

Now, solar-powered rotovator to the aid of farmers

R. AVADHANI



Shortage of farm labourers forced K. Ramachandraiah, a farmer from Tad-Danpally village in Pulkal mandal of Medak district to come up with an innovation that will strengthen the hands of farmers. R. Ramachandraiah has developed a solar powered rotovator that can be operated with ease by farmers. This was exhibited at Collectorate on Monday. It was fixed with two wheels on either side for easy mobility and farmers can take it from house to farm without depending on any transport system. Solar panels were fixed on the upper side and the blades fixed in the bottom can cut weed. The switch to operate blades is fixed on the handle so that running of blades can be switched off easily. A small battery is fixed in the bottom to supply power without fluctuations so that machine can run smoothly. It took an investment of about Rs. 60,000 and eight months for Mr. Ramachandraiah to complete the model. “Due to various reasons including lack of financial support, I couldn’t complete the project in time. The farmers need not depend on tractors to run rotovators,” he told *The Hindu*. However, the innovation may need some modifications after field trial.

Sugar rises on import duty hike

GARGI PARSAI

Sugar prices jumped by at least Rs. 10 per kg in the market on Monday after the government decided to increase import duty on the sweetener and continue with the export subsidy to give relief to the industry that owes Rs. 15,000 crore to sugarcane growers. Market sentiment was affected as the government announced a slew of measures for millers, including an additional interest-free loan of up to Rs. 4,400 crore. At a meeting convened by Union Food Minister Ram Vilas Paswan, it was decided to raise sugar import duty to 40 per cent from 15 per cent and provide export subsidy of Rs. 3,300 per tonne till September this year.

Poultry farming turns a lucrative alternative

C. JAISANKAR

Department of Animal Husbandry provides technical assistance









The State government's ambitious plan to popularise the poultry farming, with 50 per cent subsidy, in the non-traditional areas of the State has started yielding dividends. An extensive tour of the interior parts of Karur district recently, which borders with Namakkal and Coimbatore districts on western and northern side that are known for broiler farms, showed that poultry farming was set to become a premier occupation of farmers in the rain shadow region of the State. As per the plan, if a progressive farmer comes forward to set up a poultry unit for rearing 5,000 birds, the government will provide 50 per cent subsidy, of which 25 per cent will be borne by the National Bank for Agricultural and Rural Development (NABARD). Besides helping and guiding farmers to avail bank loan to the tune of Rs. 8.25 lakh (total cost of the project), the Department of Animal Husbandry will provide technical assistance to set up the unit. Farmers can go for lesser number of birds. Less than two years of the launch of the scheme, more than 50 poultry units have sprung up in different parts of Karur district, mostly in K. Paramathi. Several of them have cleared the first batch of chicks, and are preparing for second batch. Some of the beneficiaries had already gained sufficient knowledge on broiler farming thanks to the training provided by the University Training and Research Centre, Karur, a peripheral unit of Tamil Nadu Veterinary and Animal Sciences University. M. Thangaraj, Joint Director, Department of Animal Husbandry, Karur, told *The Hindu* that the Poultry Development Scheme had taken off to a good start. The response was excellent. The initial results showed that poultry farming would get the imagination of entrepreneurs of the region, who wanted to take up new initiatives boldly. N. Kulandasamy, Assistant Director, said that many of the 103 beneficiaries, who had been given training and obtained the provisional sanction from banks, had set up modernised poultry units. The sheds continued to get visitors from the neighbouring villages. They had entered into buy back arrangements with leading private companies, who supplied all raw material, including chicks, equipment, feed, medicine, and vaccines. Besides ensuring correct temperature in the shed, the entrepreneurs had just to provide feed to the chicks for 40 days. "I feel happy to say that I am a proud owner of poultry unit. It promises a good return to the investment. The 50 per cent subsidy is a boon to the rural poor farmer to start poultry unit," says V. Maheswari, a progressive farmer in Pallamarudhu Patti in K.

Paramathi block. Her husband Velusamy hoped that if the birds were raised as per the standard, a farmer could get a revenue of around Rs. 80,000 per batch (40 days) for raising 5,000 birds. G. Mohanraj, K.B. Tamilarasan, and S. Senthilmuthu Kumaran, veterinarians, who offered technical advice to the beneficiaries, said that poultry had possessed one of the most profitable live stock enterprises in the State.

Ex minister appeals to open paddy procurement centre

Former Minister M.P. Renukacharya said that the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) district unit members will launch ‘Vidhan Soudha Chalo’ form next week to protest against the State government for its failure to open paddy procurement centres to help farmers. Addressing reporters here on Monday, he stated that the Union government had already fixed the support price at Rs. 1410 per quintal of paddy, so the State should take immediate steps to fix it. He also said that paddy harvesting had already been completed in 70 per cent of the area in the State. The government should open procurement centres to help farmers in selling paddy. He also asked that the State government should appeal to sugar factories across the State to clear the dues of farmers immediately as many of the factory authorities have failed to clear the dues even after repeated pleas. “If the state government has concern for farmers, it should immediately take steps to clear dues of farmers and improve market facilities for the produce of farmers,” he added. Mr. Renukacharya informed that farmers had supplied about 454450 metric tonne of sugar cane to Davangere sugars and 41545 metric tonne of sugar has been produced. But the Davangere Sugars is yet to clear dues of about Rs 9.12 crore. Similarly, the farmers have supplied about 345082 metric tonne of sugar cane to Shamanur Sugars and about 31, 618 metric tonne has been produced. This sugar factory is yet to clear dues of Rs 6.9 crore. The government should interfere in it and play a major role in getting dues to peasants from the factories, he added.

Searing heat makes vegetable prices soar

SO DEAR!	
Vegetable	Price
 Coriander (bunch)	20
 French beans	82
 Capsicum	38
 Cucumber	50
 Bitter gourd	34
 Carrot	44

With the searing heat showing no signs of coming down, the misery continues for the common man. Worse still is that the extended summer has also had a severe bearing on the prices of vegetables. A visit to the Rythu Bazaar is forcing customers to dig deep into their pockets for a bagful of vegetables. French beans are being sold at Rs.82 per kg, cucumber Rs.50 per kg, carrot at Rs.44 per kg and capsicum at 38 per kg. Coriander

leaves are simply out of stock! Rythu Bazaar authorities say these prices could continue for three more weeks. Onions, which were being sold for Rs.17 per kg, now cost Rs.22 per kg. “It is shocking. Our monthly budget is going for a toss,” says K. Sumathi, a homemaker, after checking the price list at the Rythu Bazaar in Patamata on Monday. Authorities attribute the prime reason for rising vegetable prices to the severe summer and poor arrivals into the markets. “Generally, French beans, carrot, cucumber and other vegetables are supplied from Bangalore but since the last few weeks, arrivals have gone down considerably,” points out B. Srinivasa Rao, Estate Officer, Patamata Rythu Bazaar. “Generally, 30 quintals of carrot arrive everyday but since the last few days only 10 quintals are being supplied. Likewise, only one or half quintal of beans is being supplied against the regular supply of five quintals,” Mr. Rao adds.

Now, buy superfine rice for Rs. 30 a kg. at rythu bazaar



There was good response from the people who queued up before the counters at the 12 Rytu Bazaars in the city and district from where the District Administration started selling superfine rice at Rs. 30 a kg. from Monday. The counters opened as market intervention measure to control the price of rice which is going up steadily during the recent past. Officials were asked to find if there was demand in other places and sale would commence at mandal headquarters and in rural areas also if there was demand, Joint Collector and Collector (civil supplies) Pravin Kumar told reporters. He inaugurated the sale at the M.V.P. Colony Rytu Bazaar and hoped that price in open market would come down.

BPT superfine rice

Rice traders also started selling rice at a reduced price at the direction of the Joint Collector. They would sell BPT superfine rice of Srikakulam from 50 counters, some of which were already opened, he said. The rice being sold at Rytu Bazaar counters is being brought from the stock of 2,700 tonnes procured by the Civil Supplies Corporation in East Godavari district and stored there. There is no problem regarding availability, he added.

