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THE HINDU

Farmers advised to take up agro-forestry

The Bharat India Jodo Sammelan, organised by Reliance Foundation in Kangati village, ended on Tuesday. Farmers interacted with farm scientists and representatives of private companies working in the field of agriculture. They visited stalls showcasing advanced farming equipment.

Salu Marada Thimmakka, who spoke at the valedictory function, asked farmers to take up agro-forestry and diversified farming.

She asked each citizen to plant saplings in their homes, offices or fields and to ensure trees are not cut in the name of development.

She asked farm women to treat saplings like their children and care for them properly. She spoke of how she planted and nursed hundreds of plants near Hulikal in Ramnagaram district. Some of those trees are now 50-60 years old, she said.

Umesh, Thimmakka's adopted son, said that all of north Karnataka could be turned into a green region like the Malnad, if every resident planted at least five saplings. If this happens, there will be no drought, he said. He also spoke of the importance of protecting water sources.

K. Mahantesh and Mallikarjun P. of Reliance Foundation were present.

Rs. 5083 cr. Central aid for drought hit Maharashtra, M.P.

The Centre on Tuesday announced Rs. 5083 crore as financial assistance to the drought hit States of Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh.

A high-level committee on Central assistance, after examining the proposals based on the report of a Central team that had visited the States, decided to give Rs. 2033 crore to Madhya Pradesh and Rs. 3050 crore to Maharashtra.

The meeting was chaired by Home Minister Rajnath Singh and attended by Union Agriculture Minister Radha Mohan Singh among others. The financial aid will be given from the National Disaster Relief Fund (NDRF).

“To ensure that farmers’ losses are compensated, we are providing the disaster affected States adequate and much more financial assistance than what the previous government use to give,” said Mr. Radha Mohan Singh.

Punjab to set up clusters of desi cow breeds

The Punjab Government will set up clusters of desi cows to promote indigenous breeds like ‘sahiwal’ and ‘rathi’.

Chief Minister Parkash Singh Badal on Tuesday asked the animal husbandry and dairy development departments to take joint initiative in this regard, besides exhorting the horticulture department to establish vegetables and fruits clusters.

Task force proposal

Mr Badal took the decision while reviewing recommendations of a task force on agriculture, an official spokesman said.

He asked the departments to make concerted efforts for setting up of clusters of desi cows through cooperative milk societies. A pilot project would be launched soon in Fazilka and Abohar and subsequently these clusters would be replicated in other parts of the State depending upon its success.

This move has been initiated to preserve, conserve and promote desi cow breeds, which are capable of producing quality milk and adapt to climatic conditions in the State, the spokesman said.

Moreover, these breeds give more lactation compared with exotic breeds and their feed conversion ratio was far more than the exotic kind, he said.

Besides, the quality of desi cow milk was very high as it was more nutritious and fetched higher price. The milk of indigenous cows is sold at Rs 60-65 per kg and desi ghee at nearly Rs 700-750 per kg.

Pure desi cow milk and ghee would soon be launched in the market by the State's premium milk marketing agency Verka, he said, adding the Chief Minister desired that dairy farmers be provided premium milk prices to motivate them to adopt these breeds. --PTI

Commodity prices

In 2015, though headline inflation was down, the aam aadmi still paid through the nose for basics. His household budget hit the roof, with prices of vegetables and pulses skyrocketing. Tomato, garlic and chilli saw prices double. Brinjal and bitter gourd were dearer by 50-70 per cent. Gram, tur and urad dal saw prices jump 50-100 per cent

Here are the prices of various commodities in Chennai.

Price scale is given as Rs./kg

Commodity	Quantity	Now	Year ago
Rice	1 kg	30	30
Wheat	1 kg	34	32
Atta	1 kg	30	34
Gram Dal	1 kg	75	49
Tur Dal	1 kg	146	86
Urad Dal	1 kg	170	86

Commodity	Quantity	Now	Year ago
Moong Dal	1 kg	120	111
Masoor Dal	1 kg	96	80
Sugar	1 kg	32	34
Milk	1 ltr	37	37
Ground Nut Oil	1 ltr	129	101
Sun flower Oil	1 ltr	91	85
Gur (Jaggery)	1 kg	46	57
Tea	1 kg	220	220
Salt	1 kg	18	17
Lime	1 kg	60	50
Apple	1 kg	140	150
Papaya	1 kg	30	25
Pineapple	1 kg	35	35
Pomegranate	1 kg	120	140
Sapota	1 kg	40	40
Banana	1 kg	32	32

Commodity	Quantity	Now	Year ago
Bitter Gourd	1 kg	58	32
Brinjal	1 kg	90	28
Cabbage	1 kg	24	24
Cauli Flower	1 kg	45	32
Garlic	1 kg	240	120
Ginger	1 kg	90	120
Chilly	1 kg	40	32
Onion	1 kg	25	24
Potato	1 kg	24	26
Tomato	1 kg	36	18

*Source: Ministry of Consumer Affairs, National Horticulture Board

Chhattisgarh annual plan approved; focus on irrigation and agriculture

Chhattisgarh State Planning Commission has approved the annual plan 2016-17 worth Rs 34,715 crore for the State with focus on boosting agriculture production, maximum use of irrigation capacity, better road connectivity and quality education.

Chief Minister Raman Singh on Monday presided over a meeting of the Chhattisgarh State Planning Commission in which the 'Annual Plan 2016—17' of Rs 34,715 crore was approved, a government spokesperson said on Tuesday.

During the meeting, Mr Singh said the State government is keen on improving the lot of the last person in the remotest village.

Various departments of the state should work in close coordination to achieve success, the official quoted the CM as saying.

Interests of farmers to be protected

The interests of the farmers will be protected by enlarging the irrigation facilities and a mission will be launched to increase the food production by rapidly developing agriculture, Mr Singh said.

The available irrigation facilities should be utilised to the maximum extent possible, the CM said, noting that a large number of anicuts have been constructed over canals and rivers. Solar—energy driven pumps can help the farmers to a large extent, he said.

A detailed presentation was given before the approval of the final draft of the ‘Annual Plan 2016—17.’

The proposals stress on improvement in irrigation facilities, increase in agricultural production, upgradation and extension of network of roads, education, health, freedom from malnutrition and other crucial issues.

Meanwhile, Mr Singh instructed the department officers to complete the pending irrigation projects in a time-bound phase, the official added. - PTI

Farmers upbeat in Warangal district

The cotton farmers here are in a upbeat mood as the price touched a highest of Rs. 4,500 per quintal after many years at the Enumamula Agricultural Market in the district.

The highest price the cotton commanded was in 2010-11 when the farmers got Rs. 6,600 per quintal and henceforth it was never that remunerative.

There were times when the farmers went on a rampage protesting over the low price accusing the officials and traders of collusion.

On Tuesday, the farmers got Rs 4,500 per quintal. Since October this year, the price hovered around Rs 3,000 and slowly rose to Rs 3,800 per quintal. Since December 20, it started soaring bringing cheer to farmers.

Agriculture market secretary A Raju said about 10,000 bags of cotton arrived at the market on an average compared to 50,000 to one lakh bags per day. Following the inadequate rainfall and unavailability of water, the productivity had come down drastically.

Though the extent of cotton crop was about five lakh acres, the per acre production had come down to three to five quintals as against eight to ten quintals in the past.

