanapadi and Marudadi participated in the open auction. The district administration has revised the auction days to Tuesdays and Thursdays from the original schedule of Mondays and Thursdays. “The revision is to suit the onion growers of Dindigul and Ottanchathiram where the auction falls on Mondays,” the official said.

Turmeric price set to rise



Trade sources indicated that sowing in the current season has declined by 20 per cent each in Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka.— File Photo: Shiv Kumar

Pushpakar. The price of turmeric is expected to increase to Rs.7,000 to 7,500 a quintal over the next three months and farmers can hold their stocks to sell between October and November, the Agro Market Intelligence and Business Promotion Centre (AMI&BPC) of the Department of Agri Marketing and Agri Business has advised farmers. An analysis of turmeric prices at the Erode Regulated Market over the past 25 years, and a traders survey conducted by Domestic and Export Market Intelligence Cell, Centre for Agricultural and Rural Development Studies, Tamil Nadu Agricultural University (TNAU) has indicated that the price is set to rise with the expected fall in production in this season and the stock availability. In a price advisory citing the analysis and survey, AMI&BPC said turmeric ruled at Rs. 6400-6500 per quintal currently. Trade sources indicated that sowing in the current season has declined by 20 per cent each in Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. In Tamil Nadu sowing has taken place in 30 per cent of area and expected to increase. Although consumption of turmeric is usually higher in north India at present there was not much demand. The annual demand for turmeric of the country is around 75 lakh bags (70 kg per bag) but at present trade sources indicated there were 40-45 lakh bags of stocks, of which Tamil Nadu accounted for 20 lakh bags and the rest from Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Maharashtra. Turmeric is planted with the onset of monsoon in the months of May to July. Erode, Salem and Coimbatore are major turmeric trading centres in the country along with Nizamabad, Sangli and Duggirala. Turmeric varieties such as Erode local, Salem local and PTS 10 are mostly cultivated in Tamil Nadu. India accounts for about 80 per cent of world turmeric production and 60 per cent of exports. Production of turmeric was 971 thousand tonnes in 2012-13, 17 per cent less than the previous year. Though the production declined, yield remained stable at five tonnes a hectare.

Food safety officials conduct surprise checks

Seize spurious soft drink packets, artificially coloured tea dust



Food inspectors destroying spurious soft drinks at Thatchanallur ward office in Tirunelveli on Tuesday. Photo: A. SHAIKMOHIDEEN

Officials attached to the Department of Food Safety seized adulterated soft drink packets and artificially coloured tea dust here on Tuesday during a surprise check. A team of officials, led by Food Inspector A.R. Sankaralingam, raided a shop at Tirunelveli Junction where spurious soft drink packets were seized. On getting information about the supplier, the team went to a house at Thatchanallur where they seized 1,000 soft drink packets, which were destroyed later in the presence of public. The officials also seized 1 kg of artificially coloured tea dust from a shop and efforts are on to nab the Madurai-based supplier and his agent in Palayamkottai as the officials have gathered information in this connection. When the Food Safety officials saw a cargo autorickshaw carrying 16 cartons of biscuits after unloading river sand at a construction site, they took the vehicle to the Thatchanallur Zone office of Tirunelveli Corporation and obtained an undertaking from the driver saying that he would load the edible products and snacks in his vehicle only after cleaning the autorickshaw completely. The vehicle with biscuit cartons was released later.

Farmers seek release of water to save crops



Farmers, who submitted a petition to the Collector seeking early release of water, in Tuticorin.— Photo: N. Rajesh

Farmers of Sivathaiyapuram have sought the intervention of district administration to ensure release of water from Papanasam dam to protect crops from withering. The agitated farmers led by R.P. Rajan, secretary, Srivaikuntam Union, Ahila Indhia Samaththuva Makkal Katchi submitted a petition to Collector M. Ravikumar here on Monday. According to the petition, there is no water to irrigate the crops in Peikulam. Farmers from ten villages including Podammalpuram, Servaikaranmadam, Thangammalpuram, Sivagnanapuram, Iruvappapuram, Nandagopalapuram and its surroundings were dependent on water accessed through North Main channel of Srivaikuntam. Cultivation of paddy and banana crops has been taken up on 4,000 acres at these villages, but due to lack of water for irrigation, the crops have started withering.

Level at 65 feet

Currently, the water level in the Papanasam dam has touched 65 feet and monsoon showers were also expected in a month's time. Hence, the farmers sought early release of water from the dam to benefit them.

Forest department faces severe staff crunch

The State forest department is facing severe staff crunch in several districts. According to reliable sources in the department, the number of field staff in various districts is less than half the sanctioned strength. An official said that Meghamalai wildlife forest division has less than 60 employees to protect the forest, which includes the Meghamalai Wildlife Sanctuary. The sanctioned strength for the division is 125. The division, known for its unique biodiversity, is home to elephants, leopards, tigers, Nilgiri Tahrs, Indian Guars, Lion-Tailed Macaques, Bonnet Macaques, Slender Loris, Spotted Deer, Barking Deer, Sambar Deer and Great Indian Hornbills. Another senior official said that the district forest offices in Theni and Madurai are understaffed. "In Theni district, the sanctioned strength for forest guards is 57, but it has only 15 guards, which makes it very difficult to protect the forests. The district has critical areas bordering Kumily, Kodaikanal and Madurai," the official noted. The officials are pinning hope on the board constituted to recruit forest personnel. It is expected to fill as many as 675 vacancies for the posts of forest watchers, guards and foresters through direct recruitment across the State, they said. "The vacancies for the posts of forest rangers have only been filled through promotions and not direct recruitment for more than two decades. The average age of rangers is around 55. We need young rangers, who are fit and energetic to protect our forests," stated an official.

PM's views welcomed

AgroFood Chamber of Commerce and Industry here has welcomed the views of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Independence Day speech. In a press release, S. Rethinavelu, president of the association has said that the views of the PM will lead to a faster, inclusive and substantial economic growth. Complimenting the invitation to global investors, he said that flow of foreign investment into the country will promote manufacturing sector and provide huge employment opportunities to the youth.

