

Agriculture gets priority in annual credit plan for Krishnagiri district

Total outlay is 15 per cent higher than that of last fiscal



For development:Collector T.P. Rajesh (right) releasing the annual credit plan of Krishnagiri district for 2014-15, at the Collectorate recently. The first copy was received by Ravindran (second left), Assistant General Manager, Reserve Bank of India, and Nasreen Z. Salim, District Development Manager, National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development.— Photo: Special ArrangementThe annual credit plan (ACP) for Krishnagiri district for the financial year 2014-15 envisages a total outlay of Rs. 3107.32 crore, which is 15 per cent (Rs. 402.09 crore) higher than that of the last fiscal.Collector T.P. Rajesh released the annual credit plan. The first copy was received by Ravindran, Assistant General Manager, Reserve Bank of India.Agriculture gets the major share of Rs. 2060.66 crore, which accounts for 66 per cent of the total outlay.Under investment credit for agriculture, the outlay has been projected as Rs. 928.54 crore.A sum of Rs.96.85 crore has been earmarked for rural godowns and cold storage units which will help the farmers to get better returns. A sum of Rs. 561.05 crore was allocated for non-farm sector.The plan projects Rs. 485.60 crores (15 percent) towards other priority sector and Rs. 509 crore for self-help group - bank linkage programme.Nasreen Z. Salim, District Development Manager, National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development; T. Rudrappa, Lead District Manager among others were present.

Disburse drought relief to affected farmers, says CPI (M)

The Communist Party of India (Marxist) had asked the district administration to disburse drought relief to farmers.A press release issued by G. Sekar, District Secretary, here on Sunday, said that production of mango, coconut and other crops had been affected because of insufficient rainfall last year.Mr. Sekar said that seven resolutions had been passed at the party's executive committee meeting of the district unit on Friday.A resolution said that due to insufficient rainfall, crops had failed across the district. The crop loss should be surveyed properly and compensation disbursed to the farmers.It also urged the district administration to take effective steps to deal with drinking water scarcity on a war footing, as many areas were left with insufficient water supply.Increasing crimes like murders, robbery and house breaking incidents were cause for concern. The police department should act swiftly to arrest those responsible and also take measures to prevent crimes.Members of the public, especially farmers, had been badly affected due to loss of human life and crop damage by wild animals, including

elephants. The forest department should ensure that wild animals did not enter human habitations. Affected farmers should be given compensation immediately. Action should be taken to ensure uninterrupted power supply, and measures adopted to stop spread of chikungunya.

Wages

Beneficiaries of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) had been unable to get their weekly wages for the last few months. The district administration should ensure disbursement of wages to the beneficiaries every week. Besides this, the authorities should disburse old age pension to beneficiaries, along with arrears, according to the press release. The executive committee meeting was presided over by S. Vasudevan, District Executive Member. P. Sundarrajan, State Committee Member participated.

‘Production of mango, coconut and other crops has been affected because of insufficient rainfall last year’

Now, a book on trees in Madurai

Lists 25 species that are common in Madurai with details of origin and uses



Green info: ‘Madurai Trees 25’ being released in Madurai on Sunday. Author D. Stephen, left, Assistant Professor in Botany, The American College, is seen.— Photo: R. Ashok ‘Madurai Trees 25,’ a book on trees in Madurai was released by Madurai Green, a non-governmental environmental organisation, here on Sunday. The book authored in Tamil by D. Stephen, Assistant Professor in Botany, The American College, has a list of 25 species that are common in Madurai, with elaborate details of the origin and uses of the trees. The book was released by P. Saravanan, managing director of Saravana Multispeciality Hospital, at Gandhi Memorial Museum where the 25th Green Walk of Madurai Green was organised on Sunday. Speaking on the occasion, N. Chidambaram, coordinator of Madurai Green, said the organisation, established 22 years ago, had conducted 25 Green Walks in the past two years. “Involvement of people in green walks has given us fresh hope that the environment of Madurai can be conserved in a better way in the coming years. The participation of youth is laudable,” he said. “One of the major environmental issues Madurai faces is improper disposal of garbage. Sewage and garbage disposal should be done properly by the public,” Mr. Chidambaram added. Mr. Stephen said the book would serve as guide to people on the different trees in

Madurai. Purasu, nuna, athandai, vattakanni, oduvan, banyan, peepal, palm, neem and coconut were some of the trees mentioned in the book. M.P. Vasimalai, executive director of Dhan Foundation, emphasised that the city's green cover should be improved. "We should start planting saplings of rare and traditional trees," he said. President of Madurai Green D. Raghavan pointed out that the city's temperature has rapidly increased in the three decades because of felling of trees. "In 1982, the maximum temperature here was 27 degree Celsius, whereas it was 32 degree Celsius in 1990 and now it is 39 degree Celsius," he noted. Members of Nanal Nanbargal and other youth organisations that took part in the green walks regularly also shared their experiences. A.K. Xavier, Principal of St. Joseph ITI, Edwin Rajkumar, Professor of CSI Jayaraj Annapackiam College of Nursing, Ranjitham, Principal of St. Teresa Teacher's Training Institute, and several others spoke. Free saplings of trees were distributed to those who attended the programme.

Monsoon maintenance fund for potters announced

A monsoon maintenance fund has been announced for pottery workers by the State government. According to an administration release, the annual monsoon maintenance support of Rs. 4,000 will be provided to pottery workers registered with the pottery workers welfare board based on field inspections, to compensate for the lack of work during monsoons. Field inspections are under progress jointly by a team of pottery workers welfare board, Tamil Nadu Khadi Gram Welfare Board, and Revenue Department officials. The field inspections will be held up to July 4. Details may be ascertained from the labour office (Social protection Scheme) over phone (04365-220203)/9566281414 or assistant director, Khadhi Gram, on ph: 9842052841.

SCPCR intervention sought in implementing RTE Act

The intervention of the State Commission for Protection of Child Rights (SCPCR) has been sought in ensuring the effective implementation of Right to Education Act. The Act mandated private schools to reserve 25 per cent of their total seats to students from disadvantaged groups or weaker sections. In a letter to the Commission and Principal Account General, who recently conducted pre-auditing on RTE Act admissions in private schools in the State, Marumalarchi Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (MDMK) youth wing secretary V. Eswaran said that Andhra Pradesh had introduced quotas within the 25 per cent to ensure no one section cornered all the benefits. However, in Tamil Nadu, all families coming under 'disadvantaged groups' were exempted from economic criteria of annual income of less than Rs. 2 lakh. The disadvantaged groups include Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes — Arundhathiyars, Scheduled Tribes, Backward Classes, Most Backward Classes, those affected by HIV and children of conservancy workers. This would affect the prospects of students from economically weaker families and those who are affluent but coming under any of these groups can gain admission under the RTE Act quota. Mr. Eswaran also urged the Principal Accountant General to investigate the students admitted under the Act. Rather than confining the scrutiny of documents

submitted to schools, he said that a team must be sent to the student's homes to ascertain their social and economic status. He alleged that private schools were passing off students from affluent families as having been admitted under the Act. This was being done with the connivance of Government officials who were only focused on the numbers rather than ensuring only genuine candidates were admitted. He urged the Commission and Principal Accountant General to take action and ensure that the benefits of this legislation go to the deserving students.

Fair price stall for seafood inaugurated



Beneficial: Minister for Tourism S.P. Shanmuganathan (second from right), inaugurates the fair price stall for seafood at Surangudi in Vilathikulam on Sunday. Minister for Tourism S.P. Shanmuganathan inaugurated a seafood fair price stall launched on a trial basis at Surangudi in Vilathikulam panchayat union near here on Sunday. The facility was launched under the Pudhu Vazhvu Thittam to curb the soaring prices of seafood. A group of 20 persons would be involved in managing the fish stall. Many people living in 236 village panchayats in Tuticorin, Pudur, Kayatar, Kovilpatti, Ottapidaram and Vilathikulam unions would enjoy the benefits of this scheme. In Vilathikulam, 192 families had been earning their livelihood under the Pudhu Vazhvu Thittam, the Minister said. Adequate funds were allotted to alleviate poverty in rural areas and to improve rural infrastructure, he said. Collector M. Ravikumar, who was instrumental in the launch of the stall, said based on the response of the consumers, similar fish stalls would be opened at other places across the district. Last month, sale of tender coconuts at a fair price was introduced at Kovilpatti under this scheme, and it got an overwhelming response from the consumers, he pointed out. Vilathikulam MLA G.V. Markandeyan and S. Selvaraj, president of Surangudi panchayat, were present.

