

‘Uzhavar Maiyyam’ opened

Chief Minister Jayalithaa inaugurated the “Uzhavar Maiyyam” building constructed at a cost of Rs.1 crore on the Nanjikottai road in the town through videoconferencing on Friday. Following the inauguration, the District Collector N. Subbaiyan, distributed sweets to people. The centre with 4,482 sq.ft on the ground floor and 4482 sq.ft on first floor has a seed testing laboratory, store room, Automated Teller Machine (ATM) facility and Internet facility. The building has come up in the Agriculture Marketing complex. K. Parasuraman, MP, M. Rangasamy MLA, Savithiri Gopal, Mayor, R. Gandhi, Chairman of Thanjavur District Co-operative Milk Producers Union, Durai Thirugnanam, Chairman, Thanjavur Central Co-operative Bank, participated in the function.

‘Govt. should have advised farmers against sowing water-intensive crops’

R. KRISHNA KUMAR

Farmers worried over prospects of poor monsoon



A farmer in Mysore preparing the ground for sowing.— Photo: M.A. Sriram

Farmers in the region have called for a long-term weather advisory bulletin to help farmers plan cropping pattern in a year of drought to minimise crop loss. The demand assumes significance due to the threat of drought looming large in the region. Vivek Cariappa, an organic farmer from Sargur in H.D. Kote, told *The Hindu* that sowing in most parts of Mysore district took place in April and May, when the region receives a spell of pre-monsoon showers. “This year, scientists world-wide were forecasting a poor monsoon due to El-Nino factor and farmers should have been kept posted,” said Mr. Cariappa. In May, he had urged the State government to issue an advisory to farmers to desist from sowing water-intensive crops due to the prospects of poor rain due to El-Nino, but there was no response from the authorities. “The government was urged to advise farmers against sowing water-intensive crops like paddy and cotton as early as the first week of May, but they ignored it. Farmers will now pay the price for this inaction,”

he added. Instead, farmers have taken up sowing in full swing. Sowing is nearing completion in H.D. Kote, where the bulk of farmers cultivate Bt. Cotton. In the absence of an advisory, farmers will now bear the brunt of crop loss. Though a loan waiver may be announced by the government, the Confederation of Indian Farmers' Association (CIFA) has pointed out waivers benefit only a small fraction of farmers, as a majority borrow from private money lenders. While the government has announced contingency plans to take up ragi cultivation if the drought persists, there is a general perception that farmers who have invested their hard-earned money or taken loans to cultivate commercial crops will not opt for ragi at this juncture. "The general trend among farmers is to wait and watch, hoping for a revival of rains, and to retrieve whatever is possible rather than go for fresh cropping," said Kurubur Shanthakumar, CIFA member. Though H.D. Kote does not have canal irrigation system, a majority of the farmers have borewells installed on their farms. However, the power situation is bleak and precedence is accorded to urban centres in power distribution. Hence the IP sets receive electricity only for a couple of hours, said Mr. Carriappa.

Bumper crop brings down mango prices

Vendors get less this summer



A vendor sells mangoes from an autorickshaw in Nellore.- Photo: K. Ravi Kumar
Considerably increased yields have resulted in less market prices for mango. Though there are comparatively higher sales in local market but the vendors ended up with reduced income. Ninety per cent mango sold in Nellore town and surroundings is usually brought from the Vulavapadu wholesale market located in the neighbouring Prakasam district. Most vendors in the city buy from the dealers at the wholesale market at the rate of Rs. 2,800 per lorry load of 400 fruits. The dealers bid for the mango orchards at the beginning of season itself depending on the status of the crop at that time. "We have far lesser price this year. It is mainly because of the bumper crop though there may be other reasons as well," said Venkataiah, a street side vendor in Nellore. He buys loads from Vulavapadu market and sells the fruit at different points in the city limits. If there is a chance to buy directly from the plantation, it would fetch a little more income for the vendors. But in the case of mango orchards, the crop is usually sold out wholesale to the dealers much in advance. Mango orchards are grown in good numbers in

Juvvaladinne, Macherla, Baddipudi, Paturu, Gummaladibba and other villages. The mango varieties available here are 'banginapalli', 'sora mamidi', 'antu mamidi' and 'tene rasalu'. Krishnaiah, a vendor who comes from Dagadarthi, said that they were getting just Rs. 100 for 4 kg. this season. It means there are very less margins. The vendors have also come up at many more points in the city these days, which is another reason for less income.

