

THE HINDU

Farmers welcome supervisory committee

The Union Cabinet's decision to constitute a supervisory committee on the Mullaperiyar dam issue has been viewed by water experts and farmers as a logical fulfilment of the legal process. The Supreme Court, in its judgment last month, ordered the constitution of a three-member supervisory committee with one representative each from the Kerala and Tamil Nadu governments. A nominee of the Central Water Commission will be the chairperson. The committee will, among others, ensure restoration of the water level up to 142 ft.

'Be proactive'

K.M. Abbas, president, Periyar-Vaigai Irrigation Five-District Farmers' Association, told *The Hindu* on the phone that the farmers had been expecting this development for quite some time. He wanted the committee to be proactive in raising the water level. An expert called the move "a shot in the arm" and said it was a vindication of the State's case.

As agrarian crisis looms, delta farmers look up to PM

The Cauvery Delta Farmers' Welfare Association has sought the intervention of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to help Tamil Nadu get its due share of Cauvery waters and bail it out from an agrarian crisis. Association vice-president K.V. Kannan, in a representation to the Centre, said that all along, the Karnataka government had been paying scant regard to the agreements signed in pre-Independence days (in 1892 and 1924) on the sharing of the Cauvery waters. Nor was it honouring its commitment to the implementation of the Cauvery Water Disputes Tribunal's award, which came after a protracted legal battle. He pointed out that as per the 1990 interim award, Karnataka was duty-bound to release 205 tmc ft to Tamil Nadu. The final award came in 2007, but it took six years for the Centre to gazette it — in 2013. As per the award, Karnataka had to release water for the kuruvai season, extending from June to September, as follows: June-10 tmc ft, July-34 tmc ft, August-50 tmc ft and September-40 tmc ft.

Kuruvai prospects grim

But as Karnataka was never keen on implementing the award, the kuruvai crop prospects in Tamil Nadu were crippled. The crop could be properly raised only if water was released from the Mettur dam on June 12. But since 1972, the Mettur water had been released on the date only three or four times. Therefore, the area under kuruvai had shrunk to 1 lakh acres from the usual five-six lakh acres. Even this was limited to areas

where the groundwater was available. Mr. Kannan said that if the interests of Tamil Nadu farmers were to be protected, Mr. Modi must act immediately to set up the Cauvery Management Board and the Cauvery Regulatory Authority.

Narmada model

Mr. Kannan said the Cauvery dispute could be settled amicably, on the lines of the arrangement for sharing of Narmada waters among Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Rajasthan, which worked without hitch. He said that when Deve Gowda was Prime Minister, he signed a Farakka accord with Bangladesh for sharing of Ganga waters by the two countries. But it was a surprise that Mr. Gowda was now siding with the Karnataka government to deny Tamil Nadu its due share of Cauvery waters. After 1970, Karnataka constructed nine dams across the tributaries of the Cauvery such as the Hemavathi, the Herangi and the Yegachi without the consent of Tamil Nadu and the Centre. He said formation of the CMB and the CRA was the way out for safeguarding agriculture in Tamil Nadu.

Movement seeks relief package for farmers

The Tamil Nadu Agriculture Awareness Movement has appealed to the State Government to provide relief to the farmers raising coconut and rainfed crops in the district who had suffered huge crop losses due to lack of adequate water for irrigation.

Acreage

G. Ramanathan, the state joint secretary of the Movement, said the government should give the relief package not in general for a specific acreage rather it should be after computation of losses crop wise. "For an example, the coconut farmers should be compensated at Rs. 18,000 for a tree which was completely dried and Rs 10,000 for trees where the yield had come below the average productivity levels," he added.

PAP canal

According to him, similar type of calculation should be carried out with each of the rainfed crops which were damaged owing to inadequate reception of water. "Mainly the areas under PAP canal system have received much less quantity of water this season," he said.

Agriculture officials told to monitor quality of inputs sold to farmers



District in-charge Secretary P.B. Ramamurthy (centre) addressing a progress review meeting in Shimoga on Wednesday.— Photo: VAIDYADistrict in-charge Secretary P.B. Ramamurthy has directed the officials of the Agriculture Department to monitor the quality of agricultural inputs sold to farmers.He was addressing a progress review meeting here on Wednesday.Mr. Ramamurthy said that there were several complaints against some fertilizer dealers in the district, who were allegedly preparing complex fertilizers in an unauthorised manner and selling them to farmers.The Agriculture officials should initiate stern action against the dealers by booking cases under the Chemical Fertilizers Control Act, he said.Mr. Ramamurthy directed the officials to take action against those selling low quality sowing seeds. At present, the government was providing copper sulphate — used to control fruit rot disease in arecanut crop — to small and marginal farmers at a subsidised price. Apart from this, farmers were purchasing copper sulphate from private persons also. A facility to check the quality of the copper sulphate purchased from private parties should be provided at the taluk-level office of the Horticulture Department, he said.

RTC issues

Mr. Ramamurthy asked the officials of the Revenue Department to address problems related to the issuance of Record of Rights, Tenancy and Crop (RTCs) for farmers.At present, the information related to plantation crop cultivated by farmers was missing in the RTCs issued by some Nemmadi Kendras in the district.Farmers were forced to get a separate crop certificate from village accountants to avail themselves of the credit facilities from banks.This has led to exploitation of farmers by village accounts, he said.

Drinking water

Surendra, Chief Engineer of Karnataka Urban Water Supply and Sewerage Board, told the meeting that the work of providing drinking water for Sagar city from Linganamakki reservoir would be completed by March 2015.Chief Executive Officer of Shimoga Zilla Panchayat Sasikanth Senthil said that a similar project had been planned to provide drinking water for Sorab town from the reservoir.A multi-village water supply scheme had been designed to provide drinking water for Kumsi Gram Panchayat by lifting water from the Tunga reservoir, for which the government's approval was awaited, he said.

School buildings

Mr. Senthil said the buildings of 122 government schools in the district were dilapidated owing to heavy rain. The government has been requested to grant funds for repairing these buildings immediately. The Department of Public Instruction will open a tent school in the academic year 2014–15 for the children of migrant workers, who were serving in stone quarries in Devakatikoppa-Kallugangur village, he said.

MNREGA

Deputy Secretary of the Zilla Panchayat Gopal told the meeting that 45 complaints regarding violation of rules in implementing works under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act were lodged with the Ombudsman of the scheme in 2013–14. Of this, 29 cases were disposed. The Ombudsman has ordered for recovering Rs. 16,90,532 from the erring persons, of which Rs. 8,69,905 had been recovered so far, he said. Deputy Commissioner Vipul Bansal was present in the meeting.

Four banks serve recovery notices on farmers

Farmers are in jitters as four commercial banks in Prakasam district have served notices to recover dues with the State government taking its own time to operationalise the loan waiver scheme. Sitting on the Rachabanda Mogachintala village with fingers crossed, a group of farmers said “we have voted the TDP to power with great hopes.” “All of us have overdue crop loan of Rs. 1 lakh each. The government should write off the loan without any loss of time”, said Ch. Venkaiah while talking to *The Hindu*. Another farmer M. Kondaiah said Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu should arrange for fresh loan for Kharif operations. The situation is worse in the case of Bengal gram growers whose produce is idling in cold storage units with its price falling to about Rs. 3,000 per quintal as against Rs. 7,500 per quintal two years ago. Four of the nine banks which had given loans to them have fixed June 27 as the deadline for auctioning of ryots' produce. APRS-led Tenant Farmers Association State secretary N. Ranga Rao wanted the State government to put into operation the loan waiver scheme early and take up with Andhra Bank, the lead bank in the State, the ‘over-action’ of the local officials of four commercial banks in the district. Over 500 farmers from 20 villages in Nagulalpupadu mandal were served notices by four banks for auctioning of their produce on June 27 if they failed to repay loans without fail by then. “The Chief Minister should use his good offices with the Centre and ensure issuance of directions from the Union Finance Ministry to banks in the State not to put pressure on farmers to clear their dues”, he said while talking to *The Hindu*. Over 100 farmers in Parchur, Devarapalli, Adusumalli, Pollavaripalem, Chinarajupalem and Upputuru were issued notices for repayment of their crop loans as also loans taken pledging gold, said Andhra Pradesh Rythu Sangam Parchur division secretary Bandi Shankariah. Farmers’ plea to bankers to wait for the report of the committee constituted by the Chief Minister on loan waiver had fallen on deaf ears, CPI(M) Parchur division secretary M. Vasanta Rao said. An official of Syndicate Bank,

the lead bank in the district, said “notices are normally issued when loans are overdue. We will not rush through the legal proceedings at one go.” “Farmers should regularise their accounts in their own interest as banks cannot keep quiet indefinitely. The accounts of farmers concerned will be credited as and when the State government releases the amount towards loan waiver”, said a senior officer with Andhra Bank here.