Farmers urged to get crop insurance

Joint Director of Agriculture Mahantheshappa has urged farmers to get their crops covered under the crop insurance as there has been a shortfall in the monsoon so far this year. Crops are withering in several parts of Mysore district owing to insufficient rain. Officers in the Department of Agriculture, Mysore have noticed that crops were drying up in Yelwal hobli in Mysore taluk; Doddakavalande and Hullahalli hoblis in Nanjangud taluk; Bilikere and Gavadagere hoblis in Hunsur taluk; Kasba, Ravandoor and Bettadapura hoblis in Periyapatna taluk and Sosale and Mooguru hoblis and all hoblis in K.R. Nagar taluk. Joint Director of Agriculture Mahantheshappa said the crops were

expected to get a new lease of life as there were predictions of monsoon becoming active before July 10. In case of no rain, the crops will dry up completely, he said. Mr. Mahanteshappa has said the last date for availing insurance is June 30.

Agricultural varsities

He said the department is planning to discuss with scientists from the universities of agricultural sciences in the State on cultivating alternative crops in areas where sowing had not been taken up done. The department will inform farmers on measures taken by it in case of failure of monsoon, he said.

Vegetable prices go up



Inadequate rainfall and low yield of crops have pushed up prices of some vegetables here. With reduced supply, prices of some vegetables have seen an increase over the corresponding period last year. The prices of coriander leaves, raddish and knol khol have all breached their previous highs. “Scanty rainfall has resulted in low vegetable yield thus affecting the supply of some vegetables to the city. While prices of some vegetables have gone up substantially, that of a few vegetables like lemon has come down. The average cost of lemon has been around Rs. 70 a kg whereas its average cost last year was around Rs. 80 a kg,” said a source in the Horticulture Department. The official also pointed out that the cost of many other vegetables, which have been in good supply, has been higher this year by around Re. one or Rs. two a kg. This, he attributed to the fluctuating cost of transport and also increased cost of cultivation. While the average price of onion has been Rs. 37 a kg, the average price of brinjal and tomato has been Rs. 28 and Rs. 16 respectively, which was almost the same last year. President of the K.R. Market Traders’ Association G.M. Diwakar said vegetable prices have gone up in the last two or three weeks, and that it is likely to remain high at least till the end of July. “A kg of peas shot up from Rs. 200 to Rs. 260, and the retail price of traditional variety of beans has touched Rs. 80 a kg,” he added. Meanwhile, an official of a leading vegetable chain said the high cost of vegetables also has pushed away many pushcart vendors out of business, though temporarily. “Investments for pushcart vendors go up drastically and their margins have to be high. In the hot condition, moisture level in vegetables comes down resulting in losses to vendors since vegetables lose weight.” he said.

Commission suggests multi-pronged approach to ensure farmers get fair prices



T.N. Prakash Kammaradi

The Agriculture Price Commission, recently set up by the State government to come out with ways and means to ensure that farmers get remunerative prices, has suggested a multi-pronged approach, involving crop planning, market reforms and setting up facilities such as cold-storage units, to achieve its objective. In a chat with *The Hindu*, agricultural economist and commission chairman T.N. Prakash Kammaradi said the commission would particularly look at preventing glut in production, which was the main reason for the fall in prices of agricultural commodities.

Regional crop plan

The commission would work towards evolving a regional crop plan, prescribing ideal crops for different agro-climatic zones in the State based on socio-economic factors, to prevent excess production, he said. Another area where the commission wanted to focus its attention was linking farmers to markets and integrating various agricultural markets. Efforts would also be made to tap the export potential as well as look into issues related to setting up of specialised commodity markets using e-trading, Mr. Kammaradi said. In addition to this, collective marketing experiments would be promoted so that farmers would be in a better position to bargain.

To provide information

The commission would also work towards setting up facilities to provide advance and timely information to farmers and policymakers on the situation related to prices, market demand and crop situation. To facilitate this, price-forecasting exercise would be promoted for all important crops, he said. He made it clear that market intervention by the government to bail out farmers during a price crash would be considered as the last option. The focus would be on helping farmers get remunerative prices in a natural manner through various measures.

Remunerative prices

At the same time, Mr. Kammaradi emphasised that the proposed remunerative prices of the State government would have to be higher than the minimum support price (MSP) fixed by the Union government. At present, the MSP fixed by the Union government covered only 24 commodities in the country, including 14 in the State. The remunerative prices fixed by the State government would cover all the crops in the State, he noted. To begin with, the commission would focus on the eight important crops of ragi, maize, jowar, bajra, onion, toor dal, tomato and potato. Other crops would also be covered in a phased manner during the three-year term of the commission.

Flowers are dearer

The prices of flowers have also increased in city in the past fortnight, and inadequate rainfall has been blamed for it. The cost of a kg of jasmine has gone up from around Rs. 120 to around Rs. 200 while the cost of chrysanthemum has increased from around Rs. 120 to around Rs. 160, said V. Balakrishna, vice-president of the Bangalore Flower Merchants' Association.

Farmers protest against delay in completing lift irrigation project



Farmers digging land at Mallikarjunapura village, near Halebid, as a mark of protest on Sunday. Farmers of Halebid hobli in Belur taluk staged a protest here on Sunday, opposing delay in completing the Halebid-Madihalli Lift Irrigation project to provide water to villages from the Yagachi reservoir. The farmers brought in men and machinery and dug canals to convey a message to the government. Several farmers arrived at Mallikarjunapura village near Halebid with earthmovers and digging tools. The project, meant to provide water for 38 tanks in the hobli, started in 2012. As per the schedule, the work should have been completed by September 2013. However, it was stopped following objections from the Forest Department, who did not want to part with their land near Mallikarjunapura. Basavananda Swami of Shivapura, Somashekhar Shivacharya Swami of Pushpagiri near Halebid, and Jayachandrashekhar Swami of Kedige Math at Kolagunda also took part in the protest. Belur tahsildar Jagadish and officers of the Water Resources Department assured the protesters that the work would be completed soon. The farmers, following the assurance, resolved to camp at the work site to ensure that the work is completed early.

B.L. Rice's contribution to archaeology hailed

Stating that B.L. Rice's contribution to archaeology was significant in recording the history of different dynasties, Kumara Chalya, professor of Kuvempu University, said the younger generation was not keen on studying inscriptions. He was speaking at a seminar on B.L. Rice organised at Shravanabelagola in Channarayapatna taluk, as part of the Chandragiri Utsav on Sunday. "B.L. Rice travelled across the State to study inscriptions. Though he was from England, he found his home in India. Even after he returned to England, he remembered India as his homeland. His research was filled with dedication, responsibility and commitment," he said. Rice was born in Bangalore in 1837, but his family returned to England in 1953. In 1960, he returned to Bangalore and became a headmaster. Within a few years, he rose to higher posts in the Department of Education and started studying inscriptions. Later, he became the Director of Archaeology, the post he enjoyed for 15 years, he said. "Today, scholars can speak on Mysore rulers because of Rice, whose research and study into inscriptions has provided data," Prof. Chalya said. Wherever he went to study inscriptions, he involved local scholars in his research. He knew that without the knowledge of local culture, language and traditions, he could not read or understand inscriptions. "But it is sad to say that many of my contemporaries now cannot read old Kannada (Halegannada). The present generation is also least bothered to study the works of old Kannada," he noted. Charukeerti Bhattaraka Swami of Jain Math, who inaugurated the seminar, said many literary programmes would be conducted as part of the Chandragiri Utsav in the next one year. "This is the first literary event. Many more will be held in the year. Chandragiri is historically significant as many scholars and thinkers spent valuable time there," he said. Jeevandra Kumar, retired professor of History, and H.L. Janardana, president of Hassan District Kannada Sahitya Parishat, were present.