Govt. takes steps to check vegetable prices

The West Bengal government on Monday capped the potato price at Rs 14 a kg and initiated measures to keep vegetable prices under check. “The State government has decided to cap the price of potato at Rs 14 and will set up 27 fair price shops across 14 municipal markets of the city,” chairman of the Forum of Traders Organisation (West Bengal), Rabindranath Kolay said after a meeting of the task force chaired by Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee. Mr. Kolay is a member of the task force on essential commodities formed by the State government. The prices of potato and onions had shot up sharply in the retail markets and prices of the tuber had touched Rs 20 a kg for the Jyoti variety and Rs 25 for the Chandramukhi variety. The government would also keep tab on illegal speculative trading and check at borders to stop illegal export of potato and onion. – PTI

Safal to sell onions, potatoes at reasonable rates

VISHAL KANT

Even as the Delhi Government officials claimed on Monday that the prices of onion and potatoes are stable, around 380 Safal outlets across the city would start selling onions from Tuesday. The first consignment of onions procured by National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India Limited (NAFED) from Maharashtra reached Delhi on Monday to meet the city’s requirements. “A team of officers from Safal and the Delhi Government is in Nasik to oversee the procurement. Based on Delhi’s requirement, onions will be procured daily from Maharashtra and dispatched to the city to ensure uninterrupted supply,” said Food & Supplies Commissioner S.S. Yadav. Officials claimed that prices of onion and potatoes in the city were stable with onions being sold at Safal outlets at Rs.20.90 per kg, potatoes at Rs.24.50 per kg on Monday. “The arrival of onions at Azardpur Mandi was 1,522 MT on Saturday and 1564 MT on Sunday. Arrival of potatoes was around 1,000 MT daily in the last two days,” said Mr. Yadav.

Largest fruit gets the biggest neglect

JABIR MUSHTHARI



Untapped: A processing technology for the large-scale production of food-products from jackfruit is yet to emerge.- Photo: K. Ragesh

Anyone who travels the length and breadth of rural Kerala would be shocked to see the sheer number of jackfruits, which were once considered a major source of food to keep starvation at bay, being wasted on countless jackfruit trees in private and public lands. If the government agencies including the agricultural universities or the Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVK) were to develop some effective technology to process the fruit in large-scale and make value-added products from it, that would have made a big difference to rural economy of the State, say observers. Different products including jackfruit chips, mixture and squash are available in the market, though they don't make for even 10 per cent of the total annual production of the fruit. "If the authorities were to make a sincere effort by promoting new entrepreneurs equipped with modern technologies, jackfruit would hold key not only to the development of rural economy but also to the food security of the State," says M.A. Johnson, environmental activist.

Major challenge

Around 75 per cent of the fruit produced in the State was going without being properly utilised, says K.B. Sheela, professor and head of Processing Technology Department at the Kerala Agricultural University, Vellanikkara. The difficulty in the primary processing of the fruit is the major challenge says Dr. Sheela, who vouches for the high nutrient value of the fruit, which is one of the rare 'completely organic' fruits available in the State today. The university has recently developed a technology to make a product called 'osmo-dehydrated jackfruit', which can be sold to prospective business firms interested in marketing it. Around 20 other products like jelly, squash and halwa are also being now made in different parts of the State using different technologies, says Dr. Sheela. The seed of the fruit is also said to be protein rich, which can be utilised for cattle feed. "A processing technology for a product of bulk use of jackfruit is however yet to emerge," she says. The KVKs also make minor efforts to produce and market traditional products from jackfruit. "But none of them is sufficient to make a major difference to the fate of the fruit," says B. Sasikumar, scientist in-charge of the KVK, Kozhikode. "Though we make only a few products using a small portion of the fruits from KVK farms, there is great demand for them," says Dr. Sasikumar.

Jackfruit council


Two years ago the State had even witnessed the formation of a Jackfruit Promotion Council, following a jackfruit festival in Thiruvananthapuram. "However, nothing significant came out of either," says Mr. Johnson, who wants the attention of the Agriculture Ministry into the issue.

Farmers' experiments

However, experiments are on among different collectives of farmers in the State in preparing diverse varieties of food items from the fruit, which is the largest tree-born fruit in the world. Niravu Vengeri, a progressive residential forum here, had showcased as many as 101 varieties of dishes from *payasam* to *biriyani* using jackfruit in a State-level jackfruit festival organised in the city three years ago. "All of them were prepared by our member residents using fruits from their own backyards," says Babu Parambath of Niravu.

Encroachments on 2.04 lakh acres of forest land in State

The areas include reserved and protected forest land



EXTENT OF FOREST ENCROACHMENT	
Circle	Area (In acres)
Shimoga	81,501.65
Chikmagalur	30,641.48
Canara	28,345.16
Bangalore	15,046.77
Gulbarga	9,584.53
Dharwad	8,558.72
Kodagu	7,358.89
Mangalore	5,862.60
Mysore	5,070.95
Chamarajanagar	4,524.09
Belgaum	4,405.04
Hassan	2,695.74
Bellary	815.14
Field Director, Project Tiger, Mysore	28.00
Total	2,04,442.16

Around 2,04,442.16 acres of forest land in the State has been encroached upon, said Minister for Forests B. Ramanath Rai.

Replying to Janata Dal (Secular) member K.M. Shivalinge Gowda during Question Hour in the Assembly, the Minister said these encroachments, involving 1,10,626 cases, includes the reserved and protected forest lands. The extent of forest encroachments had been sourced from the report of a committee of experts. The statistics furnished by the Minister regarding the circle and division-wise break-up of encroachments show that Shimoga circle accounts for highest encroachment of 81,501 acres, followed by Chikmagalur (30,641 acres) and Canara (28,345 acres). Bangalore forest circle, which comprises the districts of Bangalore Urban, Rural, Kolar, Chickballapur and Ramanagaram, accounts for encroachments of 15,046 acres.

Highest encroachments

Within Shimoga circle, Sagar accounts for highest encroachments of 44,300 acres. Similarly, Koppa in Chikmagalur circle has encroachments on forest land of 22,640 acres. Mr. Rai said the State has 29,688.37 sq km of reserved forests, 3,50.07 sq km of protected forests and 10,024.91 acres of unclassified forest land.

Eviction notice served on forest-dwellers causes concern

They urge the government to bail out poor farmers

The episode of the Forest Department issuing notices to evict forest-dwellers figured in the Legislative Assembly with several legislators from the Malnad region, including Speaker Kagodu Thimmappa, expressing concern over the future of the poor families who have been living in forest areas for three generations. The issue came up during Question Hour when Bharatiya Janata Party member K.G. Bopaiah alleged that nearly 100 people in Chembu and Sampaje villages at Madikeri taluk in Kodagu district had been served eviction notices by the Forest Department. He said those families had been served notices despite their applications seeking regularisation of unauthorised cultivation of forestland pending before the authorities under the Forest Rights Act.

‘Be humane’

Mr. Bopaiah and several other members from Malnad region expressed concern over generalising things with respect to forest encroachments, while pointing out that the lands which were in possession of the residents of the villages for more than three generations too were categorised as encroached forestland. They urged the Forest Minister to adopt a practical and humanitarian approach to resolving the issue. “Almost everybody in the Malnad region will lose their land if such a rule is applied generally,” Speaker Kagodu Thimmappa observed and stressed the need for legislators from Malnad region to hold a meeting to discuss how to provide justice to the affected families.

Exploring options

Responding to this, Forest Minister B. Ramanath Rai said the government was trying to explore various options to help the people. Steps were also being taken to examine the possibility of regularising unauthorised cultivation of forest areas even after the cut-off period of 1978, he hinted. A Cabinet subcommittee had already been formed to examine the issue and take a call, he said.

Fishing for good fortune in abandoned quarries

GIJI K. RAMAN

These head load workers have turned to fishing

A small group of head load workers at Kovilkadavu near Marayur have proved that all you need is an idea and the will to work hard for success to come your way. This group has found a way to make money from abandoned quarries by breeding freshwater fish. For Kochethu Babu, a head load worker at Kovilkadavu, it was a humble beginning three years ago. Now, he and a group of friends, harvested over 200kg of fish. Mr Babu launched the venture as a past time and now breeds pomfret, catla, tilapia, goldfish and

the like. When the first harvest was successful, his five of his friends, also head load workers, chipped in and fish farming started in five abandoned quarries nearby. Mr Babu says that the fish are given only organic feeds including rice and selected food wastes from hotels. He ensured that no artificial feed was given and sought expert help for tips to breed the fishes. He now wants to experiment with the variety of freshwater fish available in Alappuzha in the quarries in Kovilkadavu. The quarries, where fish are grown are three to ten cents wide, he says. Fish are grown in consideration of the carrying capacity of each pond, he says, adding that local support made it a success. The prices charged are less than the market rate, he says adding that there is good demand for the freshwater fish and he could not meet the demand from the neighbouring areas. A major factor which made the venture a success was that the fishes available in the area were those arriving from Ernakulam. Often they were artificially preserved and are of low quality. The price too is high and it made a favourable ground for their venture to succeed in these parts. "The abandoned quarries everywhere could be made for use of fish farming that too without much investment," says Mr Babu.