'Provide relief to farmers'

District President of the Hyderabad Karnataka Horata Samiti Chandrasekhar Harsur has urged the government to declare Gulbarga district as drought-hit. He wanted the government to extend relief measures to the farmers due to the failure of rain. Addressing presspersons here recently, Mr. Harsur said that the government should announce the compensation of Rs.15,000 per acre. It must also provide fresh crop loans to the farmers to take up the sowing for rabi season.

Moisture stress in soil affects red gram



The lack of moisture content in the soil and continued dry spell has resulted in the withering of standing crops in almost 4.92 lakh hectares of land. If there is no rain in the coming days there is very little chance of revival of the farmers' fortunes. Agriculture Department officials told *The Hindu* in Gulbarga on Tuesday that there was a shortage of 51 per cent of rainfall in the district this season. The situation was the same in all the seven taluks. As against the average rainfall of 365 mm during June to August, the district received only 176 mm rainfall. As against the targeted sowing area of 5.72 lakh hectares fixed for the kharif season in Gulbarga district, the farmers could complete sowing operations only in 4.92 lakh hectares. Even in the sown area there were complaints of non-germination of the soyabean crop. Red gram sown in more than 2.83 lakh hectares was either withering or encountering the problem of stunted growth. According to the officials in the Agriculture Department, a report has been submitted to the government stating that the situation was distressing and crop in more than 2.66 lakh hectares of the sown area has been affected. Even if there was some rain, the yield of all the crops was likely to be affected seriously, the report said. One of the features of the sowing operations this year was the shift of the farmers to the cotton and soyabean cultivation from the traditional red gram cultivation. This was mainly due to the assured prices available for both cotton and soyabean. The area under the cotton cultivation in Gulbarga district had more than doubled from 35,000 hectares last year to more than 70,000 hectares this year. However, even the cotton taken up in the rain-fed areas was reported to be withering due to lack of moisture content in the soil. The Agriculture Department has mooted a proposal for a joint inspection, by the Agriculture and Revenue Department officials, for a scientific assessment of the affected areas and extent of the crops fully and partially damaged due to the lack of rainfall.

Focus on strawberry cultivation in Wayanad

A programme to create awareness among farmers of strawberry cultivation will be held at the municipal town hall here at 10 a.m. on Thursday. The programme is being organised by the State Horticulture Mission in connection with the launch of strawberry cultivation in the district, Alex C. Mathew, Deputy Director, State Horticulture Mission, said. The mission is planning to expand strawberry cultivation to 100 hectares in the State, 50 hectares each in Wayanad and Idukki districts, during the current fiscal by following open precision farming method.

Nearly 60,000 plants could be cultivated on one hectare of land and the Mission would provide an incentive of Rs.1.6 lakh a hectare, including Rs.50,000 for saplings, Rs.18,000 to purchase polythene sheets for mulching the plant and Rs.36, 000 for fertigation, to farmers to promote strawberry cultivation, Mr. Alex said. Various varieties of strawberry plants would be introduced to the farmers, Mr. Alex said.

Chandy opens jackfruit festival



PROMOTING JACKFRUIT:Chief Minister Oommen Chandy talking to P. Rajendran, Vice Chancellor, Kerala Agricultural University, during the inaugural function of the jackfruit festival at Ambalavayal in Wayanad on Tuesday. Yourh Affairs Minister P. K. Jayalaxhmi is also seen.Chief Minister Oommen Chandy opened a State-level jackfruit festival, Jack fest-2014, organised by the Kerala Agricultural University (KAU) at its Regional Agriculture Research Station (RARS) at Ambalavayal in the district on Tuesday.After inaugurating the five-day festival, Mr. Chandy said the government would take measures to set up a horticulture college, the first such institution in the State, on the RARS campus next fiscal.The proposed institution would be a self-financing one and could accommodate 50 students in a batch, P. Rajendran, KAU Vice-Chancellor, said. The programme is being organised as part of sensitising the public on the commercial potential of the organic fruit.Seminars on jackfruit processing, exhibition and sale of value-added jackfruit products, cookery and fruit-carving competitions, and a photo exhibition on jackfruit varieties will be held as part of the festival.

Weather-beaten Kanthallur subdued

Vagaries during sowing likely to lead to a fall in production this Onam



Many vagaries of weather later, Kanthallur is all set to harvest cool season vegetables for Onam. However, a considerable drop in production is likely owing to climatic changes during the sowing season. The main crops likely to be hit are potato, cabbage, carrot, and garlic. It is estimated that there will be a 40 per cent fall in production for the Onam season, the harvesting for which has just begun. Bhagavathiappan, a farmer, says he had to sow the seeds for the season thrice — the first two attempts failed owing to drought conditions and a cloudburst in May-June. This is the season most favourable for potato and carrot cultivation, and the farmers often make up their losses through the Onam sale. Manikandan's land at Perumala got flooded after the cloudburst, and his vegetable plants are now in the initial stage of growth. He says seasonal cultivation changed this time owing to the delayed sowing. The farmers here cultivate in the main two seasons of May/June and September/October. Almost all the farmers had to sow the seeds afresh after the first sowing failed owing to the drought situation. The June 2 cloudburst destroyed the seeds sown in the second round. It took the farmers weeks to clear the debris so that their lands could be prepared for another sowing. There are plots that have just been planted with vegetable crops, especially at Perumala, where the cloudburst caused severe damage. This will affect the arrival of vegetables from here for Onam. Vegetable and Fruit Promotion Council Keralam (VFPCCK) assistant manager Harris Muhammed says 250 tonnes of vegetables from Kanthallur is expected for Onam. In addition to the VFPCCK, HortiCorp too will procure vegetables from the farmers through the Kanthallur Coolseason Vegetable Marketing Society. Farmers also directly sell produce to businessmen and middlemen, a system traditionally followed for years. Mr. Muhammed says the main cool season vegetables are expected to arrive in the market a little after Onam. The prices at the VFPCCK auction centres have reached Rs.30 for a kilogram of carrot, Rs.25 for potato, and Rs.14 to 15 for cabbage as per latest estimates. This may rise further in the coming days owing to the delayed production and high demand.