Mangoes turn bitter for Ulavapadu farmers

Bifurcation of the State, fall in productivity and lack of patronage from upcountry traders have added to the woes of Banganapalli mango growers in Ulavapadu . “The Horticulture Department, which used to arrange Mango mela in Hyderabad every year, did not do so this year,” a group of farmers from Ulavapadu says. “The price of Ulavapadu variety has plummeted to Rs. 16,000 per tonne as against 25,000 per tonne last year. We are not in a position even to recover our cost of cultivation,” adds farmers, most of them tenants who had taken orchards on lease

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An agricultural school named after an exemplary farmer

In many agricultural Universities and colleges it is common to see buildings named after some illustrious personalities. But in a small village called Settukkunnu in Pozuthana Grama Panchayat, Wayanad, a farming school has been named after a progressive farmer called Mr. Eldho Baby.

Positive attitude

“The M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation in Kalpetta, Wayanad, realised the potential of Baby who through his contagious positive attitude towards natural system of farming, was able to influence several farmers in the area to take up organic cultivation. As an honour for him we decided to construct a school in his land, and named it after him. “Till date nearly 2,000 people have visited the farm school including visitors from foreign nations such as Britain, Estonia and Russia. The school is operating with the financial support provided by a nationalised bank,” says Mr. N. Anil Kumar, Director of the Institute. The school is very popular in the region and has become a landmark for tourists and travellers. With just an acre bordered by thick forests on all four sides, Mr. Baby is able to generate Rs. 40,000 a month from his farm. Major crops cultivated are coffee, arecanut, pepper, ginger, turmeric and cardamom. Annual crops like broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage, carrot, cow pea, brinjal, tomato and amaranthus generate daily income. In addition the farmer maintains thirteen cows, three goats, eight units of rabbits and 20 poultry birds. The waste generated from the dairy and goat units are used for biogas generation. An electric pump is using to pump the biogas slurry to the fields. Since the farm is surrounded by thick forests, attack from wild animals like elephants, monkeys and boars are a regular occurrence.

Animal menace

“The animals usually enter the farm during nightfall and leave by early morning. Many times I was at my wit’s end trying to prevent their entry but could not succeed. Then suddenly I got an idea. Wild animals usually keep away from human voices. They are naturally scared. “So I kept a radio with full volume in the farm all through the night. The sound drives away the animals. I have also fitted tube-lights in the borders of the farm to prevent the entry of the animals. I find that elephants especially are frightened by the bright lights and do not enter,” he says with a smile. Every farmer has to find his own marketing strategies to sell his products, otherwise farming will not be easy, according to him. “In my farm I am selling 3-4 weeks old poultry chicks instead of eggs. This fetches me a good income as an egg gets only three rupees but a chick gets Rs. 50. I start planting vegetables only after ascertaining that there is a good market for them.” The farmer has been successful in creating a name called Eldho Baby farm products in the surrounding areas and buyers readily purchase the products at premium prices.

Marketing

To market farm fresh vegetables he invites the buyers to come directly to his field and pluck the vegetables directly from the plant. All the milk produced by his cattle is being sold to a milk society, which as an incentive, allows him to buy cattle feed from them at a price lower than the market’s. Cardamom, ginger, turmeric and pepper are processed and kept in the store room to be sold when price rises. The Vegetable and Fruit Promotion Council (VFPC) is also helping him in marketing. Visitors stay in the farm school and personally see how the farmer is successfully able to earn well from his one acre.

Classes

About 26 classes on various subjects on agriculture have also been conducted till date in the school. The Kerala Agriculture department through its agricultural technology management agency (ATMA) programme, linked the farm in its extension programme. Though conferred several awards for his work, the farmer considers Karshaka Thilak award by the Kerala government, as most important because, “parents should realise the value of their children. Only then will they be appreciated by others,” he says. Interested farmers can reach Mr. Baby at Eldho Baby farm school, Settukkunnu, Achooranum P.O, Pozhuthana Phone : 04936 250530 and Dr. Anil, MSSRF, Community Agro Bio-Diversity Centre , Puthoorvayal Post, Kalpetta, Wayanad, email: cabcmssrf@dataone.in , mobile: 09446537019, phone: 04936-204977, 207019.

Managing termite menace in crops

Even though termites are of great economic importance and distributed widely, very little information is available on different species of termites in India. It is reported that 190 species of termites are there attacking a wide variety of crops like cereals, annuals, shrubs, living trees and timber. Although termites are strictly tropical insects they invade the sub-tropics and to a limited extent, the temperate zone. The insects attack several

agricultural and horticultural crops. It is estimated that the loss accumulated due to damage in these crops may run to several millions of rupees per year.

Important species

The important termite species invading different crops includes *Odontotermes obesus*, *O. wallonensis* and *Microtermes obesi*. Among them *Odontotermes obesus* is an important termite species which infests wheat, barley, sorghum, cotton, sugarcane, groundnut, coconut, sunhemp, chillies, mango, citrus, grapevine, peach, *O. wallonensis* is a major pest on maize, finger millet, redgram, sugarcane, groundnut, niger, castor, coconut, mango, jackfruit and cashew. *Microtermes obesi* attacks several crops like wheat, barley, oats, maize, pearl millet, pulses, cotton, jute, sugarcane, groundnut, coconut, sunhemp, chillies, vegetables, plantation crops, potato, cassava, chrysanthemum, rose and fruit trees.

Management

— Deep ploughing or hand tillage exposes termites to desiccation and to predators, thus reducing their number.

— Pre-planting tillage also destroys the tunnels caused by termites and minimises their foraging activities and associated damage.

— Complete destruction of mounds and removal of queen termites are effective control measures against mound building species.

— Partial destruction of mounds is unlikely to solve problem if nymphs are present during the time of dequeening because replacement reproduction may develop.

— High density sowing, followed by thinning of surviving plants reduces anticipated losses due to termites.

(Dr. D. N. Kambrekar is Scientist, Agricultural Entomology, Regional Agricultural Research Station, University of Agricultural Sciences, Bijapur-Karnataka, Email: kambrekardn@gmail.com: Phone: 08352 230568)

‘Grow exotic strawberries ... get your rice from Bangladesh’



Farmers should grow lucrative crops: Kaushik Mukherjee

Bankers should “shake off status quoism” and think of a “paradigm shift” in their approach to increase agricultural productivity. Agriculture in India requires a “creative” approach, in which the government will have to spend to create infrastructure that will enable farmers to become entrepreneurs, Chief Secretary Kaushik Mukherjee has said. He was speaking at a meeting of the State-Level Bankers’ Committee (SLBC), Karnataka, held at the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD), here on Wednesday.

‘Tired earth’

Farmers should cultivate high-value agricultural products, and foodgrains could be imported. They should grow lucrative crops instead of trying to coax the “tired” earth to produce more foodgrains because agricultural production in parts of the country, including Karnataka, had reached saturation point. He said, “Tell farmers to grow exotic products... strawberries with high value and get your rice from Bangladesh. Livelihood to farmers is more important than food security.” Mr. Mukherjee said, “Why do you think it is the farmer’s exclusive duty to grow food for you?” Increasing agricultural production required new ideas such as using recycled wastewater from Bangalore to water floriculture farms in parched Kolar, where farmers were using tanker water, or growing vegetables along with flowers there. G.V. Krishna Rau, Additional Chief Secretary and Development Commissioner, said it was time bankers deliberated on the approach and set up a subcommittee to evaluate credit performance, instead of moving in “autopilot” mode. Uma Shankar, Regional Director, Reserve Bank of India (RBI), said people should be wary of a fake website (<https://www.rbi-inonline.org/savings.html>) offering banking facilities and asking people to apply online for opening Reserve Bank of India (RBI) savings accounts. RBI did not offer such services that commercial banks provided, she said. She said it was enough to provide proof of address of either the current or permanent

address to open a new bank account, or while updating an existing bank account. G.R. Chintala, Chief General Manager, NABARD, was present.

