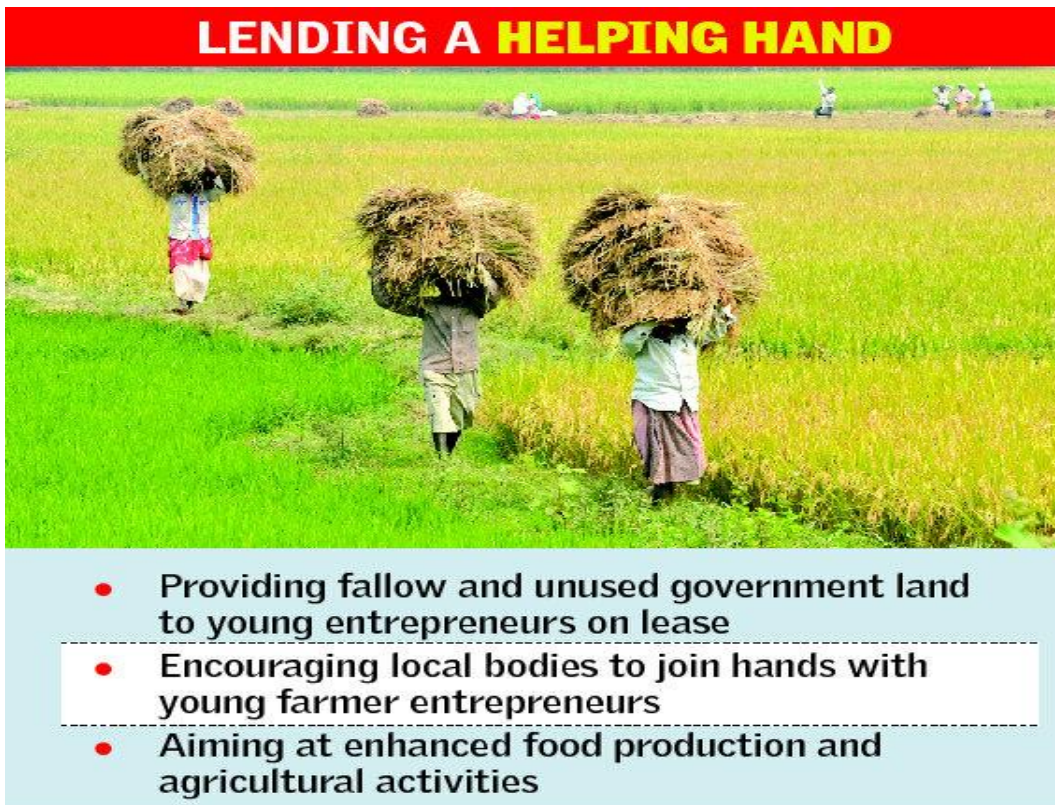


Kerala government mulls policy change to support young entrepreneurs



The latest move is part of the continuing efforts to change archaic policies to encourage young entrepreneurs to invest their talents and skills in agriculture and food processing sectors.

Buoyed by the enthusiastic response among young entrepreneurs ready to launch start-ups in agriculture and allied sectors, the government is keenly debating certain policy changes that would permit them use its fallow and unproductive land for long-term lease at concessional rates.

The latest move is part of the continuing efforts to change archaic policies to encourage young entrepreneurs to invest their talents and skills in agriculture and food processing sectors.

Local bodies' role

Senior officials who are part of the policy formulation told *The Hindu* that a public-private-panchayat model is one among several ideas being discussed to develop a robust ecosystem for young entrepreneurs.

As part of the proposal, the farmer entrepreneurs could tie-up with local bodies and utilise fallow and unproductive land under their possession for agricultural and related ventures. The government expects to overcome bureaucratic hurdles and delay in clearances by roping in panchayats as a key partner in these initiatives.

The local bodies could also reap the benefit of increased revenue through such joint ventures. Other expected returns include enhanced food production and infrastructure development and increase in local commerce.

The government has also plans to use private land acquired for various development works but remaining unused for joint ventures involving young farmer entrepreneurs. Such land would be located and measured to ascertain whether it could be utilised for agriculture, food processing and other value-added initiatives.

Senior officials admitted that panchayats would have to act as facilitators and not a regulatory body exercising its powers to support young entrepreneurs across the State. The government is now planning a series of measures in the coming months to instill confidence among talented youngsters willing to take up start-up projects having social relevance and extending benefits to the common man.

The cotton blow to farmers



With 40 suicides in 100 days, there is an urgent need for farmers to focus on other crops. The scale of finance for cotton is Rs. 24,000 per acre for un-irrigated crop while for red gram, black gram and green gram it is Rs. 11,000, Rs. 9,500 and Rs. 9,750 per acre.

Adilabad seems to be holding onto to its position among the top ranking districts in the country in terms of cotton farmer suicides what with 40 crisis tormented farmers ending lives within a span of 100 days, starting June 24 this year.

The three lakh small and marginal farmers with dry land holdings between two and five acres in this district, depend upon agricultural borrowings for personal and family expenditure in the absence of even subsistence income from agriculture operations.

“One of the ways to ease the agrarian crisis is to wean them away from cotton by enhancing the scale of finance for other crops,” suggests B. Goverdhan Reddy, farmer leader and secretary in the State unit of Telangana Rashtra Samiti. “Cultivation of food crops on

a commercial scale, for example, can be a viable alternative,” he adds.

The scale of finance for cotton is Rs. 24,000 per acre for un-irrigated crop while for red gram, black gram and green gram it is Rs. 11,000, Rs. 9,500 and Rs. 9,750 per acre. “The cost of production of cotton is a minimum of Rs. 20,000 per acre and the same for pulses is about Rs. 8,000,” says retired Assistant Director of Agriculture C. Narsingu.

“If the cultivation of the latter is improved by using modern methods, the yields can be increased to 5 to 6 quintals per acre which will almost be on a par with cotton and the economics will work out fine for the farmers. The pulses command a price of Rs. 4,500 per quintal while cotton is likely to fetch a price of around Rs. 4,000 per quintal,” he points out. Facing Combating the cotton blow

The scale of finance is fixed every year by the District Level Technical Committee (DLTC) based on the cost of production and the minimum support price of a given variety of produce. “The DLTC can instead take into consideration the chances of repayment before deciding upon, or to enhance the scale of finance for crops,” Mr. Reddy opines.

* Adilabad district has around 3 lakh small and marginal farmers and 80 per cent of cultivate cotton.

* The income graph of almost all the small and marginal farmers is perennially in the negative.

* There were 40 suicides of cotton farmers since June 24 and 75 since January this year besides the 64 in the second half of 2013.

*Borrowings from banks and private sources materialise in June-July every year and a good portion of the money is spent on consumption.

*Scale of finance from banks for cotton is Rs. 24,000 per acre for un-irrigated crop while that for redgram, blackgram and greengram is Rs. 11,000, Rs. 9,500 and Rs. 9,750 per acre.

*Cost of production for cotton is Rs. 20,000 per acre and that for pulses is about Rs. 8,000 per acre. The average yield of cotton in dry lands is about 6 quintals and that of the pulses is about 4 quintals.

*Minimum support price for cotton is Rs. 4,050 and pulses command a market price of Rs. 4,500 per quintal on an average.

Former MP bats for Central Agricultural University

The town might lose the opportunity to house the Central Agricultural University, thanks to the inept handling of the issue by the State government, former Member of Parliament Y. Sivaji has said.

The Union government had promised that a Central Agricultural University would be set up with grants under the 12th and 13th Planning Commission under the A.P Reorganization Act-2014, Dr. Sivaji said and called for urgent intervention of Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu in the issue. The allocation of a central Agricultural University found mention in the budget speech made by Union Finance Minister Arun Jaitley.

The Centre had promised agricultural universities to Andhra Pradesh and Rajasthan and a Horticultural University to Telangana and Haryana. The former MP also called up Chief Secretary I.Y.R. Krishna Rao on Tuesday and sought his help in facilitating a meeting with Secretary of Agriculture Bahuguna who was in Hyderabad at present.

Mr. Sivaji further said that some forces were trying to scuttle plans to establish a Central University on the premises of Regional Agricultural Research Station at Lam Farm and in turn were advocating the establishment of a State University.

“We may well lose the opportunity to have a Central Agricultural University, the first of-its-kind in South India. Location of a Central University would give boost to research, bringing eminent agricultural planners like M.S Swaminathan here and facilitate interaction between scientists and farmers,” he said.

With no palm oil in PDS festival fare set to get expensive

The suspension of subsidised palm oil supply through the public distribution system (PDS) is set to dilute Dasara and Deepavali festivities, especially in the homes of poor tribal people in Adilabad.

