

E-based crop management to increase income of farmers

To maximise the income of small and marginal farmers by narrowing the yield gap, the Department of Agriculture will shortly introduce e-based crop management system in the district. As part of the scheme, a total of 53 tablet computers manufactured by Kerala State Electronics Development Corporation Limited has arrived in the district for distribution to the agriculture department officials working at the block level. "These gadgets, fitted with GPRS (general packet radio service) technology and carried by the officials directly to the fields, will be utilised to identify the potentiality of farm in relation to soil, irrigation and crop suitability at micro level. The procedure will help the farmers move from the present area-based generic approach to farm-based cropping technique and thereby, increase the yield multi-fold," Joint Director of Agriculture P. Santhanakrishnan told *The Hindu*. Each of the tablets would be fed with farmers' database, farm mapping, crop plan, reports of periodic field monitoring and yield analysis. Under the crop plan segment, information regarding climate, soil, irrigation and rainfall would be available for dissemination to the farmers. "Once the system gets rolling, even input assessment can be done with farm-specific introspection because of facility to instantly download data from the tablets," Mr. Santhanakrishnan said. Simultaneously with the e-based crop management system, the entire 13 agriculture extension centres and 13 sub-depots in the district would be equipped with computerised 'comprehensive input supply management system'.

Deadline set to clear queries of farmers

Give them appropriate reply, Collector Karunakaran tells officials



Officials attached to various departments have been set a deadline of August 15 to reply to all pending questions and grievances of farmers. Collector M. Karunakaran set this deadline in the farmers' grievance day meeting held here on Friday. As the meeting started, farmers were up in arms against the inordinate delay in getting reply to their queries from officials saying that they would be compelled to stage a walkout from the

meeting if the situation was allowed to continue. They then virtually mobbed the Collector on the dais with their petitions. Once the farmers settled down in their seats after submitting the petitions and questionnaires, Dr. Karunakaran told his subordinates that the officials should clear all pending queries of the farmers before August 15 and give them appropriate reply while a copy of the responses should be submitted to the Personal Assistant to Collector (agriculture). "Those who fail to meet this deadline will have to face severe action," the Collector warned. Raising the issue of invasion by wild animals, especially elephants and wild boar, into ranches close to the Western Ghats, farmer Shaik Maideen of Vadakarai said digging of trenches in vulnerable areas should be completed as early as possible besides providing solar electric fence along the border to deter the invading animals. Velladurai, Ranger of Kadayanallur, said the digging of trenches in the forest land had been completed while the department was waiting for permission to dig the rocky terrain in private lands. When an official said the cold storage facilities in the regulated market at Tenkasi and Kadayanllur were operational, it triggered wild opposition from agriculturists, who said the facility was yet to be commissioned. "The official is giving false information to the Collector and the farmers," Mr. Shaik Maideen alleged. When the Collector intervened, it became clear that the official's reply was found to be wrong and was forced to apologise for his response. At the same time, Horticulture Department officials disproved the charge of a farmer from Keezhapuliyoor, who sought compensation for "onion damage and poor quality of tomato and chilly seeds" distributed by the department. Deputy Director of Horticulture S. Raja Mohamed displayed vegetables collected from the field of the farmer, who had levelled charges, and showed photographs taken in farms at Keezhapuliyoor showing healthy vegetables. Subsequently, the farmer withdrew his charges. The Collector accepted the demand to repair shutters of major irrigation dams and directed officials to rectify problems, if any, immediately. Officials revealed that the 'kar' paddy cultivation area during this year has come down. While farmers had cultivated paddy on 2,850 hectare till July 18 last year, the area has shrunk to 2,293 hectare due to erratic southwest monsoon and poor storage in reservoirs, particularly in Manimuthar and Papanasam dams. But the area of cultivation of cereals has gone up with farmers cultivating them on 1,576 hectare till July 18 against 1,422 hectares in the corresponding period last year.

Demand to make crop insurance to cover individualised losses

Farmers asked District Collector A. Gnanasekaran to recommend to the government to make crop insurance person specific that can cover individualised crop losses. Presently farmers can get insurance cover only when crop loss was endemic in a particular region. Now the farmers want their crop insurance policies should be able to protect them from individualised crop losses. Speaking at District Farmers Grievance Redressal Meeting held at collectorate here on Friday some of the farmers raised the issue. They asked the collector, who was presiding over the meet, to take the demand to the knowledge of the government. Farmers also felt premium of crop insurance policies to be costly and wanted it to be slashed. Some other farmers wanted collector to ensure that

Shenbagathoppu dam was strengthened and its sluice gates repaired, so that water can be stored in the reservoir. There were demands for sprucing up of inlets of water bodies before monsoon sets in. Another demand was to allot more power connections to farm sector in Tiruvannamalai district as the region mainly depends on well irrigation. N. Palanivel, personal assistant (agriculture) to District Collector was among the officials participated in the meet.

Farmers' grievances day meeting

The monthly farmers' grievances day meeting will be held at the collectorate hall here at 10 a.m. on July 25. An official press release issued here on Friday.

Farmer shares his spice of success

Farmers in the drought prone district looked dumbfounded as a progressive farmer from the neighbouring Pudukottai district demonstrated that the spicy pepper crops, grown only in cool climatic conditions in hill areas could be cultivated in coconut groves in the district. The farmers who turned up for the monthly grievance redressal meeting at the Collectorate here on Friday were astonished when D. Raja Kannu from the neighbouring Pudukottai district demonstrated his success story of cultivating pepper in his coconut groves for the past 15 years through a slide presentation. Mr. Kannu who has taken up farming after superannuation as a school headmaster, casually planted a pepper seedling in his coconut grove 15 years ago to see it grow beautifully, proving as myth the fact that the crop would grow only in cool climate conditions and that too in hilly areas. Presently, he was cultivating pepper as an intercrop in three acres of his coconut groves at Vadakadu, near Alangudi and exhorted his counterparts in the district to try it out in their coconut groves. Encouraged after visiting the plants, at least three farmers have started cultivating the crop in their groves, he said. Kannu said he has 15 year-old crop in one acre, three year-old and one-year-old crops in another two acres. Kariyamunda variety is ideally suited for plains and it grew well in coconut groves where the temperate climate would be hovering around 28 to 30 degree Celsius, he said. The plant would take three years for flowering and fruiting and he was harvesting 300 to 400 kg of pepper from the one acre land of 15-year-old crop in a year. "Initially, I sold pepper at Rs. 60 per kg and now selling at Rs 900 per kg," he said adding the price of the 'black gold' is always on the rise. Mr. Kannu brought pepper grown in his field and exhibited it to the farmers. He also invited the farmers to visit his field as "seeing is believing."