Turmeric harvester

Is there any machine for harvesting turmeric rhizomes from the field?

C. Loganathan

Tamil Nadu

Mr. P. Ramaraju, a farmer, has designed an efficient turmeric harvester. It consumes one litre of diesel an hour. Special attachment of this harvester shakes the harvested rhizomes so that the soil adhered to them drops to the field, leaving the rhizomes clear for collection. It is priced Rs. 30,000. For details contact Mr. P. Ramaraju, Pudhupalayam, Gettisamudram post, Anthiyur Taluk, Erode district – 638 501, TamilNadu, mobile:9865171790.

Water fears keep Cumbum farmers away from nurseries

Even as the government released water from Periyar dam for irrigation on June 1, a majority of the farmers in Cumbum valley feel reluctant to raise nurseries fearing that the happenings of 2013 may repeat this year as well, thanks to the poor start of southwest monsoon in Kerala and low storage in the dam. In August last year, PWD officials stopped release of water for irrigation owing to sharp depletion of storage in the dam and monsoon failure. “We don’t want to burn our fingers again because we need to shell out at least Rs.20,000 per acre to raise nurseries and complete transplantation,” the farmers said. Farmers having alternative water sources like borewells or open wells have started raising nurseries with available dam water. Nurseries were raised up to Uthapuram channel. However, illegal tapping delayed water reaching the tail-end areas. The situation turned worse as the officials recently decided to draw 50 cusecs from the total 200 cusecs discharged from the dam for irrigation purpose, to maintain drinking water supply. Farmers demanded the officials to draw only 400 cusecs to meet drinking water needs while maintaining the supply for irrigation undisturbed. A meeting convened by PWD officials with farmers at Uthamapalayam to settle the issue on Saturday did not yield any result. When the officials ruled out withdrawal of large quantum of water from Periyar dam because of poor storage and advised farmers to use water judiciously, the farmers refused to oblige. Later, the matter was brought to the knowledge of Collector K.S. Palanisamy who ordered that top priority should be given to drinking water supply. Meanwhile, the PWD officials asked how they could wait for rains to meet the drinking water needs when the southern districts were reeling under water crisis. The farmers are now pinning their hopes on improvement in rainfall in Kerala. Water was released to irrigate 14,707 acres for the first crop in the double-crop areas of Cumbum valley on June 1 even as the combined credit was far below 4,000 mcft. Last year, crops

on 6,000 acres were saved in the first cropping season, but those on 10,000 acres withered away in the second season due to non-availability of water.

JAC bats for agriculture varsity in Tirupati

The Acharya N.G. Ranga Agricultural University (ANGRAU) was trifurcated into separate entities meant for agriculture, veterinary and horticulture faculties during the Congress regime. The decision was widely debated then and there is still no unanimity of thought over the concept of splitting the monolithic entity into three varsities. The State bifurcation now requires the three varsities to be merged into one consolidated block, and divided further on regional lines, to suit the agro-climatic conditions. The idea is to promote mixed farming, which includes veterinary and horticulture components, as it will offset losses to some extent. In a nutshell, a farmer growing cereals, plantation crops and also rearing cattle should be provided information from a single point. This is the idea mooted to form region-specific universities that can zero in on the soil and agro-climatic conditions of the particular area. "It is pertinent to have a university having all the three faculties to meet the requirements of Chittoor, Nellore, Kadapa, Anantapur, Kurnool and Prakasam districts," say the president K. Venkaiah and general secretary A. Ramakrishna Rao of the varsity's Rayalaseema Teaching and Non-Teaching Employees' Joint Action Committee (JAC). Of the nine agro-climatic zones, southern and scarce rainfall zones fall in Rayalaseema region, where the soil, irrigation sources, climatic conditions and cropping pattern are unique and hence do not match with the other zones. Having two universities, one for Rayalaseema and the other for Coastal Andhra, will help avoid regional confrontation between the staff of the two regions, they feel. The existing infrastructure of the SV Veterinary University can be used to establish the regional university in Tirupati, the JAC members opined.

Greenpeace funds hit Home barrier

VARGHESE K GEORGE

A RECENT INTELLIGENCE BUREAU REPORT CHARGED THAT GREENPEACE INDIA IS STALLING DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS. SOME OF THE IB CLAIMS:

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| <p>SEEING RED</p> | <p>AGAINST COAL</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mobilising protests at major coal blocks and coal-fired power plant sites • Protests in five project-affected villages of Mahan coal block in Singrauli district of Madhya Pradesh • 15,000 MW of energy produced through local power plants and coal mines in the district |  |
| <p>GREENPEACE INDIA FOREIGN FUNDING Funds received since FCRA (Foreign Contribution Regulation) Act registration in 2005-06</p> | <p>AGAINST GM FOOD</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greenpeace India provided resources to activists campaigning against Genetically Modified food • Major German donors: Greenpeace International, FEI, Bread for the World, Misereor | <p>AGAINST PALM OIL</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Campaign against import from Indonesia • India imports 48% of its edible oil needs • 80% imported from Indonesia and Malaysia • Says it encourages deforestation and peat destruction |
| <p>45 IN 07 CRORE YEARS</p> <p>MAJOR CONTRIBUTORS Greenpeace International 94% Climate Works Foundation 03%</p> | <p>AGAINST E-WASTE Aimed at eroding earnings of IT firms AAP declared Greenpeace consultant Pankaj Singh as candidate from Sidihi, M.P.</p> | |
| <p>RAISING FOOT SOLDIERS Aims to support demands of migrant construction workers to raise cadre of field-level protesters</p> | | |

Following an Intelligence Bureau (IB) report that alleged foreign-funded NGOs were creating obstacles to India's economic growth, the Home Ministry has clamped down on Greenpeace, an international campaign group present in 40 countries. In a letter dated 13th June, the Ministry has directed the Reserve Bank of India that all foreign contributions originating from Greenpeace International and Climate Works Foundation — two principal international contributors to Greenpeace India Society — must be kept on hold until individual clearances are obtained from the Ministry for each transaction. The RBI has been asked to direct banks to this effect. The central bank has also been asked to report to the government if any government department or institution is receiving such funds. Greenpeace was specifically targeted because the IB report had charged it with orchestrating "massive efforts to take down India's coal-fired power projects and mining activity." According to the report, public protests in Madhya Pradesh's Singrauli region — which produces 15,000 MW energy — were being engineered by Greenpeace, "actively aided and led by foreign activists." In its directive to the chief general manager, Department of Banking Operations and Development, RBI, the Ministry has invoked Section 46 of the Foreign Contributions (Regulations) Act, 2010, that says the "Central government may give such directions as it may deem necessary" for execution of the provisions of the Act. The new directive will effectively bar the NGO from accepting foreign money, as it will require seeking case-by-case clearance for each contribution.

Jayalithaa thanks Modi on Mullaperiyar

L. RENGANATHAN

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Jayalithaa has thanked Prime Minister Narendra Modi for the Union Cabinet's decision to constitute a supervisory committee for raising the Mullaperiyar dam level to 142 feet. In a statement here on Wednesday night, Ms. Jayalithaa lauded the Prime Minister for the prompt action on her plea in a memorandum she had submitted to him during their June 3 meeting in New Delhi. The decision will help mitigate the distress of farmers in the five southern districts of Tamil Nadu dependent on Mullaperiyar water, she said.

As agrarian crisis looms, delta farmers look up to PM

A.V. RAGUNATHAN

To enable Tamil Nadu to get its due share of Cauvery waters

The Cauvery Delta Farmers' Welfare Association has sought the intervention of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to help Tamil Nadu get its due share of Cauvery waters and bail it out from an agrarian crisis. Association vice-president K.V. Kannan, in a representation to the Centre, said that all along, the Karnataka government had been paying scant regard to the agreements signed in pre-Independence days (in 1892 and 1924) on the sharing of the Cauvery waters. Nor was it honouring its commitment to the implementation of the Cauvery Water Disputes Tribunal's award, which came after a protracted legal battle.