It may sound unbelievable but there are hundreds of families in this district that may not be able to prepare the special festival eatables this instance in the absence of subsidised cooking oil.

Normally, Adivasis get their first income from agriculture around this time when they harvest pulses. The delay in kharif season by over one month owing to the prolonged dry spell has left the tribal farmers high and dry right at the festival time.

“The consumption of edible oil goes up from 1 to 3 kg during the festivals even in the poorest of tribal homes. However, affording even Rs. 300 to purchase the oil in open market is a difficult task for them,” concedes a fair price shop owner in Jainoor.

“We will go to the weekly shandy in Jainoor on Thursday to purchase all the grains needed to make special eatables. But, we will have to borrow money from the 'saet' (money lender) to do so,” says Pendur Ambubai, a Gond woman from Polasa village in Jainoor mandal,

summing up the situation for all the women who will form a group on the shandy day before approaching the money lender.

Adivasi Gonds, Kolams and Pardhans compulsorily make the garka (garelu), purun podiyan (boorelu) and neesarin (resembles a dosha), all with rice flour. These items need a lot of oil for frying.

“Palm oil distribution has been suspended since April this year. The Central and the State governments are not paying subsidy of Rs. 26 on 1 kg packet of palm oil since then,” revealed M. Anand Reddy, the District Manager, Civil Supplies.

Adilabad was earmarked a quota of about 7 lakh litres of palm oil, at the rate of 1 litre per person per month to white cardholders, before its supply was suspended. The number will go down given the decrease in number of white ration cards following weeding out operations carried out recently.

Raitha Dasara from Saturday

Raitha Dasara, an event organised as part of the Dasara to involve farmers in the festivities, will be held here from September 27 to 29.

Apart from competitions, an interaction session will be held with progressive farmers and agriculture scientists. Competitions include slush race, 75-metre sprint carrying a 50 kg bag of fertilizer, tug of war, ragi grinding, lemon and spoon race.

Apart from this, a State-level cow milking competition will be held on September 28 at the J.K. Grounds. It will be held in two sessions – 6.30 a.m. and 5.30 p.m. A cash prize of Rs. 50, 000 is up for grabs. Pushpa Amaranath, president of Mysore Zilla Panchayat and chairperson of Raitha Dasara sub-committee, said here on Tuesday that district in-charge Minister V. Srinivas Prasad will inaugurate the event on September 27 at Kote Anjaneyaswamy Temple. Joint Director of the Agriculture Department Mahantesh said over 30 stalls

displaying agricultural implements, providing information on organic farming, and dairying would be set up. The departments of sericulture, fisheries, horticulture and veterinary will also put up stalls.

The ABC of irrigation



A gingelly field under drip irrigation

“Water, water every where... nor a drop to drink.”

Water is the fundamental basis of life. We all know that no living being can survive without water. Not only humans and animals, but plants too need water. If any of you have potted plants at home, you would have noticed that after you pour a small mug of water the drooping leaves start straightening up and appear glossy and shining.

During man’s long journey, from a hunter-gatherer to pastoralist (rearer of cattle) to farmer, the importance of water for crops should have become apparent.

Though we cannot place an exact date as to when man started sowing crops and irrigating his land, museum records show that irrigation – which we can simply define as the planned watering of land [as opposed to unplanned watering, through direct rainfall, also known as rain-fed or dry land farming] -- was well known centuries ago.

As early as Raja Raja period

In you happen to visit the famous Saraswathi Mahal library in Thanjavur, in TamilNadu -- smack in the centre of the State's fertile agricultural plains -- you can see for yourself recorded information on palm scrolls as to how Raja Raja, the great Chola emperor who ruled southern India, placed great importance on irrigation and built dams across the Cauvery river to store water. The historical record shows that surface irrigation through canals to fields has also been known to man for thousands of years.

If you've taken a train, or driven down across India, you can't have missed the vast expanse of fields with canals running crisscross all over them. This is what's known as canal irrigation. Usually one end of the canal is connected to a stored water source, a big lake or pond, and from there the canal has been dug to allow water to flow to the fields. This works well most of the time, except during summers when the water body dries up and no water flows through the canal.

A way out of this is to use well water for irrigation, in areas where plentiful groundwater is available. Typically, in the Indian scenario, the farmer yokes two oxen to a pulley connected to a big iron bucket and uses animal power to fetch water: the movement of animals towards and away from the well dips the bucket into the water and hauls it outside.

Of course, given the rapidly depleting levels of ground water, today we have to resort to very deep drilling via bore wells to get water. Powered by diesel motors, bore wells or tube wells help farmers with irrigation. But even these are not fully dependable, because we need plenty of rains to lift the water table; water tables rise and fall depending on the monsoon.

No wastage

So researchers developed another model for irrigation called drip irrigation. This type of irrigation is optimal, since water is not wasted and is given to the plants drip by drip. In this method rubber pipes with holes at regular intervals are laid on the field and one end of the main pipe is connected to a big metallic or plastic drum which stores water. The water flow is controlled through a valve.

An extended version of this drip is the sprinkler. It is common in tea, cardamom and coffee plantations. A shower like head is fitted at some vantage points in pipes and water sprinkled all over the plants.

If you've been observant, one thing you may have realised that the greatest thing about nature is that till now science has not been able to create artificial water.

There have been attempts to get round the use of water: farmers and scientist have experimented with growing crops in coir husk or with other materials, but even here the coir has to be wet for crops to grow; till date no large scale farming has been ever done based on technology alone. Everything depends on nature — soil, water, sunlight... practically everything a crop needs be can be provided only by nature. Technology can only help provided all these things are available.

Who killed the bees?

Federal police were investigating Thursday the alleged poisoning deaths of millions of bees in the Canadian prairies.

These were "highly suspicious deaths," Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) Corporal Mike Boychuk told AFP by telephone from Brandon, Manitoba.

A probe was launched after a beekeeper complained to authorities that more than 200 hives at two locations north of Brandon had been targeted in the last weeks of August.

The exact number of bees killed is not known, but it is estimated to be as high as 10 million, as a typical hive holds between 10,000 and 60,000 bees -- with the count peaking mid-summer.

"All of the bees died at the same time, and a crystalized substance was found at their hives," said Boychuk.

The substance is now being analysed to determine what it is, and whether the deaths are due to foul play.

Police said they have no suspects at the moment. A conviction for causing unnecessary suffering to an animal (birds and bees included) carries a maximum penalty of five years in jail and a fine of Can\$10,000 (\$9,138).

Sudden bee deaths -- linked to pesticides and parasites - have provoked worldwide concern in recent years, as these insects are crucial for agriculture.

Meanwhile in Canada's Ontario province, beekeepers this month launched a half-billion-dollar lawsuit against pesticide makers. The case marks an escalation of tensions between beekeepers and chemical companies, two groups which farmers rely on for pollination and crop protection.AFP

Banks agree to give fresh crop loans

Banks have agreed to renew farm loans to an extent of 25-30 per cent in view of the Telangana government's decision to credit 25 per cent crop loan to the bank accounts of farmers, according to Minister for Agriculture P.Srinivas Reddy.

Mr. Reddy along with Finance Minister Eatala Rajender told reporters after a meeting here that crop insurance would also be ensured. Since time was running out, Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao had approved the Cabinet sub-committee report immediately. GO 532 releasing funds of Rs.4250 crore was issued on Monday itself while GO 116 giving the administrative sanction was issued on Tuesday, the ministers told the media.

Thanking the Chief Minister for the bold step, they said the first instalment of loan clearance would benefit 36 lakh farmers. They said officials of Revenue department would help the farmers secure fresh loans. They asked the farmers to approach the banks as per the village-wise schedule given by them. The TRS government had honoured the promise it made. "We believe in action and not just words", the ministers said and criticised the Congress for making baseless allegations.

Procurement centres would be opened in all the nine districts of the State from October 1. There were 2,000 purchasing centres of the Civil Supplies department apart from Markfed and cooperative societies. Minimum support price of Rs. 1,345 would be given for paddy and Rs. 1,310 for maize.

Claiming that there was no shortage of urea in the State, Mr. Srinivas Reddy said that traders in Mahabubnagar and Nalgonda districts were trying to create artificial scarcity. The requirement of the State was 17.44 lakh tonnes. Urging the farmers not to resort to panic buying Mr Reddy said that if necessary, the government would get additional quota of urea from the Centre.

Krishi Bhagya scheme to increase productivity

The State government has come out with a new scheme to increase agricultural productivity in rain-fed areas. Chief Executive Officer of the Gulbarga Zilla Panchayat T.H.M. Kumar briefing presspersons about the salient features of the Krishi Bhagya scheme in Gulbarga on Tuesday, said the scheme will provide assistance to the farmers in rain-fed areas to dig up agriculture ponds.