Rain brings relief to farmers

A spell of heavy rainfall on Friday afternoon brought relief to farmers in Bela mandal as it is expected to aid the germination. The rainfall lasted for about 90 minutes which was sufficient for wetting the cotton and soyabean fields. Rainfall also occurred at Gudihatnoor, Utnoor and Jainoor. Sudden rain caused the inundation of low-lying areas in the district headquarters town and the outskirts. However, it brought cheer to farmers in particular and people in general. Accompanied by strong gales, rain lashed the town and its peripherals for half an hour. Farmers are relieved as it will help them undertake cultivation.

State government plans to turn one-third of land into green cover

'Harita Haaram' to be launched to plant 210 crore seedlings and saplings over the next three years across Telangana In a massive programme to bring one-third of land mass of Telangana under green cover, the State government is launching an ambitious 'Harita Haaram' to plant 210 crore seedlings/saplings over the next three years.

Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao directed the officials on Friday to observe green week every month to take up plantation on a large scale by involving people, officials and elected representatives.

'Rejuvenate forest'

Reviewing the initiatives planned under 'Harita Haaram', he directed HMDA and GHMC officials to plant 10 lakh saplings in three years at 3.33 lakh saplings every year. About 40 lakh saplings would be planted in every Assembly segment and 33,000 in every village in a year. The requirement of 210 crore saplings was estimated on the basis of survival rate and existing green cover. The Chief Minister told the officials to evolve new strategies to rejuvenate the existing forest cover under joint forest management. Suggesting schematic plantation on the lines of the practice in Singapore, the Chief Minister said people should feel as if they were walking through a forest, while passing through avenue plantation. All river banks, in and around tank bunds and shore areas of tanks, compounds of all institutions should be brought under the plantation programme. Required funds could be drawn from Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) and Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning

Authority (CAMPA), the Chief Minister said, adding that nurseries should be set up for every four-five villages along with the borewell facility.

Vegetable prices soar

The prevailing dry weather conditions, the unseasonal rains and depletion of groundwater table led to a decline in the cultivation of vegetables, forcing prices of vegetables to shoot up in Karimnagar district. The available vegetables range from Rs. 60 a kilogram to Rs. 80 a kilogram. Spinach is being sold at Rs. 50 per kilogram. A coriander bunch of 50 gram costs Rs. 20.

New head sluice will be ready by next kharif, say officials



Growth engine: The new head sluices at the Krishna Eastern main canal in Vijayawada are almost complete. - Photo: Ch. Vijaya Bhaskar The new and improved head sluice of the Krishna Eastern Main Canal, that is going to replace a century old sluice with a lower capacity, is 90 per cent complete. With the release of drinking water to Eluru, Gudivada towns and 361 villages in Krishna district, the working on the new head sluice came to a grinding halt. The head sluice that releases water from Prakasam Barrage to Bandar, Ryves and Eluru canals has an ayacut of 7.47 lakh acres. The sluice with six vents having the capacity to discharge 10,600 cusecs is being constructed at an estimated cost of Rs 16.50 crore. Head sluice site engineer Ravi told *The Hindu* that the old sluice that was over 100-year-old would be removed once the new sluice was complete. As per the current schedule, the new sluice would be ready for use for the 2015 kharif. Saying that power connection had already been given to the sluice gate hoisting mechanisms, he said that 90 per cent of the work had been completed. The height of the wall from the head sluice to the banks of the canal on either side had however to be increased. "With removal of the old head sluice, the river will extend to the new head sluice. The level of the barrage was 17.390 metres above mean sea level (MSL) the water level will increase to 22.50 metres above MSL during flood and a strong wall has to be constructed to withstand that. The designs have been sent to the Central Design Wing for approval," Mr Ravi said. The canal bed is 16.189 metres above MSL. A staircase, from the road level to the top, where the hoisting mechanism was perched, had to be built, the site engineer said.

‘Government should focus on reviving agriculture’

The development of Telangana should focus on the development of its people else the whole endeavour would be meaningless, said G. Haragopal, a professor. Delivering a lecture on ‘Telangana development – political economy perspective’ at Kakatiya University here on Friday, Prof. Haragopal said the government should encourage manufacturing units all over that would create real wealth. “Sadly, what we see today is lumpen capital where money generates money and there is no self-respect or human element in it,” Prof. Haragopal pointed out. The new State government has come out with slogans of free education and land distribution to Dalits which would be good only if implemented in letter and spirit. The government should also focus on reviving agriculture into a profit-making proposition.

Crisis in the sector

“Agriculture, which contributed to 65 per cent of the GDP once, is now contributing just 13 per cent. Hence the crisis in the agriculture sector,” he pointed out. The lecture was organised by the research scholars of Department of Economics, Kakatiya University in honour of T. Papi Reddy, a professor who is retiring from service on June 30. Prof C. Sivarama Krishna, Prof. V. Gopal Reddy, Prof. Iqbal Ali, Dean Prof. K. Sitarama Rao, Prof. T Papi Reddy and others were present.