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Village-level farm loan melas

The district administration will organise farm loan melas for farmers from July 1 to 21 in Perambalur, Kunnam, Alathur, and Veppanthattai blocks. Revenue officials would provide computerised chitta to farmers at the mela venue itself. Arrangements would be made to provide no due certificates at the spot. — Staff Reporter

Onion, fruit markets to go to Mattuthavani



Discussing public welfare: The Corporation Council meeting in progress in Madurai on Wednesday.— Photo: R. Ashok
Onion and fruit markets operating near Simmakal in the city will soon be shifted to Mattuthavani to decongest traffic, especially in Veli streets. The Madurai Corporation has identified a site behind Mattuthavani bus stand where market facility will be provided for onion and fruit traders in about six months. This announcement was made in the Corporation Council meeting held here on Wednesday, where councillor S.T. Jayabalan raised the issue of inconvenience caused to the public because of parking of lorries near the four Veli streets. Replying to the member's question on what steps had been taken by the authorities to prevent lorry movement in the city during peak hours, City Engineer A. Mathuram said the corporation had already worked out a plan to shift the onion market to Mattuthavani. "Vakkil New Street and East Marret Street face congestion due to lorry movement. In six months, we will shift the markets," he said. However, Mr. Jayabalan appealed to Mayor V.V. Rajan Chellappa to immediately take up the issue with traffic police for regulating lorry movement near Veli streets till the shifting was done. "Earlier, there used to be particular timings for entry of lorries into the city. But now the lorry booking offices are keeping their vehicles in Simmakal area, making the movement of buses and other vehicles difficult," he noted.

MLA attends meet

Madurai Central MLA R. Sundarrajan attended the council meeting which was held for the first time after the Lok Sabha elections. The last meeting took place in February and the monthly council meetings were not convened since the model code of conduct was enforced. Mr. Sundarrajan, who has won on a Desiya Murpokku Dravida Kazhagam ticket, read out a list of developmental works needed for his constituency which, he said, he had taken to the attention of Chief Minister Jayalalithaa when he met her. The MLA's demands placed before Corporation Council include providing public amenities in Aruldossapuram, Thathaneri, Government Rajaji Hospital, completion of works near Koodal Alagar Temple, cleaning up Anuppanadi water channel and sprucing up areas surrounding Sri Meenakshi Sundareswarar Temple.

Reap rich harvest with kuruvai special package'



Sandeep Saxena, centre, Secretary, Agriculture Department, speaking at the consultative meeting with farmers' representatives at Tiruvarur collectorate on Wednesday.— Photo: DIPR

| PACKING A PUNCH | |
|--|---|
| ● Assured 12-hour uninterrupted power supply | |
| ● Free PVC pipes for a length of about 600 feet to each farmer | ● Water for crops through canal and pump irrigation |
| ● Quality seeds through agricultural extension centres | ● Rs.9.68-crore package for Tiruvarur, Rs.2.73 crore to Cuddalore, Rs.8.8 crore to Nagapattinam |
| ● Programmes to spread awareness, identify beneficiaries | |

Agriculture Secretary Sandeep Saxena meets farmers of Tiruvarur, Nagapattinam, Cuddalore

Farmers raising kuruvai in the delta region should make the most of the special scheme announced by State government for boosting productivity, said Sandeep Saxena, Secretary, Agriculture Department. The government has introduced a special package for kuruvai which includes assured 12-hr power supply, irrigation through canals during availability of water in the Cauvery and pump irrigation during other times, and free PVC pipes for a length of about 600 feet to each farmer, Mr. Saxena said while addressing a consultative meeting with farmers' representatives of the districts of Tiruvarur, Nagapattinam, and Cuddalore here on Wednesday. About 36,000 hectares would be brought under kuruvai cultivation in Tiruvarur district, and 35,000 hectare each in Nagapattinam and Cuddalore district, Mr. Saxena said adding that steps were in place for supplying quality seeds to farmers through agricultural extension centres. Adequate quality seeds of ADT 43 and ADT 45 varieties have been stocked, he said. Under the special package worth Rs.9.68 crore, 50 units of paddy transplanting machinery worth Rs.1crore, 50 weeders worth Rs.15 lakhs, 2,100 units of PVC pipes worth Rs.4.2 crore, and community nursery on 170 hectare for transplantation on 17,000 hectares had been sanctioned to Tiruvarur district. Fertilizer, gypsum, and other inputs would also be sanctioned. While it is Rs.2.73 crore for the Cuddalore district, the package for Nagapattinam district would be Rs.8.8 crore. Mr. Saxena said that about 2,200 hectares have been brought under kuruvai in Tiruvarur district, 10,809 hectares in Nagapattinam, and 2,887 hectares in Cuddalore district. Mr. Saxena said that 44 hectares had been brought under SRI cultivation in Tiruvarur district, 104 hectares in Nagapattinam, and 50 hectare in Cuddalore district. Special awareness programme was being conducted about the package to sensitise farmers to the scheme. Potential beneficiaries were also being identified at these programmes. M. Rajendran, Director of Agriculture, M. Mathivanan, Tiruvarur District Collector, M. Senthil, Chief Engineer, Agricultural Engineering Department, and P. Manimaran, District Revenue Officer, took part

Onion price up by Rs. 10 per kg



The price of onion, which was in the range of Rs.10 to Rs.15 a kg, is now above Rs. 25.— File Photo

The onion price in Bangalore has gone up by nearly Rs. 10 a kilo in the wholesale market over the last fortnight and is likely to increase further, according to onion traders at the Agriculture Produce Marketing Committee (APMC). The retail price of good quality onion, which was in the range of Rs. 10 to Rs. 15 a kilo, is now above Rs. 25. The increase, they say, is due to a shortage of supply from Maharashtra even as supply from Karnataka has almost come to an end. While a quintal of onion was traded between Rs. 1,000 and Rs. 1,200 till about the beginning of June, it is currently being traded around Rs. 2,500. S. Balakrishna, vice-president of Bangalore Onion and Potato Merchants Association, said that the current price is almost comparable to that in the corresponding period last year when heavy rainfall damaged crops. A quintal of good quality onion last June cost about Rs. 3,000. The price, Mr. Balakrishna said, could go up further during marriage season when demand for good quality onion goes up. “The big onion used in hotels and marriages come to us from Maharashtra. The current stock may not be sufficient to meet the demand,” he said, adding that high prices may prevail till August-September when fresh stock will come from Karnataka.

‘Launch a movement to promote organic farming’

Principal Secretary, Department of Cooperation, C. Somashekar on Wednesday called upon organic farmers to launch a movement among the farming community to promote the eco-friendly practice of organic farming. Inaugurating a seminar on the role of cooperatives in organic farming and allied activities, organised by Karnataka State Cooperative Organic Producers’ Federation Ltd. at the Institute of Agricultural Technologists here, he suggested that organic farmers utilise the services of dairy cooperative societies to market their produce. Mr. Somashekar also told the farmers to make best use of Raitha Grahaka Angala (farmers consumer yard), a concept promoted

by the Agriculture Produce Marketing Committee to create a direct link between farmers and consumers to market organic produce. Stating that the services of Raitha Samparka Kendras in rural areas were not being properly harnessed, he appealed to organic farmers to make use of the facility to create awareness among other farmers on the need to reject chemically driven agricultural practices. Mr. Somashekar also suggested that the federation form “informal squads” to trace traders who cheated growers and consumers by supplying spurious seeds and other produce. Delivering the keynote address, federation secretary Devidas Gaonkar pointed out that lack of marketing facilities was a major problem faced by organic farmers in the State. He lamented that the government’s Organic Farming Mission had failed to achieve its purpose. “There is no demand for organic produce in rural areas and though there is a demand for the produce in urban areas, growers are not benefiting.”