Soaring cotton price brings cheer to ryots

Driven by demand, private traders pay heavily in excess of the Minimum Support Price



Cotton being loaded into a truck in Adilabad on Tuesday.-Photo: S. Harpal Singh

cotton fetched the highest price in the season for farmers as arrivals of the produce peaked across 84 procurement centres in Telangana in the last two days. On Monday alone, private traders purchased 49,000 quintals at a premium while the Cotton Corporation of India which procures at the minimum support price of Rs 4,100 if the moisture content is below 8 per

cent picked up 4,000 quintals. The traders coughed up to Rs 4,500 a quintal but it was Rs 100 more at Khammam market yard.

Additional Director of Marketing G. Lakshmi Bai said the price did not go beyond Rs 4,400 a quintal last year when about 224 lakh quintals of cotton were received. This year, only 204 quintals were estimated but the Agriculture Department further slashed it by 15 to 20 per cent due to adverse seasonal conditions. In fact, the cropped area of cotton in Telangana this year was 16.72 lakh hectares while it was only 16.50 lakh hectares.

The arrivals at market yards so far this season since the commencement on October 20 was 88 lakh quintals, of which the CCI procured 30.12 lakh tonnes and the balance by traders. Driven by demand, the traders paid heavily in excess of the MSP. The produce fetched up to Rs 5,000 a quintal in 2013-14, Mr. Lakshmi Bai said.

Jammikunta, Warangal, Khammam, Karimnagar, Peddapally, Adilabad and Bhainsa are the major markets where the arrivals were high.

Rain lashes Rameswaram

A total of 142.4 mm of rainfall recorded in two days

Normal life was hit in several parts of the island as intermittent rains lashed the coastal areas of the district since Saturday.

When the northeast monsoon showed signs of withdrawing in several parts of Tamil Nadu, it became aggressive in the coastal areas of the district on Sunday and Monday. The pilgrim island bore the brunt of the rain fury as it received a total rainfall of 142.4 mm in the last two days.

Official sources said that Rameswaram recorded the highest rainfall of 75.2 mm at 8 a.m. on Tuesday, followed by Thangachimadam (52 mm), Mandapam (49.2), Pamban (45 mm) and Ramanathapuram (29.4 mm).

Several low-lying areas in the island such as Indira Nagar, Verkodu, Karaiyur, Athammal Street, Seetha Theertham Road, Manthoppu, Santhana Mariamman Koil Street and Natarajapuram were inundated and normal life

was affected. Rainwater also inundated East Car Street of Sri Ramanathaswamy Temple.

Rainwater entered about 400 houses and people in about 4,000 houses were affected as they had to wade through knee-deep water to come out of their houses. The municipality installed motors at eight places and pumped out water. It also pressed into service three earthmovers to drain water out of low-lying areas, official sources said.

Meanwhile, sources in the Agriculture Department said that the district, which received an average rainfall of 501.6 mm during the northeast monsoon, had already received 623 mm in 51 rainy days during this season. The rain was sufficient for paddy crops in rain-fed areas, the sources said.

Paddy procurement in Koppal from January 1



M. Kanagavalli, Deputy Commissioner, presiding over a meeting of the district task force in Koppal on Tuesday.

Government agencies will start procuring paddy at the minimum support price from January 1. Two procurement centres have been set up at the Agricultural Produce Marketing Committee yards in Gangavati and Karatagi in Koppal district, according to Kanagavalli, Deputy Commissioner.

Presiding over a meeting of the district task force here on Tuesday, she said that ordinary paddy would be procured at Rs. 1,510 per quintal, and Grade-A paddy at Rs. 1,450.

The market price for paddy is good now and farmers could prefer to sell it to procurement centres before they crash. Maldandi jowar too would be procured at these centres at the minimum support price of Rs. 2,100 per quintal (Rs. 1,590 announced by centre and Rs. 510 as incentive given by State government).

Karnataka State Marketing Federation is the nodal purchasing agency for Koppal district.

Ms. Kanagavalli instructed officials to arrange godowns to store the foodgrains and remit the value through RTGS directly to the farmers' bank account. She directed the Agriculture Department to arrange for graders at the centres.

Ramadas, Joint Director of Agriculture, informed the meeting that paddy was cultivated on around 39,920 hectares and the yield was expected to be around 1.71 lakh tonnes.

Maldandi was grown in 25,630 ha and the anticipated yield was around 14,117 tonnes.

Karnataka State Marketing Federation is the nodal purchasing agency

CM wants Pocharam to visit Delhi for pursuing drought relief

Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao has directed Agriculture Minister Pocharam Srinivas Reddy to go to Delhi and pursue release of drought-relief assistance to the State by meeting Union Agriculture Minister Radhamohan Singh.

He requested the Centre to release the drought assistance at the earliest so that it could provide some relief to the farming community and other

sections that were impacted by the severe drought conditions in the State. He stated that farmers had suffered heavy losses as over six per cent of the State's geographical area was under the impact of drought.

In an official statement, the Chief Minister said that the State Government had already sent detailed reports to the Centre on the impact of drought and the assistance needed. Besides, teams sent by the Centre had visited the drought-affected areas to assess the situation and they too had felt the need to come to the rescue of farming community and other sections suffered by drought conditions.

Meanwhile, the Chief Minister decided to take up special programme to make the State 100 per cent literate. He stated that literacy among people was necessary for transparency in the implementation of welfare and development programmes taken up with huge expenditure.

Rural areas lose out on Japan-aided water scheme

Call to allot funds to repair Kuttiyadi canal



Kozhikode district panchayat vice president Reena Mundengad and president Babu Parassery discuss the agenda at the meeting of the district panchayat on Tuesday.— Photo: K. Ragesh

A delegation of the Kozhikode district panchayat will meet Chief Minister Oommen Chandy and Irrigation Minister P.J. Joseph to apprise them of the alleged apathy on the part of the Kerala Water Authority in putting into service the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA)- aided Kozhikode Water Supply Scheme in the rural parts of the district.

District panchayat president Babu Parassery, while adopting a resolution at a meeting of the panchayat here on Tuesday, said the commissioning of the project should have supplied drinking water to Kozhikode city and several other grama panchayats. However, water was distributed only to some parts in Kozhikode Corporation limits.

The development of the scheme included water treatment plant of 174 million litres per day (MLD) capacity, construction of new and refurbishment of old water transmission system, building of intake well and reservoirs of 85 million litres capacity and reduction of water-leaks. The project should have enabled increase in the water supply volume to 246 MLD from 72 MLD, serving 12 lakh people.

Mr. Parassery said the treatment plants and tanks had been constructed in several grama panchayats. But supply of water from the Peruvannamuzhi reservoir had not reached the rural belts. The project had been designed to give relief to the people during the summer season, he added.

In a related development, the district panchayat also passed a resolution urging the State government to allot funds to repair the Kuttiyadi canal that was on the verge of collapse. Communist Party of India (Marxist) member Thazhathayil Jumailath raised the issue at the meeting.

Ms. Jumailath said the canal under the Kuttiyadi Irrigation Project was the major source of supply of drinking water and for irrigation facilities in the rural belt. The main canal and its networks spread over 600 km had provided water to 14,500 hectares of agricultural land since the 1970s when it was implemented. But, today the supply of water had been stopped. The sidewalls had collapsed on account of land erosion. An amount of Rs. 10 crore was required to repair the canal, and subsequently cultivate the now parched lands. But the government had sanctioned only Rs 2.4 crore, she said.