'Extend deadline for weather based crop insurance'

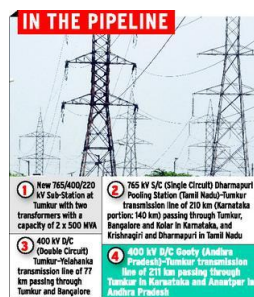
In the wake of the Union government extending the deadline for enrolling for the national crop insurance scheme, MP and BJP State president Pralhad Joshi has urged Chief Minister Siddaramaiah to extend the deadline for the weather based crop insurance scheme. In a letter written to Mr. Siddaramaiah, Mr. Joshi has pointed out that because of the delayed monsoon, most of the farmers had not been able to take up sowing activities and because of the same they were unable to submit the required documents for the crop insurance schemes before June 30. Already several farmers had sought extension of the deadline for submitting the forms with required documents for availing the crop insurance scheme, he said.

'Natural farming a way out of debt'

The decline in agricultural income coupled with the rise in farm input costs is forcing a large number of farmers to opt for natural farming in the region. To popularise the concept, the People's Legal Forum conducted a workshop on natural farming at Hadinaru

village in Nanjangud taluk on Saturday. A release said it was organised in collaboration with the Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha and Hasiru Sene at Kynady Farm. Bannuru Krishnappa, a well-known natural farmer in the locality, said it was the only way for farmers to save themselves from suicide. Recalling his own experience as a chemical-based farmer, Krishnappa said he had to take loans and suffered pest attacks and crop. He added that natural farming expert Subhash Palekar's techniques like Jeevamrutha and Beejamrutha based on cow's urine and dung made his farm and life sustainable and pest-free. Every farmer needs to be self-reliant and healthy, for which Subhash Palekar's zero budget farming techniques are most suitable, he asserted. The workshop was inaugurated by Amshi Prasannakumar, journalist and member of Media Academy. Mr Vidyasagar, taluk president of Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha presided. James Jacob Kynady, Gurulingegowda, Bokkali Nanjundaswamy were among those who addressed the participants while P.P. Baburaj, Director of PLF, explained the objectives of the workshop. About 100 farmers from Mysore and Chamarajangar districts attended, said the release.

Power line: farmers plan to move court for higher relief



With authorities of Power Grid Corporation of India Limited (PGCIL) gearing up to resume work on the high-capacity power transmission corridor, farmers in Tumkur district are planning to move court demanding higher compensation for their land on which the power line passes.

Delayed

The first high-capacity power transmission corridor (765 kV) in the State was delayed due to agitations by farmers demanding higher compensation for their land on which the power lines pass and grid towers are erected. This project will help Tumkur district get uninterrupted power supply and not depend on other sources. The estimated cost of the project is Rs. 650 crore, while the State's share is Rs. 400 crore. It was scheduled to be commissioned in March 2014. Working president of the Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha K.T. Gangadhar said that successive governments had been giving compensation to farmers based on the Land Acquisition Act 1894. This was formulated by the British at a time when land prices were lower and hence the Act needs to be amended to suit today's requirement. "There is no provision under the Land Acquisition Act 1894 to give higher compensation to farmers whose land is acquired by the government and hence we are

forced to go to court as the land under the power lines will lose commercial value,” he said. He added that they had allowed PGCIL authorities to continue work at the moment but they would continue to fight in court for higher compensation.

Compensation

They plan to demand compensation based on the yield of the agricultural and commercial crops that grow on the land in question, market value of the land, and the cost of living of a farmer, he said.

Farmers told to avail themselves of crop insurance facility



Udupi district has received 42 per cent lesser rainfall than usual in June.—File photo

Deputy Commissioner Muddu Mohan on Saturday directed officials to encourage farmers to apply for crop insurance facility in the light of poor rainfall in the district in June. He was chairing a meeting of officials of Agriculture Department here to review steps taken due to poor monsoon. Mr. Mohan said that Udupi district had received 42 per cent lesser rainfall than usual in June. This had affected agricultural operations. If the same situation continued, it might affect the paddy crop of farmers. Hence officials should do their best to enrol maximum number of farmers for crop insurance. All the 146 gram panchayats, Udupi City Municipal Council, Saligrama Town Panchayat, Kundapur and Karkala town panchayats had been brought under the National Crop Insurance scheme. Small farmers in the district should take advantage of this scheme. Farmers could get details of the insurance scheme from the nearby Raitha Samparka Kendras or bank officials. The last date for enrolling for the National Crop Insurance Scheme was June 30. But a proposal would be submitted to the government to extend the last date for enrolling the scheme, Mr. Mohan said. Anthony Maria Immanuel, Joint Director of Agriculture said that normally, the district received 1,195 mm of rainfall in June. But this time, so far the district had received only 689.7 mm of rainfall. His department had kept paddy nurseries ready for 25,000 hectares. If transplanting operations were not taken up in 21 days, it would reduce the yield. The paddy saplings too would also get damaged. If the rains failed, it would affect agriculture in the district. The department had set up a target of cultivation of paddy in 45,000 hectares of land in the district. But till June 27, only 422 hectares of land had come under paddy cultivation. Last year in the corresponding period, 4,290 hectares of land was under paddy cultivation, Mr. Immanuel said. Mr. Mohan directed the tahsildars of all three taluks to call a meeting of agricultural and horticultural officers and respond immediately to the problems of the farmers. Kumara, Additional Deputy Commissioner, Pranesh Rao, Deputy Secretary of Zilla Panchayat, B.P. Satish,

Deputy Director of Horticulture, and Assistant Directors of Agriculture from Kundapur, Karkala and Udupi, participated in the meeting.

Dry weather spells doom for cardamom



Udumbanchola taluk of the Cardamom Hill Reserve is witnessing diseases such as clump rot. The severe spell of dry weather conditions has badly affected cardamom plantations with some areas recording a rise in fungal diseases, which the farmers claim to be spreading fast. Udumbanchola taluk of the Cardamom Hill Reserve (CHR) area is witnessing diseases such as clump rot in a large scale that may impact production in the coming season. A senior scientist of the Indian Cardamom Research Institute (ICRI), Myladumpara, told *The Hindu* on Friday that there were chances that some diseases could spread fast as there was a dry spell against the wet and damp conditions required by the plant. The plant is sensitive to atmospheric and soil conditions. He said a study by the scientists' team found leaf blotch diseases in plants, and there were chances that it could spread fast. There is a severe change of atmospheric conditions in the CHR, especially during this period of the rainy season. There is high variation in temperature during a short period. An official of the ICRI said there was sharp rise in complaints from the farmers with regard to cases of crop loss due to a spurt in some diseases. He said it was being monitored and counter measures taken in specific cases.

Legislation for welfare of migrant workers soon

Minister for Social Welfare M.K. Muneer has said a legislation to ensure social justice and better standard of life for migrant workers is in the pipeline. At a discussion on 'Migrant workers of Kerala: restructuring our social fabric' organised by the North Malabar Chamber of Commerce (NMCC) here on Sunday, the Minister said the government would initiate steps to ensure better accommodation and healthcare for the migrant workers. The Labour Department had already presented a proposal for a legislation to ensure welfare of the migrant workers, he said. The Minister said the government was yet to have any database on the exact number of inter-State migrant workers working in the State. The Labour Department was planning to get details about the migrant worker population, he said adding that a decision was yet to be taken whether the exercise should be a survey or a census. Existing accommodation and healthcare facilities as well as social security measures available to the migrant workers were indicative of a crisis situation, he said. "Proposals for constructing multi-storey buildings for their accommodation are under serious consideration," he said. Dr. Muneer also disclosed that the Health Department had been given instruction to conduct medical checkups for the migrant workers.