Ramnad to be rid of 'seema karuvelam' trees

All 429 'kanmois' to be freed of trees in two years: Collector

The drought prone arid district would be freed from the menace of anti-farmer *Prosopis juliflora* (seema karuvelam or kattu karuvai) as the district administration proposed to remove the trees from government lands and non-governmental organisations offering to help to remove the trees from private lands. Though a small section of poor people was

eking out a living by making charcoal out of the wood, the trees infested on around 40,000 hectares in the district is considered a bane for the farmers as they spread the roots as deep as 70 to 80 feet and exploited the groundwater resource. Addressing the farmers at the grievance redressal meeting here on Friday, Collector K.Nanthakumar said the union 'kanmais' (water bodies) in all the 429 panchayats would be freed from 'seema karuvelam' in two years time and the trees in waterbodies maintained by the Public Works Department (PWD) would be removed in a phased manner. After a meeting with the presidents of 429 panchayats in the district, the auctioning for removing the trees would be decided soon, he said adding it has been decided to remove trees in 40 kanmois a year. Those employed under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee scheme would be involved in uprooting the trees and they would be replaced by the farmers' friendly 'nattu karuvelam' trees, he said. Meanwhile, representatives of four non-governmental organisations – Sugam Arakattalai, Kanavu Ulagam Arakattalai, DARE Foundation and DHAN foundation, who attended the meeting, have come forward to remove the trees from private lands. The Sugam Arakattalai, which launched the project at Pattinamkathan panchayat last year, had already removed *Prosopis juliflora* in 900 acres of private land. With permission from the National Highways, it was also removing trees on both sides of the 90 km-long East Coast Road (ECR) from Devipattinam to Kannirajapuram. It had already cleared the trees in 45 km-long stretch. The DHAN Foundation has introduced mechanisation to uproot the trees and could remove trees on five acres of land in just one day. They would, however, take up work on a minimum area of 50 acres. They have been engaged in the work for the past three years. All the four organisations have said that they would not charge the farmers for removing the trees but take away the removed trees in lieu of the work.

Pudukottai reeling under agrarian crisis, say farmers



Farmers who spoke at the monthly grievances day meeting held here on Friday, urged the district administration to persuade the State government to declare Pudukottai as drought-

hit district. Failure of monsoon for three years in a row had resulted in a serious loss of crops, particularly paddy and sugarcane, they said pleading for immediate relief by declaring the district as drought-prone zone.

Farmers' loss

G.S. Dhanapathy, district chairman of the Farmers' Forum of India, said that paddy cultivators and sugarcane growers had incurred huge losses in the last two years. He wanted steps to be taken for clearing the encroachments on major and minor tanks in the district. He said the water user committees, comprising the local ayacutdars as office-bearers, should be consulted for the implementation of the World Bank-funded schemes.

Disbursement of arrears

Sugarcane growers pleaded for immediate disbursement of arrears as per the state advised price (SAP) by private sugar factories. Against the state advised price of Rs. 2,550, the private factories had disbursed only Rs. 2,250 a tonne. The cooperative loans had become overdue attracting penal interest, they said urging the district administration to direct the private factories to pay up the arrears of Rs. 19 crore.

Solar pump sets

Chelladurai, a farmer from Aranthangi, said solar-energy operated pump set should be sanctioned to farmers. S. Ramasamy, president of Kallanai Kalvai Ayacutdar Welfare Association, pleaded for immediate dredging of irrigation channels in the Kallanai Kalvai.

Now, farmers can test soil at Mattuthavani

Mobile lab to be stationed for two days in a month

A mobile soil testing unit was launched at Mattuthavani paddy and flower market complex here on Friday. It is an initiative of District Agriculture Department and Madurai Market Committee. "It will be stationed at the market twice a month and farmers can bring soil samples and get them tested there. For the rest of the month, the unit will tour the villages across the district," said Joint Director of Agriculture Jaisingh Gnanadurai. The vehicle has a small laboratory. Technicians test the soil samples and give the results to the farmers during the day, latest by 3 p.m. There are three agriculture officers who advise the farmers and answer their queries on soil. Madurai Market Committee secretary J. Thavasamuthu said the paddy market was chosen to station the unit since more farmers visited it. "This is a longstanding demand of the farmers and based on their response, we will increase the frequency of visits to the market," he said.

The market has 129 paddy shops, 60 traders of fertilizers and seeds and 104 flower traders. Members of the Integrated Association of Farmers and Traders of the market bear the expenses of Rs.20 for getting a soil sample tested. Officials said the unit would enable the traders in the market to maintain a database of the various soil types of farmers. “Based on the database, the traders can sell the right type of fertilizers and seeds to them,” Mr. Thavasamuthu said.

Jackfruit festival from August 1

The Regional Agriculture Research Station (RARS) at Amblavayal, under the Kerala Agricultural University (KAU), will organise a State-level jackfruit festival at the flower show ground of the station from August 1 to 6. Seminars on jackfruit processing, exhibition and sale of value-added products, cookery competition, would be part of the event. A feast of jackfruit-based dishes would be organised on the first day.

Forest Department plans to plant 2.06 lakh saplings

The Forest Department has set a target of planting 2.06 lakh saplings this year in Erode district, to expand green cover and address global warming. The Department is now into the process of reaching out to Government offices, schools, colleges, private organisations, and factories to provide saplings free of cost. An organisation has to be prepared to plant and nurture a minimum of 50 saplings. The State Government had set a target to plant 66 lakh saplings throughout Tamil Nadu, in order to ensure clean air, and the right environment for growth of fauna. In Erode district, the Forest Department has been carrying out the TCPL (Tree Cultivation in Private Land) initiative in several villages in Erode division through formation of clusters. Cultivable fallow lands are identified for planting the saplings with the cooperation of the land owners. Through a press release, the Forest Department has requested educational institutions and industries to contact the following officials over phone to get saplings free of cost: District Forest Officer, Erode, and Forest Range Officer Erode: 0424 2291722 / 94454 68250 / 94423 52892; District Forest Officer, Satyamangalam, and Deputy Director, Sathyamangalam Tiger Reserve, and Forest Range Officer, Sathyamangalam: 04295 220312/ 94454 68259/ 94435 05889; District Forest Officer, Hasanur, and Deputy Director, Sathyamangalam Tiger Reserve: 04295 223512/ 94454 68256/ 94434 54971; Divisional Forest Officer, Bamboo Plantation Division, Gobichettipalayam, and Forest Range Officer, Bangalawpudur: 04285 228404/ 94454 68269/ 99423 64936.

Ratify Land Acquisition Act: farmers

Farmers have urged the State government to approve the Land Acquisition Act passed by both the Houses of Parliament recently to enhance the compensation amount to be paid to those farmers whose lands are being acquired for implementation of various projects. The farmers raised this demand under the banner of the Consortium of Indian Farmers' Association, according to R. Vriddhagiri, general secretary of the Tamil Nadu chapter of the Consortium. He told *The Hindu* that the core group of the Consortium that met

recently had passed a resolution in this regard. He said that whenever major government projects were implemented vast stretches of arable lands were being acquired by giving nominal compensation. Mr. Vriddhagiri said that the new Central legislation provided for giving a compensation that would be four times of the guideline value of lands in the rural areas and two times of the guideline value of lands in the urban areas. Only when the State Assembly ratifies the legislation it could be implemented in Tamil Nadu. Therefore, the Consortium has appealed to Chief Minister Jayalalithaa to take immediate steps in this regard.