Cutting across party lines, many members said the canal had become a garbage ground for the local people. Several paddy fields near the canal had also been reclaimed while others remained uncultivated. The local bodies should be permitted to carry out repair works, they said.

Assumes office

S. Kanagaraj assumed office as Joint Director (Agriculture), Madurai district, on Monday. He will hold additional charge as Project Director, ATMA and Project Officer, DWDA.

— Special Correspondent

Maharashtra gets Rs 2,033 cr as drought aid

The Centre on Tuesday announced Rs. 5083 crore as financial assistance to the drought hit States of Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh.

A high-level committee on Central assistance, after examining the proposals based on the report of a Central team that had visited the States, decided to give Rs. 2,033 crore to Madhya Pradesh and Rs. 3,050 crore to Maharashtra. The meeting was chaired by Home Minister Rajnath Singh and attended by Union Agriculture Minister Radha Mohan Singh among others. The financial aid will be given from the National Disaster Relief Fund (NDRF).

“To ensure that farmers’ losses are compensated, we are providing the disaster affected States adequate and much more financial assistance than what the previous government use to give,” said Mr. Radha Mohan Singh.

There has been a 14 per cent deficit in southwest monsoon this year due to the influence of the El Nino phenomenon. Last year, the monsoon deficit was 12 per cent. Rainfall deficits were experienced in some States even as there were floods in other parts of the country.

Another State initiative to harvest rainwater

State to take up large-scale construction of check-dams on streams and rivulets under Neeru-Pragathi



Governor E.S.L. Narasimhan and Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu before the launch of the Neeru-Pragathi programme in Anantapur on Tuesday. —PHOTO: R.V.S. PRASAD

Governor E.S.L. Narasimhan and Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu on Tuesday inaugurated the Neeru – Pragathi programme aimed at harvesting every drop of rain water in the State. After arriving at the Puttaparthi airport by a special aircraft from Hyderabad, Mr. Narasimhan and Mr. Naidu reached the venue of the programme at Srinagar Colony here by a helicopter. Addressing a public meeting after inspecting the photo exhibition arranged at the venue depicting the achievements of the Neeru – Chettu programme that preceded Neeru — Pragathi, Mr. Naidu said that the government was committed to transforming Rayalaseema into “Ratanala Seema” (land of gems).

‘Panta Sanjeevani’

“We should not be afraid of drought. The general perception that Anantapur is prone to drought is bound to change,” Mr. Naidu said, and exhorted people to dig farm ponds in their fields as part of the ‘Panta Sanjeevani’ scheme.

Under the scheme, it is targeted to dig one lakh farm ponds at an estimated cost of Rs. 600 crore in Anantapur district with a view to harvesting rainwater for use during lean period to save standing crop. The scheme required a huge outlay with an average farm pond of the size of 10 x 10 x 2 metres costing Rs. 61,000, Mr. Naidu said, and assured the district administration of unhindered access to funds for the programme. Referring

to Neeru — Pragathi, Mr. Naidu said: “Water is core to our life and future. Hence the programme has been aptly named. The government will take up large-scale construction of check-dams on streams and rivulets to harvest rainwater. I have also decided to extend the Panta Sanjeevani programme to the entire State, under which 10 lakh farm ponds would be dug.”

Recalling that the Handri Neeva Sujala Sravanthi (HNSS) project was launched by former Chief Minister N.T. Rama Rao, he said that the government was diverting 80 tmcft water from the Godavari directly and another 20 tmcft from the rivulets and streams on the way through the Pattiseema project to the Krishna delta and that a similar quantum of water would be made available to the Rayalaseema region from the Srisailem dam.

“While the Krishna, the Tungabhadra, and the Penna face ever lesser inflows due to projects in the upper riparian States, close to 3,000 tmcft of water is drained into the sea through the Godavari, the Vamsadhara, and the Nagavali. Hence, the government has decided to accord top priority to interlinking of rivers,” said Mr. Naidu.

Interestingly, the Chief Minister said that construction of the Polavaram would take four years.

‘Ananta Santosha Puramu’

Mr. Narasimhan, speaking at the meeting, said that he had seen the name of Anantapur district change to “Anantapuramu”, and he had no doubts that it would be changed into “Ananta Santosha Puramu” in the next six months after implementation of the Panta Sanjeevani programme.

Later, the Chief Minister and the Governor flew back to Puttaparthi and from there to Hyderabad.

Give more relief: farmers



A farmer speaking at the grievance day meeting in Tiruchi on Tuesday.—
Photo: M. Srinath

Farmers representatives of Tiruchi district have expressed apprehension over possible yield loss in paddy and other crops due to the recent rain and urged the State government to increase the compensation for the rain affected crops.

Raising the issue at the farmers grievances day meeting here on Tuesday, a cross-section of farmers' representatives said the compensation announced by the government would not be adequate to cover the losses sustained by farmers.

Puliyur A.Nagarajan, president, farmers' wing of the Tamil Maanila Congress, who had brought in a sample of the rain affected paddy crop, said though the crop may look green and health outwardly, there will be severe yield loss due to the inundation during the heavy rain. "Farmers will not even able to harvest 10 bags (60 kg) of paddy due to the inundation against the normal yield of 30 to 40 bags," he said. The district administration should take into account in the survey damage to crops and sanction appropriate compensation. The government should hike the compensation to Rs.25,000 an acre of paddy, he demanded.

While emphasising the need to ensure that all affected farmers were compensated, R.Raja Chidambaram suggested that the government pay the premium for crop insurance cover so that farmers could get compensation

from the insurance agency apart from the relief sanctioned by the government.

Crops of some farmers may not have sustained 33 per cent damage but they should also be compensated. He observed that the compensation announced by the government was very low, especially for rainfed crops such as maize, cotton, onion, tapioca and horticulture crops.

C.Masilamani, district secretary, Tamil Nadu Vivasayigal Sangam, underlined the need to ensure that adequate compensation was given to all affected farmers. N.Veerasekaran, coordinator, Ayyan Vaical Pasanatharar Sangam, expressed apprehension that farmers could sustain heavy yield loss and sought adequate compensation.

Collector K.S.Palanisamy said that farmers could bring to notice if any area or affected farmer has been omitted in the survey for sanction of compensation.

P.Ayyakannu, president, Desiya-Thennindia Nadigal Inaippu Vivasayigal Sangam, called for waiver of all crop loans sanctioned by cooperative societies and immediate stoppage of auctioning of jewels pledged for crop loans by farmers. A section of the farmers called for steps to rectify errors in pattas of land holdings of farmers.

R.Subramanian, deputy Secretary, Cauvery Delta Farmers Welfare Association, called for steps to remove the silt accumulation at Upper Anicut (Mukkombu) and also the desilting of tanks and lakes for effective rain water harvesting.

“New technologies will enhance income of farmers”

Nano technology is an ideal tool to extend the shelf life and delay in ripening mango in trees, but proper bio-safety tests should be done before introducing it to farmers, according to Deputy Director General of ICAR N.K. Krishnakumar.

Inaugurating a workshop on Enhanced Preservation of Fruits using Nanotechnology Project held at the Horticultural College and Research Institute at Periyakulam near here, he said that bio safety test was very important before implementing any nano-technology. Proper adoption of new technologies would certainly enhance the income of farmers, he added.

“Diversification of crop and improving off-season crops will help mango growers to tap country market. Dasherri, Langra and Kesar varieties of mango are in great demand in Delhi, UP, MP and Bihar.”