Little farmers to get help for growing veggies

Agriculture Department to spend Rs.50 lakh for vegetable farming in schools


Educational institutions in the district will get a share of fund from the Agriculture Department this fiscal for the promotion of various organic vegetable farming initiatives. The special consideration is given to the young farmers in over 200 schools taking into account their contribution in the previous years. M. Abdul Latheef, Deputy Director of Agriculture, says nearly Rs.50 lakh will be spent exclusively for the promotion of vegetable gardening projects — including the distribution of free vegetable seed kits, setting up of school farms, and formatting of students' agriculture clubs.

Special awards

To boost the participation, there will be special awards for the best-performing educational institutions, teachers and students in the sector, he adds. The department's plan is to utilize a total State and Central aid of over Rs.2 crore to encourage vegetable farming among various groups, including elders and youngsters, in Kozhikode district during this fiscal. To begin the venture in schools, the department will freely distribute over four lakh vegetable seed bags — each worth Rs.20 — to students from July 1. Under the scheme, schools having a minimum area of 10 cents for farming purpose will be given an initial financial aid of Rs.4,000. The amount is mainly released to get the land ready for cultivation. A team of 25 students, under the headship of an assigned teacher, will take care of the school farms, which will be directly supported by the Agriculture Department. For irrigation purpose too, the department will sanction fund to the selected educational institutions during this year. According to officials, the short-listed educational institutions will be eligible for a fund of Rs.10,000 to purchase required plumping accessories. Unlike the previous years, the Department is planning to encourage all the educational institutions to video document their vegetable farming activities for the reference of other educational institutions. Selected video works will be screened in all educational institutions.

Fruits set to get dearer during Ramzan

PRICEY STUFF Farmers and middlemen eagerly wait for Ramzan and try to make the most of the demand and some varieties already registered 50 per cent increase in the price
MIRZA ISMAIL BAIG, FRUIT VENDOR AT AFZALGUNJ



Mango Rs. 30-100 a kg
Pineapple Rs. 30 to 50 each
Sweet lime Rs. 20 to 40 each
Water melon Rs. 60 to 100 each
Apples Rs. 25 to 50 each

We do not expect a major profit on our investment as these are perishable items and there is a lot of risk if the fruits are not stored properly.
JUNAID, TRADER AT BAHADURPURA

Those planning to take lot of fruits for ‘iftar’ (breaking the fast) may have to think twice. This Ramzan, fruits are going to cost a bomb. The prices of the fruits have sky-rocketed in the last one week in the city owing to huge demand and less supply this season. “Farmers and middlemen eagerly wait for Ramzan and try to make the most of the demand. Prices of a few fruits have witnessed an increase of 50 per cent,” says Mirza Ismail Baig, a fruit vendor at Afzalgunj. Fruits such as water melon, pineapple, grapes, sweet lime and guava have made their way to the market from various parts of the country. “As this is off-season the prices will be high. Already the prices of mango have increased by Rs. 10 per kg in the open market,” says Sayeed Bhai, a fruit merchant at Kothapet fruit market. Mango costs between Rs.30 and 100 a kg, water melon between Rs. 60 and 100, pineapple is priced between Rs. 30 and Rs. 50 each while sweet lime costs between Rs. 20 and Rs. 40 each and apples costs between Rs. 25 and Rs. 50 each. “The price of apple is expected to come down once local ‘Shimla’ variety arrives by July end,” says another trader. Fruits form an integral part of the iftar menu and people prefer it in large quantities. “Looking at the prices we will be forced to buy it in lesser quantity as one cannot completely avoid them ,” says Sohail Hasnain a businessman from Charminar.

Regular feature

Fruit shops near mosques and residential areas are a regular feature but this time they are not to be seen. “We do not expect a major profit on our investment. Moreover, these are perishable items and there is a lot of risk if the fruits are not properly stored,” explains Junaid, a trader from Bahadurpura.

Fruits form an integral part of the iftar menu and people prefer it in large quantities.

Progressive farmers rear Ongole bull with passion



A farmer with his Ongole bulls.— Photo: Kommuri Srinivas

The majestic Ongole bull (*Bos indicus*) is venerated down the ages as the vehicle of Lord Siva and nurtured by farmers in Prakasam district, for many generations for its special characteristics. “But the pure breed of Ongole bull is losing ground in its native place, contrary to the preferred treatment it gets in countries like Brazil which has recognised the high value of the docile animal,” laments Ch. Ranga Rao, a farmer

leader. Farm mechanisation has pushed to the back-burner the age-old practice of the entire village taking care of the superior bull dedicated to the village temple and even the peasants' interest in rearing the handsome bull has declined over the years. But a few progressive farmers have taken to rearing this handsome bull out of sheer passion. Each animal costs over Rs. 1 lakh. "The government should provide incentives to farmers opting for rearing this big size animal as it best suits the tropics and also helps reduce environmental pollution indirectly," says M. Srinivasa Rao, a progressive farmer from Kumaranenivaripalem. "Taking into consideration the fact that fossil-fuels will not last for long, the government should rekindle interest in farmers to use Ongole bull in farm operations instead of tractors," says M. Rajasekhar, another farmer from Parchur. Ban on ox races The ban on ox races should be lifted to create a healthy competition among farmers to raise the Ongole Bull, suggests yet another farmer, Srinivas, pointing to his five-year-old pet. The animal is much taller than him but dances to his tunes. "The ox races have long been part and parcel of Andhra culture. No cruelty is involved during competitions and hence these races should be allowed as in the past," they plead.

Delay in loan waiver keeps farmers on tenterhooks

The delay in the finalisation of modalities of loan waiver scheme appears to have a telling effect on the kharif prospects of farmers. The prevailing uncertainty over the scheme coupled with delayed monsoon has kept farmers in Prakasam district on tenterhooks. They are yet to start kharif operation and are waiting for a clear picture to emerge. At a time when the ryots begin *Eruvaka*, signalling commencement of farm operations, they are whiling away time gathering on the *Rachabanda* and discussing about the loan waiver scheme. "We have been eagerly waiting for Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu to clear the air over the loan waiver. Only then, we will be in a position to start kharif operations" say farmers at Mogachintala near Kondepi. "The delay in loan waiver will cost us dear. It is not yet clear as to who will be covered under the scheme. We need fresh loans from banks to start cultivation," says Ch. Venkaiah. Agriculture production will be hit this year, if there is further delay in release of crop loans, feels another farmer M. Kondaiah. AIKS-affiliated Kavulu Rythula Sangam's State secretary N. Ranga Rao says tenant farmers, who cultivate 70 per cent of the three crore acre arable land in the State are the most-affected sections. "It is unfortunate that the government is silent on debts of over 25 lakh tenant farmers in the State who are in the grip of private money-lenders. Tenant farmers should be given an ad hoc payment of at least Rs. 10,000 each to clear part of their loans," he says. Mr. Rao says tenant farmers would lay a siege to the office of the Tehsilidars from July 5 to press for Loan Eligibility Cards and farm credit. E. Narayana, Associate Director, Regional Agriculture Research Station, Lam, said the condition was favourable for advancement of monsoon and there was no need for them to finalise alternative cropping strategy.

Irrigation authorities to seek more water

Citing transmission loss, Irrigation Department authorities are initiating measures to seek additional grant of water from upstream Nagarjunasagar Project, apart from the 3.5 tmcft to be released. A quantum of over 4,000 cusecs of water was released on June 25 from upstream and authorities here expect about 1,100 cusecs to reach Prakasam Barrage by Saturday evening. As per the plans to release the 3.5 tmcft of water, the Nagarjunasagar Project officials released over 4,000 cusecs of water on June 25 in the first phase. They also released around 7,500 cusecs on June 26 and nearly 5,900 cusecs more on June 27 to maintain the per day average release of 6,000 cusecs for a week. But there is every possibility of a transmission loss to the tune of 1 tmcft of water due to different reasons. It has been a severe summer and the dry bed would absorb lot of water. Considerable quantum would be lost due to authorised and unauthorised drawing of water, by industrial units, illegal drawing by farmers through pump-sets and some more water filling up the pits en route, explains a senior official. "Eventually, we will get only 2.6 tmcft of water. In view of transmission loss, we will appeal the special committee to re-examine the quantum of water to be released and grant more. The committee is likely to meet on July 2 or 3 after the total 3.5 tmcft is released," says the official.