Poultry farming a lucrative alternative

C. JAISANKAR



In two years, more than 50 farms have come up in K. Paramathi area.— Photo: B.Velankanni Raj
The State government’s ambitious plan to popularise 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, which borders with Namakkal and Coimbatore districts on the western and the 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 regions. 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.

Paddy procurement price rise meagre, say ryots

A.V.RAGUNATHAN

The Tamil Nadu chapter of the Consortium of the Indian Farmers' Association has voiced its resentment over the nominal increase in the statutory minimum price (SMP) for paddy procurement announced by the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs. General secretary of the association, R. Vriddhagiri, told *The Hindu* that the SMP had now been raised by a paltry 0.50 paise a kg or Rs 50 a quintal of paddy. In this aspect the pricing policy being adopted by the Bharatiya Janata Party-led National Democratic Alliance government at the Centre was nothing different from that of its predecessor, the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance government. The SMP for the common paddy variety had now been revised from Rs 1,310 a tonne to Rs 1,360 a tonne and for finer variety from Rs 1,345 a tonne to Rs 1,400 a tonne. Such a price structure did not reflect the ground reality. With the subsidy on fertilizers withdrawn, diesel prices being raised periodically, acute shortage of labour force, high wages and so on the cost of food grain production had gone up manifold. It would be unrealistic to think that the Rs 50-a quintal rise in the SMP would offset the increased production cost.

Unremunerative price

Mr Vriddhagiri pointed out that the un-remunerative prices for the produce was the primary reason for the farmers to commit suicides. Therefore, to prevent such unpleasant happenings on the farm front the previous government had constituted the National Commission for Agriculture headed by farm scientist M.S.Swaminathan. After having taken into account various factors the panel had come out with the formula $C_2 + 50$ per cent (total cost of production plus 50 per cent profit). But the painstaking efforts taken by the panel to ameliorate the lot of farmers and to safeguard their livelihood by framing such a formula did not find favour with the policy-makers. The reason trotted out for not raising the SMP as per this formula was that the country lacked storage facility for paddy, which was unacceptable and meant to discourage the paddy farmers. Mr Vriddhagiri said that the BJP in its election manifesto had promised to implement the formula but it did not stick to the promise. The association had sought the revival of the National Agricultural Insurance Scheme that was in vogue during the Vajpayee regime and scrapping of the Modified National Agricultural Insurance Scheme brought into force by the now-ousted UPA government.

Deficient rainfall worries Palakkad farmers

K.A. SHAJI



The Malampuzha dam, which irrigates most agricultural land in Palakkad district, has received only 61 mm of rain since the onset of the monsoon. Last year, it was nine times higher. The southwest monsoon seems to have eluded most of Palakkad where it used to hit during the first half of June. Water level in most dams which protected the district's agricultural sector did not pick up because of the deficient rainfall. Lack of rain has evoked widespread apprehensions as farming activities have already begun in most parts. According to Water Resources Department officials, catchment areas of dams at Malampuzha, Meenkara, Walayar, Pothundi, Chulliyar, Mangalam, Kanjirapuzha, and Siruvani had received enough rain since the beginning of June. Malampuzha Dam received hardly 1.4 mm rain in the last three days. Farmers say the dams received copious flow during this time last year due to better rainfall and some dams even opened their shutters to release excess water. The Mangalam Dam has only 72.43 cubic metres of storage water now while it was 77.67 this season last year. As per the data available with

the district administration, the district received 887 mm rain during June 1 and 25 last year, but the figure this time is only 276 mm rain. Malampuzha dam which irrigates most agricultural land in the district received only 61 mm of rain since the beginning of the monsoon season. Last year it was nine times higher. “We hope the situation would improve in the coming days. The change in climatic condition has started affecting farm activities. Most of us depend on irrigation, but the stored water in dams remains less,” said Muthalamcode Mani, secretary of the National Farmers’ Forum. Officials fear the continuation of the situation may even affect drinking water supply in the district. Palakkad Town is largely depended on water available from Malampuzha for drinking purposes. Poor downpour in catchment areas of Parambikulam-Aliyar Project and Siruvani Dam has started affecting drinking water supply and irrigation needs in neighbouring Coimbatore and Tirupur districts of Tamil Nadu. “Life here is largely dependent on rain lashing the catchment areas of the dams each year. If the dams show alarm signals, the coming months would be worse,” says P.K. Sudhakaran of Kerala Karshaka Sangham.