Demand for organic fruits was very high in foreign countries, he said, adding that Japan and Germany were prepared to buy large quantum of organic pomegranate. Covering fruits in bags would ensure uniform colour and quality, he said.

He appealed to scale down use of chemical pesticides and fertilizers to improve quality and taste. He said dipping mango in water mixed with salt will suffice to control fungus.

DCs told to enrol blue card beneficiaries

Punjab Deputy Chief Minister Sukhbir Singh Badal on Tuesday directed the Deputy Commissioners (DCs) to speed up the process of enrolment and distribution of 28.5 lakh blue cards under Atta-Dal scheme by February next year.

Reviewing all the welfare and development schemes in a meeting with DCs here, he ordered them to initiate preparation of smart health cards under cashless health insurance schemes launched for farmers, traders and labourers in the State.

Mr Badal also directed to take necessary steps for enrolment and distribution of smart blue cards under Atta-Dal scheme to be used under Bhagat Puran Singh Sehat Bima Yojna.

He informed that recently the government has launched a cashless health insurance scheme which would benefit approximately 2 lakh labourers, 2 lakh traders and 10 lakh farmers.

He directed that the meeting of district-level advisory committees and district grievance committees should be convened in the first week of every month by the Cabinet Ministers.

He asked Chief Secretary Sarvesh Kaushal to issue orders on this and directed that Chief Parliamentary Secretaries would head the advisory committees and divisional grievance committees at sub-divisional level every month.

Reviewing the progress of 'sewa kendars' being set up in the rural and urban areas, he revealed that 2174 sewa kendars would be launched on Baisakhi next year across the State and asked the Chief Secretary to take stock of the preparations.

Concentrating on the skill development sector, he asked Secretary Technical Education and Industrial Training R K Verma to speed up the pace of constructing 150 skill centres in villages and towns which would cost Rs 25 lakh per centre. -- PTI

Draft master plan makes farmers edgy

Lack of clarity on finer details a cause for concern, they say

: The draft master plan released by the AP Capital Region Development Authority (CRDA) has apparently watered down the hopes of farmers who parted with their lands for the capital city Amaravati.

The farmers complain that the master plan missed the finer details such as where the land would be earmarked for them.

The plan broadly mentioned about residential areas. The farmers, more particularly jareebu farmers, are apprehensive that the State government might not allot developed lands for them in their own villages.

Coercive tactics

D. Balaji Reddy of Undavalli fumes that the State government took their lands by coercive methods.

The farmers gave their consent, but the CRDA hasn't spelt anything about the developed plots. Farmers feel that the government is not being transparent, he said. M. Srinivas Reddy of Nidamarru village says that the government lured the farmers by painting a rosy picture of the developed plots and their market value once the capital city was constructed. Now, the farmers are clueless about where they get their developed plots, he lamented. The CRDA in its draft master plan said that the objective was to control the development within Amaravati by designating land parcels into different zones and land-use in order to provide sufficient programmes and facilities within the city.

Classification

These land uses have been classified broadly into ten categories such as residential, commercial, industry, recreational, regional park, transportation, utility, government, public and semi-public facilities and green and blue. The development in these land-use zones would be carried out in accordance with the zoning regulations as given in the Development Code.

Lack of clarity on finer details a cause for concern, they say

Centre will expedite pulses import: Paswan

In a bid to keep the spiralling price of pulses under check by ensuring adequate availability in the market, the Centre will step up its efforts to expedite imports of pulses, Union Minister Ram Vilas Paswan said on Tuesday.

He said India had produced 17.2 million tonnes of pulses this year and imported 4.5 million tonnes, taking the total supply to 21.7 million tonnes against the requirement of around 22.6 million tonnes. “We will see that there’s no shortage of pulses in future.”

He said the Food Corporation of India had purchased 1,780 quintals of arhar (pigeon pea) so far in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh directly from farmers at market price to create buffer.

Meanwhile, the Income Tax department conducted searches on pulses traders and commodity business centres earlier in the day in several cities. The searches were carried out simultaneously in Delhi, Mumbai, Nagpur, Indore and some cities in Uttar Pradesh. According to sources, the search operations were a part of their investigation into alleged tax evasion in the pulses trade and allied activities.

Officials, who requested anonymity, said the search operations were based on inputs of alleged hoarding and financial irregularities.

Meeting between farmers, scientists

About 30 farmers were exposed to scientific methods and latest technologies in cultivation during farmers-scientists meet organised by the National Research Centre for Banana, Tiruchi, at Nachalur near here in connection with the Jai Kisan Jai Vigyan week observation.

B. Padmanaban, Director, NRCB, R. Thangavelu, Principal Scientist (Plant Pathology), K. J. Jeyabaskaran, Principal Scientist (Soil Science), K. N. Shiva, Principal Scientist (Horticulture) and Dr. P. Suresh Kumar, Senior Scientist (Horticulture) of NRCB, interacted with the farmers and clarified their doubts.

CHESS TOURNAMENT ON JANUARY 2 AND 3

The Rockfort Chess Academy would organise a district level children chess

tournament at Chinmaya Vidyalaya Matriculation School in Srirangam on January 2 and 3.

The competitions would be held in the categories of Under 7, Under 9, Under 11, Under 13 and Under 17. Participants should produce age proof for entry.

Those who wish to participate can send an email totdca2010@gmail.com or contact M.Iravatham at 9842678108 or N.Venkataraman at 9843361122 for more details.

SENIORITY LIST READY AT

EMPLOYMENT OFFICE

The seniority list of candidates eligible to be recommended for Pharmacist Siddha vacancies notified by the Tamil Nadu Medical Services Recruitment Board has been prepared and eligible candidates can verify whether their names have been included in the list by visiting the District Employment Office before January 4, C.Tamilselvi, Deputy Director, District Employment Office, said in a press release.

Candidates with diploma in pharmacy (Siddha) are eligible for the posts, the release added.

Duck rearing proves lucrative in Erode



Duck meat consumption is picking up in Erode district.— PHOTO: M. GOVARTHAN

Duck rearing is becoming visible on the city's peripheries and rural pockets of the district.

The rearers, usually, belong to far-off places and take the duck along to harvested fields where fallen grains and insects are eaten by the birds.

Eggs of ducks are considered nutritious and rich source of protein. Rearers create small ponds for the flock of birds that are obtained as chicks from Andhra Pradesh and grown here.

The rearers sell the live birds for Rs. 180 to Rs. 200 per kg. to meat sellers, who, in turn, make a margin of 30 to 40 per cent in the selling cost. Still, it is affordable for people. The trend of eating duck meat is picking up among the people. Cooked duck meat is also sold on the city outskirts.

At the retail point, ducks are sold alongside chicken. A normal-size duck is sold for Rs. 250, sellers say.

According to Animal Husbandry Department sources, the trend of duck meat consumption has gradually spread to Erode from neighbouring Karur district.

Unlike in the case of poultry, ducks do not require housing. The wet fields close to water bodies are the ideal spots for their rearing.

According to farmers, fish ponds are specifically created in some fields for rearing ducks. Alongside providing essential nutrients to increase biomass of natural food organisms, the duck droppings serve as fish feed resulting in high yield. Disturbance caused to the surface of the pond facilitates aeration.

As in the case of poultry, ducks also need to be immunised against duck plague. Rearers are following the schedule of vaccinating ducks once every year, Joint Director of Animal Husbandry Department P. Ravichandran said.