21 farm cooperatives to be made urban credit societies

Reflecting the growing urbanisation in the State, 21 primary agricultural cooperative credit societies (PACCS) in six districts will be converted into urban credit cooperative institutions. Announcing this in the Assembly on Friday, Cooperation Minister Sellur K. Raju, who replied to the debate on the demands for grants for the Cooperation, Food and Consumer Protection Department, said that as the areas served by the PACCS, located in the vicinity of big towns, did not have farm lands, the societies were not in a position to provide crop loans. By making the PACCS urban cooperative credit societies, people living in these areas would be able to get housing loans, house mortgage loans and jewel loans. The 21 PACCS were now functioning near the limits of municipal corporations of Coimbatore, Madurai, Salem and Tirupur besides those of the municipalities of Cuddalore and Kancheepuram. Initiating the debate, Mr. Raju informed the House that two years ago, 10 PACCS operating in the suburbs of Chennai and Coimbatore – six in Kancheepuram district and four in Coimbatore – were made into the urban cooperative credit societies. Now, there were 53 urban cooperative credit societies, which disbursed loans to the tune of Rs. 787.47 crore to nearly 1.68 lakh members last year. The Minister said that since the present government assumed office three years ago, the cooperative institutions gave interest-free crop loans of about Rs. 12,066 crore to around 29.83 lakh farmers. This year, the government fixed a target of Rs. 5,000 crore for crop loans and Rs. 200 crore for interest incentive. As regards “Amma Marundhagam” (Amma pharmacy), the Minister said 100 outlets would be set up by cooperative institutions in addition to the existing 210 shops. In June, Chief Minister Jayalalithaa inaugurated 10 such pharmacies, offering a discount of 10 per cent to 15 per cent. During 2012-13, the value of sale of medicines by the already existing shops was Rs. 64.97 crore, which went up to Rs. 79.42 crore between April 1, 2013 and June 30, 2014, the Minister added.

Kuruvai package benefits 2,032 farmers

CHEER TO THE FARMER	
● About 2,500 acres has been brought under special package	● Adequate inputs including zinc sulphate, gypsum and solid bio manure supplied to farmers
● Community nurseries were being raised on 20 acres	● Ten farmers' groups had been sanctioned transplanting machinery
● 65 hectares would be covered for raising coconut, pulses and maize in the district	

About 2,500 acres of land has been brought under 'kuruvai' cultivation under the special package being implemented in three blocks in the district. All arrangements have been made for the supply of adequate inputs to farmers under the package, said Collector E. Saravanel Raj. Presiding over the monthly farmers' grievances day meeting here on Friday, the Collector said 2,032 farmers had benefited under the package. Adequate inputs including zinc sulphate, gypsum, and solid bio manure had been supplied to them. The Collector said that the nurseries were raised on 20 acres of land. Ten farmers' groups had been sanctioned transplanting machinery. Five groups had been provided with mechanised weed clearing equipment and steps were being taken to supply it to the other five groups. The Collector said that under the 'seed village' programme, a subsidy of Rs. 24.5 lakh had been sanctioned to the district. Under the 'sustainable sugarcane initiative', steps had been taken to cultivate sugarcane on 290 hectares of land in the district using drip irrigation and agricultural implements worth Rs. 87 lakh will be distributed.

220 tonnes of seeds

The district administration has taken steps to cater to the needs of samba farmers. A total of 220 tonnes of samba seeds had been stocked. Under the National Mission, 65 hectares of land would be covered for raising coconut, pulses, and maize in the district. While cent per cent subsidy towards the infrastructure of the drip irrigation equipment would be given to small and marginal farmers, big farmers would be eligible for 75 per cent subsidy, he added. The Collector gave away water-soluble fertilisers to 10 farmers on the occasion.

Farmers' appeal

R. Ulaganathan, district secretary of the Tamil Nadu Vivasayigal Sangam, urged the district administration to moot a proposal for construction of barrage across the Coleroon and Marudhaiyar to benefit the farmers to irrigate their fields. P. Viswanathan, state president of the Tamizhaga eri matrum aatru paasana vivasaygal sangam, pleaded for dredging of the 22 major tanks and their supply channels on the Pullampadi vaikkal. Referring to the serious loss incurred by the sunflower growers in and around Tirumanur,

he said that crop over a vast area had withered away due to paucity of irrigation. He pleaded for adequate compensation for the sunflower growers. He also wanted more area to be covered under onion in the district. N. Sengamuthu, district president of Ariyalur district farmers association, pleaded for stepping up milk production in the district by setting up additional mini diaries on the cooperative sector. He also wanted all the old and damaged electric poles in the district to be replaced by new ones for ensuring safety of the members of the public. S.R. Ambedkarvazhiyan, state president of Tamizhaga Ambedkar Vivasayigal Iyakkam, pleaded for road facility between Kamarasavalli and Oriyur.

Make use of incentives, horticulturists urged



Special incentives and subsidy based infrastructure is provided to encourage horticultural cultivation in the district under the National Mission for Micro Irrigation Scheme. Farmers should take maximum advantage of these schemes, said E. Saravanavelraj, Collector. The Collector inspected various units and villages where the scheme was implemented and said the micro irrigation facilitated economy up to 55 per cent in the use of irrigation waters. The efficiency of water utility was enhanced. The strategy was applicable to all major horticultural crops and it registered a fall in the use of chemical fertilisers and reduced power consumption. The productivity got doubled. Under the scheme, about 1,237 hectares had been covered in the district with a subsidy of Rs. 7.45 crore. The Collector inspected the cultivation of cashew at Pattanakurichi village, where Ravichandran, a farmer, had utilised the scheme last year. The Collector said that Rs. 1.14 crore had been allotted under the National Horticulture Mission during the current financial year 2014-15. About 300 hectares of land would be covered under mango, lemon, cashew, flowers, chilly, turmeric, coriander, and so on. Shade net would be set up for an area of 1,000 square metres. Sixty hectares would be covered under integrated pest management and integrated nutrient management. Vermibeds would be set up in seven places. The Collector inspected minor nursery raised in the field of N. Balasubramanian in Siluvaichery village and the shade net set up by K. Valli in the village. He appealed to the farming community to utilise these schemes.

Gunasekaran, Joint Director of Agriculture; and Subbiah, Deputy Director of Horticulture, accompanied the Collector.

Water levels dip in major reservoirs

Water level in major reservoirs in the country has dipped lower than the average of last 10 years, official sources said on Friday. This is due to a weak south-west monsoon this year. Water storage in six reservoirs of the northern region, including Himachal Pradesh, Punjab and Rajasthan has dipped to 47 per cent as compared to 56 per cent in the corresponding period last year. In the western region comprising Gujarat and Maharashtra, where the monsoon is particularly deficient this year, the average water level in 22 reservoirs is reported to be 22 per cent of the total storage capacity as against 45 per cent in the corresponding period last year. In the central region comprising U.P., Uttarakhand, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh the water level is on an average 31 per cent of the total capacity as against last year's 48 per cent. In the southern region the total water storage is 16 per cent of the total capacity of the 30 reservoirs as against 36 per cent last year.