AMIBPC issues price advisory for kharif crops

To help farmers take proper pre-sowing decision



The Agro Market Intelligence and Business Promotion Centre (AMIBPC) of the Department of Agricultural Marketing and Agri Business has indicated that the price of maize would rule around Rs.1,480 per quintal till June end. In a price advisory for kharif crops such as maize, sorghum, gingili and groundnut, the centre said the price of maize during the harvest season from October to November is likely to be around Rs.1,400 a quintal. The ‘adipattam’ is an important cropping season for farmers in rainfed areas in the State. Cereals, oil seeds and vegetables are sown during the season. To help farmers take proper pre-sowing decision, the back office of the AMIBPC in the Centre for Agricultural and Rural Development Studies (CARDS), Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, provides price forecast for the crops. The centre analysed prices of maize over the past 20 years price at the Udumalpet regulated market and also conducted a survey among traders to issue the advisory. Perambalur, Ariyalur, Cuddalore, Dindigul, and Tirupur are major maize cultivating districts in Tamil Nadu. Currently, price of maize is ruling around Rs.1,480 per quintal.

According to the advisory, trade sources indicated that farmers have stocked about 15,000 tonnes of maize which was sown during 'thai pattam' anticipating an increase in price. The Karnataka government has procured and stocked around seven lakh tonnes. Besides, arrivals from Bihar are currently flowing into Tamil Nadu market at less than Rs.1,400 per quintal curtailing the anticipated increase in price. The advisory also said that the price of sorghum ('chola') would prevail around Rs.18 to 19 a kg during the harvest period from September to October 2014. The projection is based on an analysis of the price that had prevailed during the last 10 years at the Tirupur regulated market. Sorghum is currently ruling at Rs.19 per kg at the regulated market. In Tamil Nadu, sorghum is cultivated for mainly grain and fodder purpose. The major sorghum growing districts are Dindigul, Coimbatore, Tiruchi, Salem, Karur and Tirupur. Tamil Nadu is also the home of the largest number of traditional sorghum varieties. The price of red gingili, an important oilseed crop cultivated widely in Erode, Karur, Salem, Cuddalore, Villupuram, Thanjavur, Tiruppur, Pudukottai and Thiruvannamalai districts, would hover around Rs.7,800 to Rs.8,000 a quintal during the harvest period of September to October. The advisory also said econometrics analysis of the price of groundnut over the past 14 years at Tindivanam and Sevrur regulated markets and traders survey indicate that farmers in Tirupur and Coimbatore districts could get a price of Rs.4,200-4,300 a quintal of groundnut pods in Sevrur Regulated Market of Tirupur district and Rs.3,500-3,600 at quintal at Tindivanam.

Apple growers in Shimla protest condition of roads

: Hundreds of apple growers and farmers in the priority fruit belt of Himachal, the Kotkhai-Jubbah-Nawar belt, staged a protest on Friday against the plight of roads in the area. The farmers complained of total government apathy when less than a month is left for the advent of the peak apple season and its marketing, the mainstay of Himachal economy. Leading the protestors the State vice president of the BJP and former Horticulture Minister Narendra Bragta said the Theog-Hartkot road, the lifeline for farmers to transport their produce has gone from bad to worst and the Congress representatives are least concerned about the troubles of apple growers who are now sick of making complaints to the government. He said the Virbhadr Singh-led Congress government has stalled all pro-farmer projects initiated during the previous regime. It has stopped the ongoing work on Parala Subzi Mandi project that was conceived during the last regime and is now planning to start a fruit market at a new place with no facilities. The BJP leader claimed that his government had made a number of small and big marketing yards for the help of apple growers and more than 50 per cent of the crop was marketed amidst the apple belt only a few farmers had to depend on the traditional markets of Shimla, Parwanoo, Chandigarh and Delhi. The entire road network in the State gets choked during the peak apple season and the administrations are trying to stall or divert the huge traffics of the apple belt from coming to the State capital which is already overcrowded with a heavy tourist rush during these months. Farmers from the

Kisan Morcha, Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association and local farmer unions also participated in the protest demonstration on Friday.

Strong odds of El Nino's return by end of year: UN

World Meteorological Organisation puts the odds of El Nino at 60% between June and August, rising to 75-88% between October and December

The U.N. weather agency says there's a strong chance an El Nino weather event will reappear before the end of the year.