Betel farmers' plea



Farmers at the district collectorate showing damaged betel leaves during the grievance day meeting in Thanjavur on Monday.— PHOTO: M. MOORTHY

The betel farmers urged the government to take steps to prevail upon the European countries for lifting the ban on import of betel leaves from India. In a petition to District Collector N. Subbaiyan at the grievances day meeting here on Monday, the betel farmers, led by P. Sukumaran, deputy secretary of the Cauvery Delta Farmers' Protection Association, said that betel leaf was a major crop in parts of Tiruchi, Karur, Dindigul, and major areas in Tiruvaiyaru, Papanasam, and Kumbakonam in Thanjavur district. Although no credit facility was available for the crop, farmers were raising it using bio-technique and most of them were lessees. This was the second crop to be axed because of the ban on import by European countries, they said and added that this had badly hit their livelihood. The petition sought the intervention of Chief Minister Jayalalithaa for solving this issue in the interest of a large number of betel farmers.

Fisheries polytechnic students land lucrative jobs

Several aqua companies competed to recruit students of SMVKR Fisheries Polytechnic College, Bhavadevarapalli in Krishna District, during the campus recruitment drive held at the college on Monday. Each of the 28 students, including eight girls, who completed the two-year polytechnic course (2012-14) was offered multiple opportunities in their respective positions. Lallemand Animal Nutrition recruited four candidates with a lucrative package. The positions offered included that of lab technician. Candidates also bagged positions in farming of shrimp and fish, hatcheries, aqua labs and marketing. Hyderabad-based Etern Biotechnology Private Limited and Farm-Ocean Tech India Private Limited also took part in the drive. This was the sixth batch of the college that comes under Sri Venkateswara Veterinary University. All students of the previous five batches got employment in aqua industry.

AP seeks fisheries projects

BJP leaders of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana States have represented to the Union Minister of Agriculture Radhamohan Singh for development of Fisheries sector. Mr. Kishan Reddy, Telangana BJP president urged for setting up a State level Fish Brood Bank and projects for integrated fisheries development in reservoir tanks and ponds. He also requested for setting up a Fisheries Institute in the State. Mr. Somu Veerraju of BJP National Executive member urged the Union Minister to set up National Fisheries Development board in Rajahmundry of Kakinada to extend financial assistance to develop fisheries .

Meet to discuss ways to increase fish exports

Union Minister of State for Commerce and Industry Nirmala Sitharaman will hold a high-level meeting soon to discuss ways and means to raise fish exports from Andhra Pradesh from Rs.12,000 crore to Rs.20,000 crore in next five years. The meeting would be held for two days in one of the coastal cities of the State to discuss other demands of the fishing community, State BJP president and MP K. Haribabu said on Monday. He was interacting with fishermen at a meeting conducted by the Dolphin Boat Operators' Welfare Association here. Association president Ch. Satyanarayana Murthy and others sought separate Ministry for fisheries, shifting of National Fisheries Development Board headquarters from Hyderabad to Visakhapatnam, granting of agriculture status to fisheries and increase in diesel subsidy. Dr. Haribabu said of total export of Rs.30,000 crore from the country, undivided AP, mostly the coastal areas, had a lion's share during last fiscal. Now efforts would be made to increase it to Rs.15,000 crore in next two to three years. On shifting of NFDB office, he said it would not be possible.

Sugarcane growers flag delay in payments

'Sugar mills have failed to keep their promise to settle dues by June 18'

Cane growers hoisted black flags in their fields in 18 villages in around Kumbakonam in protest against the inordinate delay in settling payment for sugarcane by two private sugar mills in Thanjavur district. District Collector N. Subbaiyan convened peace talks with sugar mills where they promised to settle the dues by June 18. Since they had failed to keep their promise, farmers demanded legal action.

Horticulture gives new meaning to this retired doctor's life



K.N. Pai, a retired family physician, tending to plants at his garden in Manipal on Monday.

The gentle manner in which he touches the plants tells his concern for them. He smiles all the time as he talks about the vegetables and fruits that he cultivates. K.N. Pai (78), a retired family physician, is growing a variety of vegetables and fruits in his 13 cents garden located on the 10th Cross at Eshwar Nagar in the educational hub of Manipal, where he resides. Leading a retired life, Dr. Pai got interested in kitchen gardening about five years back. But this hobby turned into passion as he slowly learnt how a variety of vegetables and fruits could be cultivated. That is not all, he follows organic farming methods and also does rainwater harvesting, in his garden. The vegetables he cultivates in his garden include okra, brinjal, tomato, black pepper, bitter gourd, cucumber, ridge gourd, little gourd, curry leaves, snake gourd, colocasia leaves, betel leaves, yam and ash gourd. The fruits cultivated include pomegranate, papaya, mango, sapota, cashew, pineapple, water apple, star apple, banana, and guava. "What I grow meets the needs of my house. I also give the vegetables and fruits grown to my friends, neighbours, schools and poor people. I do not sell them. But it can be a good source of income," he said.

Rainwater harvesting

The rain water from his house is directed through pipeline to a percolation tank of 10,000 litres capacity. There is another tank of 3,000 litres capacity. "The importance of rainwater harvesting is known during peak summer. My rainwater harvesting has helped in water level rising up in the area. There is at least seven feet of water during peak

summer,” he said. There is maximum utilisation of available land in his garden. He uses green manure, compost and kitchen waste for his garden.

“There is no spraying of chemicals on the fruits and vegetables that I grow. I spend not less than seven hours a day in my garden. I do not know how time flies by. There is no profession which gives as much happiness as this, provided you are involved in it,” he said. Children from eco-clubs of schools visit his garden. But he regrets that the younger generation is not much interested in agriculture. His wife Manorama N. Pai, a homemaker, also helps him in this endeavour. “Collecting vegetables gives happiness, but cultivating it requires efforts. I am interested in it, but not as much as my husband,” she said.

A fruitful mission takes steps on the museum premises

Governor launches drive to plant indigenous fruit trees



For a greener India: Governor Sheila Dikshit planting a gooseberry sapling on the museum premises in Thiruvananthapuram on Monday as part of a programme organised by ‘WePlant India.’ — Photo: C. Ratheesh Kumar: Thiruvananthapuram took a ‘green’ step forward on Monday when Governor Sheila Dikshit planted a gooseberry sapling on the museum premises to mark the beginning of a greening drive led by Delhi-based NGO ‘WePlant India’. Ms. Dikshit administered an oath committing the youngsters present on the occasion to preserve and protect biodiversity by planting ‘indigenous and location-specific fruit trees in public places wherever possible’.

Schools extend support

Around 150 fruit tree saplings were planted at the event, including those of mango, pomegranate, litchi and Indian gooseberry by the volunteers and 150 students of various schools in the city — National Institute of Speech and Hearing (NISH), Akkulam, Holy Angels’ School, Vanchiyoor, St. Mary’s Higher Secondary School, Pattom, LMS UPS Cantonment School, Viswaprakash Central School, St. Theresa’s School, St. Thomas Residential School and Women’s Christian College, Nagercoil.

Children born with clubfoot who have undergone Ponseti treatment under CURE Clubfoot Kerala were also part of the people who planted fruit tree saplings. Kerala State Biodiversity Board chairman Oommen V. Oommen; Museum Director B. Joseph; founder of 'WePlant India' J. George, national team leader Santhosh George G., State team leader S. Devanesan; and Secretary, Agriculture, Jyothilal, were present. Zulfiqar Marikar, CEO, Marikkar Motors, said on the occasion that for every vehicle sold by the showroom a fruit tree would be planted in partnership with We Plant India.

Turmeric sowing begins on apprehensive note

S. HARPAL SINGH



Turmeric being sown at Neelaipet in Nirmal mandal in Adilabad district. -PHOTO: S. HARPAL SINGH

Turmeric sowing has begun in Adilabad, but farmers are anxious about the price which their produce will attract eventually. "The market trend is not healthy so far as the price of turmeric is concerned and this could add to the problems of farmers, who are already reeling under the effect of the heavy loss they suffered owing to the dismally low price last season," says K. Narasimham Naidu from Armoor in Nizamabad, who is the founder president of AP Turmeric Farmers Association, a representative unit of turmeric farmers in AP and Telangana. The trend in price however, may not result in decrease in the area under turmeric cultivation in this district as there is no hope for farmers to succeed if they went in for other cash crops. Like last year, about 10,000 acres in the mandals of Dilawarpur, Nirmal, Laxmanchanda, Mamda, Khanapur and Kadem will be sown with turmeric.