Students try their hand at paddy harvest

The paddy harvest at Valiyakandam, near Kattappana, was turned into a festival by the students of Government College and Government Tribal Higher Secondary School, Kattappana and M.E.S College, Nedumkandam, on Monday.

The festival was a celebration of its kind with the students and farmers singing harvest songs and engaging in paddy harvest, which was organically cultivated by a farmers' collective called 'Sanikoottam'.

It was the third consecutive year of harvest in the field. It was the disappearance of paddy cultivation that prompted the members of the collective comprising retired hands and farmers to turn to paddy cultivation. A member of the collective said that they would continue the paddy cultivation though the farmers had abandoned it due to various reasons including the shortage of labourers. By pooling in additional time for farming especially on Saturdays, the collective could bring a good result.

Though it had earlier cultivated vegetables, due to unfavourable soil conditions and rains, it was not a complete success.

However, this time only the rice was cultivated and the production was more than what they expected, said Nayan Gopi, a member of the collective.

The harvesting festival was jointly led by municipal councillor P.R. Remesh and college principal K.K. Suma.

The students later carried the harvested paddy to the nearby tribal school on a procession and traditionally held the 'kattathallal' there. Sanikoottam members C.P. Roy and Shanmughan said that they could harvest the paddy after 120 days of sowing the seeds. They also plan to keep a store house of paddy seeds especially the endemic varieties and supply them free of cost.

The paddy was organically cultivated by a farmers' collective, 'Sanikoottam'.

Training

Thirty farmers will get training in apiculture at the Vengeri Training Centre from January 6 to 8 under the Human Resource Development programme.

Farmers who have not taken part in the training previously shall contact 0495-2373582 to register. — Staff Reporter

Orientation camp for farmers

The Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha, in association with Samanathegagi Janandolana, has organised a one-day orientation camp for farmers' activists at Nanjaraja Bahadur Choultry on Vinobha Road at 10 a.m. on December 30. For details, call 9481257099.

— Staff Correspondent

Millions of California trees threatened by drought

As many as 58 million large trees in California are threatened by record drought afflicting the state since 2011, says a study published Monday.

Even if the weather phenomenon called El Nino produces more precipitation, California's forests could suffer irreversible change, the report said.

Besides the lack of water, high temperatures and a destructive insect called the bark beetle also raise the risk of forest **mortality**, said the study published in Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences.

"California relies on its forests for water provisioning and carbon storage, as well as timber products, tourism, and recreation, so they are tremendously important ecologically, economically, and culturally," wrote Greg Asner, an ecology expert with the Carnegie Institution.

He added: "The drought put the forests in tremendous peril, a situation that may cause long-term changes in ecosystems that could impact animal habitats and biodiversity."AFP

Rare butterfly sighted at Arippa forests



Rare sight: The Banded Royal spotted in the Arippa forest area last week.

Nature lovers from the Thiruvananthapuram-based Warblers and Waders chanced upon a 'very rare' Banded Royal-Rachana jalindra (Horsfield) butterfly at the Arippa Ammayambalampacha forests on the borders of Kollam-Thiruvananthapuram districts during a two-day nature watching camp organised in connection with the silver jubilee of the organisation.

The group described the sighting as incredibly rare because the Banded Royal was last sighted in these forests 10 years ago. C. Susanth, who led the group, said the butterfly was seen settling for a long period basking in the sun and that 'provided us the opportunity to click some great photos of the winged beauty'. The trail was conducted in with support from the Forest Department.

The colour of the spotted Banded Royal's wing was pure white below and a brown band on the upper side both on the fore and the hind wings. The hind wings were a bit worn out. Mr. Susanth said that Banded Royals are considered rare to very rare in Kerala. Very few sightings of this butterfly were reported from Aralam Wildlife Sanctuary (Kannur) and Vazhchal-Athirapilly reserve forests (Thrissur) in the past.

The natural habitat of these butterflies is thick forests below 5,000 feet. They usually settled on the undersides of leaves, are not is not very active flyers, and rarely come to flowers or damp patches. The one spotted at Arippa was found settling on a leaf along the trekking path. During the camp, 60 species of butterflies were recorded.

Mr. Susanth said significant butterfly sightings were aberrant oak blue, Malabar rose, Travancore evening brown, Malabar banded swallowtail, Indian ace, Tamil grass dart and black-veined sergeant. The endemic damselflies Malabar torrent dart, Travancore bambootail and jungle grass dart were observed by the team.

Eighty bird species, which included the brown fish owl, grey headed bulbul, black Eagle, sparrow hawk, and great eared nightjar, were also observed. R. Jayaprakash, K.A. Kishore, B.V. Premkrishnan and Dr. Abhiram Chandran.

State govt. to ensure MSP for paddy

Minister for Labour K. Atchannaidu on Tuesday said the government made all arrangements for procurement of paddy and would ensure minimum support price (MSP). He said transport charges were included in the MSP.

Addressing Srikakulam Zilla Parishad general body meeting here, he promised to provide dryers to overcome confusion over the wet percentage in the paddy.

He said procurement centres were set up in all the important locations for buying 4.68 lakh quintals of paddy from farmers. Srikakulam MP Kinjarapu Rammohan, Palasa MLA Gowthu Shyam Sundar Shivaji and others raised farmers' issues at the meeting. Government Whip Kuna Ravikumar urged Collector P.Lakshmi Narasimham to appoint food advisory committees in all mandals to monitor the supply of essential commodities properly in all villages.

Avarekayi corrects veggie prices



However, prices continue to be high when compared to last year

The arrival of copious amounts of avarekayi to the markets has effected a major correction to the skyrocketing vegetable prices this week. However, the prices continue to be high when compared to the corresponding period last year.

The prices of almost all veggies, except carrots and tomatoes, have tanked in the last few days. The unseasonal rains in December in Bengaluru Rural and Kolar districts – the vegetable growing belt around the city — led to diminished supplies in markets, which led to a rise in prices. However, the arrival of avarekayi saved Bengalureans, who took to the seasonal beans with vigour causing a dip in demand for other veggies.

Avarekayi causing a crash in vegetable prices is an annual phenomenon.

A senior HOPCOMS official said that during November-December, the arrival of avarekayi would cause all vegetable prices dipping to below Rs. 30 levels, but this season only potatoes are trading below Rs. 30.

Price rise

Meanwhile, reduced supply had led to prices of tomatoes and carrots skyrocketing this week too. A source in a retail market chain said, “We are

in the fag end of the season for carrots. Besides, rains in Tamil Nadu have caused large scale crop damage in Ooty.”

Milk coop society building inaugurated

Information Technology Minister Mukkur N.Subramanian has inaugurated a building and equipment for Arani Milk Cooperative Society and equipment in Arani on Monday.

Speaking at the event Mr.Subramanian said, “the society building has been constructed at a cost of Rs.24.3 lakh under Thanniraivu Thittam (Self sustenance programme). The society has contributed Rs.8.10 lakh and government has contributed Rs.16.2 lakh. The equipment for the bulk milk cooler unit costs Rs.19 lakh. It could handle 5,000 liters of milk every day and would be useful to cool the milk purchased from 1,000 milk producers of 35 villages”.

District Revenue Officer S.Palani presided over the event. Arani MP V.Elumalai, Vellore-Tiruvannamalai District Milk Cooperative Union president T.Velazhagan, General Manager N.Arul Jothi Arasan, Deputy Registrar (dairy development) R.Muniraj, Arani Municipal Chairman T.Anandakumari and commissioner C.Ravi (in charge) and Arani Milk Cooperative Society president A.Kumudavalli participated.