Water level

Mettur Dam

The water level in the Mettur Dam stood at 45.18 feet on Sunday against its full level of 120 feet. The inflow was 4,862 cusecs and the discharge, 2,000 cusecs.

hindustantimes

Chennai

Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather



Cloudy

Monday, Jun 30

Max Min
35° | 26°

Rain: 0

Humidity: 89

Wind: normal

Sunrise: 05:45

Sunset: 06:39

Barometer: 1006

Tomorrow's Forecast








Cloudy

Tuesday, Jul 1

Max Min
39° | 29°


Extended Forecast for a week

Wednesday Jul 2	Thursday Jul 3	Friday Jul 4	Saturday Jul 5	Sunday Jul 6
				
39° 29° Cloudy	39° 28° Partly Cloudy	40° 29° Cloudy	39° 28° Partly Cloudy	38° 29° Cloudy

Airport Weather

Chennai

Rain: 0 Sunrise: 05:45
 Humidity: 89 Sunset: 06:39
 Wind: normal Barometer: 1006



THE  NEW
INDIAN EXPRESS

Jaya Lays Foundation for Innovative Sports Fishing-cum-Eco Park in City

Chief Minister J Jayalalithaa has laid the foundation for setting up of an innovative `42 crore Sports Fishing Cum Eco Park at the 15 acre Chetpet lake owned by the Tamil Nadu Fisheries Department. With the allocated funds, the following facilities would be created in the Chetpet lake: Entertainment like fishing, water adventure sports, boating, open air theatres and children's park among other things. With a view to beautify the banks of this lake, rare species of trees would be grown. The multi-layer parking lot to be set up there would ease the traffic congestion. A fish canteen would provide delicious food varieties made of fish. These measures would facilitate converting this place as a tourist spot in the future. Meanwhile, the CM inaugurated Annankovil fish landing centre near Parangipettai in Cuddalore, set up at a cost of `18.91 crore. This has been a long-pending demand of fishermen in the area and it comprises of fish auction centre, net repairing centre, effluent plant etc. The CM also inaugurated Tourism Reception Centre at Karaikudi, set up at a cost of `35 lakh for the benefit of tourists, pilgrims and others who visit Chettinad bungalows and temples located in the area. She also laid foundation for the Fossils Museum to be set up at Ariyalur, by the departments of Tourism, Arts and Culture, archaeology and museums, at a cost of `10.63 crore. Virtual Tour of the Museum in Chennai through website and Museo bus for school students were among those completed projects, inaugurated by the Chief Minister.

234 Beneficiaries Get Free Goats Under CM's Scheme



As many as 936 goats were given to 234 beneficiaries in Polur and Arani under the free distribution of cow, goat and sheep scheme here recently. People are happy about the scheme. A Aaravali, a local resident, said, “My husband Arunachalam and I are daily wage labourers, we couldn’t do much with the mere earning. When we heard of Chief Minister Jayalalithaa’s free goat distribution scheme, we registered for it and got the free goats. We are now leading a better life. Veterinary doctors are visiting the village monthly and our goats are receiving free health check-up.” Another resident P Vijaya said, “My husband is also a daily wage labourer and we live in poverty. The government gave us a cow for free and we are taking good care of it. Veterinary doctors give us free advice on how to take care of the cow. Now my cow gives 7 to 8 liters of milk per day. These kinds of schemes have to be implemented for the welfare of the lower middleclass families.” The Animal Husbandry division joint director Dr Selvaraj said, “In the last three years, the government has given free cows to 2,100 beneficiaries at a cost of `7.14 crore and free goats to 20,271 beneficiaries at the cost of ` 25 crore in Tiruvanammalai. There are about 115 medical shops and we have enough stock of medicines.”

Healthcare for dogs A healthcare centre for stray dogs was opened in a renovated building near Muthumandapam on Friday. The building, renovated at a cost of `13 lakh, houses an operation theatre with new equipment and medicines worth `3 lakh. Mayor P Karthiyayini inaugurated the building. Veterinary doctors were present on the occasion. A van used for transporting stray dogs and having equipment worth `7 lakh was funded by the Corporation for the Animal Husbandry Department. Under the Animal Birth Control (ABC) programme, the doctors operated upon a stray dog in the newly inaugurated operation theatre. After surgery, the dogs would be kept in the centre for three days and they would be released in the respective areas from where they were caught. City Health Officer Dr Vasanth Dhivakar said, “We have planned to catch around 25 stray dogs per week to operate upon. After the surgery, our sanitary workers will look after them.”

Fisheries Policy to Double Output in Five Years

The State Government has finalised the fisheries policy in a bid to double fish production within five years. The policy is likely to be announced in the State Assembly, which will meet from July 9 after the recess. The Draft Fisheries Policy was reviewed by Chief Secretary J K Mohapatra here recently where he directed the Fisheries department to

develop long-term strategy to augment the domestic market demand, create employment and income generating opportunities for the rural poor and enhance their food, nutrition and livelihood security. Official sources said the policy has been prepared to increase the productivity of fish and upgrade infrastructure facilities with an eye on the export market. The draft aims at increasing investment in the fishery sector to generate employment for fishermen and women. The policy aims at increasing institutional finance to fisheries sector, lower power tariffs, tax, excise and customs duty concessions for entrepreneurs in the sector, adequate water supply and issue of Kisan Credit Cards to fishermen and provide necessary incentives and tax holidays to large-scale fish farmers who produce 10 tonnes per hectares (ha) or more fish. It envisages adequate and timely credit to investors and working capital for primary fishery cooperatives. Fish production in the State is about 79.8 per cent of the overall fisheries potential of 5.14 lakh tonnes, including 1.61 lakh tonnes of marine sector and 3.53 lakh tonnes from the fresh and brackish water sectors. The requirement of the State is about 3.8 lakh tonnes for meeting the nutritional requirements of non-vegetarian population. The State exports about 28.4 per cent of the produced fish. Fish production in the last five years has increased at 14.8 per cent per annum. While fish production from inland fisheries and brackish water resources has increased from 2.18 lakh tonnes to 2.91 lakh tonnes, there was a decline in the marine fish production from 1.3 lakh tonnes to 1.11 lakh tonnes during the last five years. The annual export of marine products from the State during last five years has ranged between 14,135 tonnes in 2008-09 and 23,691 tonnes valued approximately at `35,800 crore to `90,850 crore. The fisheries sector has placed the average per capita annual income at `6,787 compared to the all-India average of `10,204. The fisheries sub-sector has contributed about 6 per cent to the Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) share of the agriculture sector for 2012-13.

Delayed Monsoon Turns Odisha Energy Deficit

Delayed monsoon has triggered a crisis, both on the agricultural and hydro power fronts. Restriction on release of water from major reservoirs having hydro power generating stations has led to a shortfall of power generation forcing the State Government to buy costly power to meet increasing demand. With no respite from sizzling temperature due to high humidity level and power demand of the State hovering between 3300 MW to 3500 MW, restriction on hydro power generation has made Odisha (which was surplus with power a couple of weeks ago) a power deficit State. As monsoon does a vanishing act, the State Government asked the Odisha Hydro Power Corporation (OHPC) last week to restrict average generation of hydro power to 450 MW. In a fresh advisory, the State-run corporation has been asked to further restrict the power generation to 300 MW from July 1, sources in the Energy department said. A fortnight ago, the average availability of hydro power was about 950 MW while the peak generation was nearly 1400 MW. While the average power demand of the State is more than 3000 MW, evening peak demand is about 3500 MW. The demand also goes up to about 3700 MW at times, sources in the State Load Dispatch Centre (SLDC) said. Sources in CESU said earlier, the evening peak demand was for two to three hours. However, this summer it has stretched to beyond

midnight. While there is restriction on hydro power generation, outage of several units of Central thermal power stations (with generating capacity of about 2000 MW) has further deepened the crisis. Seven thermal units including two units of NTPC's Kaniha super thermal power stations went out of the eastern grid bringing the system frequency in grid to a level prohibiting overdrawing by the State, the sources maintained. The sudden outage of Jindal Indian Thermal Power Limited (JTIPL) unit at Derang in Angul district has further worsened the situation. A subsidiary of BC Jindal Group, the first unit of 600 MW of the thermal power plant commissioned on March 31, 2014 was supplying 120 MW to Gridco, the bulk power supplier to the State. Besides, Gridco is getting 50 MW less from Sterlite Energy's Jharsuguda power plant, official sources said. Latest report said the first unit (500 MW) of NTPC's stage-I power plant on Saturday backed to the grid.