“This would help in achieving the twin objective of harvesting every drop of rainwater and use it optimally through either sprinkler or drip irrigation to provide irrigation to the crops raised in the rain fed areas,” Mr. Kumar said. This would automatically increase agriculture production and improve the economic life of the farmers. It would also help them save the standing crops even if the rain fails at a later stage.

He said that government has decided to implement the Krishi Bhagya scheme in five taluks of the Gulbarga district. The scheme would also encourage farmers to diversify their agriculture crops by taking up vegetable cultivation as well as animal husbandry activities by providing liberal assistance. Mr. Kumar said each farmer would be eligible to claim the benefits of the scheme for one hectare of land.

As many as 200 farmers per taluk would be selected this year for the construction of the agriculture ponds. Another 10 more farmers would be eligible, in each of the five taluks, to take up the polyhouse cultivation of crops. The government has fixed the cost of the construction of the agriculture ponds, installing the drip irrigation with either diesel or solar power connections at Rs 1.25 lakh per hectare.

‘Farmers will get assistance to take up rainwater harvesting and drip irrigation’

Cooperative banks to disburse loan against warehouse receipts

In keeping with the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development's policy of extending loans to farmers against warehouse receipts of farm produce, the branches of Tiruchi District Central Cooperative Bank and Primary Agricultural Cooperative Banks will be extending loans to farmers based on warehouse receipts, said G.Rajendra Prasad, Joint Registrar of Cooperatives, Tiruchi.

Speaking at a function held at Lalgudi on Tuesday, he said the scheme had helped farmers to avail loan against commodities kept in cold storages and warehouses. It was aimed at preventing distress sale of farm produce. The loan would help the farmers to meet their emergency expenses. The farmers could sell the products when they get a good price, and repay the loan. All PACBs and TDCCB branches would accept warehouse receipts for lending loan. Suresh Kumar, Assistant General Manager, NABARD, said as many as 29 warehouses had been constructed in Tiruchi district on PACB premises. The farmers could store their produce in the warehouses and they would be given receipts for it. Interested farmers could get loans with the help of these receipts from commercial banks.

N.Ramaiah, Deputy Registrar, K.K.Selvaraj, Managing Director, Tiruchi District Cooperative Union, and S.M.Balan, Lalgudi Sivagnanam Agricultural Sales Association, spoke.

Krishi Mela from Saturday

The four day annual Krishi Mela- 2014 will begin on the University of Agricultural Sciences Dharwad campus here on Saturday. Speaking to presspersons here on Tuesday, UAS Vice-Chancellor D.P. Biradar said this year's mela would focus on drought and flood management.

The main focus would be on four components of farming namely, water conservation, watershed management, irrigation management and reclamation of saline land.

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah would inaugurate the mela on Sunday. Governor Vajubhai Vala would visit the mela on Monday. As many as 550 stalls displaying seeds, crops, agriculture implements, and traditional foods would be set up.

Grievances redress meeting

The monthly agriculture grievances redress meeting is scheduled to be held at the Collectorate on September 30 at 11 a.m., a release says.

Heavy use of chemical fertilizers destroys pepper vines: study



A study conducted by scientists of Kerala Agricultural University (KAU) found that heavy and unscientific application of chemical fertilizers without regular application of lime was the major reason for the spread of yellowing disease in pepper vines.

The study was led by K.M. Sreekumar, Associate Professor, Department of Entomology, Agriculture College, Padnnakkad.

Sugandhi project

It was conducted under the four-year Sugandhi project, organised jointly by the Indian Institute of Spices Research, Kozhikode, KAU and the Agriculture Department, to analyse the soil-based problems and find the cause-effect relationship, especially the post-monsoon yellowing disease.

Many pepper gardens begin to show yellowing after the monsoon. The majority recover by the next monsoon, but the symptoms recur for 2 to 3 years, affecting the entire pepper vines garden,” Dr. Sreekumar said. It was found that the soil PH was near-neutral in healthier gardens. Studies showed that such plots were formed with higher level of beneficial micro flora, thanks to the regular application of lime or dolomite, and the low presence of pathogenic micro flora.

Plant growth

With the application of dolomite, the availability of both calcium and magnesium were ensured, resulting in higher plant growth and dark green colour.

Application of potassium results in higher bolder grains with more weight, said P. Jayaraj, soil scientist, KAU.

Thirty-four pepper gardens with severe yellowing disease and 25 plants each were supplied with nutrients in a balanced manner by the application of dolomite, Trichoderma, enriched neem cake, Pseudomonas bacteria, micro nutrient mixture and organic manure, he said .

By the end of the second year, yellowing had reduced to a good extent. Moreover, the productivity of the vines had improved, he added. This showed that the yellowing problem was caused by imbalance and deficiency of nutrients rather than nematodes or mealy bugs as was earlier thought, Dr. Srekumar said.

District panchayat to take up 602 projects this year

The programme will cost Rs. 88.42 crore

This financial year, the district panchayat will take up 602 projects worth Rs.88.42 crore. According to president Nimala Jimmy, the 602 projects also include spill over from last year—132 projects under Special Component Plan (SCP) and 22 projects under Tribal Sub Plan (TSP).

Projects worth Rs.32.47 crore have been formulated under the general head, while Rs.14.62 crore would be expended under SCP. The 22 projects under TSP have a total outlay of Rs.1.85 crore. Ms. Jimmy said that the thrust of projects in the productive sector would be on animal husbandry and paddy cultivation. This includes the Rs.37.80 lakh earmarked for the 240 primary cooperatives in the dairy sector, which accounts for 33 per cent of the milk production in the district. In an unprecedented step, the plan has allocated Rs.17 lakh for the maintenance of the combined harvesters and other agriculture machinery. The availability of combined harvesters had been one of the major hurdles in completing the harvesting on time during the past many seasons. The district panchayat hopes to complete the maintenance work soon and keep the combined harvesters ready for the coming season, she said.

The annual plan also provides for developmental and modernisation work at the Regional Poultry Farm, Manarcadu, she said. She said another ambitious project was the Rs.185.62 lakh allocated to solve the drinking water problems at the Scheduled Caste colonies in the district.

The district panchayat also plans to take up 264 projects of road development, which have a total outlay of Rs.21.25 crore. Out of this, Rs.2.15 crore will be spent on road development in SC sector, she

said. The plan also envisages to take up projects like 'Gurukulam' aimed at a focused endeavour against the drug and liquor menace among students; 'Sreshta' and ayurveda package for sports persons; 'Poornasree' for diabetics and 'Vidyajyothi' for raising the pass percentage at the Class X level, she said.

The district panchayat had achieved 65.21 per cent plan target. With more time available for taking up projects, the rate of achievement could be higher this year, she said.

The thrust of projects in the productive sector would be on animal husbandry and paddy cultivation.

Farmers oppose acquisition of fertile land

The people of Kutyar, Padur and Kalathur villages are up in arms over acquisition of fertile agricultural lands for laying of pipelines to connect the underground caverns to store crude oil belonging to Indian Strategic Petroleum Reserves Ltd. (ISPRL) at Padur in Udupi district with Thokur near Mangalore in Dakshina Kannada district.

Speaking to presspersons here on Tuesday, Lawrence Fernandes, Convener of Janajagriti Samiti, said two underground pipelines were planned – output pipeline from Padur to Thokur passing through seven villages in Udupi district and 17 in Dakshina Kannada district, and input pipeline from Mulur to Padur in Udupi district.

In addition to these two pipelines, a high tension electricity line would be installed from Nandikur to Padur villages in Udupi district.

The seven villages in Udupi district where the output pipeline will pass are: Padur, Kalathur, Belapu, Yellur, Santhur, Nandikur and Inna, and the 17 villages in Dakshina Kannada district are: Balkunje, Karnire, Kavathur, Atikaribettu, Simanthur, Talapady, Kilpady, Bellyur,

Thokur, Koikude, Panja, Madya, Surinje, Kuthethur, Katipalla, Bala and Aravateradu Thokur.

The ISPRL and the Karnataka Industrial Area Development Board (KIADB) were confusing the people of the villages in Udupi district on the exact areas through which the pipelines will pass, to pre-empt any public opposition, Mr. Fernandes said. But these pipelines would pass through villages in Udupi district, via fertile fields where paddy, coconut, arecanut, pepper and jasmine were being grown, he said.

Farmers' future

Nearly 60 feet-wide land would be required to lay two pipelines. The pipelines would be laid at a depth of about 15 feet. Besides this, 20 feet land alongside this pipeline would also be acquired to construct roads. The total land required would be around 100 feet wide.