Truck tariff row hits onion trading

Onion trading came to a halt at Kurnool market yard on Tuesday following controversy over truck tariff. The truck operators insisted on a higher tariff while traders stuck to the old rates on the ground that any increase would adversely affect the consumer price. As the truck operators did not allow the traders to engage outside vehicles, the traders complained to Joint Collector who tried to settle the issue. With truck operators unrelenting, the Joint Collector asked the traders to engage outside vehicles and promised to intervene if the truckers disrupted the outside vehicles.

Agricultural budget will be a permanent feature: Minister

The budgetary allocation to agriculture and allied sectors, including free power subsidy and loan waiver, would be between Rs.10,000 crore and Rs.20,000 crore, according to Agriculture Minister P.Pulla Rao, who is all set to present Agriculture Budget for 2014-15 to the Assembly on August 22. In an informal chat with reporters in the Assembly

lobbies on Tuesday, he said the government would be spending nearly Rs.3,000 crore on power subsidy this year.He said the aim behind separate agriculture budget was to send a message to farmers that government was according high priority to agriculture sector. He said priority would also be accorded to drip irrigation and said State would get 90 per cent Central subsidy for drip irrigation once Special Category Status was granted. Agri-based industries would get a fillip once the status was given.He said the Speaker could use his discretionary powers to allow the government to present agriculture budget this year, while it was proposed to amend the relevant act to make it a permanent feature.The Minister said that a MoU would be signed between the State Government and ICRISAT by this month-end on seeking the latter's technical expertise in improving soil fertility to improve yields. He said ICRISAT had assured that yields would improve by 10 per cent and input costs would reduce by 30 per cent.He said 13.50 lakh agricultural pumpsets would be replaced in a phased manner by solar pump sets across the State and quotations were being sought from companies in this regard. Use of solar pump sets would help in reducing power subsidy.

Steps being taken to check spurious seed: Minister

State government was taking all possible measures to check supply of spurious and substandard seeds in the market. Inspections were being done at the processing stage itself to ensure quality of seeds and pesticides, said Agriculture Minister, P. Pulla Rao.Replying to a question raised by A. Suresh and G. Ravikumar of YSR Congress in the Assembly here on Tuesday, the Minister denied that Guntur had become a hub for sale of duplicate and spurious seeds.In fact the government was taking action wherever samples were found to be substandard. Under the Essential Commodities Act 8795 quintals of spurious seeds worth Rs. 6.40 lakh were seized, 47 cases booked apart from 5 cheating cases.“Government on its part is not showing any leniency whatsoever although the offenders might get relief from courts”, Mr. Pulla Rao said.A DNA seed testing lab was set up and tests were being done for soil and micro nutrition deficiency. The services of agriculture experts and scientists were requisitioned besides skill development and awareness programmes were being held. Before the seeds were released into the market, the Agriculture Department tested the minimum seed standards. Seeds stored in cold storage were separated into different lots, the Minister said.The YSRC members asked government to take steps to infuse confidence among farmers since Guntur, Prakasham, Anantapur and Kurnool districts had become hubs for sale of spurious seeds. “Monitoring should be done at the production stage itself”, said Mr. Suresh of YSRC.

‘Health services poor’

YSRC members mounted a severe attack on the government for the poor functioning of its hospitals. People had lost confidence in them and were forced to turn to corporate hospitals for treatment. The situation had deteriorated with non-availability of specialist doctors and modern equipment. Most of the government doctors carried out private practice and asked the patients to come there, alleged Chintala Ramchanddra Reddy.

The people were faced with Dengue and malaria but absence of doctors and diagnosing facilities left a lot to be desired. Most of the hospitals did not have medicine and ambulances. “Let the Minister come with me and I will show the condition of government hospitals”, Mr. Reddy said.

‘Debt column’ issue crops up

Mild commotion prevailed in Sanjeevaiahnagar of Sircilla textile town during the conduct of the Intensive Household Survey on Tuesday when some local people asked the enumerators to include a column on debts in the questionnaire of the survey.

Survey obstructed

When the enumerators were collecting details from the residents in the locality, local Mala mahanadu leader Ragula Ramulu, along with some others, rushed to the spot and obstructed the conduct of the survey demanding that the government should include a column on debts in the survey. “When the government is asking the people to disclose the details of their properties in the survey, it should also include a column for the details of debts made from private moneylenders, banks, etc”, he argued. Later, the revenue officials and the police rushed to the spot and pacified the people and promised to include a column on debts sought by the leader in the questionnaire of the survey. Following this assurance, the Mala Mahanadu leader along with his supporters left the venue, ensuring the smooth conduct of the household survey by the enumerators.

Sowing hit by deficient rainfall



Paddy sowing in progress in a field at Chittivanipalem in Machilipatnam rural mandal in Krishna District.- Photo: T. Appala Naidu Around 35 per cent of paddy sowing was completed in Krishna district by mid-August due to lack of rainfall, which was 27 per cent deficient as against the district’s average of 435 mm for the period of June to mid-August. ‘The total extent of land under paddy cultivation is above 2.1 lakh hectares in kharif season in Krishna district, where nearly 90 per cent of sowing operations are expected to be completed by August end,’ Agriculture Department Joint Director V. Narasimhulu told *The Hindu* . He added that delayed monsoon and poor rainfall impacted

sowing operations which were in full swing across the district. On the other hand, agriculture workers from Northern Andhra districts have already arrived in Krishna district for sowing operations. Farmers are relying on surface and ground water sources.