Farm varsity co-opts households into drive to boost flower production



If the efforts of the Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK) of the Kerala Agricultural University (KAU) bear fruit, many homes in Thrissur will sell indigenous flowers such as chlerodendron, marigold, gomphrena and balsum this Onam. On Thursday, the KVK will start training the last batch of farmers this year under the programme, “Ponnonaththinoru Pookkooda”. The aim of the programme is to boost flower production in the district. Demand for flowers peaks during Onam. People depend on truckloads of flowers brought mainly from Thovala in Kanyakumari district of Tamil Nadu, Mettupalayam near Coimbatore and Hosur in Karnataka. Five to six additional trucks ferry flowers to Thrissur during the festival season. The total number of flower-transporting trucks that reach the district then goes up to 12 or 15. Flower costs about Rs. 150 to Rs. 200 a kg during the season. There is a huge demand for marigold, chrysanthemum, nerium, gomphrena, cockscomb, tube rose, lotus and jasmine. Under the KVK programme, local people are taught to grow Onam flowers in homesteads, by regulating the timing of seeding, transplanting and management. Last year, about 180 people participated in the training. Some of them were successful. The KVK prescribed a specific crop calendar and provided inputs. Horticulturist Jalaja S. Menon ensured follow-up measures. “The attempt by Thrissur KVK is worth emulating in other parts of the State,” said P.V. Balachandran, KAU Director of Extension. “I am amazed by the public response to the innovative idea. Native flowers should be brought back to our homesteads. Some indigenous plants have

medicinal properties. It is good to grow them at home,” he said. Ranjan S. Karippai, KVK head, who floated the idea of the programme, is happy about the results. “The main purpose of training is to reduce Thrissur’s overdependence on flowers from neighbouring States. Last year, we offered training to only 100 people. This year, we have extended it to 160 people,” he said. The KVK also keeps for farmers a stock of seeds and saplings of native flower plants.

Soaring mercury takes a toll on poultry units



A farmer spraying water inside his poultry shed through sprinklers to protect fowls from the summer heat at Velpucharla in Pedavegi mandal in West Godavari district.- Photo: A.V.G. Prasad

The poultry industry in East and West Godavari district has come under a threat with the day temperature remaining high this summer. The mortality rate of the birds is reported to be alarming because of the rising mercury coupled with severe heat wave conditions in the last two weeks. According to Veterinary Assistant Director Satyanarayana, the toll due to the heat wave was pegged at close to 300 birds per every lakh on an average, delivering a deadly blow on the farmers. The birds are increasingly falling prey to the prevailing heat conditions in the twin Godavari district as they did not have sweat glands to let out heat from their body, he said. This would necessitate using artificial methods to keep the shed temperatures under control, Mr. Satyanarayana explained. More than 2 crore layer fowls are grown in both the districts which usually cater to the egg markets in Kolkata. The poultry farmers are facing a hard time to save their birds from the heat. They are installing sprinklers over rooftops of sheds, foggers inside and covering the windows with curtains and dippers. “I am trying to minimise the mortality rate by taking all these precautions which helped bring down shed temperature by 5-6 degrees Celsius,” said Valavala Sriram of Bhadhradri Poultry Farm at Devarapalli in West Godavari district. “With the day temperature hovering between 40 degrees and 45 degrees Celsius from the beginning of June, it is wrecking havoc with farmers, The recent viral attack also caused an extensive damage to the industry” he said. Chalasani Jaganmohan Rao, a poultry farmer from Velpucharla under Pedavegi mandal, was forced to keep a generator ready to run the motor so as to keep the sheds cool by sprinkling

water throughout the day.**38 deaths**The toll due to prevailing heat wave conditions in Srikakulam district has reached 38, says an official record.

Horticulture varsity to come up at Kadiyam



Workers watering plants a nursery in Kadiyam. —Photo: S. Rambabu

The State government is all set to start a horticulture university in Kadiyam from 2014-15 in this 100-year old highly fertile and abundantly irrigated nursery fields. The temperate is moderate and with high relative humidity, the main factor contributing to the plant protection in the area. “The largest cluster of nurseries in the country has sought a research and training centre in Kadiyam to help them meet international standards for taking up direct exports. They have also sought market development assistance from the government. There are about 1,200 nurseries ranging from one-fourth an acre to 100 acres located in the area, creating employment directly or indirectly to nearly 70,000 people, and generating an annual turnover of Rs. 180 crore,” district Collector Neetu K. Prasad said. The area of Kadiyam nurseries cluster is about 3,000 acres spread in the villages of Kadiyam, Kadiyapulanka, Burrilanka, Veeravaram, Pottilanka, Venkayyammappeta, Domireddypalli and others. The nursery growers have developed numerous varieties of fruits, flowers, ornamental, indoor and outdoor plants over the decades. Some rare plants are grown at these nurseries, and of late aromatic and medicinal plants have been introduced at some nurseries. Prices of each plant range from Rs. 5 to Rs. 5,000. Traders from different States come to Kadiyam for purchase of plants. “Mostly traders from Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Kerala, Delhi and West Bengal are purchasing our plants in a big quantity every year,” told Pulla Anjaneyulu, president of Sir Arthur Cotton Kadiyam, Kadiyapulanka and Burrilanka Nursery and Growers Welfare Association. “Out of our total production, 60-70 per cent plants go to other States,” he revealed. “Major plant traders from Mumbai, Pune and Bangalore procure plants from Kadiyam nurseries and export to other countries with attractive packing and get high margins,” said Palla Subrahmanyam of Sri Satyanarayana Nursery Gardens. This year owing to severe summer, small farmers of the nurseries are facing tough times. “Half of the nurseries are facing acute water shortage and the temperature, from last one week, is forcing labour to abstain from work, Mr. Subrahmanyam added.

Water level

Mettur

The water level in the Mettur Dam stood at 44.10 feet on Wednesday against its full level of 120 feet. The inflow was 392 cusecs and the discharge 800 cusecs.



Chennai

Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather



Partly Cloudy

Thursday, Jun 19

Max Min

38° | 29°

Rain: 0

Humidity: 55

Wind: normal

Sunrise: 05:43

Sunset: 06:37

Barometer: 1004

Tomorrow's Forecast



Partly Cloudy

Friday, Jun 20

Max Min

39° | 30°

Extended Forecast for a week

Saturday
Jun 21



39° | 30°

Partly
Cloudy

Sunday
Jun 22



38° | 30°

Partly
Cloudy

Monday
Jun 23



39° | 29°

Partly
Cloudy

Tuesday
Jun 24



38° | 30°

Partly
Cloudy

Wednesday
Jun 25



38° | 30°

Cloudy

Airport Weather

Chennai

Delhi

Rain: 0

Sunrise: 05:23

Humidity: 66

Sunset: 07:21

Wind: normal

Barometer: 998



Chandrababu Discusses Crop Loan Waiver Issue with RBI Governor



HYDERABAD: Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu today spoke to Reserve Bank Governor Raghuram Rajan over phone and discussed the crop loan waiver issue in the backdrop of reports that the RBI was opposing it. Chandrababu reportedly explained to Rajan the circumstances in which the TDP had promised waiver of crop loans as the agriculture sector was the worst hit due to vagaries of nature in the state during the last decade. "There were a series of natural calamities like floods, cyclones, unseasonal rains and drought that left farmers in worst misery. Farmers are in deep distress and hence, moved by their plight, I promised loan waiver during my foot march in late 2012," Chandrababu reportedly told Rajan. The AP government constituted an expert committee to work out modalities for implementation of the scheme. The committee would submit its preliminary report by June 22, he said. The Chief Minister also requested RBI to lend a helping hand to pull the farmers out of distress. Chandrababu is scheduled to discuss the loan waiver issue with bankers here later in the day. Last week, RBI executive director D P Joshi reportedly wrote to the AP government opposing the loan waiver scheme saying it would destroy the financial health of the banks. This would in turn lead to economic instability, he had cautioned. Following the letter, the Chief Minister spoke to the RBI Governor over phone to discuss the issue, sources in the Chief Minister's Office said. Chandrababu, who will visit New Delhi on June 25 and 26, will take up the issue with Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Finance Minister Arun Jaitley as well, the sources added.