Most of the farmers – who had big families to support – had small land holdings and were totally dependent on agriculture, Mr. Fernandes said. If their lands got divided, the farmers would be left with little or no land, staring at a blank future. While digging land for laying the pipelines, if clay was dug and it spread, the nearby land too would become unfit for cultivation, he said.

Lack of coordination

There was lack of coordination between the officials of ISPRL and KIADB on the routes of pipelines. Yet both the ISPRL and the KIADB were trying to acquire the land unilaterally under the Petroleum Pipelines (Acquisition of Right of User in Land) Act without taking the people of the villages into confidence. The Kalathur Gram Panchayat had received notice for land acquisition a week back. “We condemn this dictatorial method of both ISPRL and KIADB,” he said.

Though the matter had been brought to the notice of District in-charge Minister Vinay Kumar Sorake and the district administration, their response had been lackadaisical, Mr. Fernandes said. The volunteers of the Samiti would visit all the to-be-affected villages in Udupi and Dakshina Kannada to create awareness on the matter and launch an agitation, he said.

· *Nearly 60 feet-wide land would be required just to lay the two pipelines*

· *'Lack of coordination between officials of ISPRL and KIADB on the pipeline route'*

Engagements

Shri Kshetra Dharmasthala Rural Development Project (SKDRDP): National conference on “sustaining small holder agriculture – Issues and challenges”, Umashankar, Regional Director, RBI, Bangalore, inaugurates, S.S. Bhat, Chief General Manager (CGM), Canara Bank, delivers keynote address, P. Sathish, CGM, National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD),

chief guest, 9.30 a.m.,

seminar on “Way forward”, 4.15 p.m., Cultural programme, 5.15 p.m., Mahotsava Bhavan, Dharmsthala.

Sri Krishna Math: Maha Puje, 10 a.m.; Discourse on Srimad Bhagavata, Chandra Shale, 5 p.m.; Discourse on Mahabharata, Rajangana, 6 p.m.; Chamara Seve, Ratri Puje, 7 p.m.

Udonga Montana attacks arecanut plantations in Sagar villages

The infestation of Udonga Montana, an insect, which was limited to only forest areas in Sagar taluk, has now spread to arecanut plantations in the vicinity. These insects feed on inflorescence of bamboo and leaves of a few varieties of trees in the forest.

The infestation of these insects was first reported from the forest areas in Sirsi taluk in June this year. By the first week of July, it had spread to the forests around Mundigesara, Kerekai, Lingadhalli, Hosur and Kuntagodu villages in Sagar taluk. A team of officials from the departments of Forest, Agriculture and Horticulture have visited the affected areas.

In previous years, Udonga Montana insects used to infect forests only during summer and they disappeared at the onset of monsoon. This year, the insects have continued to remain in forest areas even after the monsoon became active. By the first week of September, the arecanut plantations in the forest fringe areas near Mundigesara, Umblesara and Kuntagodu have been infected.

The insects have also been found on pepper, banana and cocoa plants cultivated as sub-crops in arecanut plantations in these areas. The infestation has created panic among farmers, who have been incurring heavy loss every year owing to fruit rot and root grub diseases.

Deputy Director of the Department of Horticulture M. Vishwanath told *The Hindu* that so far, more than 20 acres of arecanut plantations has been infected with Udonga Montana. The insects though don't feed on arecanut palms, but the withering of tender nuts and leaves have been reported owing to their weight.

In addition, the presence of insects in large number on the leaves of arecanut palms affect the photosynthesis process as a result of which the growth of palms gets crippled.

He said that experts in the University of Agriculture and Horticultural Sciences, Shimoga, would undertake a study on the infestation and submit a report to the government in this regard soon.

· *The first infestation of Udonga Montana reported in June this year in Sirsi taluk*

· *Horticulture and Agriculture departments to soon undertake a study of the attack*

State will promote farm mechanisation, says Minister

Agriculture Minister P. Pulla Rao said that the concept of 'Polam Pilustondi' was to create awareness among farmers on how to make farming profitable by adopting best farming methods, particularly farm mechanisation, and check migration from rural to urban areas. He said 'Polam Pilustondi' was one of the five programmes that Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu had initiated to put the State back on rails. The other programmes are: Badi Pilustondi, Neeru-Chettu, Arogyam and poverty alleviation.

Mr. Rao said 'Polam Pilustondi' would continue in future. He said that the government would write off Rs. 50,000 of the crop loan of each small and marginal farmer in the first phase that would begin in the first fortnight of the next month.

To weed out middlemen, he said that the government would sanction vans at 50 per cent subsidy to operate mobile rythu bazaars and Rs.

1 crore for construction of buildings in towns/cities and Rs. 7.50 lakhs for sheds in villages for marketing fish.

Agriculture Minister Pulla Rao says the government will offer farm equipment at 50 per cent to farmers and harvesting machines on hire to a group of farmers

Disease-resistant fish seed to fetch good profits to farmers



ICAR governing body member M.V.S. Nagi Reddy (extreme right) greeting Central Institute of Freshwater Aquaculture Director P. Jayasankar in Vijayawada

Central Institute of Freshwater Aquaculture (CIFA) released disease-free Jayanti Rohu fish seed. Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) governing body member M.V.S. Nagireddy and CIFA Director P. Jayasankar handed over the new variety seed to the farmers on Tuesday.

Participating in the one-day National Surveillance Programme for Aquatic Animal Diseases (NSPAAD) here, the officials released the seed on which the CIFA has done investigations for about 10 years.

The disease resistant seed will give good profits to the aqua farmers, said the scientists.

On the occasion, Mr. Nagireddy said that nearly 30 per cent of the revenue was being generated from agriculture of which 50 per cent was from aquaculture. He advised farmers to follow scientific methods in cultivating shrimp and fish for good returns.

Severe losses

Stating that shrimp farmers suffered severe losses in coastal districts, particularly in East and West Godavari districts last year, Mr. Reddy said farmers in Thailand, China and other countries were raising Vennami extensively by following disease resistance methods.

Mr. Jayasankar said that NSPAAD was jointly organised by the ICAR, National Bureau of Fish Genetic Research (NBFGR), National Fisheries Development Board (NFDB), CIFA and the Fisheries Department.

Disease diagnosis

Issues such as rapid disease diagnosis, disease-free locations and human resources development were discussed in the programme.

During 2014-15, the CIFA would allocate 40 per cent of its budget in developing CIFA's Regional Office. A research and training centre would be set up in Vijayawada, said the director and released toll free number for aqua farmers.

The officers also released Fish Health Cards for farmers and NSPAAD leaflets on prevention of diseases among various fish varieties.

Mr. Jayasankar said despite attacking of diseases on aquaculture, there was not much scientific information and each farmer was

spending about 10 per cent of the investment on preventing and controlling diseases on each acre.

Joint Director (Fisheries) of Visakhapatnam P. Koteswara Rao, Dean, Faculty of Fisheries of Sri Venkateswara Veterinary University T.V. Ramana, scientists B.K. Das, P.K. Sahoo, Seshagiri, farmers, researchers and students participated.

CIFA Director P. Jayasankar says a research and training centre will be set up in Vijayawada

Water level in Vaigai dam goes up to 44.8 feet

Inflow into the Vaigai dam has been improving slowly, thanks to moderate to heavy showers in Vaigai dam catchments and massive discharge from Periyar dam.

Almost 80 per cent of total discharge from Periyar dam has been reaching Vaigai dam. Flow in Kottakudi and Vagai Rivers was also good owing to moderate showers in some parts of the district last evening.

Despite sharp slump in inflow into Periyar dam, the Public Works engineers have been withdrawing 1,400 cusecs of water from the dam for the past four days to improve storage in Vaigai dam and to ensure supply of water for irrigating the single crop in double cropping area in Dindigul and Madurai districts till harvest. They did not pay much importance to raise the Periyar dam level to 142 feet.

However, inflow into Periyar dam dwindled further to 51 cusecs owing to poor rainfall in the catchments and at the dam site. Water level fell to 130.8 feet in Periyar dam. Vaigai dam has 44.8 foot of water. It has been receiving 1,323 cusecs and the discharge stood at 960 cusecs.

Farmers in rainfed areas were happy over sudden showers in certain pockets because it would be useful to raise pulses and oil seeds, the prime crops in rainfed areas. This rain will also recharge rural tanks and wells, helping cattle and goat rearers. Long-term crops like banana and sugarcane and horticulture crops will also be protected, farmers added.