The El Nino, a flow of unusually warm surface waters from the Pacific Ocean toward and along the western coast of South America, shakes up climate patterns worldwide and usually raises global temperatures. An update on Thursday from the World Meteorological Organisation puts the odds of El Nino at 60 per cent between June and August, rising to 75-88 per cent between October and December. WMO Secretary-General Michel Jarraud says El Nino leads to "extreme events and has a pronounced warming effect" on top of man-made global warming. The outlook is for peak strength during the last quarter of the year and into the few months of 2015 before dissipating.

hindustantimes

Chennai

Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather



Sunny

Saturday, Jun 28

Max Min

33° | 28°

Rain: 0

Humidity: 79

Wind: normal

Sunrise: 05:45

Sunset: 06:38

Barometer: 1008

Tomorrow's Forecast



Cloudy

Sunday, Jun 29

Max Min

39° | 30°

Extended Forecast for a week

Monday
Jun 30



39° | 30°

Cloudy

Tuesday
Jul 1



39° | 28°

Partly Cloudy

Wednesday
Jul 2



39° | 30°

Partly Cloudy

Thursday
Jul 3



39° | 29°

Partly Cloudy

Friday
Jul 4



39° | 30°

Partly Cloudy

Airport Weather

Delhi

Rain: 0

Sunrise: 05:25

Humidity: 56 Sunset: 07:22

Wind: normal Barometer: 1004



THE NEW INDIAN EXPRESS

Mangoes of many shades and shapes beckon visitors



Doesn't everyone love mangoes? As an extension of our devotion to the king of fruits, the second Kerala Mango Festival was inaugurated at St Michael's Church Hall at Chembumukku on Thursday. The festival, hosted by the Green Valley Public School, Kothamangalam, boasts over 1,500 varieties of the fruit. While most of the varieties are from various parts of India, around 20 species have been sourced from different parts of the world, including Brazil, Philippines, Pakistan and Dominican Republic. While there are over a 1,000 varieties of the fruit on display, ranging from the 'Angoor Lata' weighing just 5 grams to the 'Hathizhul' that weighs around 3 kg, there are also selected varieties on sale. Also available is the Mango 'payasam'. Pradeep Kuriakose, director of the school and festival director, said, "We have a passion for mangoes, and we're aiming at spreading awareness about the numerous mango varieties available in India." The festival is by and large organised by students of the school. Apparently, the export of mangoes from India to European countries has been banned, and only quality control and certification can undo this. A K Singh, Senior Research Officer at GB Pant University, Uttarakhand, says, "India is the world's largest producer of mango, but cultivators must be aware of the existence of certifying agencies such as the Global GAP that will enable them to export to the international market. Such festivals are a good step in creating awareness among the general public as well as orchardists". Additionally, he says that since there is a demand for richly-coloured mangoes at the international market, new varieties are being developed even in India to meet these needs. Meanwhile, Tariq Mustafa, the MD of Mustafa Orchards in UP, asks, "There is now a trend of Organic farming. However, it is extremely difficult to deal with the pests that destroy the crop,

without certain amounts of insecticides. Why doesn't the government ban such methods, but more importantly, provide us with an alternative to such measures," Mustafa has been the champion at the Delhi International Mango Festival since 2007, winning the award for the Best Mango, and has also contributed over 500 varieties to the Festival at Kochi. The festival that commenced on Thursday will be on till Sunday.

Flourishing Period for Crops



Thiruvathira Njattuvela, the best time to plant any kind of seedlings, is on till July 5. Farmers need not follow any already-set farm methods in this season, which commenced on June 22, as it is known as the flourishing period of crops. Three hundred and sixty-five days of the year are divided into groups of 14 days, that is called Njattuvela, which means 'njayarinte nila' (position of the sun). For some other farmers, the term Njattuvela is described as the time to plant njaru (saplings). Whatever the meaning is, the first Njattuvela called Aswathi Njattuvela starts on Medam 1 or Vishu day. When it comes to agricultural practices, among all Njattuvelas, Thiruvathira Njattuvela is important as rain pours in without a break in this period. The average duration of a Njattuvela is nearly a fortnight (14 days). Bush pepper, mango seedlings, coconut seedlings, saplings of various fruit-bearing trees, areca seedlings and many more will take roots better without any fertilisers during the period. "During my childhood days, Thiruvathira Njattuvela used to be celebrated as a festival. You could hardly find a house without cultivation in those days. People completely made use of the uniform availability of rain and sun," recollects K Kumaran, 60, a farm employee. "But now, nurseries use Njattuvela as the best time to market saplings," he says. Farmers these days, are not happy with the commercialisation of Njattuvela. Still, for the peasants in the rural hamlets of the state, Njattuvela is a time to replant pepper. This is also a time in which animals and plants require extra care. "Till I attended a seminar conducted by the Department of Agriculture, I was ignorant about the importance of the period," says Roopesh Kaval, a young farmer. He also urges the Department of Agriculture to conduct a special session for school and college students in the district to give them an idea about the Malayalam months and climate changes. Says Manalil Mohanan of Kerala Sastra Sahitya Parishad (KSSP), "For our forefathers, calendar was a luxury. They were that much accustomed to nature. Unfortunately, the present generation lacks 'agri-culture,' without which life itself is impossible," he says. For the KSSP, organising various programmes during Njattuvela is an attempt to evoke the agrarian past of the farmers. It has become a trend in the city to conduct agricultural expos ahead of Thiruvathira Njattuvela.