Centre grants Rs 3,049-cr drought-relief package to Maharashtra govt

Befitting reply to critics who are playing politics, says Fadnavis.



The state government had sent a proposal seeking a Rs 4,500-crore package from the Centre to provide compensation to farmers for crop damages.

The centre on Tuesday sanctioned a Rs 3,049-crore financial package to tackle drought in Maharashtra. At a meeting in Delhi, Union Home Minister [Rajnath Singh](#), Finance Minister [Arun Jaitley](#) and Agriculture Minister Radhamohan Singh gave their consent to allocate Rs 3,049 crore to the state to provide relief to farmers.

The state government had sent a proposal seeking a Rs 4,500-crore package from the Centre to provide compensation to farmers for crop damages. While acknowledging that Maharashtra intends to make greater investment in the agriculture sector, the state government is exploring modes to raise revenue to generate more finances for the 2016-17 budget.

Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis said, “This is the biggest-ever relief package given by the government to Maharashtra. I personally spoke to Rajnath Singh(ji) and expressed gratitude for support to state to tackle the agro-crisis.”

In a message to critics, he said, “The Centre’s package is a befitting reply to all my critics who, instead of uniting for the farmers’ cause, were trying to play politics.” “Yet, my government reckons the challenges are plenty ahead in the agro-sector and we are committed to resolve the problems of farmers.”

Earlier, the Centre had provided Rs 2,000 crore package. “My government will not stop with this package. To provide long-term solutions to agro-crisis we will have to tap larger financial resources to bring agriculture growth to a positive index in the next three years,” he said.

Apart from providing crop loss compensation, the chief minister issued directives to district collectors to roll out plans for water management from

February to July in drought-prone districts. The state government's proposals worth Rs 10,512 crore includes Rs 2,500 crore for farm ponds to farmers who demand it.

To facilitate larger number of farmers to avail financial relief, the government had revised the compensation norms from 50 per cent crop loss to 33 per cent crop loss. The decision has helped them to extend the financial relief to 25 per cent more farmers. Besides, the state government has directed district collectors to begin water management to tackle the water problems till next monsoon.

Fadnavis said, "At the end of the fourth consecutive drought, we have to prepare the roadmap for water management for the next six months. And also hope coming June-July would bring better monsoons. We are identifying the main water sources. But if even they run dry before monsoons we will have to provide some alternative, which remains the biggest concern."

"Whether it is the Centre or the state, financial constraints will not come in the way of relief to farmers. We want to bring number of farmers availing credit loans to 75 to 80 percent. At present only 35 to 40 per cent qualify for financial institution loans, which is the real root of the crisis and attributed to distress leading to suicides. It can be overcome by greater investment in the agro-sector and also providing robust market to farm products. Water and power supply to farmers is part of the infrastructure where government will make highest investment," he observed.

Every district has been asked to tap potential water bodies and simultaneously work to revive old structures which can be cost effective and help in bringing larger areas of barren land under irrigation.

The [Congress](#)-NCP dismissed the Centre's package as "peanuts". Opposition leader Radhakrishna Vikhe-Patil said, "I wish the state had declared a complete loan waiver. It would have helped farmers better along with Centre's package."

After a bad summer, winter woes may hurt wheat harvest



Summer foodgrain output fell 1.7% at 124.05 million tonne, according to the government's first of the four quarterly estimates due to a crippling back-to-back drought. (HT File Photo)

Wheat, the country's winter staple, has hit hurdles, with farmers unable to sow the normal area and instances of a dreaded fungus attack being reported from some parts of Punjab and Haryana, raising concerns of a lower output.

Summer foodgrain output fell 1.7% at 124.05 million tonne, according to the government's first of the four quarterly estimates due to a crippling back-to-back drought. This has hurt farm incomes, which support nearly half the population, stoking a rural distress. A smaller wheat crop could hurt rural earnings further.

Acreage of wheat, a big crop which boosts farmers' earnings, is down 7% and yellow fungus — dubbed "agriculture's polio" that can devastate whole fields unless checked — have prompted an alert from the directorate of wheat research to the farm ministry.

The fungus, a constantly moving one that gets blown from farm to farm, needs to be immediately checked with appropriate anti-fungal measures, the directorate of wheat research has said in an advisory. "The fungus is localised as of now and has been reported from fields in Punjab's Himalayan

foothill areas of Anandpur Sahib and Nangal. But it can spread. That's the worry," said Indu Sharma, who heads the Karnal-based Directorate of Wheat Research, the top state-run crop advisory body. In 2006-07, a yellow-fungus attack crippled 2 million hectares, she said.

According to the advisory, wheat growers must spray any of the approved fungicides, such as propiconazole for crop protection.

Wheat sowing levels are down 7% because of poor soil conditions due to drought and wild swings in temperatures in the bread basket of Punjab and Haryana. Farmers have been able to sow 520.07 lakh hectare until last week, compared to 540.17 lakh hectare in the corresponding period last year.

There are very little, if any, chances that the shortfall would be made up because the sowing seasons is virtually over. "Temperatures in November and December fluctuated widely, from warm to cold. This did not allow farmers to plant wheat sufficiently. Only late-sown varieties can be sown now," Sharma said.

The Modi government has been struggling with an agrarian distress, which impacts livelihoods and overall growth.

THE HINDU BusinessLine

Karnataka pips Kerala to become top pepper producer

KOCHI, DECEMBER 29:

Karnataka has dethroned Kerala as the leading producer of pepper, accounting for almost 50 per cent of the production in the 2014-15 crop year.

Of the estimated all-India pepper production of 70,000 tonnes, Karnataka's share was 33,000 tonnes while that of Kerala was 28,000 tonnes during the period. In 2013-14, the figure was 16,000 tonnes and 20,000 tonnes respectively.



Official sources in the Spices Board attributed rising prices of pepper and fluctuation in coffee rates as reasons to incentivise farmers in Karnataka to take up pepper as an adjunct crop. Moreover, Karnataka planters have been taking lot of initiatives in stepping up pepper production and have set up plans to adopt the Vietnamese method of exclusive mono-crop of pepper cultivation.

In Vietnam, pepper is grown exclusively as a mono-crop with very high density planting on wooden poles, concrete pillars or brick pillars. As of now, many farms in Karnataka have been trying this method and planters feel that this model can be emulated in the coffee estates, the sources said. A 25-member planters' delegation from Karnataka visited the exclusive pepper growing areas of Vietnam recently as part of their field visits to the coffee and pepper growing regions.

According to sources, pepper production in Kerala has almost halved in the last few years. In 2008-09, the State produced over 41,000 tonnes on 1.75 lakh hectares and was the single largest producer along with few tracts of Karnataka and Kanyakumari and Dindigul districts in Tamil Nadu.

However, diseases such as quick wilt had contributed to production loss in Kerala. The major issue that is crippling progress is the total shortage of quality planting material, presence of small and marginal holdings, existence of senile and unproductive vines and pest and diseases. All these hold good for the current situation in Kerala, sources said.

Pepper, a major ingredient in the traditional wellness system, is the most important spice traded in the world, accounting for about 35 per cent of total spice export earnings (\$2.30 billion) last year. The price had touched a record \$9.90 per kg for black pepper and \$13.57 for white pepper.