'Use newer varieties to bring down cost of sugarcane cultivation'



Deputy Commissioner of Belgaum N. Jayaram emphasised the need for mechanisation in sugarcane farming, inter-cropping and use of newer varieties to bring down cost of cultivation and sugar production. Inaugurating the two-day '16th Sugarcane R&D meet of North Karnataka' organised by Coimbatore-based Sugarcane Breeding Institute (SBI) in collaboration with University of Agricultural Sciences (UAS), Dharwad, S. Nijalingappa Sugar Institute (SNSI), Belgaum and sugar industries in the region here on Friday, he said Karnataka ranked 3rd in cane production and 2nd in achieving high sugar recovery in the country. Ugar Sugar Works Ltd. hosted the event. The State's sugar production during 2013-14 was highest with 40.50 lakh tonnes as on April 15, 2014 as against 33.50 lakh tonnes during previous season, with about 69% coming from the north Karnataka region alone, where the average sugar recovery was 11.71 per cent during the year. But the most important challenge before the industry was to increase their productivity so that could offer better prices to the growers, he said. SBI director N. Vijayan Nair, who set the agenda for what eventually turned out to be brain-storming sessions, called upon the

industry focus on “soil nutrition management” and set up tissue culture laboratories in the sugarcane belts in the region where the crops were affected by Yellow Leaf Disease. He said the industry need to mechanise sugarcane farming to bring down the cost of production and also address shortage of labour, besides inter-cropping to enhance farm income for growers. He called for urgent corrective measures while pointing out that half of the sugarcane area in the region was prone to drought, besides undergone soil degradation. But there were positive signals from the absence of red rot and high-sugar recovery levels in the region. Dr. Nair, who was felicitated in recognition of his commendable contribution to the development and progress of the sugar industry in India and was due to retire in September this year, said that only eight of the 43 sugar mills in the region had submitted their Action Taken Report (ATR) on the resolutions adopted at the 15th meet, whereas all the mills in Tamil Nadu had promptly submitted their ATRs.

Agriculture varsity in the grip of a financial crisis

The accumulated liabilities of the only farm university in the State have touched Rs. 264.8 crore. For the current fiscal, the KAU requires Rs.124.53 crore for payment of salaries, and Rs. 100.77 crore to meet pension and other retirement benefits. The KAU's total Non-Plan requirement for 2014-15 is pegged at Rs. 245.30 crore. It expects internal generation of Rs. 20.23 crore.

Grant-in-aid

A grant-in-aid of Rs. 225.07 crore is required, but that sanctioned in the State budget is Rs. 208.82 crore. This creates a shortfall of Rs. 16.25 crore. If the commitment for revision of dearness allowance and wages is to be honoured, the deficit will be more. The picture for 2014-15 budget is better than that in the previous years. For instance, the deficit between allotment and expenditure for 2001-02 was Rs.5.75 crore and that for 2002-03 was Rs. 7.47 crore.

Defecit

The accumulated deficit of Rs. 264.8 crore comprises the University Grants Commission package grant arrears of Rs.12.11 crore; a shortfall of Rs. 108.35 crore in General Provident Fund/Welfare fund account; pending arrears of Rs. 34 crore for pay and allowances of retirees; pension arrears of Rs.30 crore; restoration of Rs. 74.68 crore diverted from research funds; and audit fee of Rs. 5.66 crore payable to State Local Fund Department. The KAU currently has 526 teachers against a sanctioned strength of 779. Nearly 1,000 of the 1,800 posts of administrative and technical staff are vacant. The KAU employs only 994 labourers against the sanctioned strength of 1989. Joy Mathew, KAU Comptroller, said only a generous contribution of the government can save the university. “A one-time grant or a special aid, perhaps in instalments, is needed. In 2011-12, the subject committee recommended a one-time grant of Rs. 190 crore. If it were granted, the deficit would not have gone up,” he added. In his report in June 2012, the

then Chief Secretary K. Jayakumar, appointed by the government to study the KAU's woes, stated that the university needed adequate financial support.

Good response to State agri proposal from Union Ministry, says Minister

The State government has received a very positive response from Union Minister of Agriculture Radha Mohan Singh to some of the proposals made in the draft of a new State Agriculture policy, Minister for Agriculture K.P. Mohanan has said. The policy included a separate budget for the farming sector and a special crop insurance project for the farmers, he said. He was speaking after the State-level inauguration of a comprehensive vegetable cultivation project for the 2014-15 fiscal at the Tagore Centenary Hall, here, on Friday. Mr. Mohanan said the Union Minister, who recently held discussions with the State government, was very happy with the proposals made by Kerala as part of making a fresh policy. "It was he himself who suggested the scope of implementing some of the proposals nation-wide for the welfare of the farming sector in the country," he said. According to Mr. Mohanan, the State would be getting a copious fund of Rs.1,257 crore during the 2014-15 fiscal to develop the agriculture sector. "During the tenure of the United Progressive Alliance-led government too, the State was fortunate to get very good funding for the sector," he said. Announcing some of the new plans of the government, the Minister said steps would be taken to open at least one model cattle farm in each grama panchayat at the earliest with direct funding of the State government.

Use of organic manure

"The project is mainly aimed at promoting the use of organic manure for vegetable cultivation," he added. Also, the Minister maintained that special collection centres would be launched in all Krishi Bhavans in Kerala to procure home-grown vegetables and effectively market it through various government-supported agencies. Lauding the "enthusiasm" already shown by the students' community in Kerala towards various agriculture promotion programmes of the government, the Minister said a similar zeal should come from all citizens to make barren land cultivable in the State. The function also witnessed the State-level distribution of bio-gas plants for schools and the presentation of various excellence awards instituted by the Agriculture Department for the students and schools those rendered an outstanding service in the last fiscal for promoting vegetable farming. Mayor A.K. Premajam presided over the function.

‘No fund shortage for farm projects’



Agriculture Minister K.P. Mohanan speaks during the inauguration of a training programme for the Farm Action Force at KILA, Mulangunnathukavu, near Thrissur, on Friday.— Photo: By Special Arrangement

Paucity of funds will not hinder any projects for agriculture development in the State, Agriculture Minister K.P. Mohanan has said. He was speaking after inaugurating a State-level training programme for the Farm Action Force organised by the Kerala Panchayat Association at the Kerala Institute of Local Administration, at Mulangunnathukavau, near here, on Friday. “Our objective is to make each panchayat self-sufficient in vegetable production,” he said. Kerala Panchayat Association State president P.T. Mathew presided over. An Agriculture Action Force has been formed in 60 panchayats for comprehensive development of farm sector. Kerala Panchayat Association is implementing the project with the association of the Agriculture Department and Kudappanakunnu Agriculture Action Force. Under the project, 13-day training programmes were conducted in 18 panchayats. The three-day training programme at KILA was attended by presidents, secretaries, treasurers, coordinators and supervisors of the action forces who have completed the first phase of training. Panchayat presidents and agriculture officers also will be given training. Agriculture experts are leading the classes. Therambil Ramakrishnan, MLA, District Panchayat president C.C. Sreekumar, Panchayat Association State vice-president Sneharajan, KILA Associate Professor Sunny George, Agriculture Department Director R. Ajithkumar, Principal Agriculture Officer Mercy Thomas and others participated.