Sunflowers Shine Bright for Balasore, Bhadrak Farmers



BALASORE: After sustaining huge loss in traditional crop due to frequent floods, a group of farmers in northern parts of the State has shifted to sunflower cultivation. Eight years back, sunflower was cultivated in 500 hectares (ha) in Balasore and Bhadrak districts. Now, it is cultivated in about 2,200 ha. Happy with the lucrative returns, more and more farmers are taking to the cultivation of commercial crop. Most of the sunflower farming takes place in Chudamani, Adhuan, Iram, Nuagaon, Kumarpur, Sudarshanpur and Padhuan in Bhadrak district and some parts of Remuna, Baliapal, Bhogarai, Basta, Soro, Simulia and Sadar blocks of Balasore district. Farmers are making the best use of Rastriya Krishi Vikash Yojana under which, the Government offers subsidies and other assistance to farmers to prepare farm land where they can grow the cash crop in controlled environment. Officials said around 200 farmers of Nuagaon panchayat in Basudevypur block of Bhadrak have grown sunflowers over 500 acres which is a record in the State. While 250 farmers took to sunflower cultivation a decade back, the number has gone up to 2,500 this year in both the districts. Deputy Director of Agriculture Department Gangadhar Pal said as the sunflower was a short duration crop (three months), farmers earn quick profits by cultivating this crop. "Besides, sunflower requires less water. The crop is generally cultivated during rabi season," he said. A farmer Niranjan Das said he decided to switch over to sunflower farming after his paddy crop was washed away during 2010 flash flood. "I grew sunflower on my two acres of land and made a profit of nearly `30,000 in just 90 days," he said. Despite unseasonal rain in the second week of May, sunflower growers here are expecting an average harvest this time. The seed procuring agencies like NAFED, MARKFED and co-operative societies also have come forward to their rescue. These agencies have targeted to procure nearly 10,000 quintals of seeds from the farmers. While so far nearly 30 per cent has been procured, sources said the rest will be purchased soon. Farmers are provided `3,700 per quintal of seeds as minimum support price (MSP).

Kuruvai Package Beneficiary Selection Underway

Express News Service

Tiruvarur: The selection process of beneficiaries for the recently announced Kuruvai package is underway in Tiruvarur, Nagappattinam and Cuddalore districts.

This was disclosed during a meeting held in Tiruvarur on Wednesday to review the preparations for the Kuruvai paddy season in Cauvery delta districts. Sandeep Saxena, Agricultural Production

commissioner and Principal secretary to the Government of Tamil Nadu, chaired the review meeting.

Under the scheme in Tiruvarur, around 19,000 hectares would be taken up for Kuruvai cultivation and another 17,000 hectares would be taken up after water is released into the Cauvery river. Government has allotted ₹9.68 crore under Kuruvai package for supplying inputs like bio agents, micro

nutrients, fertilizers. So far 68 awareness camps have been conducted out of the 320 villages initialled planned to get the details about the Kuruvai package to the farmers. Under this 35,868 beneficiaries have been identified.

Similarly in Nagappattinam district, the awareness camps were conducted in 52 villages out of 240 villages planned and 12,432 beneficiaries have been identified,

while in Cuddalore district, the 25 awareness camp has been conducted in 25 villages and 8,600 beneficiaries have been identified.

A sum of ₹8.85 crore has been allotted for Nagappattinam district, while ₹2.73 crore has been granted for Cuddalore district in this regard. The Principal secretary to the government, visited few villages where the Kuruvai cultivation process, using ground water is underway.

Exempt Vaccines from Import Duty, Urge Poultry Owners

Express News Service

Namakkal: The poultry farmers in the region have urged the Central Government to provide exemption of import duty to vaccines used in poultry farms.

Representatives of various organisations including the Tamil Nadu Poultry Farmers' Association (TNPFA) led by its president R Nallathambi met the Union Minister of State for Commerce and Industries Nirmala Sitharaman in Chennai on Saturday and submitted a memorandum in this regard. Highlighting the issues the sector was facing, the farmers appealed to the Minister to take steps to provide exemption of import duty to vaccines.

"A large quantity of vaccine is being imported from overseas manufacturers and import duty is levied on the consignment. If vaccines are exempted from import duty, it will relieve us from financial burden," the memoran-

dum stated.

Setting up of a separate board for poultry sector was also demanded.

While urging the Centre to take steps to create a poultry zone in Namakkal region, besides compartmentalisation of poultry farms, the farmers said that such measures would help revive the sector.

"The sector is badly hit by several factors. Failure of monsoons has resulted in spiraling of raw material costs. Feed prices are also increasing," the memorandum said.

It urged the Union Government to remove soya, maize and kambu (pearl millet) from the lists of commodities of forward trading so that the prices could be kept under control. Soya and maize are essential ingredients for manufacturing poultry feeds. The farmers also sought distribution of damaged grains like rice, wheat and maize at subsidised rates to the poultry farms as done on earlier occasions.

Boost for Minor Millet Cultivation in Dharmapuri

R Sivalingam, Managing Director, DMPCL, receiving minor millet seeds from Ravikesavan, Professor and Head of the Department of Millets at TNAU | SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

by M Niyas Ahmed

Dharmapuri: Just as the Cauvery Delta region is hailed as the 'rice bowl' of Tamil Nadu, Dharmapuri is seeking to earn the sobriquet 'minor millets bowl' of the State. All thanks to the joint initiatives taken by the Agriculture Department, Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK) and the Tamil Nadu Agricultural University (TNAU).

To promote minor millets in Dharmapuri, the TNAU

distributed seeds of minor millets including Ragi, Saamai, Thinai and Varagu to 65 farmers in Pennagaram taluk of Dharmapuri, free of cost.

About a thousand farmers in Dharmapuri have jointly started a company named Dharmapuri District Minor Millet Producers Company Limited (DMPCL) to sell their products directly to the buyers. The company organised a function in Pennagaram of Dharmapuri in

which the TNAU distributed seeds.

R Ravikesavan, Professor and Head, Department of Minor Millet in TNAU distributed the seeds. "There was a time when farmers in Tamil Nadu had cultivated minor millets on 15 lakh acres. However, later farmers took to cultivating cash crops like paddy, maize, sugarcane and cotton began and the area under minor millet cultivation shrunk to just five lakh acres. Compared to

other food products, millets are rich in fibre, which prevents diabetes," he told Express.

To promote minor millets, the TNAU has come up with many new high yielding millet varieties including Raagi co15, Saamai co4, Thinai co7 and Varagu co3. "These are short term crops. While our traditional raagi variety is a six month crop, our Raagi co15 is 120 days crops and it has high resistance to pest attacks," he said.

K Ranganathan, a farmer from Kerainpatti in Pennagaram, said "I am doing farming in five acres of land. I got saamai co4 variety from them. While our traditional variety is 120-day crop, the new high yielding variety is just a 90-day crop. I am hopeful that it will fetch a higher yield."

Other than seeds, the TNAU distributed micro nutrients and bio fertilizers to the farmers.

NTamilselvan, Head, KVK in Papparapatti, Selvam, Deputy Director of Agricultural Marketing and R Sivalingam, chairman DMPCL were also present on the occasion.

Business Standard

Steps on agri commodity prices unlikely to have immediate effect

The price control measures announced by finance minister Arun Jaitley on Tuesday on agricultural commodities are likely to help cool inflation in these in the coming months rather than at present, say observers. On Wednesday, the futures exchanges saw a moderate fall in some essential commodities' prices; [potato](#) fell more, by four per cent. Prices of potato and [onion](#) have risen 53 per cent and 26 per cent in the past 10 weeks in Delhi's wholesale markets due to reports of crop damage and interrupted supply, on

unseasonal rainfall. Data compiled by the food ministry showed potato at Rs 1,625 a quintal in the Delhi mandi on Wednesday from Rs 1,063 a quintal on April 1. Similarly, onion was Rs 1,163 a quintal from Rs 925 a quintal a fortnight earlier. This trend in agri commodities raised the [wholesale price index](#) rise to a five-month high of 6.01 per cent in May from 5.2 per cent in April. Jaitley had announced a number of corrective measures, including action on hoarders of onion and potato. "Delisting of fruits and vegetables from the Agricultural Produce Market Committee Act will hold potential increases in the prices of these food items. Also, there is no reason for food inflation to be so high when so much of cereals remain stored with the government. Hence, the government's move is in the right direction, which will help control prices in future more than now," said D K Joshi, chief economist, [CRISIL](#). Potato prices for delivery in the current month hit the lower circuit of four per cent on the Multi Commodity Exchange, to trade at Rs 1,379 a quintal. All far-month futures for potato were also down four per cent on the MCX. Similarly, chana prices for delivery in October fell by 0.5 per cent to trade at Rs 3,063 a quintal on the National Commodity & Derivatives Exchange. Soybean for July delivery was down one per cent at Rs 4,099 a quintal. In the spot market, however, prices of essential commodities remained almost unchanged.