(This article was published on December 29, 2015)

Mango output up 2.2% in 2014-15



NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 29:

There was a 2.2 per cent rise in mango production in different States, from 184.31 lakh tonnes in 2013-14 to 188.32 lakh tonnes (lt) in 2014-15, according to the third advance estimates made by the Agriculture Ministry. However, the area covered by the mango crop, known as the 'king of fruits', declined in 2014-15 to 22.18 lakh hectares (lh) from 25.15 lh in 2013-14, Minister of State for Agriculture, Mohanbhai Kundaria, informed the Lok Sabha in a written reply.

Despite the decline in crop area, mango productivity rose in 2014-15 to 8.49 million tonnes per hectare against 7.33 million tonnes a hectare in the previous year, said the Minister.

The sharpest decline in mango crop area was in Maharashtra, which fell from 4.85 lh in 2013-14 to 1.56 lh in 2014-15, with production falling to 8.76 lt in 2014-15 compared with 12.12 lt in the previous year. However, in Maharashtra, too, despite a sharp decrease in crop area, mango productivity rose to 5.60 per hectare in 2014-15 against 2.50 million tonnes a hectare in the previous year. (This article was published on December 29, 2015)

Cashew exports decline, raw nut imports rise



KOCHI, DECEMBER 29:

Exports of cashew continued their downward spiral so far during the current fiscal, while imports of raw cashew nuts (RCN) have shown an increase.

Total exports during April-November 2015 stood at 64,220 tonnes valued at ₹ 3,248.32 crore at a unit value of ₹ 505.81 a kg. Whereas, during the corresponding period last year total shipments stood at 78,715 tonnes valued at ₹ 3,522.57 crore at a unit value of ₹ 447.50 a kg.

At the same time, imports of RCN increased to 8,12,047 tonnes valued at ₹ 6,977.44 crore during the first eight months of the current financial from 7,91,245 tonnes valued at ₹ 5,311.62 crore in the same period the previous fiscal.

The unit value also showed a rise to ₹ 85.92 a kg from ₹ 67.13. Exports of Cashew Nut Shell Liquid/Cardanol during the current fiscal rose to 7,653 tonnes valued at ₹ 40.88 crore from 6,944 tonnes valued at ₹ 32.29 crore. Unit value realisation stood at ₹ 53.42/kg (₹ 46.50), according to Sasi Varma, Executive Director and Secretary, Cashew Export Promotion Council of India (CEPCI).

“Nearly 50 per cent of the factories in the organised sector continued to remain closed from April 1, following substantial hike in the wages by the state government and high raw nut prices. As a result, exports continued to decline, adversely affecting the industry on the export front,” Sundaran Prabha, Chairman, CEPCI, told *BusinessLine*.

However, good persisting domestic demand, he said, is presently supporting the industry but how long it will sustain cannot be predicted, he said.

(This article was published on December 29, 2015)

‘Voodoo farming of Darjeeling tea is beyond taste’



KOLKATA, DECEMBER 29:

Although many fans of Darjeeling tea attribute its unique flavour to voodoo farming, a new book says the farming methodology goes beyond taste and aims at striking an ecological harmony.

American travel writer Jeff Koehler who has come out with his new book, “Darjeeling: A History of the World’s Greatest Tea”, says it is really hard to gauge how voodoo or biodynamic farming actually affects the muscatel flavour of one of the world’s most prized tea.

“Taste might almost be secondary. Biodynamics is a holistic approach to farming that seeks more than just flavour. It is a way of creating an ecological harmony on the garden, a tight web that interlinks the soil, plants, animals, and those who live on the estates,” Koehler told PTI.

However, he said there is no question that those who farm biodynamically treat their bushes with particular care and that is often reflected in the taste of the teas.

The author wonders whether biodynamic farming actually makes the taste better, as many believe it to be the secret behind the unmatched taste.

“Does planting according to the moon’s orbit and the position of the constellations make a difference in that final judgement of a tea when it’s sipped from the cup? Does spraying the leaves with ground silica crystals that have been buried in cow horns give deeper muscatel flavours? A more nuanced body?” he writes in the book published by Bloomsbury.

Makaibari tea garden’s manager and one-time owner Rajah Banerjee is a follower of Austrian philosopher Rudolf Steiner who had devised this alternative form of farming. Biodynamics, which is often called as voodoo farming for taking into account celestial forces, plays a very important role in Makaibari tea which fetches world record price.

Makaibari’s Silver Tips Imperial tea is plucked around full moon as it is believed that the moon and planets influence the growth of plants and its leaves. According to the book, only around 15 per cent of tea produced in the Darjeeling hills of West Bengal can be called “voodoo vintages.” Considered the “champagne of tea”, the produce from Darjeeling is known for its characteristic bright, amber-coloured brew and muscatel flavours – delicate and flowery, hinting of apricots and peaches.

“Here ecology, history, tradition, culture, and terrier come together to create a sublime product with an unduplicable essence,” the book says.

Koehler says he went on four backpacking tours around Africa and Asia where the fondest memories of many of the places he visited seem to include tea.

“Over the years since I have visited many of the world’s tea-producing areas but none ever managed to seduce or intrigue me like Darjeeling. I long wondered exactly how and why the tea grown there is, simply, the finest, and why it could not be replicated elsewhere,” he says.

(This article was published on December 29, 2015)

Mahyco Monsanto Biotech challenges Centre’s move to regulate cottonseed price

Trade body says hybrids play a key role and seed firms deserve a better share in profits



HYDERABAD, DECEMBER 29:

Mahyco Monsanto Biotech India Ltd (MMB India), which provides biotechnology to cottonseed companies, has recently moved the Delhi High Court challenging the government notification that seeks to regulate the cottonseed price.

It has questioned the government's move to fix the Maximum Sale Price, trait value and keep tabs on the trade agreements with the seed firms.

“By fixing the terms and conditions of licence, the government is bypassing the processes of the Patent Act,” the petition said.

It said the notification would infringe on its freedom to contract in a fair market environment.

Seed association stand

Ending a decade-long row between MMB India, seed firms and State governments, the Centre issued a Gazette notification early this month, announcing that it would fix the Maximum Sale Price, including the trait value.

Meanwhile, the National Seed Association of India (NSAI), which represents the seed producing companies that take Monsanto's Bt technology from MMB India under sub-licences, has completely backed the government's move to settle the issue once for all.

There were a number of cases in High Courts of Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana that sought to resolve the pricing issue.

“Monsanto’s claim that biotechnology solution has resulted in enormous benefit to farmers is partial true. No technology is good unless you have a good, vibrant hybrid. Seed firms spend a lot of funds and energies on developing good hybrids. If technology is the only formula for seed’s success, every seed must give good results. It is not the case,” NSAI President M Prabhakara Rao told *BusinessLine*.

Only a few hybrids embedded with the Bt technology hold the majority of the market share.

That the seeds of the two firms that sell technology have a market share of only 10 per cent share shows that technology is not the only trigger for success of a seed.

Equality in profits

“While hybrids also play a major role, MMB India is taking a majority in profits. We too deserve a better share. We have been demanding for this for a long time and the Centre’s notification seeks to address this issue well. We fully support the government’s move to regulate the prices,” he said. The Centre’s notification said a national level committee would be set up with representatives from stakeholders to fix the price from time to time, well before the season begins.