Medicinal Plant Farming Yet to Take Off

The long-pending demand of Ayurvedic medicine manufacturers for cultivating medicinal plants as a government initiative has not yet materialised owing to various factors. According to sources, the manufacturers are demanding the State Medicinal Plant Board to grow herbal plants since the cultivation on their farms proved futile. "The farmers are not keen to grow herbal plants as they don't yield much profit compared to other cultivations. Only a very few opt for growing medicinal plants. It has, therefore, been suggested as an initiative under the Board," a source said. It has been suggested to utilise the barren land under the possession of the Forest Department, after cutting down old eucalyptus trees. The manufacturers complain of scarcity of more than 40 types of medicinal plants in the state. It has been reported that the State Medicinal Plant Board has spent around Rs 45 crore for cultivation of medicinal plants since its inception in 2002. However, the Medicinal Plant Board said that a concrete project had not been put forward by the manufacturers rather than raising the demand. "Those who apply for cultivating medicinal plants should have their own land. We can assist them financially and can provide them with saplings," Board Chief Executive Officer K G Sreekumar said

Emergency Cell for Monsoon

The Hyderabad Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board (HMWS&SB) has constituted as many as 28 emergency responsive teams to tackle emergencies during the rainy season and take precautionary measures. Apart from the 28 ERTs, a central emergency disaster management cell has also been constituted, operating from the HMWS&SB head office, to receive complaints on a 24-hour basis. The cell will be headed by DGMs (engg) drawn from the revenue circle who will be assisted by one five-member ERT equipped with safety equipment, de-watering pump sets and a vehicle. The eight ERTs will function for three months from July 1 to September 30. The officials to be contacted are : R Bhaskar Rao (9989985120), DV Ramakrishna (9989989030) and S Ramesh (9989992927).

‘Local factors have combined with El Nino to weaken monsoon’

Locally adverse factors worsened by a developing El Nino in the Equatorial and East Pacific have combined to weaken the monsoon during the first month of June. PV Joseph, monsoon researcher of renown and a former Director of India Met Department, analyses the 40 per cent-plus deficit in rainfall till date in the following e-mail interview.

The monsoon has run up a deficit of 40 per cent in June even before El Nino has peaked. So do you think the deficiency can be attributed to El Nino alone?

Large monsoon deficiency in June is caused by many factors. Firstly, delay in monsoon onset over Kerala and slow northward movement of monsoon with long halts is one cause. This year, the monsoon onset over Kerala was delayed by five days and northward movement by a week to 10 days over the areas covered by it so far. El Nino is a factor for the deficiency in monsoon rains of June. Southward intrusion of mid-latitude westerly winds at levels 6-14 km in the atmosphere particularly over the North-West (winter flows as in western disturbances) is a factor causing reduced rainfall potential of monsoon.

If, as models suggest, El Nino has not indeed peaked, what could we expect in July-August-September by when it is expected to peak?

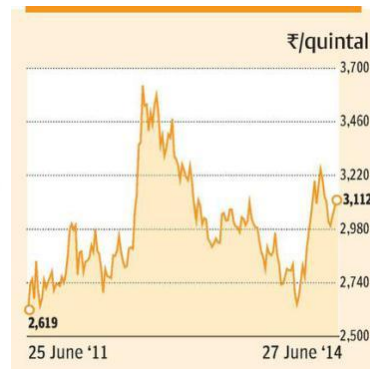
Typical El Nino warming of equatorial east Pacific ocean begins in March to May season. The ocean surface temperature anomaly there rises rapidly during our monsoon months June to September and rises at a slower pace thereafter to reach the highest temperature anomalies in the El Nino by the end of the year (December to the following February). As it develops El Nino is found associated in many cases with deficient monsoon rainfall of India. The strongest El Nino of 100 years in 1997, however, could not cause deficiency in Indian monsoon rainfall.

Do you subscribe to the view that it's not El Nino, but extended summer showers and impaired heating of North-West India which did the monsoon in?

Air temperature near the surface of the earth over the North-West has a great control on the monsoon rainfall of India as it affects north-south pressure gradient that drives the monsoon winds. There is high correlation between surface air temperature of the March to May season, particularly May, over North-West India and the monsoon rainfall of India of June to September.

Government's move sweetens sentiment

GURUMURTHY K



The Government has announced a slew of measures to revive the sugar sector. One, to help sugar mills pay back their dues to farmers, it has announced an interest-free loan of up to ₹4,400 crore. This is in addition to the ₹6,600-crore interest-free loan given by the UPA Government in December. Further, in order to curb rising imports, the import duty on sugar has been raised to 40 per cent from 15 per cent. Data from the Ministry of Commerce show that sugar imports surged to \$564.6 million in 2012-13 from just \$65.5 million the year earlier, a whopping 762 per cent surge in the value of sugar imports. This has increased the inventory of domestic sugar. The inventory at the beginning of the 2013-14 sugar season (October to September) was around 93 lakh tonnes. This is a 50 per cent surge from the 62 lakh tonnes inventory at the beginning of the 2012-13 season. However, inventory levels are estimated to come down about 20 per cent to 74-75 lakh tonnes by the end of this season (September 2014) on restricted imports. The duty hike is expected to increase the price of the commodity by ₹2-3 a kg. The Government has also increased the mandatory level of ethanol blending in gasoline to 10 per cent from 5 per cent. The ₹3,300-a-tonne subsidy on raw sugar export has also been extended until September. Though the market has reacted positively to these measures, the catch is that Food Minister Ram Vilas Paswan has said the announced benefits would be available only to those who can guarantee that they will clear their cane arrears to farmers. However, as an immediate reaction to this news, the sugar futures contract price surged about 3.4 per cent from its intra-week low of ₹3,049 a quintal to a high of ₹3,154 before closing at ₹3,112 on Friday, up 2 per cent for the week. This has helped keep the short-term uptrend intact on this contract begun in the last week of May.

Long-term view: The long-term outlook is bullish for the sugar futures contract (₹3,112 per quintal) traded on the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange. The strong downtrend in this contract from its August 2012 high of ₹3,672 a quintal found a bottom at ₹2,621 in January this year. The contract has risen sharply from this low, thereby decisively reversing its earlier downtrend. Also, this reversal has happened from an

important long-term trend line support. As such, a rise to ₹3,500 and even ₹3,700 looks likely in the coming months. Key long-term supports for the contract are placed at ₹2,750 and ₹2,600. A break below ₹2,750 could give the initial signal of a trend reversal. But only a strong break below ₹2,600 will turn the outlook bearish for the contract.

Medium-term view: The medium-term trend is up. The 200-week moving average at ₹2,922 is a key medium-term support for the contract. The outlook will turn negative if the contract declines below this level. The ensuing target on such a break will be ₹2,750. On the other hand, the 61.8 per cent Fibonacci retracement level of ₹3,270 is a significant resistance. A strong break above this can take it to ₹3,400 in the medium term.

Short-term view: The recent reversal from the low of ₹2,974 recorded on May 27 has turned the short-term trend also up. This reversal has happened from the 21-week moving average, currently at ₹3,028, and also from just above the 50 per cent Fibonacci retracement level of ₹2,943. A short-term rally to ₹3,200 and ₹3,270 looks likely now. However, the bullish view will get negated if the contract declines below the 21-week moving average. The target on a break below this level will be ₹2,950.