Onion, tomato prices hit the roof

BEYOND THE common man's reach

Tomatoes Per Kg **Rs. 80**

Onion Per Kg **Rs. 35**

Onion price was **Rs. 16** early last month

❶ A few months ago farmers dumped tomato in Madanapalle and Palamaner to shore up prices

❷ Fall in production is attributed to failure of rains and uncongenial farming climate

“ We will use tamarind juice for cooking the dishes until tomato prices come down **HOUSEWIFE**”

With prices of the onion and tomato constantly going up every day, it is giving a tough time to not only the domestic consumers, but to hoteliers all over. In Chittoor town, the prices of these two essential commodities stood at Rs. 35 and Rs. 80 respectively on Thursday. The tomato market yards in Madanapalle and Palamaner which witnessed scenes of farmers abandoning their produce outside the yards due to steep fall in prices a few months ago, are currently running with low stocks. Drastic fall in the production levels is attributed to failure of rains and uncongenial farming climate. Similarly, the farmers have kept exporting their produce to the neighbouring Tamil Nadu since a month, leading to skyrocketing of the prices in the domestic market. Onion price which remained at Rs. 16 early last month has doubled. Previously there used to be three varieties of the onion with three different prices, but for the past week only one variety is seen at the markets. Most consumers are returning with small quantities of onion, while the tomatoes are untouched by the middle class consumers. Some housewives maintained that till the tomato prices come down, they would increase the quantum of tamarind juice in cooking the dishes. They said that even on earlier occasions, the price of tomato did not cross Rs. 60, but this time it has gone out of reach for the common man. This phenomenon has brought perceptible change in various dishes in the hotel industry.

Officials' plans

Meanwhile, a senior official of the district marketing wing said that plans were ready to procure about 20 tonnes of onion from Maharashtra, for subsidised sale at Rs. 26 a kg at the Rythu Bazars in Chittoor and Tirupati. The public say that the administration should also concentrate on tackling the tomato prices too.

Race for Agriculture Market Committee chief post hots up

Selection of the right candidate for chairperson post of the Palamaner Agriculture Market Committee has become a tough task, with many from the ruling Telugu Desam Party leaving no stone unturned to wrest the chair. Those in fray included party senior leaders from Gangavaram, Palamaner, Baireddipalle and V. Kota mandals, apart from the new entrants who switched loyalty to the TDP months before the Assembly polls. Apart from this, caste equation has made the situation even tougher, with a near-to-stalemate situation prevailing between the two dominant communities --Reddys and Kammas. As many as four senior leaders from Kamma community and an equal number of their Reddy counterparts are making efforts to get support of the State level leaders to wrest the market committee. With big spurt in farm sector in the western mandals, Palamaner market is considered one of the few viable ones in the district, catering to the needs of thousands of farmers. Ever since the panel was formed, its reign had been with the dominant communities from Gangavaram and Palamaner mandals, while V. Kota and Baireddipalle mandals are yet to have any representation. Leaders from here had already approached Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu urging him to consider leaders from these mandals as the chief of the market committee.

Final say

However, senior party leaders observe that TDP's constituency in-charge R.V. Subash Chandra Bose, who was defeated in the recent Assembly polls, is going to have the final say in the selection of the candidate. Interestingly, Mr. Bose's nephew Sudhir Kumar is said to have eyeing the market committee post.

Picking up basics of farming the hard way

Farmers' children and oxen need to go through a rigorous training session in the fields for over a year



The essence of training is to allow the error without consequence, says American novelist Orson Scott Card. Farmers here must have learnt this well before this was written, and they practice it as well with their children and cattle when it comes to

training them in the basics of farming. The men as well as the animals, in this case the oxen, have to go through a rigorous and planned training schedule before they are actually initiated into the agricultural operations. To begin the long training schedule for farmers' children and oxen, none of the seasons are better than kharif. Such an instance was spotted at Muthyalammagudem village of Kattangur mandal here on Friday, where a 50-year-old farmer, Tarala Rambabu, had been training his 20-year-old son and a pair of three-year-old oxen at his field. "We start training a young ox at the age of three years, which is called 'Saga Toloudu' in Telugu," he said. The plough and other farm tools used in cultivation are so sharp that without proper training, the animals could injure themselves when forced into the job.

Safety is priority

"The animals can even damage the crops during weeding operations. Besides, the ox sometimes even attacks the farmer or the other ox tied to it," he added. Explaining the process of training the ox, another farmer, Dasari Bikshamaiah, said they pair a well-trained ox with a young one. Before that a wooden log is tied to the young ones and they are guided to pull it for long distances for a week, so that the animal can walk in tandem on a straight line.

Elaborate process

Later, the farmer involves them in the land preparation activities such as pulling a large rake (locally called *dante*), used in the preparation of land for sowing. After a year in these basic activities, the farmer said that they train the ox in pulling the plough, *guntaka*, and ploughing in water, which is considered the toughest job for the oxen and the farmer. Similarly, the farmers also train their sons in farming activities in a phased manner.

Mechanisation in farming

G. Rama Rao, a teacher, said they used to witness these hectic training sessions in May, but these schedules are rare now, as mechanisation has restricted the use of cattle in farming.

Tributaries save the day for Krishna farmers

Tributaries that discharge their floodwaters into the Krishna River below the Nagarjunasagar Project have come to the rescue of delta farmers to raise seedbeds though the Krishna River Management Board stopped releases more than a week ago. Vijayawada Irrigation Circle authorities have been releasing between 3,300 and 6,150 cusecs of water received from tributaries that discharge into the Krishna River below Nagarjunasagar Project (NSP). Floodwaters from Muniyeru, Wyra and Kataleru are providing farmers in Krishna delta the much needed water to raise seedbeds.

Farmers began agricultural operations with groundwater in some areas, but the salinity is high in the groundwater in places along the coast beyond Pamarru. The release of water from NSP for Krishna delta was stopped on July 9, but releases continue to Alimineti Madhava Reddy Project (AMRP). The release to AMRP was increased from 900 cusecs to 1,350 cusecs on July 12 and was reduced to 340 cusecs and stopped completely on Thursday. The Vijayawada Irrigation Circle authorities released 3,300 cusecs into the canals from Prakasam barrage on Friday. They released 2,200 cusecs to the Krishna Eastern Main Canal that supplies water to Krishna delta areas in Krishna and West Godavari districts and 1,000 cusecs to Krishna Western Main Canal that supplies to Guntur and Prakasam districts. About 100 cusecs were released to the Guntur Channel that provides drinking water to villages located between Vijayawada and Guntur cities and also to Guntur city. Scanty rain was recorded in the delta districts of West Godavari, Krishna, Guntur and Prakasam on Wednesday and no rainfall was recorded in the delta on Thursday.