Demand for

Turmeric Board

"We have pinned our hopes on Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Nizamabad MP K. Kavitha towards establishing a Turmeric Board. They had assured the farmers of doing so during their election campaigns," says Lakkavathula Ramesh, a farmer from Khanapur as he broached a long pending demand for the Board. A turmeric board will regulate all aspects including local trading and its export. Regulation will remove the huge disparity

in the price which the farmers get and the profits earned by traders and middlemen. "Farmers are not even able to recover their investment of about Rs.1.5 lakh per acre if the yield is below 15 quintals as the maximum price is pegged at Rs. 6,000 per quintal. On the other hand, exporters are selling the same turmeric at Rs.30,000 a quintal," Mr. Naidu points out the lopsidedness. The APTFA, according to its founder president will also come up again with the demand for declaring turmeric as a commodity. "This will have the government fix a minimum support price for the produce," he says. Farmers anxious about price as turmeric fetched low price last year

Rs. 500 crore sought for drip irrigation

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu hosted a luncheon meeting for Union Agriculture Minister Radha Mohan Singh here on Monday. The State Government reportedly submitted a representation to the Union Minister seeking, among others, an additional assistance of Rs.500 crore for promoting drip irrigation in the drought-prone area of Anantapur, Kurnool, Kadapa and Chittoor districts. Every year the Centre allocated Rs.200-Rs.250 crore for A.P. .

'Set date for implementing crop loan waiver scheme'

YSRC MLA Kotamreddy Sridhar Reddy wanted the Chandrababu Naidu government to set a date for implementing the crop loan waiver promise which was made during the general elections. Mr. Reddy lashed out at the ruling party saying that the first files on which the CM put his signatures lost their significance as they are nothing but empty promises. Mr. Reddy recalled that former Chief Minister Y.S. Rajasekhara Reddy implemented with immediate effect all the decisions of the files on which he put his signature at the time of his swearing-in. Mr. Reddy said that the YSRC would pressurise the government to make sure that its election promises are fulfilled.

Action plan on farm technology expansion sought

Officials of the Agriculture Technology Management Agency (ATMA) were directed to prepare an action plan on agriculture technology expansion with complete details. ATMA Governing Body meeting was held here on Monday presided over by in-charge Collector A. Sarath. Expressing displeasure over not preparing records properly, he has directed them to get ready with all records in a couple of weeks for the next meeting.

Subsidy offer

Mr. Sarath also came forward to experiment with solar pump set proposed by one K. Ramachandraiah at an estimated cost of Rs. 3.25 lakh. The ATMA would offer 70 per cent subsidy for the pilot project if any farmer comes forward to bear the remaining 30 per cent cost for the experiment. It was expected to bring water from 200 feet depth.

Sugarcane issue echoes in Assembly



Leader of the Opposition Jagadish Shettar, BJP leader Govind M. Karjol and JD(S) leader Y.S.V. Datta seeking a debate on the sugarcane issue in the Legislative Assembly in Bangalore on Monday.— Photo: Bhagya Prakash K.

The State government on Monday informed the Legislative Assembly that recovery notices have been issued to 18 sugar factories, including cooperatives, for their failure to pay the fair and remunerative price to sugarcane growers. Recovery notices empowered deputy commissioners to seize factories and sell the sugar stock for meeting payment dues to growers. Eighteen factories are expected to pay a sum of Rs. 503 crore as dues. In a reply over the debate on non-payment to sugarcane growers, Minister for Cooperation and Sugar H.S. Mahadeva Prasad said the Karnataka High Court stayed the notice issued to sugar factories directing them to pay Rs. 2,500 a tonne to growers, besides warning of penal action in case they failed to make payments. Following the stay order, notices were issued to factories to pay FRP of Rs. 2100 a tonne, fixed by the Union government as per the Sugarcane Control Amendment Order, 2009. However, 18 factories had ignored the directive. Six factories had not even replied to notices, he said. As many as 48 factories had paid FRP, he said. After several rounds of meetings with cane growers, the price was fixed at Rs. 2,650 a tonne, including incentive of Rs. 150 a tonne. A sum of Rs. 398 crore has been released to factories so far, he said. Dissatisfied with the government's reply, Opposition Bharatiya Janata Party members staged a dharna in the House demanding that the factory owners fulfil the commitment to pay Rs. 2,650 a tonne of sugarcane or at least FRP of Rs. 2,100. An adjournment motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition Jagadish Shettar was rejected by the Speaker. Mr. Shettar alleged that the government had succumbed to the 'sugar lobby' and was committed to safeguard the interest of factory owners only. BJP members demanded that Ministers owning factories had failed to implement the order and they should be dropped from the Cabinet. While the BJP members continued the dharna on the first day of the 27-day session, Deputy Speaker Shivashankara Reddy adjourned the House for the day. *Recovery notices have been issued to 18 sugar factories*

Water level

Mettur

The water level in the Mettur dam stood at 43.12 feet on Monday as against its full reservoir level of 120 feet. The inflow was 341 cusecs and the discharge 2,000 cusecs.

Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather



Sunny

Tuesday, Jun 24

Max Min

39° | 29°

Rain: 0

Humidity: 55

Wind: normal

Sunrise: 05:44

Sunset: 06:38

Barometer: 1004

Tomorrow's Forecast



Partly Cloudy

Wednesday, Jun 25

Max Min

37° | 28°

Extended Forecast for a week

Thursday

Jun 26



38° | 28°

Partly Cloudy

Friday

Jun 27



38° | 27°

Partly Cloudy

Saturday

Jun 28



36° | 28°

Cloudy

Sunday

Jun 29



34° | 25°

Cloudy

Monday

Jun 30



35° | 26°

Cloudy

Airport Weather

Chennai

Chennai

Rain: 0

Sunrise: 05:44

Humidity: 55 Sunset: 06:38

Wind: normal Barometer: 1004



THE NEW INDIAN EXPRESS

Delay in Monsoon May Throw Farmers' Life Out of Gear



HUBLI: Farmers of Dharwad district are seeing the first signs of trouble as the monsoon has slowed down drastically in the district. In June, the district received 42 per cent less rainfall, hampering sowing severely. According to Agriculture Department officials, the district received 46.6 mm rain as on June 23 against the expected 80.3 mm. The deficit is evenly spread across all the five taluks of Dharwad, Hubli, Kundgol, Kalaghatagi and Navalgund. The slowdown of monsoon has brought down the area under sowing. As against the targeted 2,07,600 hectares, sowing has taken place only in 1,20,343 hectares in the district till June 21. The district had received very good pre-monsoon showers. During January to May, it had received 7 per cent more rains, triggering hopes among farmers of a good monsoon this year. But now most farmers are keeping their eyes glued to the sky hoping for rains. If the rains continue to elude for another week or so, the situation is going to worsen. "I had plans to complete sowing in the first week of June. I kept my field ready for sowing. But the rains have suddenly disappeared," said Fakkirappa of Gabbur village on the outskirts of Hubli. The situation is no different for farmers who have completed sowing as the lack of rain will affect yield. Shabana Sheikh, joint director (in-charge), Department of Agriculture, terms the situation critical at the moment. "Rains are badly needed or it will have an adverse effect on crop yield. We are waiting with our fingers crossed," she said. Asked whether a drought-like situation is imminent in the district, Shabana said it is too early to comment. "However, we are preparing a contingency plan just in case, so that crop yield is not affected," she said. Different methods of sowing and growing crops are being studied. "There is hardly any moisture in the soil at present. Hence, we are studying different methods of sowing and growing crops," she said.

Water Problem Likely in Belgaum

Belgaum: The city is likely to face shortage of drinking water in the coming days in view of dwindling storage in Rakasakoppa reservoir, the main source of water to the city. There has been scanty rainfall in the catchment areas. Officials said the water is being supplied to the city from the dead storage of Rakasakoppa and this will last only for ten to 15 days.

Deer Menace: Farmers Fear Loss of Crop

HAVERI: Farmers of Ranebennur, Byadgi, Haveri, Hangal and part of Savanur taluks are once again hit by deer menace. There have been reports of a group of 40-50 deer eating 10-day old kharif crop sprouts. Farmers who have sown maize, soy, jowar, cotton, cereals, groundnut among others in their fields, fear complete loss of crops due to black buck attack. When asked, farmers said it has become very difficult to get rid of them because the deer always comes early morning or evening and when the farmers try to catch it the animal just leaps away. Blackbuck Sanctuary, Ranebennur, Forest superintendent Pramod said his department has received 365 applications for solar fencing from Ranebennur and Byadgi farmers. The government will provide 50 per cent subsidy to the farmers and rest will be borne by them, he told Express over phone. He said based on a survey by the Agriculture Department, the government has given `1 lakh compensation to 377 farmers

who lost crop in 2013-14 due to the deer menace. “Mere paying compensation to farmers is not a solution. To check black buck attacks, the government has to consult experts and adopt chain link mesh in places where major losses have been reported,” he said. Haveri district has a black buck sanctuary, which is spread over 11,900 hectare in Ranebennur and Byadgi taluk. The Forest Department has taken all steps to provide food, cattle proof trenches and water tanks for the deer in the sanctuary.