Rainfall recorded at various places at 8 a.m. (in mm) in Theni: Thekkadi 0.8, Veerapandi 16, Vaigai dam 37.1, Gudalur 7.5 and Uthamapalayam 12. In Dindigul district, Dindigul 21.5, Kodaikanal 38.9, Nilakottai 60.4, Palani 17, Veda sandur 30.30, Chatrapatti 19, Veda sandur Tobacco Research Station 32.2, Kodaikanal boat club 23.75 and Kamatchipuram 93.5 mm.

Campco to train farmers' children for civil service examinations in Mangalore

The cooperative will identify certain educational institutions where the training will be given. It will also sponsor the cost of training.

Farmers, who are members of the Central Arecanut and Cocoa Marketing and Processing Cooperative Ltd, can now hope to have their children pass the civil service examinations.

The cooperative will soon launch a project under which the aspirants will be trained for the examinations.

Announcing this at the 40th annual general body meeting of the cooperative here on Tuesday, the president, Konkodi Padmanabha, said that 30 per cent of the member development funds will be reserved for the training.

The objective will be to help children of farmer members of the cooperative get into the Indian Administrative Service, Indian Police

Service, Indian Foreign Service, Indian Revenue Service and other civil services for which examinations and interviews are conducted by the Union Public Service Commission.

Training will also be given to children for the examinations conducted by the Karnataka Public Service Commission.

Later Mr. Padamanabha told *The Hindu* that training and orientation will start from the pre-university level itself.

The cooperative will identify certain educational institutions where the training will be given. It will also sponsor the cost of training.

He said that there were many intelligent children of farmers who do not have proper guidance on how to enter civil services.

The number of civil servants from the State was less when compared to the representation from other states. The objective of the project was to ensure that as many children of farmers held the reign of the administration.

Mr. Padmanabha said that the privilege of entering into the civil services should not be the only domain of urbanites.

Earlier at the meeting Mr. Padmanabha said that the cooperative has plans to enter into the manufacturing and marketing of packaged drinking water from next year.

It was exploring if drinking water having some medicinal contents could be marketed. The president said that more cooperative societies should enter into arecanut marketing.

There should be more cooperative arecanut buyers in the market to thwart attempts by some private traders to destabilise the market. Farmers too should sell their produce to cooperative societies who paid the "actual tax" to the government

Dairy farmers want milk price to be increased

Aavin pays Rs. 7 or Rs. 8 less than what private dairies pay for a litre of milk



TOUGH:If Aavin does not revise the procurement prices, many dairy farmers may veer towards private players

Milk cooperative societies have come under severe pressure over the past few months as private dairies are offering better prices than Aavin. There is apprehension that the cooperative institutions might be weakened if the private dairies manage to wean away more dairy farmers.

The common grouse of dairy farmers is that Aavin's procurement price is Rs. 7 to Rs. 8 less than the price offered by private dairies for a litre of milk.

The drought-like condition over the past three years has compounded their woes. Many complain that they are finding it difficult to maintain cattle. "Rearing cattle has become very difficult. There is no place for the cattle to graze. Cattle feed, including paddy straw, has become very expensive. Given the returns we get now, it is hardly worth the labour," says A. Ariyan of Ammapatti near Thuraiyur in Tiruch district.

Aavin offers Rs. 23.32 a litre for cow's milk with 8.5 per cent SNF (solid non fat) and 4.5 per cent fat content. But most dairy farmers get just about Rs. 21 a litre as their milk has lesser SNF and fat content. (Although the price for buffalo milk is higher, most farmers do not rear buffaloes as it entails more expenditure but poor returns).

Private dairies are opening procurement centres and even offering to procure milk from the door step of producers. They offer up to Rs. 30 a litre for cow's milk. "A private dairy has opened a centre here and is offering Rs. 29 a litre. Some milk producers have started supplying to them. Many others are tempted to do so; but are holding back owing to their loyalty to society," says P. Kanagaraj, Secretary, Milk Producers Cooperative Society, Ammapatti.

Dairy farmers want the government to increase the procurement price of cow's milk to Rs. 30 and buffalo milk to Rs. 40 a litre. The government should increase the retail price too. Otherwise, cooperative unions will sustain losses, says N. Ganesan, joint secretary, Tamil Nadu Milk Producers' Welfare Association.

Procurement at the Tiruchi District Cooperative Milk Producers Union (Aavin), which has over 725 societies in Tiruchi, Karur, and Perambalur districts, has come down to 2.67 lakh litres from 3.45 lakh litres a day over the past few months. But officials in the union maintain that it was normal to have such fluctuations. A senior official said milk unions were extremely loyal and would not switch over to private dairies. "That is just a mirage. We take care of their needs and they will stay with us," he said. But a section of dairy farmers are not so optimistic. "Our members are hopeful that Chief Minister Jayalalithaa will increase the procurement price soon. Otherwise, it may not take long for the private operators to tempt dairy farmers to switch loyalties," said Mr. Kanagaraj.

Aavin offers Rs. 23 or Rs. 21 for a litre of milk, Private dairies offer up to Rs. 30 a litre of milk

Heavy rain in Salem, Erode



The poor condition of the Mullai Nagar III Cross in Salem city following rain, and (below) a view of Bhavani river in Erode on Tuesday

Stagnation of water hits residents hard

Salem city and other parts of the district experienced sharp showers for some time late in the evening. The rainfall brought much respite to the people suffering under sweltering heat for the last few days.

Sankagiri experienced the maximum rainfall of 110mm in the last 24 hours that ended at 8am on Tuesday.

Omalar got 93mm during the same period followed by Edappadi 79mm; Salem 57.2mm; Mettur 55.6mm; Vazhappadi 10.6mm, Yercaud 3.4mm, and Attur 1.6mm.

Due to the non-cleaning of the plastic wastes, the open drainage system along the Junction main road from Sona College to State Bank Colony road junction, over flowed last night.

A part of the Junction main road remained water logged even on Tuesday morning, affecting the flow of vehicular traffic and movement of the pedestrians.

The stagnation of rain and drainage water in residential localities like Mullai nagar in the Junction area converted the roads in to slushy one, causing untold hardship to the local residents.

The people residing in the residential localities at Suramangalam, Junction main road complain that the open drains get blocked often due to the indiscriminate dumping of garbage and plastic materials.

The corporation too turns a blind eye to this recurring problem.

They urged the authorities to take initiative to prevent the people from dumping the garbage and plastic wastes in the drains.

Various parts of the district, including Salem city, experienced sharp showers for some time for the second consecutive day on Tuesday evening. The sharp showers inundated many low lying areas and also affected the flow of traffic.

Erode

A spell of heavy rainfall in and around Erode city in the last 24 hours ending 8am on Tuesday raised hopes among residents for recharge of aquifer. The rainfall of 45mm recorded in the city limits is the highest so far this year, according to official sources. There must be a few more similar spells for recharge of groundwater, according to PWD sources.

In fact, infiltration can happen only if the rainfall is average and staggered over a lengthy duration. Otherwise, excessive rains at one go would cause run off, the sources explained.

The groundwater level has been depleting fast in the urban area over the years. At some places such as Rangampalayam and Thindal, borewells have to be dug for at least 600 feet for sourcing water.

Based on its finding that groundwater in six out of 20 blocks are over-exploited, and withdrawal in three blocks exceeds 85 per cent of the utilisable recharge, the Central Ground Water Board has advocated appropriate groundwater legislation to regulate digging of borewells.

Since the rainfall and the return seepage from the canals, irrigation tanks and reservoirs are the important sources of groundwater recharge, the Board has recommended micro level studies in the canal command areas to explore the prospects of conjunctive use of surface and groundwater resources; and a participatory approach involving farmers, Non-Government Organisations, and the government departments for better water management practices.

Sathyamangalam received the highest rainfall of 90mm followed by 86mm in Gobichettipalayam, and 80mm in Kodiveri. This resulted in substantial inflow from inlets into the Bhavani river.

Rainfall in other places: Elanthakuttaimedu — 64mm, Kavindapadi and Kangayam — 58 each, Kungampadi — 34, Orathupalayam — 30, Bhavani — 26, Bhavani Sagar — 24, Sivagiri — 25, Olapalayam — 18, Modakurichi and Arahcalur — 12 each, and Chennimalai — 9mm.

'60 pc of job schemes fund to be utilised for agriculture and allied activities only'

The Centre has directed states, including Karnataka, to utilise 60 per cent of the funds released under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) for implementing works directly linked to agriculture and allied activities during 2014-15.

In a communication to the State Government, R. Subramanyam, joint secretary, Union Ministry of Rural Development, said that “60 per cent of the works to be taken up in a district in terms of cost should be creation of productive assets directly linked to agriculture and allied activities through development of land, water and trees.”

Six activities

Following the Centre’s order, the State’s Rural Development and Panchayat Raj Ministry has decided to spent 60 per cent of the allocation on six activities and they are – farmers’ land development, farmer’s threshing yard field, sheep/cattle shed, our village – our water, our village tank, and our land our way.