For several farm enthusiasts in the state, this is a golden opportunity to get quality seedlings without much search for them.



Monsoon: Sowing tumbles by 48% so far, Met holds out hope for July



Summer sowing tumbled nearly 48% and seasonal monsoon showers trailed the benchmark average by 42% until Friday, compounding worries of an inflation-wary government that is scrambling to deal with any drought-like situation this year. Water reservoir levels — which has remained relatively high mainly due to plentiful showers last year — improved only slightly from a week before, showed data from the Central Water Commission. Sowing has been affected due to the monsoon's arrival being delayed by six days from the ideal date of June, as well as its sluggish progress so far. In contrast, rainfall until June 26 last year was 37% higher than the long-period average (LPA) of 89 centimetres, which also served to widen the gap between sowing in 2013-14 and this year. The situation so far this season, however, is better than the same period in 2009 when the country faced the worst drought in 37 years as rainfall was 54% lower than the LPA. Although it is certain the rain deficit could seriously impact the country's foodgrain output this year, it is too early to say by how much. India's grain output hit a record 264 million tonnes in the 2013-14 crop year; the farm GDP growth in the corresponding fiscal year was 4.7%, robust by the sector's standards.

THE ECONOMIC TIMES

Commodity traders play safe as government talks tough on hoarding



Commodity traders are a panicked lot, with the government talking tough on hoarding. They aren't taking any chances to speculate price movements because of fear that any adverse price comments could put them under the scanner. Playing safe, most say that prices will remain stable with the government's move to release more grain. "The government, by giving a statement that we are hoarders, is making the market panic," said Om Prakash Jain, president of the Delhi Grain Merchants' Association who has been in the trade for 62 years. "The trading community has no option but to be terrified." Such is the fear, particularly among traders in fruits and vegetables, that even media-savvy ones don't want to be quoted. Recent raids on their premises have made them further wary of making speculations. Jain, who is associated with the RSS, the ruling BJP's ideological parent, says the government should keep a check on companies who package and on retailers than on traders. "I sell arhar dal (yellow pigeon peas) for Rs 70 a kg and in retail it is available for Rs 125 a kg. Why are we getting all the blame?" The sugar industry, which is delighted by the decisions taken by the government to bailout the industry - such as higher import duty and interest-free loans - is also terrified by the strict stand of the government on commodity hoarders. With foreign supplies expected to dry up because of higher import tax, sugar prices in Delhi's wholesale market rose by Rs 1.50 in less than a week to Rs 34.20 a kg on Thursday, despite abundant stocks with mills. But market players say they expect the government to keep prices from fluctuating much. The bailout package was announced on condition that sugar makers will first agree to pay arrears to cane farmers, a step that some traders see as a proof to the government's consumer-first stance. A Maharashtra-based sugar trader, requesting anonymity, said the Narendra Modi government is a pro-consumer government, hence traders were under the lurking fear of scrutiny and the industry is under pressure to look for consumer's interest first. "Recent decisions by the government have brought the traders in line with the governance. Last week, it was for the onion market that the

finance minister cracked the whip. With the government coming out with a strong statement that there is no shortage of foodgrain, there is a general sentiment that there could be a policy announcement of stock limit," said MG Joshi, managing director of the National Federation of Cooperative Sugar Factories. But some expressed concerns over the supply chain getting choked. "Traders are the vital logistical arteries and if you hurt or choke them, the challenge of distributions and last-mile connectivity diminishes, resulting in non-availability of commodities and therefore inflationary pressures," said Tejinder Narang, a grain analyst. Nagpur-based BC Bhartia, president of the Confederation of All India Traders, felt that prices were stable and with huge stocks they were unlikely to move. "Hoarding and black marketing were words used in the early '50s and '60s. In the current scenario, global conglomerates have a far bigger role in deciding the market prices," he said. "Pulses and edible oil are stocked out of the country and supplies are dependent on these big companies. Does the government know how business is done?" Retail chains selling fresh vegetable, fruits and grocery are also in no mood to talk on prices. "I have been told in clear terms not to speak to the media. The current government is doing what the Congress used to do," said a retail executive who didn't want to be named.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