hindustantimes

Chennai

Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather



Cloudy

Saturday, Jul 19

Max Min
36° | 28°

Rain: 0

Humidity: 70

Wind: normal

Sunrise: 05:51

Sunset: 06:39

Barometer: 1005

Tomorrow's Forecast



Cloudy

Sunday, Jul 20

Max Min
36° | 28°

Extended Forecast for a week

Monday
Jul 21



37° | 28°
Cloudy

Tuesday
Jul 22



36° | 28°
Partly Cloudy

Wednesday
Jul 23



37° | 28°
Cloudy

Thursday
Jul 24



35° | 28°
Cloudy

Friday
Jul 25



37° | 28°
Partly Cloudy

Airport Weather

Chennai

Chennai

Rain: 0 Sunrise: 05:51
Humidity: 70 Sunset: 06:39
Wind: normal Barometer: 1005



THE  NEW
INDIAN EXPRESS

Milma Milk Price Hike a Boon for Tamil Nadu Dairy Farmers

The decision of Milma to hike the price of milk by `3 per litre is likely to increase the flow of milk to the societies in the border districts of the State as the price difference prevailing in Kerala and Tamil Nadu could be as high as `10 to `12 per litre. Manager (procurement and input) of Milma K Sukumaran told 'Express' said that though the Milma has raised the price of one litre of milk by `3 to `36 per litre, of this a sum of `32.72 per litre, depending on the quality, goes to the farmer. He said that Milma will only be getting an additional amount of 16 paise per litre, after the share of the agents and societies. He admitted that the price received by the farmers in Tamil Nadu, compared to their counterparts in Kerala, could be as high as `10 to `12 per litre. He said that a ceiling has been fixed on the procurement by the societies located in the border areas and a ban has been imposed on the purchase of milk from Tamil Nadu. "There are agents who transport milk from Tamil Nadu to the border societies. In the past, on inspection of the milk vans, coming from the neighbouring states, at the border checkposts and subsequent lab analyses, traces of formalin or formaldehyde, a chemical preservative, was found in the milk. The State Government then banned the milk from these dairies. With the recent hike, transportation to border societies and adulteration is likely to increase", said former MLA and a farmer of Perumatty K Krishnankutty. The milk brought from across the borders are poured in the names of members of societies located on the borders. The difference is shared between the agent, member of the society and the farmer from Tamil Nadu. The member also gets a subsidy on the feed purchased from Milma. There are three private milk processing plants one each at Eruthenpathy, Vadakarapathy and Kozhinjampara. As the milk is cheap in Tamil Nadu, these private players transport milk from Tamil Nadu to process and sell it here. These plants also reap good profits. Meanwhile, deputy director of Dairy Development Mini Ravindradas said that the quota for the border milk societies have been fixed from December 2012 and therefore they would not be procuring from the farmers of Tamil Nadu.

She said that they have record of all 32,000 milk farmers in the district and how much they measure on a daily basis. Naturally, abnormal increases will be looked into. At present, these farmers together measure 2,26,000 litres of milk per day.

Farming Scenario Grim Despite Rain



Bhawanipatna: Kalahandi district got respite from dry spell due to rain for two days in the last one week, but it has brought little cheer among the farmers. Though the rain helped seeds germinate, the situation continues to be grim as the rainfall is not sufficient for agricultural activities, both for paddy and cotton crops. In the current kharif season, the Agriculture Department set a target of paddy cultivation in 1,90,000 hectares (ha) in the district. Due to erratic monsoon, most of the irrigation projects are lying defunct or do not have enough water for crops. Indravati major irrigation project can irrigate 80,160 ha, but at present, its water level has dropped to 629 metres against the dead level of 625. Its catchment areas are yet to get adequate rainfall. Similarly, reservoirs of 146 minor irrigation projects of the district, which have the capacity to irrigate 24,370 ha, have gone dry. The Utei medium irrigation project having capacity to irrigate 9306 ha has not been able to release water to farm land. With monsoon not showing major improvement, the district administration has come out with a contingency plan for both paddy and cotton crops. "We will provide necessary assistance to the farmers to tide over the situation," said Deputy Director of Agriculture (DDA) Laxman Kumar Paltasingh. While the district administration had set a target to distribute 61,133 quintals of paddy seed during the kharif season, about 58,000 quintals of seed, which is around 95 per cent of the target, have been disbursed so far. Paltasingh said in view of the continuing dry spell and possible damage to crops, the Directorate of Agriculture has been requested to supply additional 10,000 quintals of paddy seeds for short and medium duration of cultivation. Exuding confidence that the rain situation would shortly improve, he said the farmers need not panic and should wait for rain before going to raise nurseries or transplant saplings. The field officials have been asked to keep a close watch on the situation and advise the farmers accordingly. Against the normal rainfall of about 240.4 mm, Kalahandi received only 102 mm in June. While Thuamul Rampur and Koksara received 214 mm and 235 mm of rainfall respectively, it was only nine mm in Narla, 12 mm in Lanjigarh, 25 mm in Bhawanipatna, 43 mm in M Rampur, 52 mm in Junagarh and 57 mm in Kesinga. The situation has been similar so far this month. Meanwhile, agriculture experts have suggested for gap filling and re-sowing of paddy seeds in most of the areas. Apparently, cotton, the major cash crop of the district, is feared to be affected this time. It was targeted to cover cotton in 45,850 ha and in view of the weather forecast, it was expected for a successful cotton producing year. However, farmers have sown

cotton only in 26,242 ha of which, 14,278 ha have been badly affected. Kalahandi administration has come out with a contingency plan as erratic monsoon has affected both paddy and cotton farming. The irrigation projects of the district are not in position to tide over the crisis as the reservoirs are not yet filled up.

Business Standard

Industry brainstorms crisis in sugar sector



Sugarcane, which is a leading cash crop supporting about 50 million farmers' households in India, is currently in the vortex of crisis. While cane arrears have become an annual phenomenon putting growers to hardships, the glut in the international and domestic sugar market have kept sugar prices comparatively low affecting the profitability of sugar companies. To brainstorm challenges facing industry, Sugar Technologists' Association of India (STAI) organised an all India seminar on 'Diminishing Sugarcane Productivity and Sugar Recovery in Northern India: Opportunities & Challenges' in association with National Sugar Institute (NSI), Kanpur here today. In recent years, India has clocked record production of sugarcane and sugar, however productivity and sugar recovery in Northern India has remained stagnant for over a decade. Compared to average yield of 100 tonnes/hectare in Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra & Karnataka, average yield in UP has averaged 59 tonnes/hectare despite being the largest sugarcane producing state in the country. With challenges of growing population, increasing food and fodder needs, degradation of natural resources, climate change etc, there is an urgent need to enhance sugarcane yield and productivity to meet future sugar requirements, STAI president Dr G S C Rao said. He suggested reduction in cost of production of sugar was vital towards achieving sustainability. "Latest technologies in sugarcane processing, energy conservation devices to enhance power export and having options to produce ethanol with raw/white sugar are few measures to reduce the cost of sugar production," NSI director Narendra Mohan said. "The prevailing crisis is due to glut in global sugar market, which should be preempted with multi-pronged strategies, including exports, product

diversification, incentives etc," Dr Rao told Business Standard on the sidelines. UP Agriculture Production Commissioner (APC) V N Garg said sugar institutes, millers and farmers should work in tandem for sustainable development of sugar industry.

Cardamom prices down 0.3% on profit-booking



Amid profit-booking by speculators at current levels, cardamom prices eased by 0.34% to Rs 912.50 per kg in futures trade today. Further, slackened demand in the spot markets influenced cardamom prices. At the Multi Commodity Exchange, cardamom for delivery in far-month September fell by Rs 3.10, or 0.34%, to Rs 912.50 per kg in business turnover of 48 lots. Likewise, the spice for delivery in August contracts traded lower by Rs 1.20, or 0.13%, to Rs 938.30 per kg in 254 lots. Market analysts said besides profit-booking by speculators at existing levels, fall in demand in the spot market against adequate stocks position mainly led to the fall in cardamom prices at futures trade.