Trimex extends a helping hand to farmers

Trimex Sands Private Limited provided water facility to 120 acres of land in Kummaripeta of Gara Panchayat by removing weeds in irrigation canal. The company's move helped many small and medium farmers as they could not avail water facility poor canal system. On the request of Gara MPTC member Jallu Rajeev, the company provided machinery to remove and strengthen embankments. The villagers hailed the company's CSR activity in their area. CSR wing head CH V Prakash and members M. Shanumukha and G. Sandeep made arrangements for removal of weed, said the company in a press release.

Water level at Mettur

The water level at the Mettur Dam stood at 112.85 feet on Tuesday against its full level of 120 feet. The inflow was 7,395 cusecs and the discharge 11,999 cusecs.



Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather



Sunny

Wednesday, Aug 20

Max Min
32° | 27°

Rain: 0

Humidity: 70

Wind: normal

Sunrise: 05:56

Sunset: 06:27

Barometer: 1009

Tomorrow's Forecast



Cloudy

Thursday, Aug 21

Max Min
35° | 26°

Extended Forecast for a week

| Friday Aug 22 | Saturday Aug 23 | Sunday Aug 24 | Monday Aug 25 | Tuesday Aug 26 |
|---------------------|----------------------------|--------------------|----------------------------|---------------------|
| | | | | |
| 35° 26° Cloudy | 34° 26° Partly Cloudy | 34° 26° Sunny | 34° 26° Partly Cloudy | 33° 26° Cloudy |

Airport Weather

Chennai

Chennai

Rain: 0 Sunrise: 05:56
Humidity: 70 Sunset: 06:27
Wind: normal Barometer: 1009



THE  NEW
INDIAN EXPRESS

Modi Promises New Irrigation Scheme to Farmers

Prime Minister Narendra Modi Tuesday said his government was considering a new agricultural-irrigation scheme which will ensure ample water supply to farmers round the year. "Just as Atal Bihari Vajpayee had launched the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana connecting villages, we will launch Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchai Yojana," Modi said while addressing a public gathering in Kaithal, Kurukshetra district. He said the farmers of Haryana play an important role in ensuring adequate food supply to the nation, but unfortunately they themselves are languishing in poverty. "Once this scheme is launched, the farmers will be self-dependent. This is because if the farmers get access to water, they will have the capability to reap gold from the fields," Modi said. The prime minister also stressed on animal husbandry along with agriculture. "If we also focus on animal husbandry along with agriculture, the farmers will have the means of livelihood even in difficult times," Modi said, adding it is important to use modern technology in agriculture. He said his government will speed up pending schemes related to Haryana.

Rs 15,000 Cr Agri Budget for AP Likely

Andhra Pradesh government, which is presenting its maiden agriculture budget on August 22 in the Assembly, is planning to allocate between ` 15,000 crore to ` 20,000 crore for the purpose. Speaking to reporters at the Assembly lobbies here on Tuesday, AP Agriculture Minister P Pulla Rao said his government in order to give boost to agriculture was allocating huge amount for this sector. "We have decided to present a separate agriculture budget to send a message to the farmers that the government is giving top priority to this sector and that their needs would be taken care of", he pointed out. He said though as per assembly rules there is no provision to introduce a separate agriculture budget the Speaker would use his discretionary powers to create provision for it. "We would soon amend the Assembly rules for presenting a separate agriculture budget so that from next year it could be introduced without any problem", he said. The state government is planning to replace all the electrical agricultural pump sets with solar pump sets, he said and added that there are about 13.50 lakh agricultural pumpsets in the State which would be replaced by solar pumpsets in a phased manner in three years. He

said the Centre is offering 30 per cent subsidy on solar pumpsets and once the state get special status it would get 90 per cent subsidy on it. The State government had already invited quotations from companies manufacturing solar pumpsets, he added. In order to improve soil fertility in the State, the government had signed an MoU with Icrisat, he said and added that the initiative would help in reducing the input cost of agriculture and increase yield. The government is planning to provide soil health cards to farmers to improve the soil fertility of the land, he said. He said in the next budget Rs 300-400 crore would be allocated to improve the soil fertility of the lands.

Farmers' Migration to TN Hits a Lower Trajectory

Despite many attractive offers being rolled out by the Tamil Nadu Government to lure farmers, the number of persons crossing the Kerala border to cash in on the opportunities in the neighbouring state is learnt to have dented over the years. "Earlier, there was an exodus of farmers to Tamil Nadu. Free electricity provided to irrigate the land and low labour cost were the two main features that had lured them," Mohandas, president, Sheethakala Pachakari Karshaka Association, Kanthaloor, told Express. According to him, things are not that rosy now. "The increase in the number of applications seeking free electricity had forced the government to slow down the procedures. I had applied for free power connection in 2002. But, it was sanctioned only in 2011," he said. Even those who have managed to get the connection are fed up with the erratic power supply, he said. The labour charges have also gone northward recently and it is not easy to get workers, he said. However, some of the farmers shared a different opinion and said that farming in Tamil Nadu is still lucrative. "Every year, farmers are crossing the border to try their luck in the fields," said Binu Punnaya, president of the Karshaka Samrakshana Samithi in Idukki. He cited the glaring differences in the lease amount for the land as the propellant behind the exodus. "While the annual lease amount for 60 cents of land in Tamil Nadu stands between `5,000 and `10,000. The same area of land would cost about `1lakh in Kerala. Moreover crops like sunflower, plantain, grapes grow extensively in Tamil Nadu and we would get much support from the government, he said.

Potato Continues to Remain Pricey

Even as supply of potatoes from neighbouring West Bengal has been smooth after the ban on inter-State movement of trucks was lifted, price of the commodity remains high in Northern Odisha. While the tuber is priced at Rs.24 to Rs. 30 per kg in Balasore district, consumers are buying it at `28 per kg in Mayurbhanj and the price is `25 to `28 per kg in Bhadrak district. When the ban on potato supply was in force, it was being sold at `25 to `30 in the three districts. Sources said after Bengal Government agreed to release nearly 5,000 tonnes of potato on a daily basis from August 17 to 23, at least 655 potato-laden trucks have entered the State through both the toll gates at Laxmannath and Jamsola from Sunday to Tuesday. Civil Supply officials, however, indicated that only 18 trucks of potato have been dispatched to Balasore in the last three days.