Irrigation Project Hanging Fire Sans Canal System



DEOGARH: Delay in providing a canal system has rendered the irrigation project over Matuali nullah at Gundeimara village under Kantapali panchayat of Barkote block redundant with farming in the region taking a hit. The project was the brainchild of erstwhile King of Deogarh Raja Basudev Sudhal Deb. During early days of its initiation, the project benefited the farmers of the district to a large extent and helped improve irrigation in the region. The then legislator of Deogarh Subhas Panigrahi got funds sanctioned from Western Odisha Development Council (WODC) in 2001 and work to augment the project was initiated. The whole exercise was aimed at bringing more land under irrigation and `18 lakhs were spent on it. In 2003, the then Water Resources Minister Mangla Kisan inaugurated the project. However, the very purpose of the project got diluted as it did not have a proper canal to ensure flow of water downstream. Surprisingly, the project was conceived without a canal. After the problem was identified, WODC sanctioned `1.18 crore for digging a canal from 2003-04 to 2005-06. This apart, `10 lakhs were spent from Critical Fund and `8 lakhs from National Drought Relief Fund in 2010-2011 on the project. Despite spending such a huge amount of money, the digging work of the canal still remains incomplete. To make things worse, the old canal system, which was earlier in place, has been rendered useless. The farmers, who used to benefit from the project, have been deprived of irrigation facilities. On the other hand, in absence of desilting, the barrage has been filled with soil reducing its water holding capacity. Poor standard of work is also taking its toll on the digging of the canal. Contacted, Deogarh Assistant Executive Engineer, Minor Irrigation Project, AB Chakrabarty attributed the delay to land acquisition hurdle. He, however, informed that land acquisition for the canal is over and work on the project would resume soon.

Farm Activities Cramped by Deficit Rain, Late Monsoon

BALASORE: Agricultural activities in the district have been affected severely again. This time, it is deficit rainfall and delayed monsoon to blame. With the district receiving only 40 per cent of normal rainfall in May and June, farmers are yet to plough the fields

and sow the seeds in many areas. According to official reports, the district has received around 140 mm rainfall against the normal 330 mm in May and June. Rain during June helps farmers go for paddy sowing. Paddy is sown in 60 per cent of crop land of the targeted area. Apparently, this is not the first time that monsoon has affected agricultural works in the last one decade. From 2006 to 2009, the district has been facing either flood or drought. In 2010, paddy saplings dried up and some fields developed cracks due to water stress condition. An agricultural scientist, Sushil Dutta, said agriculture pattern in the region had been affected due to excess rain at times or no rain for several days. "The district has so far received rain for three consecutive days in May and a couple of days in June. Excess rain at a time can be of no help for farmers," he said. Of around 2.69 lakh hectares of total agricultural land in the district, kharif crop is cultivated in 2.2 lakh ha and rabi in 1.01 lakh ha. Most of the crop land in the district depend on rain as only 55,000 ha have irrigation facilities. Sources in the district administration said so far paddy had been sown in around 4,800 ha which is less than even three per cent of the total crop land. Farmers said by this time, paddy saplings should have come up in the fields, but farmers have not yet sown the seeds. Mayadhar Bindhani, a farmer, said last year Phailin induced flash floods washed away their crops. "Though we had cultivated rabi crop, it was affected due to untimely rain. Now the deficit rainfall is all set to affect the kharif crop," he said. On the other hand, farmers who had sown paddy alleged that their seeds were damaged due to rain for three consecutive days in May. Agriculture Department is yet to provide them fresh seeds. They claimed that though 36,408 quintals of paddy seeds are required this year, only 6,254 quintals have reached them so far. Deputy Director of Agriculture Department Gangadhar Pal said though sowing has been affected, farmers can minimise the loss if they opt for 120-day paddy crop through sapling transplantation. He added that there was no paucity of seeds. Meanwhile, officials concerned have been directed to restore defunct irrigation points and make lift and minor irrigation channels functional at the earliest.

Drought Shrinks Size of Mangoes

BANGALORE: Most mango growing regions and belts have yielded fruits that are smaller this year. This is because of lack of sufficient moisture in the soil, say experts. Y T N Reddy, principal scientist, Division of Fruit Crops at the Indian Institute of Horticultural Research (IIHR), Bangalore, said: "After the fruit sets (pea stage) in mango, it is recommended to irrigate 2-3 times to increase fruit size and quality. However, in most mango growing regions, especially in Karnataka, there was severe drought due to lack of sufficient rainfall in the previous year." As a result, there was practically no soil moisture available for plant growth and development. Reddy said while "stress conditions" are ideal for flowering, for fruit growth and development, sufficient soil moisture is needed. Around 90 per cent of the mango orchards are rain-fed, and due to the poor rainfall there was an acute "moisture stress" leading to reduced fruit size. In Karnataka, five to six varieties of mangoes are grown commercially in about 1,30,000 hectares. Alphonso is grown in 40 per cent of the land, Bangalore in 20 per cent, Banganapally and Neelam in 10 per cent, Pairi in 5 per cent, Mallika in 2 per cent and

others in 13 per cent. Fruit size and fruit weight have reduced by 20-25 per cent in all varieties. Totapuri, Pairi, Mulgoa, Banganapally, Mallika and Alphonso fruit sizes have reduced more than Neelam, Kalapady, Rumani etc. Reddy said, "The water table should be below six feet. In young and irrigated orchards, fruit size and weight are invariably more compared to old and non-irrigated mango orchards." Less Price

In general, small-sized mangoes fetch less price compared to bigger ones. In grading also, the smaller ones are graded in the lower category, and may be rejected. "The percentage of marketable fruits will come down due to fruit size and fruit weight reduction," another mango expert told Express.

Model Fish Farms Mooted Across State

KOCHI: In an effort to make the state self-sufficient in fish farming and to make fish available here at cheaper rates, the state government has come up with a plan for model fish farms across the state. The model farms are envisaged as an experiment for innovative aquaculture, to try innovative technologies in developed by fisheries research institutions. The farms are being set up in around eight hectares of land in the districts. The state government has allotted `5 crore for the project and it is now under the consideration of the Planning Department. These model farms will be built in Ayiramthengu (Kollam), Njarakkal (Ernakulam), Poyya (Thrissur) and Eranholi (Kannur). "The model fish farms will demonstrate the new technology in aquaculture for fish farmers across the state. These are being formed to promote aquaculture in the state. "Farmers can visit the farms to study the latest technologies in the field. As of now, there is no such facility available in the state. Depending on the economic feasibility, farmers can replicate the innovative aquaculture practices at their farms to enhance productivity," Fisheries Minister K Babu has said. He added that the state government aims to exploit all possibilities of fish farming in the state so as to increase production and make fish available to the public at low prices. The project will be implemented by the Agency for Development of Aquaculture, Kerala (ADAK). The demonstration farming will be conducted at government farms operated by ADAK and on private farms taken on lease.

THE HINDU **BusinessLine**

Govt hikes import duty on sugar

The Government today decided to hike the import duty on sugar to 40 per cent from 15 per cent to curb inflow of cheaper sweetener, a move that could see a rise in sugar prices. Also, it decided to provide additional interest-free loans of about Rs. 4,400 crore to the cash-starved sugar mills to clear cane payment arrears estimated at around Rs. 11,000 crore. This is even as farmers continued to stage protests in Bangalore and the northern district of Bijapur in Karnataka demanding early settlement of their dues and seeking the

State Government's intervention in this regard. Tracking the Centre's decision, scrips of sugar companies such as Balrampur Chini Mills and Shree Renuka Sugars soared on the bourses on Monday.

Scripts surge

Balrampur Chini Mills gained 7.04 per cent higher to end at Rs. 85.15, while Shree Renuka Sugars closed 10.32 per cent higher at Rs. 29.4. Scrips of Bajaj Hindusthan ended 9.87 per cent higher at Rs.29.5, while DCM Shriram Ltd closed at Rs. 155.75, up 6.50 per cent. Simbhaoli Sugars ended 4.96 per cent higher at Rs. 22.20 on the BSE. After a high-level meeting in Delhi on Monday, Food Minister Ram Vilas Paswan also announced that the subsidy on raw sugar exports would be extended till September 2014. Also 10 per cent mandatory blending of ethanol (a by-product of sugar) with petrol would be allowed against 5 per cent at present. However, Paswan made it clear that all these decisions were subject to the sugar industry's guarantee that it would clear all arrears, official sources said. The decision was taken after a high-level meeting on Monday attended by Road Transport & Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari, MSME Minister Kalraj Mishra, Petroleum Minister Dharmendra Pradhan, Commerce & Industries Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, MoS Consumer Affairs, Food and PDS Raosaheb Patil Danve, MoS Agriculture Sanjeev Balyan, Women & Child Welfare Minister Maneka Gandhi, and Cabinet Secretary Ajit Seth. Agriculture Minister Radha Mohan Singh was away in Hyderabad. Welcoming the Government's move, the Indian Sugar Mills Association said these decisions would benefit the industry and improve the liquidity of sugar mills, which would help the industry clear pending payments to cane farmers at the earliest.