Sugar down 0.3% on subdued demand, ample supply

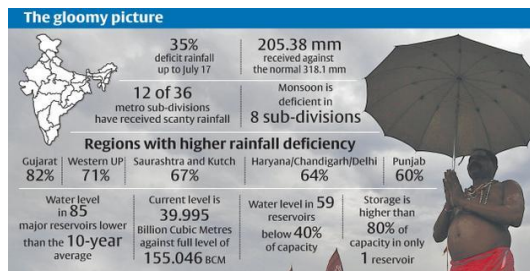


Sugar prices fell by 0.35% to Rs 3,135 per quintal in futures trade today as speculators reduced positions, driven by subdued demand from bulk consumers in the spot market against adequate supplies. At the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange, sugar for delivery in far-month September contracts eased by Rs 11, or 0.35% to Rs 3,135 per quintal with an open interest of 9,050 lots. Similarly, the sweetener for delivery August contract shed Rs 5, or 0.16% to Rs 3,051 per quintal in 22,980 lots. Analysts said besides

subdued demand from bulk consumers such as ice-cream and soft-drink makers in the spot market, ample supplies from millers, kept pressure on sugar prices at futures trade.

THE HINDU BusinessLine

Rain deficit shrinks but Kharif cover below normal



Slack sowing* (in lakh hectares)

	2014	2013	Normal
Rice	127.36	154.17	154.91
Coarse grains	48.43	127.61	125.26
Pulses	21.58	54.18	43.09
Oilseeds	38.07	136.56	101.38
Cotton	56.00	100.55	92.25
Sugarcane	46.09	46.16	45.37
Jute & Mesta	8.07	8.21	8.30

*Figures as on July 17.

Despite monsoon deficit being cut to 34 per cent this week, planting of kharif coarse grains, pulses, oilseeds and cotton continue to be lower than the normal area under these crops. The picture looks grim for kharif with the storage level in the 85 major reservoirs dropping below the 10-year average. Some 59 reservoirs have water level lower than 40 per cent of their capacity.

Coarsecereals

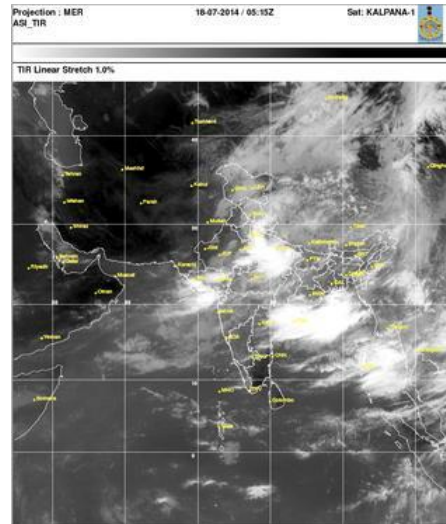
According to the Ministry of Agriculture, coarse cereals have been sown on 48.43 lakh hectares (lh) against the normal 125.26 lh and 127.61 lh last year. Coverage of pulses is down to 21.58 lh (54.18 lh last year and 43.09 lh normal). Oilseeds sowing has dropped to 38.07 lh against 136.56 last year (101.38 lh normal). Planting in cotton is down to 56 lh against 100.55 lh last year and the normal 92.55 lh. Among other crops, planting in sugar and jute is near normal, while that of rice is lower by 25 lh. "It is too premature to project or predict how the kharif crops production will turn out to be. But there are chances of the yield getting affected due to the lower rainfall or farmers opting for early maturing variety in crops such as soyabean," said Govindbhai G Patel, CEO of G G Patel and Nikhil Research Company that advises edible oil traders.

“In pulses, it is unlikely that the lost area will be made up. But there are sufficient stocks, particularly imported consignments, that can come handy to check price rise,” said a source in the pulses trade. Coverage of groundnut is lower at 15.21 lh against 26.87 lh. Normally, some 22 lh hectares are brought under the oilseed every kharif season. In Gujarat, the coverage is 5.42 lh against 15 lh. Similarly, soyabean sowing is down by over 80 per cent compared with last year at 19.50 lh (103.23 lh last year). The major fall in area is from soyabean hub of Madhya Pradesh where the coverage is down to 9.73 lh against 57.81 lh. In Maharashtra, too, the area is down at 4.33 lh against 30.34 lh. Among coarse cereals, the area under jowar is down to one-seventh of last year’s acreage at 2.95 lh, while sowing in maize is only 40 per cent of last year’s coverage (27.33 lh versus 66.32 lh). In Gujarat, maize has been hardly sown, whereas during the same time last year, nearly 3 lh was covered. In Madhya Pradesh (2.03 lh versus 9.08 lh) and Maharashtra (0.18 lh versus 8 lh) also, maize planting has been severely hit. At 13.71 lh, planting in bajra is down to a third of what it was last year. Among pulses, the area under arhar or tur is down to 9.73 lh (22.22 lh) with the coverage in Madhya Pradesh being a meagre 89,000 hectares against 3.41 lh last year.

Maharashtra,MP

Urad sowing is trailing at 3.62 lh (12.98 lh), taking a hit in Madhya Pradesh (0.62 lh versus 4.78 lh) and Maharashtra (0.32 lh versus 2.27 lh). Moong coverage has slipped to 4.76 lh from 13.78 lh last year. In cotton, planting in Gujarat has slipped to 10.19 lh against 24.57 lh to 11.84 lh from 36.34 lh in Maharashtra. A major reason for the lower coverage is that the monsoon is 77 per cent deficient in Gujarat and nearly 42 per cent in Madhya Pradesh. According to the India Meteorological Department, the monsoon deficit in central parts covering Gujarat and Maharashtra is 44 per cent. Gujarat, Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh hold the key to a good kharif harvest in coarse cereals, pulses, cotton and oilseeds. The Central Water Commission data said storage level in Andhra Pradesh is 71 per cent lower than normal, while it is 61 per cent lower than normal in Tamil Nadu. The storage is also worrisome in Gujarat and Maharashtra. “Cotton and castor may gain due to deficient and delayed monsoon. The acreage may rise in cotton but the yield could be lower,” said Patel. Prospects for kharif crops can improve if they can get showers regularly from now till the monsoon’s withdrawal in the first half of September. “Showers at regular interval is crucial for oilseeds,” said Patel.

Fresh Pacific storm as Rammasun beat forecasts to grow into monster



Typhoon Rammasun has rustled up more strength than anticipated and could grow into a near-super typhoon in the South China Sea ahead of landfall over the Hainan Island, part of China, this evening. Model forecasts suggest it has already grown into a category-4 storm, just below super typhoon status.

New-born storm

It is packing winds speeding up more than 200 km/hr, according to an update from the London-based Tropical Storm Risk Group. After landfall, the powerful typhoon will weaken and step out into the Gulf of Tonkin to the west, and aim for the Vietnamese coast for a second landfall tomorrow.

Matmo

Meanwhile this morning, the northwest Pacific has given birth to the latest tropical storm, named Matmo, which too is forecast to become a typhoon in that basin. Matmo is forecast to take a west-northwest track, much more northerly than Rammasun, which would take it towards Taiwan as a category-2 typhoon into next week.

Lateral gains

As for the Indian monsoon, both Rammasun and Matmo are expected to generate lateral gains in terms of incoming helpful circulations dropping anchor in the Bay of Bengal and grow there. The Rammasun's offspring is forecast to present itself as a low-pressure area by as early as Sunday; initial forecasts suggest the Matmo remnant would earn its spurs by Sunday next (July 27).