Though the district requires nearly 20 trucks of potato daily, six trucks a day cannot meet the demand of the consumers here. Additional Civil Supply Officer Umesh Chandra Swain said the district has a stock of nearly 18,000 quintals of potato which would be sold to buyers at a subsidised rate if any scarcity arises in future. "People have cut down on their potato intake after the price hike. The price has been reduced by `two per kg in the retail market. I purchased a kg for `24 on Tuesday. The price is expected to come down further in near future," Swain added. On the other hand, people alleged that traders in rural areas of the district are selling potato at a high price as there is no machinery to monitor the illegal practice. Villagers are forced to buy the commodity at `28 to `30 per kg. Authorities concerned, however, put the blame on inadequate staff for their failure to check such practices. They claimed that it was impossible to conduct raids in all areas with a few field staff. "We have 12 marketing inspectors in as many blocks. It is not always possible to check the illegal practice regularly on the part of the inspectors. But we are trying other options to keep a track on the hoarders," Swain said.

Gac Fruit to Be Sold in Bangalore Soon



Gac fruit will soon be an added ingredient to the rapidly expanding market of functional foods in the city. Gac fruit (*Momordica cochinchinensis*) is mainly found in the region from Southern China to Northeastern Australia. It is found in abundance in Vietnam. The fruit is commonly used for cooking in Vietnam. It has been identified as a rich source of lycopene, also present in tomatoes and processed tomato products. Gac contains 70 times more lycopene than tomatoes. Lycopene acts as an antioxidant and prevents free radicals that cause aging. It also has a high concentration of Vitamin C 40 times greater than what is found in oranges, 10 times more beta carotene than carrots, 40 times more zeaxanthin than corn and a high content of Omega 3 fatty acids. According to recent studies, this fruit contains nutrients that have proven to prevent cancer and to even slow down the multiplication of cancerous cells. It fights anemia due to the abundance of iron found in this fruit as well as folic acid. It is recommended for those with high cholesterol levels as well as those who have a history of high cholesterol in their family. If consumed weekly, this fruit reduces the 'unwanted' high cholesterol levels from the body. As this fruit is high in antioxidants, it prevents cardiovascular diseases. This fruit is also known to benefit eyesight.

Farmer Harvests 138-kg Tapioca

A farmer from Neyyattinkara in the district has tasted success by producing a giant tapioca weighing 138 kilograms. The produce was the result of the efforts Syamkumar, a farmer who has been engaged in cultivating rare tuber crops for years. The tapioca belongs to the rare species of 'Kayyalachadi', which was once widely cultivated by farmers. "The cultivation was purely by using organic manure. I followed the instructions given by Meenakumari of Microbiology Department of Agricultural University, Vellayani", says Syam Kumar. On two acres of land, Syam Kumar has dedicated more space to tuber crops like tapioca, yam and sweet potato. He has a proud collection of rare species such as 'nanakizhangu' and 'aanakomban' (species of yam). Among these, it is 'velladan kizhangu', a type of 'nanakizhangu', which gives maximum yield. Instead of NPK fertilizers, Syam Kumar depends on microorganisms - Pseudomonas, Rhizobacteria and Mycorrhiza - which he says have helped him achieve wonders, including a "ten-foot yam" and a record-breaking 'kaachil.' Syam Kumar had won recognition at the Central Tuber Crops Research Institute (CTCRI) when it conducted a tuber crops exhibition.

THE HINDU BusinessLine

Coonoor tea prices hit new low

Prices at the auctions held by the Coonoor Tea Trade Association plummeted to a new low at Sale No: 33. The average of Rs. 63.23 a kg was the lowest so far in 2014. Even after reducing prices, teas worth Rs. 3.6 crore remained unsold as there were no takers for 21 per cent of the offer.

Toppers

Homedale Estate tea, auctioned by Global Tea Brokers, topped the CTC market when Jay Kay Enterprises bought it for Rs. 189 a kg. Deepika Supreme got Rs. 186, Hittakkal Estate and Navil Kal Estate Rs. 185 each. In all, 54 marks got Rs. 125 and more per kg. Among orthodox teas, Kairbetta got Rs. 226, Kodanad Rs. 222, Corsley Rs. 220, Havukal Rs. 215 and Chamraj Rs. 210. In all, 30 marks got Rs. 125 and more per kg. Quotations held by brokers indicated bids in the range of Rs. 40-45 a kg for plain leaf grades and Rs. 100-140 for brighter liquoring sorts. They came in the range of Rs. 40-49 for plain dusts and Rs. 120-180 for brighter liquoring dusts.

Shipments

On the export front, Pakistan bought teas in a wide range of Rs. 45-111.

Cardamom gains flavour on supply squeeze

Cardamom prices rose further last week on supply squeeze amid good demand at auctions. Arrivals did not pick up as the harvesting is yet to reach its peak. No carry-over stock is available in the market either. Consequently, supply continued to stay thin and the individual auction average shot up by over Rs. 200 a kg from the price in the corresponding period last year.