Hail-hit farmers get Rs 5.4 lakh relief

Farmers should to take up multiple businesses related to farming to sustain losses, said Janardhan Jadhav, deputy director, agriculture department, Aurangabad division. He was speaking at a function organized by the Marathwada Association of Small Scale Industries and Agriculture (MASSIA) to extend help to hail-affected farmers at MASSIA office in Waluj on Thursday. "Though farmers comprise 70% of the total population in the country, their contribution to the economy is only 9%. This shows that their condition is in dire state and needs to be improved," said Jadhav. He advised farmers to adopt additional businesses relating to farming so that it would help them balance the losses. "It is the need of the hour for farmers to develop marketing skills which would help them market their produce and gain benefits." Jadhav also urged farmers to avail of benefits of various schemes launched by the agriculture department and opt for conventional method of farming. "MASSIA has decided to extend help to the tune of Rs 5.4 lakh to the families of farmers who committed suicide and those who suffered huge losses due to the unseasonal rain and hailstorm," said Bharat Motinge, MASSIA president. "The members, with the guidance of the agriculture department, have selected 11 farmers from the villages of Jalna, Beed and Aurangabad districts, considering their necessities," Motinge

said. He added, "Apart from providing them with equipment, seeds, fertilizers, we have extended financial help to four students to pursue studies and also provided employment to two youths in Aurangabad industries. We have also deposited Rs 50,000 as fixed deposit in the name of a girl, who is of marriageable age but in a bad financial condition. The money would be available at the time of her marriage." Rameshwar Kamble, who hails from Ambilwadgaon village in Beed district, said, "Unable to bear the losses, my father has committed suicide. After his death the future of my diploma in veterinary course looked bleak. But, the MASSIA offered me Rs 41,000, which would take care of my educational expenses for the remaining two years." Appreciating the efforts of MASSIA, Maharashtra Industrial Development Corporation regional officer Annasaheb Shinde said, "The association should also make efforts to impart skilled training to the children of farmers and produce employable youth."

Business Standard

Worst June rainfall in 10 years



Till Thursday, the country had received 41 per cent less June rainfall than normal - the scantiest in a decade and one of the rarest occasions when the shortfall in the month was more than 30 per cent - private weather forecaster Skymet said in its daily weather forecast on Friday. Even as the southwest monsoon continued to remain sluggish over many parts of central and western India, Skymet said: "The month of June has been the driest in India in a decade." According to the India Meteorological Department (IMD), of the 36 meteorological subdivisions, the rainfall in the month was excessive in five, normal in six, deficient in 11 and scanty in 14 subdivisions. However, a ray of hope was seen in the official weather forecaster's expectation of a monsoon revival from July 6. What is also bolstering this hope is that the fear of the El Niño phenomenon, which could have caused a major drop in southwest monsoon, is showing signs of waning. However, the adverse effect of a low rainfall in June and its long absence in many parts of India are also becoming apparent. Data from the department of agriculture showed kharif crops were sown on 13.15 million hectares till June 27, which was 34.55 per cent less than the area covered in the corresponding period last year. Worse, the area covered during the period this year was around 13 per cent less than normal acreage - the average of the past

five years. Sowing of rice, pulses and coarse cereals, grown mainly in eastern, central, western and northern parts of the country, were the worst hit. On Wednesday, the government had announced the procurement prices for these summer crops for 2014-15 would be 1-4 per cent higher than those last year. But there was some comfort on water level in the country's 85 important reservoirs. At 38.02 billion cubic metres as on June 26, the water level was 25 per cent of these reservoirs' total live storage capacity. "The storage position this year is better than last year and the average of the past 10 years," an official statement said. Except southern India, water level in reservoirs of almost all other parts of the country was better than last year.



On Friday, IMD said many parts of the country, barring western India, could get above-normal rainfall after a pick-up next month. "Monsoon revival is likely in many eastern parts and adjoining central and northern peninsular India from July 6, when above-normal rainfall is expected," the met department said in its weekly forecast. Skymet, too, said rains would pick up in eastern and central India from next week. It advised farmers to start

preparing for plantation and sowing of crops. The southwest monsoon season starts from June and ends in September. In its second-stage forecast issued in June, IMD had said rains would be below-normal in India, at 93 per cent of long-period average (LPA), which was lower than the 95 per cent it forecast in April. Rainfall in the range of 96-104 per cent of LPA (the average of rainfall in the country in 50 years since 1951), is considered normal. On the dreaded El Niño showing signs of receding, D S Pai, director of IMD's long-range forecast, told Business Standard: "As of now the sea-surface temperature (SST) in the Pacific ocean has weakened and there is no sign of it strengthening further. So, we are slightly optimistic that the impact of El Niño might not be as severe on Indian rains as was being thought of. Even if it does impact rain, it will be somewhere around August and September." Similarly, Skymet, too, has not assessed much effect of the weather phenomenon so far. "We have not seen much impact of El Niño till now, but a final assessment will be done only around July," said Mahesh Palawat, chief meteorologist, Skymet.