This will ensure a march of 'low's in procession from the assembly line of Bay of Bengal, and expectedly help sustain the monsoon well into the month-end, if not early into August. The US Climate Prediction Centre has forecast heavy to moderate rainfall over west and the northwest India until July 31, though interior peninsula and central India will remain largely dry during the period.

Bamboo growers in dire straits

Farmers who had taken to bamboo cultivation are finding marketability of this farm produce difficult and depressing. A good number of bamboo growers, who had converged at the Institute of Forest Genetics and Tree Breeding (IFGTB), campus this morning echoed this sentiment. "I took to bamboo cultivation four years back as I was told that it would control global warming and I would be able to make money on carbon credits. I am stuck now, as the return has been nil. If only I had taken to cultivation of some other crop, I would have got something," laments Jagan Radhakrishnan, a farmer from Thiruvannamalai district. According to him, bamboo is raised in around 1,200-1,500 acres in Thiruvannamalai district alone. A similar area is said to have been brought under bamboo across several other districts as well. These farmers were at IFGTB to take part in the Bamboo Growers and Entrepreneurs Meet (BGEM). Jagan and a few others told *Business Line* that their decision to take to bamboo cultivation was probably not correct in the first place. "Bamboo cultivation is not organised; we need government support to market the produce; and the department should facilitate a tie-up with the user company," said Jagan. Meanwhile, IFGTB sources said that they have been introducing bamboo to farmers through various projects since 2004. "We understand that marketability is an issue and plan to address this. Bamboo growers can contact the Bamboo Market Information Centre (BMIC) located within the IFGTB campus and seek our help. The BMIC will help farmers market their produce by facilitating meetings between growers and bamboo entrepreneurs," said M Maria Dominic Savio, Convener, BGEM. IFGTB Director, N Krishnakumar, said India is home to second largest diversity of bamboo (next only to China) in the world with around 136 species. With a focus on including bamboo in the development agenda of the country, several mission mode schemes are being implemented by the Government and bamboo plantations outside forest area, is being promoted extensively, he added. Aruna Basu Sarcar, Director, Tamil Nadu Forest Academy, emphasised the need for a minimum support price for bamboo to protect the grower community.

'No need for tea imports'

The United Planters' Association of Southern India (Upasi) has urged the Government not to yield to pressures of some dealers' lobby to relax norms for large-scale imports. Warning that the tea industry is in crisis with lower realisation and skyrocketing production cost, UPASI President, Peter Mathias, said, "It will be difficult for many

estates to pay wages on time. Tea industry supports 2.5 million workers directly and double that number indirectly.”“There is sufficient quantity of all types of teas in the Indian market. The industry, along with the Tea Board, ensures that its production meets the stringent quality parameters laid down under relevant legislations of India and abroad. Besides, production has been rising over four per cent annually in the last five years and there is no need for imports,” he said.

THE ECONOMIC TIMES

Monsoon revival rises sowing of crops by 35%, water level in reservoirs still low



The monsoon's late revival has increased sowing of crops by 35% in the past week, but worries about agriculture persist as reservoir levels are low, while planting is still much lower than last year, and only slightly better than it was at this time in the drought year of 2009. The situation in water reservoirs was also worrisome as they were filled up to only 26% capacity, down sharply from 42% last year, and the 10-year average of 30%. Reservoirs normally fill up rapidly in July and create a water reserve for irrigation, drinking and power generation until the following year's monsoon. Heavy showers drenched some of the driest regions of the country, including Haryana, where Friday's rainfall was 426% above average; Punjab, 82%, Gujarat region, 39%; and Saurashtra and Kutch, 77%. Total rainfall in the country on Friday was 8% above average, as the monsoon remained strong for the fifth consecutive day and brought down the seasonal deficit by another percentage point to 34%. The India Meteorological Department has forecast heavy rain in many parts of the country, except in the southern regions, where it will be subdued in the next week or so. Rainfall this week has helped rice planting expand to 12.74 million hectare, but it is still lower than 15.41 million hectare a year ago and slightly better than 11.46 million hectares sown in 2009. Officials said sowing was continuing in many parts of the country, and was likely to pick up significantly in the days ahead. Planting was relatively slow in Uttar Pradesh, Odisha, Maharashtra, Madhya

Pradesh, West Bengal and Haryana, the agriculture ministry said. Planting of pulses, at 2.16 million hectares, is much lower than last year's 5.42 million, and even lower than 3.84 million planted in 2009, but with the weather office forecasting good rainfall in the next 10 days, the acreage is poised to increase. "We still have a sowing window of 10-12 days. I expect farmers to go for pulses sowing in rainfed areas of Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Punjab," said KCBhartiya, director at India Pulses and Grain Association. Oilseed planting is also expected to improve but currently it is at only 3.81 million hectare compared to 13.66 million last year and 10.7 million tonnes in 2009, when July rainfall was close to normal but the dry patch in June, August and September made it the worst drought in 37 years. Cotton sowing is down to 5.6 million hectares from 10 million a year ago, but the situation can improve rapidly. "It's a cause of concern, but not a cause of panic as we can still catch up by the month end," said Dhiren Sheth, president of the Cotton Association of India. Area under coarse cereals — jowar, bajra and maize — had also dropped sharply to 4.84 million hectare from 12.76 million hectares a year ago, and 10.2 million in the drought year. Punjab and Chhattisgarh continue to have better water position in reservoirs, according to CWC report. However, the situation was not good in Himachal Pradesh, Rajasthan, Jharkhand, Odisha, West Bengal, Tripura, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu where water storage level in reservoirs monitored by CWC was below than previous year.

Sowing of kharif crops down by 50% so far on poor rains



Sowing of kharif crops, including rice, is down by 50 per cent at 34.56 million hectares as on today, but the government hopes planting will pick up in the coming days with widespread rains in central and north India. Farmers had sown summer crops in 62.74

million hectares in the same period of the 2013-14 kharif season, that begins with the onset of southwest monsoon in June. As of now, the total area under all kharif crops is lower because farmers could not sow on time due to delayed monsoon and there were poor rains in some parts of the country. Monsoon, however, has revived and covered the entire country. "The current spell of rains has been widespread and has covered central and northern parts of the country. I hope this will help farmers sowing crops," Agriculture Minister Radha Mohan Singh told PTI. "I am also told that Monsoon is likely to be satisfactory in the coming days," he added. According to the latest data released by the Agriculture Ministry, maximum drop in sowing area was seen as on today in oilseeds (72 per cent), followed by coarse cereals (62 per cent), pulses (60 per cent) and rice (17.38 per cent). Area planted to rice -- the key kharif crop -- was down by 17.38 per cent at 12.73 million hectare as on today, as against 15.41 million hectare in the year ago. Similarly, area planted to pulses was down by 60 per cent to 2.15 million hectare from 5.41 million hectare in the same period, the data showed. "The sowing of oilseeds is down by 72 per cent due to non-setting of monsoon in time. The oilseeds producing states have got rains during last and this week and now sowing is in full swing. It is expected that the area under oilseeds in the next week may increase significantly," the ministry said. On availability of farm inputs, the minister said that the supply of power "normal" in most states, while supply of diesel, fertiliser and seeds was "more or less normal" It also mentioned that there were no reports of pests and diseases so far.