Healthy prospects for maize

G CHANDRASHEKHAR



Increasing production			
(million tonnes)			
Season	Kharif	Rabi	Total
2010-11	16.6	5.1	21.7
2011-12	16.5	5.3	21.8
2012-13	16.3	6.0	22.3
2013-14	17.5	6.7	24.2

Source: Ministry of Agriculture, India

Maize is among the few success stories in the recent farm history of India. The cereal is so versatile that it lends itself to multiple uses — food, feed, fuel and ferment. As a cereal, maize is used as ingredient in food preparation; it is feed for poultry and livestock; it is feedstock for biofuel (ethanol); it is used as raw material in distilleries; and for starch production because of its high starch content (60 per cent). Harvested in two seasons (kharif and rabi), the annual output continues to gallop. The share of the rabi crop (harvested in February/March) has been rising steadily in recent years with notable contribution from Bihar, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu. The introduction of new hybrid seed varieties has made significant contribution to the crop's success. Current yields are about 2.5 tonnes a hectare. There is potential to double the yields to the global average of five tonnes a hectare by adopting modern technologies. Global corn production is about 980 million tonnes, with the US alone accounting for 350 million tonnes. The US

is the world's largest exporter of corn (48 million tonnes). China, Brazil, Ukraine and Argentina are other major producers. In the US, a substantial part of the cereal is used for ethanol production with biofuel mandate and incentive in place. Firm crude oil prices (around \$100 a barrel) have encouraged increasing biofuel usage. With diverse usage (food, feed, fuel and industrial), global corn prices have been relatively firm in recent years. This has helped India. With rising production and favourable world market (higher export prices, weaker rupee) India has been exporting 3.5-4.5 million tonnes of maize annually in the last three years. South-East Asian nations Indonesia, Vietnam and Malaysia are major destinations because of geographical proximity and shorter voyage times. However, quality issues such as aflatoxin /mycotoxin (fungal growth) infestations as well as logistics bottlenecks need to be addressed urgently for retaining the overseas market.

Opportunity for India

Maize consumption within the country has been rising rapidly over the last ten years or so (about 4 per cent annually). The poultry industry accounts for nearly half of the total maize consumption in the country, followed at a distance by the starch industry. With demand chasing supplies, maize growers have generally benefited. Open market prices have generally ruled above the minimum support price. The production target for 2014-15 is 23 million tonnes comprising 17 million tonnes for kharif and six million tonnes for the rabi season. However, the forecast of a below-normal southwest monsoon and looming threat of El Nino in the second half of the year are factors to monitor. Delayed and weak onset of south-west monsoon can potentially affect acreage and yields; it is too early to make any meaningful estimate, though. On the other hand, with excellent weather conditions, the US is poised to harvest a record corn crop this year. The International Grains Council has forecast that more than half the anticipated increase in grain output over the next five years will come from maize which, to a large extent, will reflect the projected relative strength of feed demand over other end uses. During the same period global grain trade is expected to rise strongly, led by maize. This provides a great opportunity for India. By raising productivity and production, generating export surplus after meeting burgeoning domestic demand, India can capture emerging market opportunities. Maize needs policy support, investment support and research support.

Scanty rainfall hits kharif sowings in AP

K V KURMANATH

The kharif sowings have failed to take off in 13 districts of Andhra Pradesh, three weeks into the season. Most of the districts reported scanty rainfall as monsoon does not show up. No crop registered more than 25 per cent of sowings. Only 7 per cent of 42 lakh hectares of agriculture land reported sowings. The situation in the neighbouring Telangana too is no different.

Business Standard

Delayed monsoon in Cauvery basin raises concern



Concern is building as the monsoon rains that generally arrive in the first week of June have been delayed in the Cauvery region though the situation is not serious enough to cause any anxiety. With the encouraging pre-monsoon rains, farmers took to sowing hoping for a normal onset of monsoon. But, the south-west monsoon is yet to pick up in full vigour although June is at an end. The pre-monsoon rains improved the water flow into Cauvery basin reservoirs somewhat. But, subsequent below normal rains, attributed to El Nino impact, and the resultant depletion of water levels are causing concern while farmers and the Department of Agriculture are banking on the hopes of rains before July 10 as predicted by meteorologists. The South-West monsoon ranges from June to September. However, from June 1 to June 24, rainfall activity was deficient by 28 per cent in the Southern peninsula, 90.3 mm against the normal of 125 mm, according to the Indian Meteorological Department. Joint director of agriculture of Mysore M Mahantheshappa said crops were drying up in the district due to deficient rains. Yelwal in Mysore taluk, Doddakalande and Hullahalli in Nanjangud taluk, Bilikere and Gavadakere in Hunsur taluk, Kasaba, Bettadapura and Ravandur in Periyapatna taluk, Sosale and Mugur in T Narasipur, and all hoblis in KR Nagar in Mysore district, where farmers had taken up sowing, had received insufficient rainfall and crops were drying up. The rains anticipated before July 10 may help in the revival of crops. Otherwise, all the crops may dry up totally. In view of this situation, he said plans had been drawn up for cultivation of alternative crops in areas not sown so far, in consultation with the Agricultural University experts. If this is the scenario as regards crops in rain-fed areas, farmers under the Cauvery basin area are worried over the low inflow into the reservoirs and their filling up, chiefly Krishnarajasagar (KRS), which provides drinking water to four districts and irrigates lands in Mysore and Mandya region. Compared with last year on this date, the KRS water level is short of six feet. The inflow is meagre 2,042 cusecs against 34,067 cusecs last year, while the level is 81.25 feet compared with 87.58 feet. The level in May first week stood at 84 feet. During the last one month, the water level has risen by just about five feet, while last year copious rains had brought in an inflow of 25 feet, the highest in recent years. The reservoir's maximum level is 124.80

The situation in Wayanad areas of Kerala that brings water to Kabini in H D Kote taluk, which fills up first among the reservoirs, is no different from Kodagu. There are reports that water is being discharged from the Kabini since a week to Tamil Nadu, to meet the state's obligation. The position in Harangi and Hemavathi reservoirs too is similar to the KRS and Kabini. If the rains fail in the next few days, substantial amount of crops may dry up resulting in a drought situation.

Odisha to create Rs 100 cr fund for timely payment to fertilizer companies

The state government has approved a proposal of Agriculture and Food Production Department for creation of Rs 100 crore corpus fund for timely payment to fertilizer companies by state-run corporations such as Markfed and Odisha Agro Industries Corporation (OAIC). The state planning and cooperation department has allowed the Directorate of Agriculture and Food Production to go ahead with the proposal. As per the decision, the state government will deposit the money in an escrow account opened with Orissa State Cooperative Bank on behalf of the corporations such as Markfed and OAIC. "This will be an one time deposit. We will spend the amount every year for buying fertilizer," said Aswini Kumar Dhal, general manager (finance) with Markfed. The state government will deposit Rs 75 crore on behalf of Markfed and Rs 25 crore for OAIC. "The fund will be released to the fertilizer suppliers directly on submission of sale bills, duly certified by the corporations as acknowledgement of the consignment of fertilisers. The sale proceeds will be directly deposited in the escrow account in shape of D.D./Bankers cheque which would check misutilization of the fund," as per guidelines adopted in a high level meeting chaired by Finance Secretary earlier this year. Earlier, a Rs 200 crore corpus fund was proposed to be created, but later it was scaled down to Rs 100 crore, based on profit and loss account of the corporation. The Agriculture and Food Production department said that the funds will pave way for making profit by the corporations as they will get discounts by making timely payments to the companies. Also, they need not borrow from banks to pay the fertilizer bills and will get rid of interest payments. The finance secretary has instructed that the surplus profit will be transferred to the corporations, which will be utilised for fertiliser business only under the supervision of Directorate of Agriculture and Food Production. It has also been decided that the accounts will be replenished on 1 December and 1 June every year.