THE HINDU BusinessLine

Coconut oil on the boil as speculative buying continues

Demand from the corporate sector and low arrivals of copra drove coconut oil prices to a new high in Kerala and Tamil Nadu. Prices touched Rs. 14,100/quintal in Kerala (Rs. 13,900), while in Tamil Nadu it ruled at Rs. 13,800 (Rs. 13,200). According to Thalath Mahmood, Director, Cochin Oil Merchants Association (COMA), copra prices have surged to Rs. 10,400 a quintal in Kerala and Rs. 9,900 in Tamil Nadu against Rs. 9,800 last week. He cited the setting in of the monsoon coupled with upcountry demand for the price surge. "Till last weekend, the coconut oil was sold at Rs. 1,930-2,000 for 15-kg loose pack, but on Wednesday the price spurted to Rs. 2,100. There is no reason for such sudden increase and looks like mere speculation. But the offtake was limited," said RM Palanisamy, a coconut oil dealer in Erode. However, Bharat Khona, former Board Member of COMA, was of the view that a speculative trend is witnessing in the market trend with the absence of strong upcountry demand. Sales of copra touched 120 tonnes a day and many reputed coconut oil firms are showing interest in buying at Erode paying Rs. 10,000 a quintal, which is Rs. 1,500 more than last week. On Wednesday, the copra was sold at Rs. 9,800-10,000 a quintal in Perundurai and other cooperative societies. Almost all the 50 quintals were sold.

Govt sets up panel to formulate national rubber policy

The Union Commerce Ministry has constituted an expert committee to formulate a National Rubber Policy and examine issues relating to production, development and exports of rubber and related products. The Committee chaired by Additional Secretary (Plantations), Department of Commerce, will recommend a broad based policy relating to all types of rubber such as synthetic, reclaimed rubber. It will submit its report including the draft of the National Rubber Policy within six months, a notification issued in this regard said. The Terms of Reference for the committee are comprehensive and include a review of growth and current status of rubber sector, demand and supply of different rubbers, opportunities and challenges, stakeholders' concerns and suggest a policy framework for promoting rubber plantations etc. A notification in this regard said that the rubber consuming industries have expressed concern over decline in rubber productivity and availability of various forms of rubber for use of the industry. Growers are also agitated on the issue of increased risk of production due to climate factors and adverse price movements caused by imports. Welcoming the move, Raghupati Singhania, Vice-Chairman, Automotive Tyre Manufacturers' Association, expressed the hope that the policy would address the issues of all stakeholders to meet the objectives of growth and employment through manufacturing excellence. He said that rubber and tyre manufacturing is shifting to Asia. India enjoys a unique position both in terms of verdant rubber plantations and rubber and tyre manufacturing which has stood the test of time. Unfortunately, the country's potential in the sector has not been fully harnessed. Certain limiting factors have come in the way of full blossomed growth, he said. Niraj Thakkar, President, All India Rubber Industries Association, said that the national rubber policy with interests of all stakeholders in its ambit will be the single most decisive factor for igniting the growth of rubber sector. The sector has immense potential for growth. However, in the absence of a policy framework, many a time different stakeholders found themselves unnecessarily pitted against each other harming the entire value chain. The terms of reference of the committee are quite extensive and we are hopeful of a well-considered policy, he said.

Britain offers to help India curb food wastage

The United Kingdom has offered to help India arrest food wastage and promote skill development. UK High Commissioner James Bevan, who met the Minister of Food Processing Industries Harsimrat Kaur Badal, here on Wednesday, also said that a delegation from the UK would soon visit India for business-to-business cooperation. According to estimates by a US-based organisation, India wastes fruits and vegetables worth Rs. 13,000 crore a year due to lack of storage facilities. In reply to an RTI query last year, Food Corporation of India, a State-owned procurement agency, admitted wastage of 1,94,502 tonnes of foodgrain due to various reasons between 2005 and March 2013.

Food map

Looking forward to greater cooperation with the UK, Badal informed the envoy that in the next few months, a food map of India would be created for both the Government and industry to understand the target area. She said to revolutionise food processing at the farm level, India needed to adopt a practical model at the policy level where the husband who worked in the farm and a woman who worked at the processing unit could together market processed food as a family. Bevan also met representatives of the Indian Rice Millers Association and listened to their concerns. Venkatesh Kini, President-South West Asia, Coca-Cola, also met Badal and apprised her of his company's forthcoming investment of \$6 billion into food beverages in India, a Ministry release said. After being asked by the Minister to diversify into fruit juices also, Kini assured her that Coca-Cola would diversify into fruit-based beverages in a big way.

Spot rubber rules flat on lacklustre trade

Physical rubber prices ruled steady on Wednesday.

According to observers, there were no quantity buyers or sellers in the market and it remained neutral amidst extremely poor volumes. Sheet rubber finished flat at Rs. 145 a kg, according to traders and the Rubber Board. The grade was unchanged at Rs. 142 as reported by the dealers. July futures improved to Rs. 144.20 (Rs. 143.67), August to Rs. 143.30 (Rs. 142.76) and September to Rs. 141.42 (Rs. 141.16) while the October futures slipped to Rs. 139.83 (Rs. 139.92) on the National Multi Commodity Exchange. RSS 3 (spot) firmed up to Rs. 127.41 (Rs. 125.95) at Bangkok. June futures closed at ₹195.4 (Rs. 115.45) on the Tokyo Commodity Exchange. Spot rubber rates (Rs. /kg) were: ; RSS-5: 140.50 (140.50); Ungraded: 136 (136); ISNR 20: 132 (132) and Latex 60%: 123 (123).

Rains reach East, but may be restricted to foothills

The monsoon has advanced into more parts of coastal Andhra Pradesh, foothills and rest of West Bengal, and parts of Odisha, Jharkhand and Bihar on Wednesday. The northern limit of the monsoon passed through Veraval, Surat, Sangli, Bellary, Nandyal, Visakhapatnam, Bhubaneswar, Bankura, Darbhanga and Raxaul.

Cyclonic whirl

Over next two days, it may cover coastal Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, Gangetic West Bengal, Jharkhand, Bihar and some parts of Telangana, Chhattisgarh, Vidarbha and east Uttar Pradesh. A cyclonic circulation embedded into the trough linking Punjab with north-east Bay of Bengal is presiding over the rain in the East from its perch over Jharkhand.

On Wednesday, this land-based trough lain across Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand and Gangetic West Bengal. The trough is expected to allow south-easterly monsoon winds from the Bay to enter North and North-West India.

Rains in foothills

Bihar and east Uttar Pradesh will be the two major stops before the rains can filter into the rest of Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, Punjab, Rajasthan and Jammu and Kashmir. The heavy rain expected along foothills of West Bengal and North-East India is forecast to progress along a narrow corridor onward into Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand until Monday, an outlook of the US Climate Prediction Centres aid. Plains of Bihar, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh and east Madhya Pradesh, Odisha and coastal Andhra Pradesh may benefit from spill-over rain.

Growing deficit

But the rest of central India and south Gujarat will hardly see any rain during the period. Affected region include plains in Uttar Pradesh, west Madhya Pradesh and adjoining west and south Maharashtra. The last week of the month (June 24 to 30) too may witness a similar scenario when it will be mostly Nepal and adjoining North-East India and the foothills which will receive the rains. Rain-deficit areas will grow further into the north from central India and reach Rajasthan, apart from south Gujarat. According to the US agency, the other area of enhanced convection and rain during the two weeks will be out into the sea over East Bay and adjacent Bangladesh, Myanmar and Thailand.