Erratic rains

They attributed the decline to erratic rains this year which has led to a delayed crop this season. On the other hand, as prices during the last couple of years were not remunerative, growers did not follow good farm management practices in the recent months due to shortage of funds. As a result, growers in Kumily and Vandanmettu region said that the yield this season is likely to witness decline of 25-30 per cent. Exporters were seen actively and aggressively covering whatever exportable variety of capsules arrived. They bought an estimated 60 tonnes last week. Similarly, upcountry buyers were also actively buying. At the Kerala Cardamom Processing and Marketing Company auction on Sunday, arrivals stood at 44 tonnes against 37 tonnes of capsules that arrived the previous Sunday. The entire quantity was sold. The maximum price was Rs. 1,102 a kg and the minimum Rs. 446. The auction average increased to Rs. 855 from Rs. 789.16. During the current season of the crop, which has officially begun from August 1, arrivals were 479 tonnes against 862 tonnes during same period a year ago. Sales were 469 tonnes against 852 tonnes. The weighted average price for this year stood at Rs. 801.92 a kg as against Rs. 601.99 as on the same date last year. The current good bulk was fetching Rs. 850 a kg, trade sources in Bodinayakanur said. Prices of all graded varieties moved up last week and they (in Rs. \kg) were: AGEB 1,050 - 1,060 ; AGB 845 - 855; AGS 710 - 725 ; and AGS -1:695 - 705.

Chennai to host 2-day International Wheat Seminar from Sept 2

With the global wheat market set to witness a glut, what exactly will be the production, supply and demand scenario? How will prices of wheat behave? What are the market dynamics at play with regard to wheat? How about logistics and warehousing facilities for the grain? All these could perhaps find an answer at the seventh International seminar on wheat and wheat products to be held here during September 2-3. The seminar will also have a special focus on new technologies and marketing opportunities. To be inaugurated by renowned agricultural scientist MS Swaminathan, the seminar will see Indian Council for Agricultural Research Director-General S Iyyappan taking part as a guest of honour. Other issues that will be discussed at the seminar are global wheat trade in Indian perspective; latest trends and developments in mills and baking and sustainability of food and nutrition security. Some of the leading scientists, experts and industry players will take part in the seminar and share their views. An exhibition will also be held as part of

the seminar. This is the first time that the International seminar on wheat and wheat products is being held in Chennai.

Cashew set to sparkle on festival demand

Demand for cashew kernels of different grades is likely to surge over the next few weeks in the domestic market owing to festivals. Globally, cashew markets witnessed limited activities in the first fortnight of this month with offers and trades in the range of \$3.60 to \$3.75 for W240; \$3.20 to \$3.40 for W320, \$3.10 to \$3.20 for W450, \$3.10 to \$3.15 for SW320, \$2.95 to \$3.00 for SW360, \$2.70 to \$2.75 for SSW, \$2.65 to \$2.75 for butts, \$2.55 to \$2.65 for splits, \$2.10 to \$2.20 for large pieces all per lb (f.o.b). In the domestic market, there has been regular steady offtake every month. There have been periodic spurts in demand for brokens for short periods, while domestic prices for splits and pieces have been close to the international price for wholes, according to market sources. For the ensuing Onam festival, demand for splits is expected to pick up while for Diwali, demand for brokens and premium grade kernels would witness an upsurge in the coming days, according to KA Rethesh, Managing Director, Kerala Cashew Development Corporation which processes and markets cashew and cashew products throughout the country. He said the consumer packs of W-240 grade are sold at Rs. 700 a kg, while higher grade W180 is marketed at Rs. 900. There is good demand for the latter in metros. Its demand is also expected to move up in the winter months, he told *BusinessLine*.

Global market

In the overseas markets, there was a fair amount of activity in W320 during June and July with the US and Europe. Depending on the processor and shipment period, trades have been in the range of \$3.20 - \$ 3.40 per lb (fob), Pankaj N Sampath, a Mumbai-based dealer said. Some business has been done few cents above the range as well for the fourth quarter of 2014 and early 2015 shipments, he said. Except for small shortages in some areas, 2014 raw cashew crop in the northern hemisphere has been reasonably good and most of it has been sold to processors but some quantities are still with traders. During the season, raw cashew prices have gone up by \$150-250 a tonne depending on the origin and quality. On an average, raw cashew prices in 2014 have been 15-20 per cent higher than in 2013, despite the fact that kernel prices have been in the same range as of last year, with some premium for forwards. Prices for broken grades have moved up but since the percentage of brokens in total yield is low, the increased realisation does not compensate the higher raw cashew price. Higher RCN price means that shellers' margins are probably under pressure. Keeping in mind that southern hemisphere contributes less than 25 per cent of the world crop, many shellers may decide to hold on to part of their stocks, either as kernels or as raw cashew for higher prices during the last quarter, Sampath said.

Expectations

Since the overall availability is comfortable, there may not be a big jump in the market. But, there is an expectation that prices could move up a bit during September or October when the US/EU buyers cover significant part of their requirements for the first half of the next year. It will be reasonable to expect more interest in cashews because prices have been in the same narrow range for more than two years, giving room for some increase beyond the current range as prices for other nuts are higher than last year's, sources claimed.

Rain wave from Arabian Sea to drench South

A rain wave creeping in from the western Indian Ocean and contiguous south-east Arabian Sea will drench Kerala, Karnataka, Rayalaseema, Tamil Nadu and Puducherry over the next three days. As if on cue, an upper air cyclonic circulation from off the Tamil Nadu coast has crossed in and parked itself over south interior Karnataka on Tuesday.

May ramp up

The rain wave from south-east Arabian Sea will act as a 'step-up' mechanism for the circulation to ramp up in strength and become a likely low-pressure area over Kerala and coastal and south interior Karnataka. This 'low' is forecast by various models, including India Met Department, to wheel along the West Coast in a productive run and fade out, off the Mumbai coast. The procedure will throw out an envelope of variously wet cover of heavy to very heavy rainfall over the entire peninsula with a tongue extending to north along the west coast into Konkan-Goa. It is being masterminded by a passing Madden-Julian Oscillation (MJO) wave from east Africa into the western Indian Ocean from where it is shown rubbing off activity into south-east Arabian Sea. MJO waves transit periodically to the east over the Indian Ocean and triggers onset of monsoon, formation of low-pressure areas and storms, among others. They also have a dry phase that brings in break-monsoon condition in which the seasonal rains shut out over large parts of the country for a prolonged period. The Australian Bureau of Meteorology that closely monitors MJO activity has confirmed the presence of an associated wave in the region. The Bureau said in the update that the last week had seen an increase in rainfall over the northern tropical Indian Ocean, including southern India.