The Union Rural Development Ministry said that all the work taken up by Gram Panchayats, the cost of the material component including the wages of the skilled and semi-skilled workers should not exceed 40 per cent of the GP level. There are 5631 GPs in the State and 96 per cent of works are executed by GPs.

For works taken up by the implementing agencies other than GPs, the overall material component including wages of the workers should not exceed 40 per cent at the district level, MGNREGA Special Commissioner Prabhash Chandra Ray told *The Hindu*.

The Centre has approved budget for Rs 3151.76 crore for the MGNREGA in 2014-15 for 9.34 crore person days work. The Centre has so far released Rs 1055.59 crore as on August end. The total expenditure incurred was Rs 746.71 crore.

A total number of households registered under the job scheme are 57.23 lakh and job cards issued to 56.69 lakh households. The department has been paying amounts to labourers and material purchase through electronically to bank accounts in all districts. A total of 1,000 engineers and 400 agriculture and forestry graduates

have been engaged through manpower agencies to monitor quality of works executed by GPs.

Monsoon withdraws, but more rain likely

A slow-whirling cyclonic circulation holds the promise of fairly widespread rainfall for Kerala on Wednesday and Thursday.

The wind regime over the subcontinent is changing, signalling the start of the gradual withdrawal of the southwest monsoon from the country, but Kerala is likely to receive some more good rain in the week ahead.

The monsoon withdrew from West Rajasthan and Kutch on Tuesday, which incidentally was the autumnal equinox for the northern hemisphere. Soon, the south-westerly winds will stall over the peninsula and then give way to north-easterly winds as the southern hemisphere starts warming up.

A slow-whirling cyclonic circulation hovered over the Lakshadweep-Comorin area on Tuesday, holding the promise of fairly widespread rainfall for Kerala on Wednesday and Thursday.

The India Meteorological Department (IMD), in its bulletin, said the outlook was in favour of fairly widespread rainfall over south peninsular India during the subsequent days, till September 30.

The models showed the possibility of isolated heavy rainfall in the State on Thursday.

The State received an area-weighted rainfall of 2,084.5 mm from June 1 to September 23 against a normal of 1,964.5 mm for the period. The excess rainfall received so far comes to six per cent. The monsoon seems set to take this lead to the end of the season for Kerala.

THE NEW INDIAN EXPRESS

[We Can Limit Climate Change: IPCC Head R K Pachauri](#)

UNITED NATIONS: Even as the world is faced with the growing threat of climate change, it already has the means to build a more sustainable world and avert widespread disruptions and destruction if there is a will to act, Dr R.K. Pachauri, the head of the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change(IPCC), said Tuesday.

Failing to take action now will only add to the costs of dealing with the consequences of climate change later, he warned.

Speaking at the inauguration of the UN Climate Change Summit, which was attended by more than 120 heads of state or government, he said, "We have the means to limit climate change and build a better future."

Cataloging the increase in factors impacting climate change like the rise in surface temperatures and the level of greenhouse gases unprecedented in the past 800 000 years, he said there was a small window of opportunity act. "If we want a chance to limit the global rise in temperature to two degrees celsius, our emissions should peak by 2020. If we carry on with business as usual our opportunity to remain below the two-degree limit will slip away well before the middle of the century."

The international consensus is that an increase of more than two degrees celsius in global mean temperature above the preindustrial

level is considered the tipping point at which dangers to the environment intensify and could become irreversible.

He said, "We are told that limiting climate change will be too expensive. It will not. But wait until you get the bill for inaction. There are cost for taking action, but they are nothing compared to costs of inaction."

Many solutions are available to limit the impact of climate change while continuing economic development, said Pachauri, who shared the 2007 Nobel Peace prize as the head of IPCC and is also the director general of The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI) in New Delhi.

"While some technologies need additional development, many are already available. Renewable energy is a real option. Nearly half the world's new electric generating capacity in 2012 came from renewables. We also have tremendous opportunity to improve energy efficiency. And we can reduce emissions further by stopping deforestation."

PM's Live Radio Address on Dashmi

NEW DELHI: Prime Minister Narendra Modi will address the nation live on radio to interact with people across the country and first of these radio broadcasts has been scheduled for October 3 Vijaya Dashmi day.

In a continuation of his strategy to reach out to the maximum number of people, the Prime Minister will speak on various issues on the occasion. The PM is likely to touch upon on the issues of cleanliness and women's safety to drive home his point. Modi has chosen a public holiday to speak to people so that his speech is heard by all even in the remotest corners of the country.

Earlier, he had spoken to school children on Teachers Day on September 5. Later on his birthday on September 17 the Prime Minister spent over an hour replying to people, who had greeted him on his birthday on Twitter. Meanwhile, the PM's Office has also created a separate Open Forum website--MyGov.nic.in for citizens to share their comments. "Citizens should share their ideas and best practices on development, good governance and other issues.

The PM would refer to the Open Forum before the programme and may even refer to some of the points made on the Forum. Earlier, on September 6, the Prime Minister talked about connecting with people through radio and sought ideas." Since then there has been an extremely positive feedback on the idea of having a radio programme. Netizens across India have welcomed this idea," the PMO's statement said.

TS Initiates Steps to Supply Fertilisers

HYDERABAD: After the late monsoon, the demand for fertilisers is on high in Telangana.

As the sowing area for commercial crops like cotton has increased, the agriculture department is taking all measures to ensure regular supply of fertilisers across the state.

From the beginning of this kharif season, the officials have been continuously supplying fertilizers to the district centers.

So far 7.2 lakh metric tonnes of fertilizers have been supplied, K Ramulu, deputy director of agriculture department has said.

Out of the 9 lakh metric tonnes of fertilizers needed, around 7.2 mt have already arrived and the rest will be supplied by the end of this month, Ramulu said.

The stock is mostly being imported from other states as there were very few fertilizer companies in the state.

Usually the demand for fertilisers is higher between August and September as it is crucial for Kharif crop.

The agriculture department started supplying urea and DAP (di ammonium phosphate) to the districts from the beginning of August, according to officials of agriculture department.

Consortium of Coconut Producers Cos

KOCHI: A consortium of Coconut Producers Companies in the state was formed by combining 12 such companies in the state to coordinate and provide financial as well as technical assistance to farmers.

The consortium is being formed with the support of the Coconut Development Board.

“We will intensify the efforts to get the `15-cr grant announced by the state government in connection with the production of Neera. The state cabinet on March 5, 2014, had decided to give the amount to the companies. The special working group of the government had approved the proposal on June 30. But the amount has not been given,” said Shajahan Kanjiravilayil, Chairman of the Consortium at a press conference here on Tuesday.

He added that the sale of Neera in the state could generate a revenue of `5400 cr annually and if the product is taxed the state government could make good money out of it. He alleged that instead of giving the agreed money to farmers’ companies, the state government now wants to revive the Coconut Development Corporation which which was liquidated seven years ago.

Agri Reforms on The Cards

BHUBANESWAR: The State Government has decided to amend the Odisha Agricultural Produce Market (OAPM) Act, 1958, to include a provision of e-market for the farmers and open the sector to private players. The amended Act aims to provide farmers a barrier-free market.

Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik has given his nod to the proposal and a Bill is likely to be brought in this regard in the next session of the Assembly.

Centre has been advising the States to amend the OAPM Act and bring reforms in agricultural marketing to strengthen and streamline the sector.

A high-level committee headed by the Chief Secretary has been constituted to examine the issues relating to restructuring of the agricultural marketing sector and suggest reforms.

The amendment will facilitate establishment of agricultural markets and development of marketing infrastructure under PPP mode, so as to promote private sector investment.

Besides, commodity specific special markets will be set up to enable the farmers to sell their produce directly, both to Regulated Marketing Committee (RMC) and private buyers.

For greater decentralisation, the post of Director, Agricultural Marketing will be separated from Member Secretary of the Odisha State Agricultural Marketing Board (OSAMB) while respective roles of the Directorate of Agricultural Marketing, OSAMB and RMCs will be further defined to clear ambiguities.