(This article was published on December 29, 2015)

Business Standard

Five things that should worry India

The key issues that need addressing are agriculture, child malnutrition, climate change, growth and inflation, and illiteracy



1. With growth rate of 0.2% and 600 million Indians depending on it, [agriculture](#) remains in crisis

The year 2015 began with unseasonal rainfall that damaged crops across 18 million hectares of farmland— about 30% of the *rabi* (winter) crop— according to a government [estimate](#).

Farmer [suicides](#) in Bundelkhand region in southeastern Uttar Pradesh grabbed the country's attention, as [India](#) reported an agricultural growth rate of 0.2% in the last financial year.

Agriculture, which supports 600 million Indians, faces significant distress. Over the past 20 years, the farm sector has experienced negative growth during five years; three of those were [drought years](#).

While India struggles with [food insecurity](#) and [malnourishment](#), big bang reforms are needed for the agriculture sector.

“The government had a unique opportunity afforded by the Bali package of the WTO (World Trade Organisation)—to reform the PDS (Public Distribution System) and domestic food subsidy regime—but it has shelved

those plans and ignored the Shanta Kumar Committee report on reforming the Food Corporation of India. And no efforts are underway to set right the distorted fertiliser subsidy,” wrote economist Ajay Chibber in a recent [column](#) in *The Indian Express* .

2. Drought-like conditions in 302 of 640 districts; is India’s climate changing?

Nine of India’s 29 states—Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka, Telangana, Odisha and West Bengal—[declared](#) a drought, [seeking](#) as much as Rs 20,000 crore in central aid.

As many as 302 of the country’s 640 districts are living with drought-like conditions.

There are strong links to climate change. [Extreme rainfall](#) events in central India—the core of the monsoon system—are [increasing](#) and moderate rainfall is [decreasing](#)—as a part of complex changes in local and world weather—according to a clutch of Indian and global studies [reviewed](#) by **IndiaSpend** in April.

In 2014-15 alone, 92,180 cattle were lost, 725,390 houses damaged and 2.7 million hectares of crop area were affected.

By 2020, yields of major crops, such as maize and wheat, could decline 18% and 6%, respectively, according to this [report](#) by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research.

3. 40 million Indian children are stunted, more than any other country

With 40 million, India still had the world's largest number of stunted children (lesser than average height for the age), despite [improvements](#); about 38.7% of all children.

Nutrition disparities among the worse-off and better-off states were quite marked, according to government [data](#). For example, in Jharkhand, 47% of children under five are stunted while the figure for Kerala is only 19%.

As many as 42.1% children in Jharkhand are underweight, which is equivalent to Timor Leste (East Timor) with 45.3%. This shows that Jharkhand is worse off than countries like Yemen with 35.5% and Niger with 37.9%, according to World Health Organization [data](#).

The worse-off states are classified under 'high focused states', which receive special [funds](#) from the Centre to reduce malnutrition.

Among the better-off states, Manipur has the fewest underweight children (14%), close to countries like Bhutan (12%) and Mauritius (13%).

While more children have been immunised than before, the [results](#) of the Rapid Survey on Children, released in July, showed wide disparities between states.

For example, immunisation data revealed that 56% of children were immunised in Gujarat, far below the national average (65.3%), and behind states typically described as “backward”, such as Bihar, Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand.

4. 282 million Indians illiterate, more than Indonesia’s entire population

India is home to 282 million illiterate people, as IndiaSpend [reported](#) earlier this year.

The 2015-16 budget [reduced](#) spending on education by 16%. The allocation for the Ministry of Human Resource Development was 4.6% of the total expenditure in 2014-15—it was reduced to 3.9% in the 2015-16 union [budget](#). The devolution reforms have [increased](#) the states’ share of divisible pool of tax revenue to 42% from 32%, but social sector allocations were cut. **IndiaSpend** [reported](#) how health and education sectors may be affected by such cuts.

Average public spending on education across the world was 4.9% of GDP in 2010, while India spent only 3.3%, according to World Bank [data](#).

Nearly 18% of children who went to school were not able to complete secondary level of education, a fundamental right under the Constitution, data on dropout rates reveal.

Note: GER, or Gross Enrolment Ratio, is the total enrolment, expressed as a percentage of eligible school-going age population for the level of education. The dropout rate is calculated by subtracting the sum of promotion and repetition from 100 in every grade.

While the government has succeeded in ensuring full enrolment for children at entry level, 18% drop out before completing secondary level.

Teachers are sub-standard and often absent, even as 80% of school expenditure is on teachers' salaries. Earlier this year, in Maharashtra, 99% of primary school teachers failed annual evaluation exams; as **Indiaspend reported**, less than one in five teachers is adequately trained, despite spending \$94 billion on training over the last decade.

5. Trade and growth forecasts drop, prices should too but do not

The bad news: Trade has dropped. The good news: Wholesale inflation is down; bad news again—it isn't getting passed on to Indian consumers, which means prices have not come down.

While India is on track to remain the world's **fastest-growing economy**, growth forecasts have been **slashed** and there are significant worries, such as

inflation, caused primarily by a surge in the prices of a food staple, lentils, which, as **IndiaSpend** [reported](#), will remain.

The consumer price index (CPI) and the wholesale price index (WPI) are the two indices that determine magnitude of inflation in the economy.

The wholesale price index (WPI)—an indicator of prices of production and in which petroleum, iron and steel are major factors—[dropped](#) below zero, meaning deflation, in January 2015 and has [remained](#) negative at the year end.

Falling prices of raw material and weak global commodity prices have [driven down](#) the WPI, which means India has been receiving raw material from the global market at lesser and lesser prices every month in 2015.

A positive CPI, on the other hand, shows that the benefits of falling prices (indicated by the WPI) are not being passed on to consumers, Pronab Sen, chairman, National Statistical Commission, [wrote](#) in a column in *The Indian Express*.

“Supply inefficiencies are worsening in India due to poor investment in infrastructure and rising transport and logistics costs—both for farm produce and industrial goods. This could have increased the gap between CPI and WPI”, observed R Jagannathan in [this](#) *Firstpost* column.

While the falling WPI has been conducive for Indian products to be competitive in global market, Indian exports have fallen by more than 10% in April-November 2015 compared to same period last year, as shown in the following chart.

Global economic slowdown coupled with weak demand in the international market has led to **reduction** in both imports and exports by more than 10% at the end of second quarter in 2015-16.



How to caramelize sugar



Caramelized sugar refers to melting of sugar until it becomes a caramel coloured liquid (dark brown syrup) while reaching a temperature of 320 degrees F – 356 degrees F.

The recipe for which your sugar needs to be caramelized determines different stages which it will go through.

At around 338 Degrees F sugar begins to melt and caramelize creating an intense flavor and rich color. It turns dark from a light and clear liquid as it

gets more heated. Caramel textures can range from soft to brittle depending upon when the cooking stops.

Soft Caramel can be made with caramelized sugar, butter and milk. Crushed caramel can be used for toppings in ice creams and desserts.

To caramelize sugar heat pure copper sugar pan or a non-stick pan and add the sugar in it. Add little water as it hastens the caramelization process and start stirring. Keep stirring till it reaches the consistency of wet sand.

You can add a few drops of lemon juice to prevent re-crystallization. Instead of lemon juice you can also use vinegar, cream of tartar or corn syrup to add acidity and prevent re-crystallization.

As sugar melts, wash down the sides of a pan with a wet brush. This also prevents crystallization as it removes any dried drops of syrup that might start crystals. As the caramel will heat it changes from light to deep brown in colour. Immediately remove from heat when the desired temperature is reached.