How Govt can fight food inflation



In its earnest way to tackle rising food inflation the Government has taken a welcome initiative to delist fruits/vegetables including onions (FVO) from the Agricultural Produce Marketing Committee (APMC) Act, while all other measures are as usual – short-term of political expediency, repeated several times in past while long-term reforms are awaited. The Government attributes spurt in food inflation to hoarding by traders. That is a standard cliché. When inflation surges, traders are labelled as “middlemen” resorting to unjust enrichment. Though the Prime Minister is encouraging cohesiveness amongst all participants for economic development, the system is still stuck in the old mindset keeping traders at an arm's length. The fact is that FCI, on behalf of the Government, is the nation's largest hoarder, year after year with no accountability. As of June 2014,

about 32 million tonnes of “excess” grains at an average cost of Rs. 25,000/ tonne, totalling Rs. 80,000 crore, were stored in warehouses.

Onions, govt, traders

Action against de-hoarding is a state subject. Therefore, the onus of tackling shortages/inflation gets transferred to States after the Centre asks States to “act”. If States and union territories carry out direct intervention through PSUs or agro federations/marketing boards for subsidised distribution of FVO items, this amounts to induction of another intermediary/layer which procures from private trade and then under-prices a commodity to consumers which can also be exposed to round tripping. Operational cost and losses of such official intermediaries (bound to exist in perishable commodities) get debited to state exchequers funded by common man. It is again more of Government and less of governance. Elimination of traders was one of the major factors in this collapse of socialistic system in Soviet Union and East European nations. In a free economy, middle men or traders are logistical arteries of free flow of commodities that function 24 hours/365 days with utmost alertness because their own funds and profits are at stake. Traders are better connected with farmers than the bureaucracy. Medium size trading businesses have a limited capital and cannot afford to hoard FVOs with a very short shelf life, even if negative impact of El Nino is perceived, as bullishness in coming months. The Government could have called a meeting of some of stakeholders (prominent farmer leaders/traders) for resolution of their problems/bottlenecks/disputes at Nashik/Mumbai’s Vashi market/Delhi Azadpur depot, to ease the supply side. However, the Government resorted to closed door meetings without engaging instruments of action that matter in the market. By keeping trade out of retailing, points of supply side/sale diminish and last mile availability wanes. Inflation even in short term may not be reined as PSUs/marketing federations will take time to respond in procurement and distribution. Due to vigilance’s oversight, these agencies are rule-bound and are slow to react in dynamic market.

Rice

The decision of releasing 5 million tonnes (mt) of additional rice to States is a step forward for destocking FCI, though contours of release mechanism are hazy. Do States/APL beneficiaries require this rice? Moving the rice will require about 2,000 railway rakes (carrying capacity of each rake is about 2,500 tonnes). This is in addition to about 2 mt rice distributed for a month through PDS by FCI equivalent to 800 rail rakes or 27 rakes/day. Will such a vigorous movement be feasible? The devil is in the detail. If intent of release is implemented only then it will send a sentiment of bearishness in domestic market, otherwise not. Furthermore, there is no open market sale (OMSS) price for rice as in the case of wheat as there are no bulk users of rice. Above Poverty Line (APL) release price is Rs. 8/kg, while BPL release price is Rs. 4 against average open market price of Rs. 24-27, while economic cost is Rs. 29 and bare cost is Rs. 20/kg. Thus

fixation of release rice for the market is critical. If 5 mt is disposed of at APL/BPL values, beneficiaries will be tempted to trade at Rs. 10-14 a kg through illicit channels to create liquidity of Rs. 3,000-5,000 crore and it will further fuel inflation. Preferably, the Government sale price must be Rs. 18-20/kg to offset risk of diversion back to FCI and to block generation of black money. Indeed a tough task for policymakers.

Also, why hike MSP of paddy this year if food inflation is to be curbed?

Price sentiment of pulses and edible oils internationally is bearish. By announcing credit lines to the States, mandate to import is given in advance and that may firm up world markets of these commodities. Probability of unwanted imports on government account cannot be ruled out.

APMC Act

The decision to exclude FVO from the ambit APMC act has been widely welcomed as it provides freedom to stakeholders to sell and buy. This should enable some respite on inflationary pressures but action from the states on this advisory will be watched. But other mega reforms – limiting procurement from States who give bonus on paddy/wheat (like Chhattisgarh, Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan, MP) and who levy heavy local taxes ranging from 5 to 14.5 per cent; rationalising Food Security Act, building hygienic storage facilities and calibrating MSP judiciously and not politically (as in the case of sugarcane) also need immediate attention. If the present system of sometimes supporting producers/farmers and then subsidising consumers continues, fire-fighting on food inflation will continue frequently and indefinitely. The writer is a trade analyst

Fresh clouds in the Bay signal minor gains for monsoon

Fresh clouds have formed over north Bay of Bengal after a rain-generating low-pressure area over Bangladesh and adjoining West Bengal weakened on Monday afternoon. The fresh clouds bring with them hopes of another helpful circulation taking shape over the Bay, though weather models are not sure about its track and orientation. But the evolving weather in the Bay is expected to have a rub-off effect on the monsoon, if India Met Department's outlook for four days from Thursday is any indication.

Evolving weather

It expects rain or thundershowers to break out fresh at many places along the West Coast and Andaman and Nicobar Islands and sustain into the weekend. Rain or thundershowers have also been forecast for the East Coast and at a few places over the South. Most places over the North-East and the foothills in West Bengal may witness thundershowers. Isolated thunderstorm activity has been forecast for the rest of the country. This would

represent a recovery of sorts from the ongoing lull in monsoon activity with heavy to very heavy rainfall being confined to North-East India alone.

Minor recovery

As of Monday, rains have mostly dried up over the West Coast except the odd event over Konkan-Goa, coastal Karnataka and adjoining north Kerala. Outlook for the three next days speak of a continued heavy wet spell over North-East India as a remnant cyclonic circulation from the 'low' hovers above Bangladesh/West Bengal. Cherrapunji in Meghalaya was pulverised by an extremely heavy 38 cm in overnight precipitation for a second successive day on Monday. But that was about the only standout event on a day when the rains were largely indifferent for the rest of the country.

Export enquiries improve for select varieties at Kochi tea sale

The Kochi Tea auction witnessed an improved enquiry from exporters and upcountry buyers on select varieties. In the CTC dust, the market opened on an irregular note. Good liquoring varieties ruled steady to firm and sometimes dearer as the sale progressed. Others tended to ease, auctioneers Forbes, Ewart & Figgis said. The quantity on offer in CTC grades was 13,76,000 kg and around 88 per cent was sold in the auction. However, the market for orthodox varieties was lower by Rs. 1-2 and the quantity on offer was 17,500 kg. In the best CTC dusts, PD varieties quoted Rs. 93/114, RD grades fetched Rs. 93/118, SRD ruled at Rs. 105/147 and SFD stood at Rs. 107/150. The leaf sale witnessed good demand in the auction with 2,65,000 kg of orthodox grades on offer. The market for select Best Nilgiri Broken and Whole Leaf was fully firm to sometimes dearer. Others were irregular and lower by Rs. 5 and sometime more. CIS countries continued to be the mainstay of the market. In the CTC leaf grades, the quantity on offer was 89,000 kg. The market for Good Liquoring teas was fully firm to sometimes dearer. In the dust category, Monica SFD quoted the best prices at Rs. 152/kg. In the leaf varieties, Chamraj Green FOP (S) fetched the best prices of Rs. 311/kg.

Steps to boost fish exports from AP

The Union Minister of State for Commerce and Industry Nirmala Sitaraman is planning to hold a high-level meeting soon to discuss ways and means to raise fish exports from Andhra Pradesh from Rs. 12,000 crore to Rs. 20,000 crore in the next five years. The meeting would be held for two days in one of the coastal cities to discuss other demands of the fishing community, State BJP President and Visakhapatnam member of Parliament K Haribabu said here on Monday. He was interacting with fishermen at a meeting conducted by Dolphin Boat Operators' Welfare Association. Association President Ch Satyanarayana Murthy and others sought a separate ministry for fisheries, shifting the National Fisheries Development Board headquarters in Hyderabad to Visakhapatnam, granting agriculture status to fisheries and increase in diesel subsidy.

Haribabu said of the total export of Rs. 30,000 crore, undivided AP, had a lion's share during the last fiscal.