Besides, it also aims to conduct election to RMCs, which will be conducted by the State Cooperative Election Commission

Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather



Cloudy

Rain: 0

Humidity: 89

Wind: normal

Tomorrow's Forecast

Wednesday, Sep 24

Max 32° | Min 24°



Partly Cloudy

Sunrise: 05:57

Sunset: 06:05

Barometer: 1009

Thursday, Sep 25

Max 32° | Min 26°

Extended Forecast for a week

Friday
Sep 26



34° | 26°

Cloudy

Saturday
Sep 27



33° | 26°

Cloudy

Sunday
Sep 28



33° | 26°

Partly Cloudy

Monday
Sep 29



33° | 26°

Partly Cloudy

Tuesday
Sep 30



33° | 26°

Partly Cloudy

Airport Weather

Chennai

Rain: 0

Humidity: 89

Wind: normal

Sunrise: 05:57

Sunset: 06:05

Barometer: 1009



DECCAN Chronicle

Eco-contestant plans green gift

Coimbatore: It is his return gift to Kovai voters. They gave him 523 votes in the mayoral bypoll and he will give 523 saplings to the city which is fast losing its greenery. An environmentalist, S. Chandrasekar, who contested as an Independent and secured 523 votes in the bypolls, has decided to plant that many plants in residential areas.

A resident of Meena Estate, he contested amidst seasoned politicians in the bypolls in Coimbatore, on a mission to create awareness among people on conserving nature.

"I contested the elections as I felt it was an easy way to reach out to people with my message on conserving nature for posterity. I also campaigned through social networking sites, WhatsApp, SMS and by meeting local residents. But I avoided issuing pamphlets as they are made by cutting trees," he said.

Chandrasekar, who also runs Vanam, an environmental NGO, says that he is extremely happy over the votes polled by him. "I expected around 50 votes, but what I got was a huge number. It has motivated me to work harder for the cause of the environment," he said.

The environmentalist has begun preparatory works to fulfil his wish of planting as many saplings as the votes he secured. "The planting drive will begin September 28 and will be completed in another two months. Around 50 volunteers of the Vanam Trust, a few other

environmental organisations and residential welfare associations have also pitched in to help in digging pits and planting saplings," he said.

The forest department has assured to give free saplings for plantation. "Most of the saplings will be planted in my neighbourhood. This will be convenient for me as I can water them. However, as the saplings are in danger from grazing animals, I have sought the support of my well-wishers to buy guards," he said.

Chandrasekar, who is into trading industrial products, has so far planted 1,008 plants across the city.

Business Standard

Fresh lending to agri, MSME sectors improves in Gujarat

Besides opening 1.4 million accounts under the much talked about Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY), the Gujarat banks have fared well in providing fresh lending to agriculture and MSME (micro, small and medium enterprises) sectors during the first quarter of 2014-15. However, advances to weaker and agriculture sectors was a concern as it remained below the target along with housing and education loans.

The State Level Bankers' Committee (SLBC) which met today informed that 14,18,432 accounts have been opened under PMJDY in all the banks in Gujarat till September 23. Ashwani Kumar, chairman & managing director Dena Bank and Gujarat SLBC chairman said

that out of the 12.2 million households in the state 9.3 million have been covered under banking services.

“As on date we have opened over 1.4 million accounts under PMJDY covering 0.8 million households in Gujarat. With this 9.3 million households are now covered under banking services,” Kumar said.

“With this rate we think covering the remaining 2.8 million before January 26, 2015 (deadline as set by Prime Minister Narendra Modi) will not be problem,” said Kumar while talking to mediapersons after attending the SLBC meeting in Ahmedabad.

He informed that banks in Gujarat have been given annual target of Rs 76,627 crore under Service Area Credit Plan (SACP), of which for quarter ended June 30 fresh lending was Rs 25,482 crore which comes to 33.25 per cent achievement in first quarter itself. “This is a good sign with over 33 per cent target achieved in first quarter itself. Usually this is not the case in first quarter of a financial year,” Kumar explained.

In agriculture segment, under SACP, against the target of Rs 49,889 crore disbursement has been Rs 18,604 crore for various agriculture activities for quarter ended June 30, 2014. Even in MSME sector disbursement have been done to the tune of Rs 4,448 crore in first quarter against target of Rs 12,064 crore for the entire year. This comes to 36.87 per cent of the target for the MSME sector.

Kumar expressed concern over the fresh lending under SACP for housing and educational loans with was below target. “The growth was not good in the housing and educational loan segment we have asked the banks to gear up on them,” he said.

As far as advances to priority sector was concerned the SLBC has asked the member banks to explore all possibilities to extend finance under all parameters of priority sector advances to achieve stipulated benchmark.

Though there was absolute growth of Rs 7,253 crore and Rs 1,920 crore over March 2014 in case of advances to agriculture and weaker sections respectively, target for these sectors could not be reached. The benchmark for advances to agriculture was set at 18 per cent and weaker sections 10 per cent of the total advances. Against this, achievement in the first quarter of 2014-15 was 14 per cent and 6 per cent for agriculture and weaker section respectively.

Himachal Pradesh to give 10 more acres to Spices Board

The Himachal Pradesh cabinet on Tuesday decided to lease out 10 more acres to the Spice Board of India to set up a spice park in the Kangra valley. This land would be provided on the campus of the HP Agriculture University in Palampur.

The Cabinet also decided to introduce new licences for inter-state sale of bottled Indian made foreign spirits by non-manufacturer dealers. Currently, the export of bottled spirits is allowed only from distilleries, breweries and bottling plants on receipt of import permit issued by the excise and taxation department.

For state value-added tax, it was decided that a branch of any nationalised bank could function as a treasury bank for government transactions.

The cabinet also gave its nod for providing financial assistance of Rs 40 crore to the state-run Himachal Pradesh State Cooperative Marketing And Consumer's Federation Ltd (HIMFED) as margin money from National Co-operative Development Corporation for production, processing, marketing, storage, export and import of agricultural produce.

The cabinet gave its approval for transferring land in the name of National Council of Science Museum, Ministry of Culture for the construction of Science Centre at Palampur in the campus of H P Agriculture University. Approval was accorded for the felling of trees on government and private land in Shimla as recommended by the Cabinet sub-committee.

Permission was also given to reduce the permit fee of kail pine cones to Rs 500 a quintal instead of Rs 1,000 as there was a sharp drop in kail cone export due to the raising of export fee.

Monsoon tapering after delay of 23 days

started withdrawing from the western parts of Rajasthan, which will gradually bring an end to its four-month journey across the Indian peninsula for 2014. The withdrawal started after a delay of almost 23 days.

The monsoon, which entered the country on June 5, had an uneven run in 2014, as it was deficient by 40 per cent in the first 45 days of the season.

Thereafter, it did pick up pace, narrowing the deficit to almost 11 per cent as of Tuesday. From now on, the rains would gradually retract from the remaining parts of the country, the southernmost tip being the last.

The four-month season is crucial for not only India's agriculture growth but provides vital impetus to overall economy. The monsoon season brings 70 per cent of the country's annual rainfall.

In early July, the sowing of kharif crops was almost 50 per cent less than 2013 because of delayed rain.

However, as the monsoon staged a smart recovery, planting of kharif crops too picked pace, pushing the acreage to almost last year's level.

The revival, though, was not uniform across the country and in some pockets the early deficit continued leading to drought-like conditions in major northwestern states — Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh.

The water levels in 86 major reservoirs across the country, which had dropped to around 30 per cent of the last year levels initially, are still less at around 90 per cent of the last year's levels, which could prove crucial if winter rains are not good.

However, experts feel that late resurgence of southwest monsoon could provide good moisture to the soil, vital for rabi sowing.

THE HINDU BusinessLine

We want to be an 'effective advisory' for farmers

New Delhi,

Shilpa Divekar Nirula has taken over as the Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of farm input company Monsanto's India operations at a time when the Government is debating on whether or not to allow controlled field trials of genetically modified (GM) crops. While, on the one hand, senior government functionaries have hinted that trials may be permitted, on the other, opposition from individuals and NGOs to GM crops have gone shriller. In an interview with *BusinessLine*, Nirula explains how she plans to take the company forward in this environment and how Monsanto is planning to scale up its advisory services beyond India. Edited excerpts:

What will be your focus areas as the CEO?

We will continue to focus on four broad segments – corn, cotton, vegetables and herbicides. Monsanto has been in India for over 40 years and our efforts have been to understand the needs of the farmer and how best we can address those needs. India is all set to emerge as largest producer of cotton this year and we would have played a part in that. Going forward, we are looking at how we can evolve into taking a more solutions-oriented approach to a farmer and how can we become an advisory more effectively with more capabilities.

What kind of solutions will you offer?

In the Indian context, there is an opportunity for farmers to know how to crop in a particular condition so that they can derive the most in

each season. Farmers know how to farm but there's a gap in getting timely and relevant input. There are eight million corn farmers and about seven million cotton growers so there is an opportunity for us to fill that gap.

About 4-5 years back, we started a programme through which we gave inputs to farmers on mobile devices. Once a farmer registers for this service we track factors such as humidity, temperature in his area and give related information. We also send voice messages and have developed language capabilities. We have a call centre where the farmers can call and ask specific questions. Now we have a million farmers registered on this platform. While we will focus on our core crops and pursue biotechnology, such solutions bring tremendous benefits to farmers.