DECCAN Chronicle

Old rice stocks vanish from market



Rice millers are demanding that the government increase the price of rice proposed to be supplied at Rythu Bazaars to at least Rs 35 a kg, citing losses on account of rise in power tariff, transportation and other operational costs. When rice prices crossed the Rs 55 mark last year, the then Kiran Kumar Reddy government had opened special counters at Rythu Bazaars to sell rice for Rs 30. However, the traders collected up to Rs 35 then. With drought-like conditions prevailing in the state and also in the entire country even a month after rainy season started, rice millers and traders expect rice production to come down sharply this year. They are regulating the supply of old rice stocks to open the market with an aim of making money once the price soars. This has led to short supplies in the retail market leading to escalation in prices. "The price of fine quality rice hovered between Rs 40 and Rs 45 a kg till April end. However, the price shot up over Rs 10 per kg within one month following reports of impending drought this year in the country. There is no sowing of paddy so far. The supplies to markets have come down significantly. If the same situation continues, it will not be surprising if the price crosses the Rs 60 mark soon," said B. Devender, a rice trader. Meanwhile, the civil supplies department has been insisting that rice millers sell rice for Rs 30 a kg at Rythu Bazaars. Civil supplies minister Etela Rajender already held meetings with rice millers twice, but the millers agreed to supply only if the rate is enhanced to Rs 35 a kg. The state is likely to hike the price to ` 35 in a couple of days and begin sale of rice at Rythu Bazaars.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

Sugarcane farmers to finally get their dues

After the Punjab Congress highlighted the issue of non-payment of dues to sugarcane farmers, chief minister Parkash Singh Badal on Sunday announced to clear the outstanding arrears of farmers of Rs 148.50 crore for the crushing season 2013-14. The outstanding amount will be disbursed within a week. An official spokesperson said Badal has asked the chief secretary and the financial commissioner, finance, to ensure instant payment of sugarcane to farmers in the future as well as is in the case of wheat and

paddy. He claimed that out of Rs 464 crore, the total cost of sugarcane purchased by the state cooperative mills, Rs 250.50 crore had already been cleared by these mills and Rs 38 crore had been paid by the state government from its treasury, besides Rs 27 crore by the State Cooperative Bank under government of India's (GoI) interest-free loan scheme of NABARD. Now the balance amount of Rs 148.50 crore would be cleared by the state government within a week. Badal has also asked the social security and welfare departments to clear all the pending payments on account of financial assistance under the various social security and welfare schemes. He also asked the secretaries of these departments to ensure prompt release of the arrears to beneficiaries. Last week, 32 Punjab Congress legislators had sat on a "dharna" outside CM's residence to demand immediate payments to sugarcane farmers in the state.

Red hot tidings for chilli growers: Haveri to house state's first spice park

This is some red hot news for growers of the famous Byadgi mensinkai (a variety of chilli) from Karnataka: those from northern part especially may no longer have any complaints about marketing their produce or on the price front. Reason: the state's first spice park will come up near Haveri town. The park is expected to take care of all the grievances faced by farmers on the marketing front. The state government has made available 20 acres of land near the town to set it up while the Spices Board of India and Central government have given their nod, besides releasing Rs 20 crore for the project. Many states have exclusive parks for a variety of spice crops like garlic park at Chhindwara in Madhya Pradesh, mint spice park at Rae Bareilly in Uttar Pradesh and turmeric in Tamil Nadu. It is the first time Karnataka is getting such a park. The park, once established, will not only provide marketing facilities for the chilli, but will also help farmers in exporting the produce through e-tendering. The park will have small-scale units that can add value to the chilli and market it which in turn will provide jobs to the local people in addition to providing remunerative price to the producers by these value adders. Disclosing details about the park to TOI, proposed park's special officer B A Vardaraj said the Centre is providing the money under the scheme, Assistance for Infrastructure Development for States (ASIDE). The park will also carry out research on the plant. "As Byadgi chilli is known for its oleoresin content, is most sought after by industrialists who extract this chemical. Such entrepreneurs can establish their units in this park," he said, adding that the park will automatically provide best marketing facilities and prices for the produce to farmers. The spice board has established a nodal office in the town and farmers can approach the office seeking information on the issue, he said. "Facilities at the park will enable farmers to export or sell their produce to any buyer all over the world," Vardaraj added highlighting the benefits of the park to chilli growers.

Government intervention may curb surge in vegetable prices



If you are already fretting over the rising prices of vegetables, then be prepared for a bigger hole in your pocket unless the government steps in to reduce juicy margins in the retail trade, which are pinching consumers in Mumbai more than the deficient monsoon. Some officials say retail prices can be halved if the government buys directly from the mandi and sells it to consumers in the city with a reasonable margin. The Narendra Modi government has announced steps to boost supply and suggested that states should crack down on traders who hoard. Traders, on the other hand, say they are facing a reign of terror despite their margins being much smaller than retailers. Amid conflicting claims, the consumer continues to suffer. Sample this: The wholesale rate of cauliflower at the Vashi Agricultural Produce Market Committee (APMC) is Rs 200 for 10 kg but in many parts of the city, the vegetable is retailed for more than Rs 50 a kg. Similarly, ladyfinger is being sold at Rs 360 per 10 kg wholesale but it costs Rs 60-80 a kg in the retail market. Green peas is being sold at Rs 500 for 10 kg wholesale while retail prices range from Rs 80 to Rs 120 per kg. "This is nothing but loot. Look at cauliflower. It should not be charged higher than Rs 30 even if you include Rs 4 for the transportation cost behind every kilo and another Rs 5 for your profit margin. It should be selling at not more than Rs 30 per kilo in the retail market," said an official. He added that while prices of vegetables were increasing in the wholesale market due to lack of adequate supply, it still did not explain the high costs. "The prices can be brought down by almost half. All that the government needs to do is to procure the vegetables directly from the APMC and start selling them at different centres throughout the city." Another APMC official said prices of vegetables would see a fourfold increase by July to August if there is no rain within two weeks. "The sowing season is already delayed for the next crop," said a trader. "A normal sowing season lasts 70 to 90 days. With the delayed monsoon and the current price trends, prices will increase fourfold by July- August if things continue to remain the same." According to the data from the ministry of consumer affairs, compared with June 2013, potato prices were up 9% in Delhi, 31% in Mumbai, 41% in Kolkata and 44% in Chennai. Onion prices were down 7% to 8% in Delhi and Kolkata and increased by 8% to 11% in Chennai and Mumbai, respectively. Tomato prices have fallen substantially over the previous year, dropping by 60-66% in all the metro cities.

Himachal Pradesh government simplifies guidelines under apple rejuvenation project



The Himachal Pradesh government has simplified guidelines under the apple rejuvenation project to enhance productivity of the fruit. The apple project is being implemented under Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojna, an official spokesman said here today.

Under the project, old apple orchards are being rejuvenated and replaced with new, improved and regular bearing spur varieties, he said. Nearly 1500 hectares will be brought under the "Apple Rejuvenation Project" during 2014-15, the spokesman said. Orchards covered under the scheme will have 30 per cent pollenisers and micro-irrigation facilities and an additional area of 1000 hectares will be covered under micro-irrigation during the year, he said. The apple economy is contributing about Rs 3200 crore to the state's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), the spokesman said. Himachal is known as the apple state of India and the apple covers nearly 49 per cent of the total area under fruit crop and 87 per cent of the total fruit production. Area under apple crop has increased from 400 hectares in 1950-51 to 3,025 hectares in 1960-61 and 1,06,440 hectares in 2012-13. The crop has become a primary source of livelihood of farmers especially small and marginal in Shimla, Kullu, Kinnaur, Chamba, Mandi and Sirmaur districts. To protect fruit crops especially apple from hailstorms, the state government has enhanced subsidy on anti hail nets from 50 per cent to 80 per cent.



Food minister visits closed tea garden

The Food and Essential Supplies Minister, Jyotiprio Mullick, on Sunday, visited the locked down Raipur tea garden where six labourers died of malnutrition last week. Admitting that they died of malnutrition, Mullick said, "The workers of the closed tea garden will get good quality rice from FCI. One inspector will supervise the distribution of food grains to the workers of three closed gardens." Six persons, including two children, died of malnutrition in Raipur tea garden in the past seven days due to lack of steady supply of quality foodgrains, Seema Halder, Sub-Divisional Officer (SDO) Jalpaiguri had said. The tea garden has been lying closed since 2003. The minister handed over Rs 5,000 each to the family members of the six deceased.