Little guidance

In contrast, South-East Asia, the Philippines and the north-west Pacific region have seen another week of suppressed tropical activity. But the Bureau said that forecasts for the MJO wave offered little guidance for the coming week with two potential scenarios being expressed by an ensemble of models. Either the wave will further strengthen over the Indian Ocean without much movement, or it will weaken rapidly such that it will cease to

be a significant driver of tropical weather in the coming weeks. If it were to remain slow moving and strengthen over the tropical Indian Ocean, convection would likely be enhanced over the Indian Ocean. According to outlook posted by various models, the first scenario is likely to prevail judging from the extent of rainfall being forecast and the geography expected to be covered. The west session over the peninsula would scarcely end with the death of the 'low' on the West Coast. This is because the East Coast would erupt in fresh rain activity by then, particularly off north Andhra Pradesh coast. This would be the handiwork of a trough from North India venturing deep into the west-central Bay of Bengal and lobbing in a cyclonic circulation over the coast. This may set off moderate to heavy rain over coastal Andhra Pradesh, Vidarbha, Telangana, Marathwada and Madhya Maharashtra and even parts of adjoining south Madhya Pradesh.

Business Standard

WTO food subsidies cap not to be breached, says India



The Union government is confident it will not breach the existing ceiling on food subsidies agreed to at the World Trade Organization (WTO). According to WTO rules, the amount of such subsidies given by member-countries is calculated on the external reference prices of 1986-88. The Indian government has demanded that the year be changed to a more recent period, taking into consideration the rise in food prices and rate of inflation. "As far as breaching the 10 per cent ceiling is concerned, we are not at default and not going to be, in the next few years to come. If we were to account for inflation, the increase in minimum support price since 1986-88, we would be in negative as far as subsidies is concerned," said a commerce department official who did not wish to be named. The official also highlighted that India have never demanded elimination of the 10 per cent ceiling. According to WTO's Agreement on Agriculture, developing countries such as India can provide subsidies of up to 10 per cent of the total value of production of the particular products. In India's case it is cereals and pulses. "India never said it wants to eliminate 10 per cent ceiling ... We provide per capita subsidy less than \$200 compared to \$50,000 in US," the official added. As far as the 'Peace Clause' is concerned, the government has indicated it will not use the measure. This is because, as per the Bali Ministerial Declaration, in order to use the so-called 'Peace Clause' or the interim

measure, the government has to notify the subsidies. According to WTO's Agreement on Agriculture, developing countries like India can provide subsidies of up to 10 per cent of the total value of production of particular products. In India's case, it is cereals and pulses. "India has never said it wants to eliminate the 10 per cent ceiling... We provide per capita subsidy of less than \$200, compared to \$50,000 in the US," the official added. In Chennai, commerce and industry minister Nirmala Sitharaman said the government was hopeful of a positive outcome to the public stockholding issue when the WTO resumes talks on these and allied issues next month. "It is important for us to understand that we definitely believe that the Bali agreement (on trade facilitation, which India has linked to progress on the food subsidy issue) will have to be implemented. But there is a course correction which is required in the national interest. It is necessary to have public stockholding of foodgrains, as poor farmers will have to be given protection. That is the point we have raised. Therefore, it is important to engage with WTO and I'm hopeful we will get some good outcome," she said.

Sugar spat turns bitter in Uttarakhand

The food department is at loggerheads with the sugar department in Uttarakhand over a cabinet decision to buy sugar at Rs 32 a kg for ration-card holders. The spat between top officials of the two departments has intensified at a time when the sugar department is facing an uphill task of selling sugar piled up in its godowns. The sugar department is also not allowing government-controlled sugar mills to sell sugar to the food department for ration-card holders at Rs 32 a kg. Under the cabinet decision, the food department must buy sugar from government-controlled sugar mills at Rs 32 per kg. But the decision is not being welcomed by the sugar department, which claims that the price of the commodity keeps changing. "How can we sell our sugar at a fixed price of Rs 32 a kg when the price keeps changing virtually on daily basis," said a senior official of the sugar department. Last year, the food department had bought sugar from government mills at Rs 32 a kg when the price was Rs 29.5 a kg in the market. "At that time, sugar mills have made huge profit when we paid Rs 2.5 more than the market price. The mills readily sold the sugar to our department without even giving it a second thought," said a senior official of the food department requesting anonymity. But since the prices of sugar firmed up earlier this year, the sugar mills have been reluctant to sell at Rs 32 a kg, the official said. "We will again approach the chief minister for his intervention in the matter," he said. Sugar Secretary M C Joshi said since the government order on the cabinet decision has not been issued, the sugar mills are facing difficulty to sell sugar at a fixed price.

Cane crop at risk as rains flood UP

As much as 6,00,000 hectares of farm land, including a portion of cane areas, has been inundated across 1,500 villages in Uttar Pradesh, according to senior state government officials. This has not just threatened sugar production but spelt further trouble for farmers already constrained by sugar mills' decision not to crush cane in the marketing year starting October and waiting for payment worth thousands of crores for cane supplies earlier this season. Although state officials said it was too early to gauge the impact of the floods on sugarcane, Kisan Jagriti Manch president Sudhir Panwar said the crop is at high risk, especially due to waterlogging. UP is the largest sugarcane-growing state and accounted for 27% of the country's sugar production in the current marketing year. So far, 49 people have died in the state because of floods, with Bahraich district reporting the maximum number of deaths at 22. Ironically, heavy showers in some districts also raised fears about uneven distribution of rainfall. Despite the latest downpour, the deficit in Uttar Pradesh was as high as 32% in the eastern regions and 51% in the western parts. So after poor monsoon rain until end-July hit sowing, heavy downpours in a few districts raised concerns about the crop. Last month, the Indian Sugar Mills Association (ISMA) forecast sugar output in Uttar Pradesh to drop in the 2014-15 marketing year starting October due to a 9% decline in cane areas, although output in the country would still rise 4% to 25.30 million tonne due to higher output in Maharashtra. ISMA director-general Abinash Verma ruled out immediate downward revision of production forecast, saying the specific impact of the floods on the crop in UP is yet to be gauged. He said he didn't "see much impact as of now" as the crop is mature enough to withstand some amount of water. "Had the floods happened some time earlier, when the crop was at an early stage of growth, the impact would have been much larger," he said. UP is estimated to have produced 6.5 million tonne of sugar in 2013-14, while Maharashtra produced 7.7 million tonne, thanks to higher recovery rate in the western state.