22% tea unsold at Coonoor sale

Some 22 per cent of the tea on offer at Coonoor Tea Trade Association auctions went unsold last week at Sale No. 25. The 15.69 lakh kg of tea on offer were worth Rs. 2.51 crore and prices were up by a Rs. 1/kg. The auctions have been seeing poor demand for the past few weeks. Vigneshwar Estate tea, auctioned by Paramount Tea Marketing, topped the CTC market at Rs. 187 a kg. In all, 145 marks got Rs. 125 and more. Among orthodox teas, Kairbetta topped at Rs. 231 a kg. In all, 39 marks got Rs. 125 and more. Quotations held by brokers indicated bids ranging Rs. 50-52 for plain leaf grades and Rs. 100-160 for brighter liquoring sorts. They ranged between Rs. 55-60 for plain dusts and Rs. 120-180 for brighter liquoring dusts. Export purchase was less and limited to plainer less-priced teas. Some teas were bought for Pakistan in wide range Rs. 54-121 a kg. Primary orthodox whole leaf got Rs. 2-3 more. The market for CTC leaf was irregular oscillating at Rs. 2-3 dearer and easier. Primary orthodox dusts were swinging up and down Rs. 4-5. A mixed trend was seen in the CTC dust market.

Cardamom rules steady as demand matches supply



Cardamom prices ruled steady last week as demand matched with supply, which declined at auctions. As arrivals continued to remain thin, auctioneers have decided to suspend the auction from June 30 to July 11 citing "uneconomical arrivals", market sources told *Business Line*. Of the arrivals, 15 per cent of the material was from the new crop, they said. Exporters were inactive as export quality capsules were not available, they said. According to growers, weather conditions have not improved as expected in major growing tracts such as Kumily, Kattappana and Vandanmettu as the usual South-West monsoon has not set in so far. Upcountry buyers are covering whatever material arrived at the auctions, they said. The faulty monsoon rains have created apprehensions about a possible delay in the new crop, trade in Bodinayakannur said. They said, at the same time, that given the uncertain weather conditions prevailing, at present, the crop might also be lower. At the KCPMC auction, arrivals were at 43.5 tonnes against 43.3 tonnes the

previous Sunday and the entire quantity was sold, PC Punnoose, General Manager, CPMC, Kumily, said. The maximum price was Rs. 1,004 a kg and the minimum was Rs. 489 a kg. Auction average slipped to Rs. 746.82 (Rs. 752.97) a kg the previous Sunday, he said. During the current season of the crop, arrivals stood at 20,837 tonnes against 14,762 tonnes as on June 22 during the last season. Sales were 20,199 tonnes and 14,137 tonnes respectively. The weighted average price as on June 22 was Rs. 643.20 (Rs. 703.28) a kg. Prices of graded varieties (Rs./kg): AGEB 920-930; AGB 720-730; AGS 690-700 and AGS -1: 670-680.

Spot rubber prices rise with global cues

Spot rubber strengthened on Monday. Moderate gains in domestic and international markets led by firm oil prices helped the domestic market to end higher on covering purchases at lower levels. The trend was partially mixed as latex remained unchanged on low demand. Sheet rubber improved to Rs. 148 (Rs. 146) a kg, according to traders. The grade firmed up Rs. 147 (Rs. 146) and Rs. 144 (Rs. 143) respectively as reported by the Rubber Board and dealers. July futures stretched the gains to Rs. 149 (Rs. 146.66), August to Rs. 148.15 (Rs. 145.61), September to Rs. 146.88 (Rs. 144.61) and October to Rs. 145.75 (Rs. 142.59) on the National Multi Commodity Exchange. RSS 3 (spot) was firm at Rs. 129.31 (Rs. 127.99) at Bangkok. June futures closed at ¥199.1 (Rs. 117.68) on the Tokyo Commodity Exchange. Spot rubber rates (Rs./kg) were: RSS-4: 148 (146); RSS-5: 143 (141); Ungraded: 138 (137); ISNR 20: 132.50 (132) and Latex 60%: 122 (122).

Business Standard

Sweeteners for sugar industry with caveat



The government on Monday announced several measures to bail out the ailing sugar industry: While the rate of import duty was more than doubled from 15 per cent to 40 per cent, the mandatory ethanol-blending cap was increased from five per cent to 10 per cent. The notifications in this regard will be issued shortly after the industry assures of clearing farmers' Rs 11,000-crore dues at the earliest. These decisions were taken on Monday at a high-level meeting in the national capital of representatives from

the ministries of commerce, agriculture and food, also attended by Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister Nripendra Misra and Cabinet Secretary Ajit Seth. After the meeting, Union Food Minister Ram Vilas Paswan said: “We have taken four key decisions. Besides an increase in import duty and the mandatory ethanol-blending cap, we have extended the interest-free loans given against excise duty paid by sugar mills to five years (from three years). Apart from that, the government has also decided to extend the sugar export subsidy until September 2014.” The minister has linked implementation with clearance of farmers’ dues, but industry captains have welcomed the decisions. Mills are set to benefit if the complete package comes into force. Stocks of sugar companies rallied around 10 per cent on the BSE on Monday. Sugar prices in spot and futures markets also rose on Monday. In Mumbai’s physical market, the price of M30 grade sugar rose 2.5 per cent to Rs 3,308 a quintal, while NCDEX futures shot up 1.8 per cent to Rs 3,099. “Sugar prices will increase by a few rupees per kg after implementation of these measures. In fact, the purpose of these measures gets defeated if the price does not rise,” said Shree Renuka Sugars Managing Director Narendra Murkumbi. Paswan told reporters: “These decisions will be subject to mills giving a guarantee that they will clear Rs 11,000 crore of sugarcane arrears at the earliest... If they give an assurance today, we will announce incentives today itself.” Some of these decisions will require the Cabinet’s approval, while the others will be notified by ministries concerned, Paswan added. Among the ministers present at Monday’s meeting apart from Paswan were Road Transport Minister Nitin Gadkari, Commerce Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, Petroleum Minister Dharmendra Pradhan, Women & Child Development Minister Maneka Gandhi and Micro Small and Medium Enterprises Minister Kalraj Mishra.

STOCKS CHEER

Rise in sugar companies' shares on BSE (%)*



* Over previous close

Welcoming the move, Indian Sugar Mills Association (ISMA) Director-General Abinash Verma said: “These decisions will benefit the industry and improve sugar mills’ liquidity, helping the sector clear pending payments to cane farmers. The 10 per cent ethanol-blending limit will save up to \$1.7 billion of forex which will help improve the country’s current account deficit.” Of the estimated Rs 11,000 crore of cane arrears across India, a massive Rs 7,500 crore is accounted for by

Uttar Pradesh alone, while Tamil Nadu and Karnataka account for a combined Rs 2,000 crore and Maharashtra for only Rs 175 crore. According to Maharashtra State Federation of Cooperative Sugar Factories Managing Director Sanjiv Babar, sugar mills in Maharashtra managed to clear dues with earlier interest-free loans — equivalent to the year’s excise duty — provided by the government. But these measures would certainly help increase cash flows for mills, which have been selling sugar below production cost.

“While the average cost of producing sugar is about Rs 35 a kg, mills have been selling the sweetener at Rs 30.5-31 a kg. The industry requires cash flows to clear the arrears. Today’s measures will certainly help increase the flows. Additionally, sugar mills will be able to use better cane varieties to boost yields. At present, yields in states like Uttar Pradesh is 25-40 per cent lower than potential, as mills lack funds for developing higher-yielding seeds,” said DCM Shriram Deputy Managing Director Ajit Shriram. The sugar industry was estimated to end the current season (on September 30) with carryover stocks of 7.5 million tonnes. This could have a cascading affect on cane farmers, who might be prompted to opt for crop diversion next season. Also, the government should link cane prices with sugar prices for sugar mills’ long-term sustainability, Shriram added. The government had announced interest-free loans to the tune of Rs 6,600 crore, equivalent to the excise duty paid for three years. Of that, around 66 per cent has already been disbursed. An extension of another two years will increase the likelihood of up to Rs 4,400 crore of more interest-free loans being given. “More than the announcement, it is important that the government enforce the decisions. Also, ethanol production should be made remunerative for the industry to supply the green fuel,” said Sanjay Tapriya, chief financial officer of Simbhaoli Sugars Ltd.