THE ECONOMIC TIMES

Despite Narendra Modi-government steps to boost supply, onion prices all set to jump to Rs 100 a kg by October



Onion prices are poised to jump to Rs 100 per kg by October while potato rates may fall briefly but rise again despite government measures to boost supply by restricting exports, as hailstorms and unseasonal rain in the past, along with the weak start of the monsoon season has created scarcity and strong inflationary pressures.

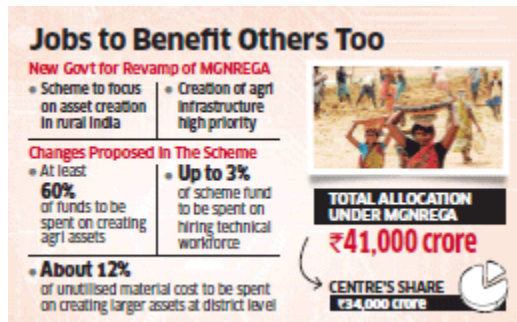
Onions, currently retailing for Rs 20-30 per kg in different parts of the country, are particularly vulnerable despite the imposition of a minimum export price (MEP) and official estimates that 2013-14 output would rise 14% to 192 lakh tonnes. This is because the rabi crop in Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh has been extensively damaged by adverse weather, traders say, although there is no firm estimate of the loss. Further, the price of seeds has jumped 400% compared to the previous year as there is a big scarcity in the market. This will reduce the area under cultivation, traders said. "The price can rise to Rs 100 per kg around October," said a leading industry official, who did not want to be quoted because of the political sensitivity of onion prices. Leading traders and an official of a government body agreed with the assessment. Like onions, adverse weather has also hit potato output, while the demand is high. Export of potatoes to countries such as Pakistan is driving up prices, but traders said restrictions on foreign shipments would not significantly change the fundamentals of the market. Prices may briefly fall by Rs 1-2 per kg from the current level of about Rs 20, traders said, but they will rise again due to short supply. In addition to disincentivising potato exports, the government on Wednesday took initial steps towards banning the trading of potato futures. It disallowed fresh positions in existing contracts through September, citing "low volumes and deliveries" on the futures market. Regulatory officials clarified that the step was not linked to food price inflation, though it comes at a time rising prices have created cause for concern. While monthly contracts up to September run concurrently on commodity bourse MCX, margins to trade on the long or buy side for the June contract have been raised to 25% from 5% earlier with effect from June 23, reducing the leverage a trader can take from 20 times earlier to 4 times in the current month. For the contracts from July through September, fresh trading positions will not be allowed with immediate effect. Rather, traders will only be able to square off existing contracts. For instance, a trader holding an outstanding buy position will be able to sell the same and exit the market. Those having a sell position will be only able to buy it back. Volumes of potato on MCX are very low indeed. For instance, potato volumes (Rs 34 crore) as a proportion of total volumes on MCX (19135 crore) were just 17% on Monday, market data on the bourse shows. On Tuesday, it was even lower at 0.1%. Market participants said the regulator could have taken the measure as a matter of abundant caution against the decade old futures market being blamed for stoking inflation. Years ago, the government banned rice, tur and urad futures though a committee chaired by Abhijit Sen could not find a conclusive link between high food price inflation and futures trading in certain commodities. "Though potato futures volumes are low, the government could have taken the step to discontinue fresh positions as a matter of abundant caution," said Suresh Nair, director, Admisi Commodities. "Though potato futures volumes are low, the government could have taken the step to discontinue fresh positions as a matter of abundant caution," said Suresh Nair, director, Admisi Commodities. In the case of onions, traders said prices could have been

calmed with a good kharif crop that is planted in May and June, and harvested by October but the crop has been delayed by about 15 days and the outlook for the monsoon for the rest of the month is not bright. Historically, onion prices have always increased if the kharif crop is delayed or depleted. Traders and exporters said the MEP of \$300/tonne, which is the current export price, would not have an impact on the market. "MEP has proved to be of no use to curtail exports in the past. Despite MEP of \$1,200/tonne, the exports continued last year," said Danish Shah, managing partner of Sanghar Exports and member of the National Horticulture Research and Development Foundation (NHRDF). Shah said that the government will have to plan to import onions right from now as the shipments take time to arrive. It will have to avoid the mistakes done by last government, which took the decision to allow imports so late that it proved futile. Also, the cargo was waiting for a month at the ports due to phytosanitary issues. "Currently, large quantities are shipped out on consignment basis. The government can also introduce letter of credit to allow genuine export to take place so that we do not lose our export market too," said Shah. Curtailing exports will also help to keep a higher proportion of good quality onion within the country, which will last longer. Importing the bulb at many ports and making a proper plan of its marketing will have to be on the agenda of the government to keep the prices up to Rs 50/kg. Currently, onion is available in many countries and the landed cost can be Rs 25/kg to Rs 30/kg. However, the trade insiders say that the government should not import too early also, which will result in fall in prices, making farmers suffer losses. "The government will also have to be careful about the quantity of import to avoid international prices from appreciating," said an old time trader. In the case of potatoes, traders said export restrictions would encourage offloading of stocks but overseas sales is only one of the factors driving up its prices. "Prices of potato is going up for three reasons. Firstly, there is a shortage of potato in the market. Secondly, the export markets in Pakistan and middle east are very strong and thirdly, the Karnataka crop which is currently being sown has been affected due to less rainfall," Rajesh Goel, general secretary, Federation of Cold Storage Association of India told ET. He said in Uttar Pradesh, the largest potato producer, storage of the tuber had fallen 12-14% due to rainfall in February. Potatoes are being sold for Rs 20-22 per kg in the state, and the prices may drop by Rs 1-2 per kg for some time if exports are curbed, he said. "But that will be for a temporary period. Since there is a shortage in the market, prices will not drop drastically due to government intervention," he said. Trade officials said potato sowing was down 40% in Karnataka as in Bengal, the second-largest producer of potato, prices are likely to rise from Rs 18 per kg to Rs 20-22 per kg as there is heavy demand from neighbouring states and even southern India as the output is falling, said Dilip Pratihar, advisor, West Bengal Potato Merchants Association.

Rural Development Ministry wants states to allocate 60% of NREGA funds to agricultural infrastructure



In a major revamp of the employment guarantee scheme, the ministry of rural development has proposed to make it mandatory for states to spend at least 60% of the MGNREGA money on creating infrastructure linked to agriculture. This is expected to bring at least Rs 25,000 crore of investment into agriculture, a senior government official told ET. As part of the amendments proposed in the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), the ministry will delegate funds at the district level so that larger works like creation of minor irrigation structures could be undertaken besides providing for a dedicated fund equivalent to 3% of the MGNREGA money to recruit technical manpower who will guide in planning and execution of works under the scheme, the official said. "The government feels that the scheme needs to be more outcome oriented on all fronts, be it creating quality assets or payment of wages" the official said. MGNREGA, a flagship scheme of the UPA government, was implemented in 2006. It promises 100 days of work in a year to every rural household. However, the scheme has drawn a lot of criticism for poor quality of assets being created and delay in wage payments, which has defeated the purpose of the scheme. The Narendra Modi-led government had indicated that the scheme would have to undergo changes and focus more on asset creation in rural India. The annual spend on MGNREGA is Rs 41,000 crore with the Centre contributing Rs 34,000 crore and the rest coming from states as well as through convergence between MGNREGA and other schemes, though this is miniscule as of now.



Out of the wage material ratio of 60:40, barely 28% is utilised in the material component under the scheme against the allotted 40%. The ministry estimates that these unutilised

funds of 12% at the district level will fetch approximately Rs 8,000 crore that can then be utilised to create bigger assets. As per the proposal sent to states, the ministry has already moved a note to the department of expenditure seeking approval to set aside Rs 1,200 crore for hiring technical staff who would guide in the planning and execution of MGNREGA works. To address leakages in implementation and delay in payments, the ministry has also proposed to come up with a mechanism that will ensure that social audits of the scheme are carried out as per rules and there is effective implementation of the provisions of the delay compensation system. Under the scheme's compensation clause, agencies responsible for the delay are expected to pay 0.05% of wages per day after closure of muster roll.