Safal to sell frozen tomatoes

If rising tomato prices were a worry, there is some 'cold respite' at hand. Mother Dairy, a wholly-owned subsidiary of National Dairy Development Board, has recently introduced its new range of frozen tomatoes in Delhi. These are available in packs of 500g for Rs 20. The current market price of tomatoes is between Rs 50-60 per kg. Mother Dairy's Safal outlets are also selling tomatoes at Rs 50-52 per kg at present."In June-August, there is usually a shortage in supply of tomatoes which leads to a rise in prices. This year, we sourced tomatoes during the peak supply season from Haryana and processed them at our plant in Mangolpuri. What we are selling now are half kg packets of full frozen tomatoes that can be thawed and consumed directly," said Pradipta K Sahoo, Mother Dairy's Business Head (Horticulture). The product is available at roughly 200 of the 400 Safal outlets in Delhi. TNN Sources said that the frozen tomatoes would be available all through the year at the same cost. "Since they are sourced during the peak production months, their cost during the lean months would be much lower than prevailing market prices. We are also supplying tomatoes in puree form. A 200 gm packet of puree would be roughly 700 gm of tomatoes. This is available for Rs 25," said Sahoo. Safal is already selling frozen vegetables that include like green peas, French beans, English carrots, sweetcorn and cauliflower florets.

Erode farmers to say no to hybrid paddy

On Tuesday farmers in Kanchikoil village in Erode district pledged not to use hybrid or tissue cultured paddy varieties for crop cultivation. They decided to use only traditional paddy varieties which do not need pesticides and other fertilisers. "We have taken this decision after we realised that the soil in which we cultivated hybrid and tissue cultured paddy varieties lost its original composition due to excessive use of pesticides and fertilisers. We want to pass on the same land to our future generation who would use it for cultivation," said Nel Jayaraman, state coordinator, Save Our Traditional Paddy Varieties Forum. Members of Bharathiya Kisaan Sangam (BKS) conducted a traditional paddy fest in Kanchikoil in Erode district on Tuesday. According to the organisers, the main motive of this festival was to create awareness on forgotten traditional paddy varieties. "We have more than 1,500 varieties of traditional paddy in our country. But most of the varieties vanished due to hybrid and tissue cultured modern paddy varieties and we totally have ignored traditional paddy for cultivation. To encourage farmers to again start cultivating those traditional paddy varieties, we have conducted this festival," Jayaraman said. According to him, the traditional paddy varieties such as kulla kar, thooya malli, illuppai poo samba, mappillai samba, kowni, karudan samba, karunkuruvai are different from each other. "kulla kar rice increases the count of red cells in our blood.

Illuppai poo samba cures diabetes and joint pains and mappillai samba increases motility count in men," he said and added that each paddy variety had its own power. "But, we could not find these kinds of powers in the modern paddy variants. Moreover traditional variants do not need too much pesticides and fertilisers and do not affect the soil," he said. In the paddy fest, organisers gave one kg of traditional paddy varieties to each farmer who participated in the festival. "Our forum will give paddy varieties free of cost to everyone who wish to use them. Jayaraman said that farmers of Kanchikoil planned to sow traditional paddy varieties. "There are 10,000 acres of land in Kanchikoil and this year we have distributed paddy varieties to 300 farmers. They will sow them in 400 acres this year and they will extend the crop area in the coming years. The farmers who get paddy varieties this year will donate paddy seeds to other farmers who wish to use them for cultivation," he added. Farmers who received the seeds on Tuesday began to sow them in their land which they had filled with fertile soil.

Agriculture college marks golden jubilee

The need to use water judiciously in agriculture in view of the impending shortage of water that the state would face by 2025 was stressed by agriculture minister S S Krishnamoorthy on Tuesday. Speaking at the golden jubilee celebrations of the Agricultural College and Research Centre (AC and RC), he said it was estimated that the state would require 6.2 million hectare per metre (mhm) of water for agriculture in the year 2025, but only 4.47mhm would be available, resulting in a shortfall of 31%. Hence, researchers should help farmers make the best use of the available water. He said that 91% of the 41 lakh hectares of land under cultivation in Tamil Nadu faced water scarcity. Tamil Nadu chief minister J Jayalalithaa was making all efforts to enhance agricultural output and increase the profits for farmers. According to Sandeep Saxena, Agriculture Production Commissioner and principal secretary to Tamil Nadu government, the state exceeded its target of 100 metric tonnes of food grain production in the year 2011-12 despite natural calamities like the Thane cyclone which hit the coastal regions and drought that affected 31 districts. He said it was the scientists who had made this possible through their efforts. The Tamil Nadu government had enhanced the allocations to the state agriculture department from Rs 2,000 crore to Rs 5,800 crore, which would go a long way in providing a thrust to this sector, he added. Dr K Ramasamy, vice-chancellor, Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, lauded the efforts of the state government to set up three more government agricultural colleges in the state. A special postal cover was released by the department of posts on the occasion and Post Master General, Chennai circle, Mervin Alexander released the first cover. Minister Sellur K Raju, Madurai collector L Subramanian and others participated.