Onion price may escalate further in coming days



Inadequate availability of good quality onion has resulted in rise in price of the vegetable by nearly 27 percent in June even as traders expect the price to increase further with rising domestic and global demand. Despite the steps taken by the Centre to curb rising prices of onion, experts feel damaged quality of the vegetable will continue to drive its price in coming days. According to the National Horticultural Research and Development Foundation (NHRDF) website, the model price of onion in Lasalgaon near Nasik has increased from Rs 10.25 to Rs 13 per kg in June. In retail market, the price of onion in different parts of India is ruling between Rs 25 and Rs 35 per kg. "This year onion production has increased but uncertain rainfall during cultivation period has damaged the quality of the crop. Hardly 25 percent best quality onion is available in the market at present and as a result, price has gone up and it may increase further," said PuRshottam Chothani, an onion merchant of Nashik-based Vishal Exports. Chothani expects onion prices to increase by Rs 5-7 to Rs 15-25 per kg in the wholesale market by the end of this month. India expects 19.20 million tonnes of onion production in 2013-14, about 14 percent higher than previous year's 16.8 million tonnes. Onion production in

Gujarat is likely to be 1.70 million tonnes in 2013-14 as against 700,000 tonnes in 2012-13. Demand for Indian onion is high in the global market. In 2013-14, the country had exported 1.48 million tonnes onion worth Rs 3,169.63 crore. Ghanshyam Patel, chairman of Mahuva Agriculture Produce Marketing Cooperative (APMC) said, "Uncertain rainfall from January to March has damaged the quality of onion mainly in Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat. The recent spike in prices can also be attributed to limited arrival of quality onion and it is expected to continue in July fuelled by export demand and peak domestic demand during the monsoon." Another Nasik-based trader has cited delay in monsoon for rise in price of onion to and has further said that if rain does not arrive in states that grow onion, then price may further go up.

THE FINANCIAL EXPRESS

Cashew to firm up on global demand

Robust demand for cashew kernels across the globe is likely to help firm up the market, traders said. With buyers having minimum inventory, any surge in consumption is likely to lead to rally in the market. A drought in California, which produces more than 80% of the world's almond production, is likely to lead to an increase in the demand for other nuts. India is the world's largest consumer of cashew nuts with trade estimates of consumption ranging from 170,000 - 190,000 tonne. It is also one of the largest processor and exporter of kernels. "Despite the substantial increase in the prices of many other nuts in the last 6 to 12 months, cashew prices have been moving within a narrow range for more than 2 years. Premium for higher grades and discount for lower grades has narrowed in the last six months. Indications are that cashew usage in the main importing countries has been increasing, probably as a result of the stable prices," Pankaj Sampat of Mumbai-based Samsons Trading said. "From middle of April, there has been reasonable activity in all markets, mainly for May-August shipments but some business was done for fourth quarter also. Consumption in the Indian market was steady," he added.

Pankaj adds that continuing the trend established in the last two years, many kernel buyers have been buying for smaller spreads to take advantage of lower prices from a larger number of smaller processors who need to sell on spot basis. "But, some buyers have been paying slightly higher prices to secure supplies for longer period from larger and better organized processors," he said. Cashew nut exports during the last fiscal touched 1,13,260 tonne, valued at Rs 4,975.96 crore, as per the data given by data provided by the Cashew Export Promotion Council of India. The increase is 13% in terms of volume while the value has gone up by 23%. Pratap Nair of Vijayalakshmi Cashews, who is also the ambassador of the International Nut & Dried Fruit Council (INC), feels that the consumption of cashew nuts is likely to increase with the health benefits clearly established. "The study published in the New England Journal of Medicine found that those who regularly consumed a one-ounce daily serving of tree nuts had a 20 % lower risk of dying from any cause during the three-decade long study compared to those who did not eat nuts.

New grapes research centre in Theni set to yield better results for farmers

The first phase work for the establishment of the grape research station in Theni district is in full swing with stone pillars having been erected to support the vines to grow, while the fencing has also been completed. The grape research centre has been a long-time demand of the farmers of Theni region as many of them were losing their crops every year due to disease and use improper techniques. The climate here is conducive for the cultivation of grapes and the black variety is grown in places such as Kamayakoundanpatti, Surulipatti, Narayandevanpatti, Rayappanpatti and Annaimalayanpatti in the Cumbum valley on about 10,000 acres. The government allotted 28.48 acres in Annaimalayanpatti on the Rayappanpatti - Shanmuganathi Road and also allotted Rs 3 crore for the establishment of the research station under the National Agriculture Development Programme. According to S Parthiban, professor and head of the grape research centre, the station would work towards enhancing the quality and productivity of the grapes. He said the stone pillars were being erected on six acres to grow 17 varieties of superior quality grapes such as Red Globe, AI8-3, Medika and Sonaka among others. At present, only the seeded black variety known as Muscat grapes is cultivated in this region. Also, root dogridge rootstock which has high drought tolerance, resistance to nematode, root rot and produces vigorous vines and enhances yield by 30 to 40%, is to be introduced to the farmers in the region. It also produces large bunches, with proper gaps between the berries due to which rot would be minimized. The farmers selected for the research are being formed into clusters and would be asked to grow the rootstock at recommended space and later they can top it with the grapes of their desired varieties. Parthiban said that farmers have also been advised to go in for a single crop per year for better results. At present, farmers in the region cultivate five crops in two years. This would ensure the production of 10-tonnes of fruits per acre, which would be of superior quality. Also, the fruits would be ready for picking in June and July, which is considered an offseason for grapes across India, so that they would be ensured a farm price which would be between Rs 80 to Rs 100 per kg which would be a premium price. This would ensure a minimum gross profit for Rs 8 to 10 lakh per annum, he said. The grapes thus produced would also be of export quality enhancing the revenue mode for the farmers. As of now seven to eight grape farmer clusters have been constituted for the purpose. Farmers in the region are elated with the prospects of the research station.

Agriculture minister: Double-digit inflation unacceptable

Union agriculture minister Radha Mohan Singh has expressed surprise over the rise in prices of onion and potato and said the prices "cannot be allowed to cross the Lakshman Rekha" as there has been increased production of potato and onion this year. Taking a stern note on the rise in prices of the two items, Singh said on Monday, "Even if there is an argument that prices rise in a natural way, there is a limit to it. Prices cannot be

allowed to cross this Lakshman Rekha. We will take stern action against hoarders to check the price rise." Singh, who was in Hyderabad on Monday, denied having earlier said that 25% inflation rate was acceptable to the government. "Instead, the 'Lakshman Rekha' for the inflation rate for us is the inflation rate during the tenure of former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee," Singh told TOI over phone and added inflation never reached double digit figures under the Vajpayee government. The average inflation rate during the Vajpayee regime, incidentally, was 3.7%.

THE ECONOMIC TIMES

It's no small potatoes as prices climb 20% on low harvest

Potato is not only pinching the pockets of households but also the pocket money of children. Price of potato chips, bhujias, flakes and even fries have seen a rise of 15-20% since the past fortnight. However, the industry is still adopting a wait and watch policy and is expecting the potato harvest in August from Karnataka to stabilise prices. A packet of Lay's chips is now for Rs 18 per 29.5 grams compared to Rs 15 a fortnight ago, though the quantity of chips in the pack has gone up too in relative proportion. Similarly, Bikano bhujia now cost 15 for 65 grams from its earlier price of Rs 10. Early this year, Canadian giant McCain Foods, that sells one out of every three french fries in the world, increased prices by 7%. Firm prices of processing potato, which has seen a jump of 130-180% this year owing to poor crop and hoarding by traders, is slated to be one of the reason for the price rise according to the manufacturers. "Everyone is under pressure to increase rates. Prices of processed potato varieties like Chipson and Lady Rosetta in Azadpur mandi have moved from Rs 7 a kg in February to Rs 20 a kg as on date," said Prakash Lohia, managing director, Vegit agro division of Merino Industries. The company is one of the leading potato flakes and snacks manufacturer processing 50,000 tonne potato annually and catering to all large players from PepsiCo, Nestle to Haldiram. The company has increased prices of potato flakes by 20% over the last two months said Lohia. Prices of Lay's popular packs at Rs 5, 10 and 20 have not been changed and contribute close to the majority 90% of its business. Its pack of Rs15, which sells mainly through institutions, has gone up but so has its weight. A PepsiCo spokesman said there has been no increase in prices of Lay's. ITC divisional chief executive (foods) Chitranjan Dar said the firm hasn't taken up prices yet. "It's a dynamic situation which we are monitoring closely. But as of now, we are protecting prices," Dar said. Currently, potato flakes in retail were being quoted at Rs 30 a kg. McCain officials in Gujarat said that the rise was a general increase owing to rising input cost of farmers from labour electricity to seed and fertilisers. Manesh Agarwal, MD, Bankey Bihari Ji Food Products in Agra, who has recently tied up with leading retailer Reliance to supply french fries, said that he had increased the prices of his own brand 'BB Fries' by 5%. "I was expecting prices to correct, but we are seeing that traders are not unloading stock in market and creating an artificial crunch. Margins have narrowed down as we can't increase price for companies with whom we have contract," he said. A good source of calcium, vitamin C and iron, potato is the king of vegetables loved by all age groups. With in-home snacking growing

by more than 20% amongst high income household, stable prices is what the industry is looking at. "Lays is the biggest player in potato chips and Indian snacks. Once it has increased prices, all other local manufacturers will soon follow," said a Madhya Pradesh-based chips manufacturer. This year the potato crop is estimated to be lower by 13% than previous year at 40 million tonne owing to adverse weather conditions.