Onion on fire but agri commodity prices largely subdued



In the past month, contrary to conventional wisdom, given the worry of an erratic monsoon and its negative impact on the kharif crop, the prices of a majority of agricultural commodities have declined. India Meteorological Department has estimated the rainfall in June at the lowest in 10 years but has forecast a revival in the coming week. "Fear of a negative impact in agri crop productivity have got nullified with expectation of a revival in monsoon rain and the higher production last year. In most cases, traders square off their positions even with marginal profits, amid expectations of a change in monsoon behaviour and government intervention," said Ajitesh Mallick, an analyst with Religare Retail Research. Ram Vilas Paswan, the Union food minister, had reiterated on Thursday that the government would not allow prices of agri commodities to move up abnormally and spur inflation.

The third advanced estimates presented by the ministry of agriculture in May showed rice production at 106.29 million tonnes in 2013-14, as against the final estimate of 105.24 mt for the previous year. Maize production is estimated at 24.19 mt in 2013-14, compared with

DAILY WHOLESALE PRICES

(In ₹/qtl at Mumbai)

Commodity	May 30	Jun 27	% chg	
Onion	1,200	1,950	62.50	
Tomato	950	1,050	10.53	
Potato	1,625	1,775	9.23	
Masoor dal	5,650	5,900	4.42	
Mustard oil*	6,600	6,780	2.73	
Palm oil*	5,719	5,800	1.42	

*Packed; Compiled by BS Research Bureau

Source: Department of Consumer Affairs

22.26 mt earlier. The output of ragi, a fully kharif crop, is expected to be 1.88 mt in 2013-14, compared with 1.57 mt the previous year. Skymet, the private weather forecasting agency, has estimated a 40 per cent cumulative rain deficit in June. "Prices of agri commodities remained under pressure because of a lack of full information about the impact of an erratic monsoon. Foodgrain production was a record high last year but beyond a point, the government cannot control a price rise driven by the demand-supply equation," said Madan Sabnavis, chief economist, CARE Ratings.

Tea prices up at Kochi auction

Improved arrivals lifted prices of few varieties of tea at the Kochi tea auction especially in CTC dusts grades. In sale no 26, the quantity on offer in the CTC dusts was 14.49 lakh kg. With a higher demand, the market for good liquoring varieties was firm to dearer by Rs. 3-5 a kg and sometimes more. Others were irregular and lower. The drop in price was less for the black plainer teas especially the grainier varieties. According to the auctioneers, Forbes, Ewart & Figgis, exporters confined to medium and low priced teas. However, the arrival in orthodox grades was lower at 9,500 kg compared to last week. Besides witnessing some withdrawals, the market was lower by Rs. 2-3. Exporters absorbed the small quantity of orthodox dust sold. In the best CTC dusts, PD varieties quoted Rs. 91/114, RD grades fetched Rs. 95/121, SRD ruled at Rs. 105/139 and SFD stood at Rs. 110/154. The leaf sale witnessed a mixed trend and the quantity on offer in orthodox grades was 2,59,500 kg. With a 68 per cent demand, the market for Select Best Nilgiri Broken, Whole Leaf was barely steady to sometimes dearer. Others were irregular and lower. Of the quantity of 64,000 kg on offer in CTC, the market for good liquoring varieties steady to dearer. Others were irregular and lower. Upcountry buyers and exporters operated at lower levels.

Absence of buyers saps rubber

Domestic rubber prices dropped further on Friday. Declines in global trendsetters depressed the local sentiments in early trades, while absence of buyers kept the commodity under pressure during late trading hours. The trend was mixed as ISNR 20 and latex finished flat amidst dull volumes. Sheet rubber weakened to Rs. 144.50 (146.50) a kg, according to traders. The grade fell to Rs. 145 (147) and Rs. 142 (144) respectively as given by Rubber Board and dealers. July futures declined to Rs. 143.80 (144.63), August to Rs. 143.60 (144.40) on the National Multi Commodity Exchange (NMCE).

TOCOM futures

RSS 3 (spot) dropped to Rs. 127.68 (129.74) at Bangkok. The June futures declined to ¥202 (Rs. 119.71) a kg on the Tokyo Commodity Exchange. Spot rubber rates (Rs. /kg): RSS-4: 144.50 (146.50); RSS-5: 140 (141); Ungraded: 135 (136); ISNR 20: 131 (131) and Latex 60%: 121 (121).