How does this solution approach lead to more business for Monsanto?

Every time a query comes in we learn a lot of more of the problems being faced by the farmers. We also get feedback to see how our products. This is a good way to stay in touch with the farmers through the year.

At this point in time we have not looked at monetising this platform but considering that the platform can go larger we have seen interest from other players to partner us. The learning we have had in India can also be useful for taking this solution to other markets such as Africa or the Philippines where the farmer profile is similar to India.

What is the status of trials in India?

We are given to understand that the Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee has started meeting again. It is important to continue trailing process because otherwise we won't know if any of these products meet the requirements of our farmers in our conditions. In

agriculture, every season is so unique and it is important to have variety of data in all types of conditions.

But we also understand that every Government needs to follow a process. So it's important to be patient. We remain hopeful that the trailing process should go on.

Are you launching any new products in India?

We are working on next stage of insect-tolerant and herbicide-tolerant technology. India has strong regulatory systems and we are in different stages of regulatory process with next generation cotton and corn technology. So we will go commercial as and when we get the approvals.

How do you deal with all controversies and opposition to GM crops?

I think there is opportunity for those involved in experiencing the benefits of technology to share their experience. Every

technology goes through rigorous testing and there are enough studies from around the world.

When it comes to specific voices (who oppose) there is an opportunity to clarify even more by people like us. Of the eight million cotton farmers in India, 90 per cent use these technologies. But there is no unified voice that comes out.

There are outstanding stories out there on the success of these technologies. There is no way to channelise these voices as opposed to a few opposing voices that perpetuate a view point.

What targets have you set for yourself?

We reported Rs. 525 crore revenues last year. This year, because of delayed and truant monsoon, we still have to

see how it plays out. We should be targeting a 10 per cent growth if you have a reasonable growth year ahead. But this will come on the back of staying close to the farmers and understanding what they need. That's where we are focussing right now.

Fertiliser sales pick up on revival of rains

The revival of monsoon in July-August has boosted fertiliser sales and nutrient makers are hopeful of a good season on better rabi offtake.

"Sales are a bit better. We are hopeful of a good season," said PS Gehlaut, Managing Director of Indian Potash Ltd.

Though the delayed monsoon had triggered concerns among the nutrient makers, the revival of rains has resulted in a pick up in demand. Also the lower opening stocks with the distribution channel aided the sales.

The monsoon started on a weak note this year and the rain deficit at the end of June stood at 43 per cent, which impacted kharif planting thereby resulting in poor demand for fertilisers. The subsequent pick-up in rains during July and August aided the kharif plantings and latest data from the Agriculture Ministry suggests that overall acreages this year were lower by about 2.5 per cent over last year.

According to industry sources, the sales of urea were marginally down till mid-August, while that of complexes were a bit higher when compared to corresponding period last year.

Urea sales stood at 94.38 lakh tonnes till mid August against 97.75 lakh tonnes in the corresponding period last year. The imports of urea during April-August this year were lower by about a third at around 22 lakh tonnes against corresponding last year's 31.27 lakh tonnes.

The sales of fertiliser complexes such as di-ammonium phosphate (DAP) till mid-August were higher at 19.32 lakh tonnes (15.2 lakh tonnes in corresponding last year). Similarly, the sale of NPK grades complexes was higher at 21.9 lakh tonnes (18.1 lakh tonnes) for the period.

Monsoon starts retreating from N-W as rains lash South

The South-West monsoon has started withdrawing from the country and exited west Rajasthan and Kutch on Tuesday, an India Met Department update said.

This is even as a remnant low-pressure area dumped heavy rain over north-east India and a renewed wet spell unfolded over parts of peninsula.

Typhoon trigger

The rains in the South from a monsoon on retreat are being bankrolled by an intense typhoon-in-making in northwest Pacific, which is initially seen hunkering down towards southeast China.

The building storm is merely waiting for predecessor 'Fung-Wong' to finish formalities and sign off quietly into the East China Sea off Hangzhou and Shanghai in China.

The European Centre for Medium-Term Weather Forecasts indicates that the successor storm has already taken shape off Guam.

The US Joint Typhoon Warning Centre also has put out a cyclone (typhoon) formation warning.

The European Centre expects the system to intensify rapidly and become a very strong typhoon, achieving peak strength just off Taiwan and south-east China coasts by the weekend.

Circulation forms

Both these coasts would come directly under the fury of the typhoon, which is then forecast to rebound towards South Korea and later to Japan.

It is around this time that the monsoon flows in the Arabian Sea and southwest Bay of Bengal get sufficiently churned up and converge into a circulation around peninsular tip of India and Sri Lanka.

The Met Department said earlier morning that a preparatory circulation has already formed over Lakshadweep-Maldives-Comorin area. It could descend to lower heights and move in east-southeast towards Sri Lanka and adjoining southwest Bay of Bengal.

It would send in easterly winds across the peninsula in a pattern associated with the North-East monsoon and cause moderate to heavy showers over the south from the weekend.

Rain in south

Parts of the southern peninsula have already started receiving passing showers over the past couple of days from a deep trough extending from the low-pressure area over east India.

These rains will get better organised with the formation of the circulation over south peninsula and Sri Lanka from the weekend.

The Met Department has warned of heavy rainfall over coastal Karnataka, south interior Karnataka and Kerala on Wednesday. On Thursday, the rains would spread into Tamil Nadu even as heavy rain continues over coastal and south interior Karnataka and Kerala.

The Met has mounted the outlook for rains and thundershowers to continue to lash many parts of south India, in line with forecasts made earlier by international weather models.

Anomaly in Indian Ocean warming can affect monsoon patterns

Western part of the ocean has been heating up at a rate faster than the others



Researchers have found evidence of a major anomaly in the warming of the Indian Ocean, which could alter the strength of the southwest monsoon. It could also adversely impact the marine food-webs over one of the most biologically productive regions, says Roxy Mathew Koll, lead researcher and co-author of a paper on the subject.

Warmest ocean

“The results of our study challenge our current understanding of Indian Ocean warming and climate change,” Koll told *Business Line*. Koll is associated with the Centre for Climate Change Research, Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology, Pune. The co-authors are Ritika Kapoor, Terray Pascal, and Masson Sebastien.

Titled ‘The curious case of Indian Ocean warming,’ the paper is scheduled to appear in the *Journal of Climate*, published by the

American Meteorological Society. Being the warmest among the major oceans, the Indian Ocean plays a critical role in regulating the monsoon as well as the dynamics over the tropics.

During summer, the central-east Indian Ocean hosts by a 'warm pool' of waters with sea surface temperatures (SSTs) greater than 28 deg Celsius.

Enhanced convection

This makes it highly conducive for enhanced convection, which involves the process of building rain-bearing clouds. Studies on trends during the past half century have pointed out substantial warming over this warm pool, though the reasons have remained ambiguous. But an analysis of the warming during 1901-2012 by Koll and team has revealed a different picture of Indian Ocean warming. "The focus now shifts to the relatively cool western Indian Ocean," Koll says. "We find that the western tropical Indian Ocean has been warming for more than a century at a rate faster than any other region of the tropical oceans, and has attained the warm pool SST values of 28 deg Celsius." While the warm pool (in the east) went through a warming of 0.7 deg Celsius, the western basin experienced an anomalous increase of 1.2 deg Celsius in summer. Thus, the warming of the generally cool western Indian Ocean against the warm pool region (in the east) weakens the SST gradients. This has the potential to change the monsoon circulation and rainfall, as well as alter the marine food webs in this biologically productive region.

Cumulative causes

This is because warming causes the air over the ocean to expand and lower the atmospheric pressure. It unsettles the wind pattern which, in turn, decides the monsoon flows. Analysing the causes, the research said the warming trend over the Indian Ocean is highly dependent on what happens in the equatorial Pacific.

The El Nino induces anomalous warming over the western Indian Ocean; but its alter ego La Nina fails to do the inverse. A second, prominent reason is that the frequency of El Nino events has increased in recent decades.

Impact of El Nino

In an El Nino, the Pacific Ocean appears to throw out its heat, which partially gets accumulated in the Indian Ocean. Post-1950, a few warm events over the Indian Ocean have attained the threshold value for El Nino (anomalies greater than 0.77 deg Celsius).

This places these warm events almost on a par with the El Nino in magnitude, Koll says. In this manner, the Indian Ocean warming turns out to be the largest contributor in phase, with the overall trend in the global SST.

'Over the long term, the warming scenario and related climate dynamics are factors to be vigilant of, while assessing climate change and variability.