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THE HINDU

TN seeks Rs. 8,481-crore Central flood relief



Chennai has received the second heaviest monthly rainfall in the past more than 100 years in the first 20 days of November

After a speedy assessment of the damage in the State due to the unprecedented November rains, in which four lakh people have been displaced, the Tamil Nadu government on Monday has asked the Centre to sanction Rs. 8,481 crore for carrying out temporary as well as permanent restoration of infrastructure.

In her letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday, Ms. Jayalalithaa has asked the Centre to immediately sanction Rs. 2,000 crore to continue rescue and relief operations with the “same vigour”.

She submitted a memorandum containing a detailed assessment of damage and requirement of funds so that the the Centre could expeditiously release the assistance as some weeks were still left in the monsoon during which period more weather systems were expected to develop.

The funds required were well beyond the resources available with the State, including the State Disaster Response Fund. Keeping in view the urgency of restoring many of the infrastructure facilities and services to the flood-affected people and to support the State which was taking up massive scale relief operations, Ms. Jayalalithaa asked the

Prime Minister to depute a Central team immediately to make an on-the-spot assessment of damage and to release central financial assistance without any delay.

The November rains were extremely heavy and sustained for several days leaving a trail of damage and destruction. To cite an example, at Neyveli, it rained 437 mm on November 9. Chennai has received the second heaviest monthly rainfall in the past more than 100 years in the first 20 days of November, the Chief Minister pointed out. As many as 169 lives were lost during this monsoon beginning October 10. More than 4 lakh people were shifted to relief camps and provided food and shelter. Rescue and relief operations were undertaken on a war footing. There was widespread damage to property including dwelling units and crops, she said.

Infrastructure, including roads and bridges, stormwater drainage systems, water supply and sewerage systems and electricity supply systems have been battered in many areas. “The State had sanctioned Rs. 500-crore initially, but the damage indicates a much higher financial requirement. The extent of damage is still unfolding,” she said.

Chennai has received the second heaviest monthly rainfall in the past more than 100 years in the first 20 days of November

‘Good monsoon a result of not just El Niño’

While El Niño is generally said to favour good northeast monsoons, there have been years when the State has received scant rainfall during El Niño years.— Photo: G. Sribharath

El Niño has become the buzzword this northeast monsoon and is said to be the cause of the torrential downpour across the State.

While admitting that this is a strong El Niño year, weather experts pointed out that this was not the only global weather phenomenon that affects the monsoon.



Tamil Nadu has so far received average rainfall of 39 cm, an increase of 32 per cent. Weather experts note that this is a defining El Niño year with the sea surface temperature going above normal. This has favoured an intense northeast monsoon in the State.

El Niño and La Niña are complex weather patterns that result from variations in ocean temperatures in the equatorial Pacific Ocean. While El Niño is generally said to favour good northeast monsoons, La Niña leads to poor rainfall.

However, there have been years when Tamil Nadu has received scant rainfall during El Niño years and excess rainfall when the La Niña factor is strong, meteorological department officials said. Global weather factors that influence weather patterns across the world were documented as early as 1950s, weather experts said. However, more people became aware of the climatic phenomenon and its impact only after the Internet era set in in the 1990s.

Y.E.A. Raj, former deputy director general of meteorology, Chennai, recalled that meteorologists who visited the United States used to bring tapes filled with data to research the impact of these global weather factors. “We cannot deny El Niño’s impact on excess rainfall this year. But, the State and Chennai can get excess rains in northeast monsoon even without El Niño. A classic example is 2005 when the state got 79 per cent more than its average of 43 cm of rainfall,” he said.

Quoting from a study of data of northeast monsoon between 1961 and 2015, he said that the State received excess rains by at least 20 per cent during the nine years when neither El Niño nor La Niña factors were strong. The latest was in 2011.

Years of no impact

While El Niño contributed to a good monsoon in 17 years, it failed to have any influence in 1982, 1986 and 2002, when the State received less than 20 per cent of normal rainfall.

This year, too, a combination of factors, including El Niño, Southern Oscillation and Siberian High, has been the driving force behind torrential downpour.

Rain plays spoilsport for medicinal plant growers

Rain is generally welcomed by farmers. But for the medicinal plant growers in the district, who primarily raise *Gloriosa Superba* (popularly known in Tamil as ‘kanvali kilangu), the opening up of skies is not good.

The plants are now in a flowering stage and the continuous precipitation could wash away large quantity of pollen grains. “In general, such washing away of pollen grain can reduce the pollination which, in turn, affects the yield,” pointed out A. Mahendran, Deputy Director of Agriculture.

B. Lingasamy, president of Tamil Nadu *Gloriosa Superba* Growers Association, told *The Hindu* that flowers of plants grown over nearly 1,000 hectares had been affected.

“This means, the yield is going to be very less when harvest begins in the early 2016,” he said.

Already, the growers of *Gloriosa Superba*, which constitutes 99 per cent of the medicinal plants grown in the district, have been bothered by the poor price realisation to the presence of middlemen to the exporters.

The seeds of *kanvali kilangu* were generally used for preparation of herbal medicines which are usually finding its market in Europe.

Mr. Lingasamy was of the view that the government machinery should extend compensation, at least at the rate of Rs.1 lakh per hectare.

“Due to the presence of companies acting as middlemen to the exporters in Dharapuram and Mulanur, the main medicinal plant growing belt, the prices of the seeds recently came down to Rs. 700 a kg because of the glut created by them. We also do not have cold storage facilities to hold back the produce till we get good price,” he said.

No fall in tomato output; price rise due to supply disruption

Food Minister Ram Vilas Paswan on Monday said there has been no decline in tomato output and the shooting up of the prices to over Rs 60 a kg is due to disruption in supplies from rain-hit South India.

“There is no fall in production of tomato in the country.



Prices have increased due to transportation problems and rains in the South India,” Paswan said on the sidelines of an event here.

[The price increase in tomato](#) is a seasonal issue and the price situation will normalise as supplies improve, he added.

Tomato prices have risen sharply in the last few days to over Rs 60 per kg in most retail markets. In rain-affected Chennai, they had touched as high as Rs 80 per kg last week.

Cabinet Secretary P.K. Sinha had reviewed the tomato price situation last week and directed the ministries concerned to keep a close watch on the prices.

On pulses prices which are still ruling above Rs 180 per kg, Paswan said the rise is purely due to widening gap in demand and supply of lentils.

The government has taken all measures to rein in prices including imposing stock holding limits and action against hoarders, imports among others, he added. Paswan said that the production is around 17.5 million tonnes against the demand of 25 million tonnes. The balance is met through imports.

The secretaries of Agriculture, Food, Commerce and Finance are regularly monitoring the prices of pulses, tomato and other essential commodities on a regular basis, he added.

Go in for value-addition, banana growers told

Banana growers in the district have been encouraged to enrol themselves with Tamil Nadu Banana Producers' Company to generate more revenue from value addition. They are being sensitised to the utility of main stem that is usually discarded. Farmers say they spend as much as Rs. 10,000 per acre for cutting and removing the main stem after harvest.

Over the years, farmers with small holdings are increasingly inclined towards banana cultivation due to fluctuations and drop in procurement costs of turmeric and sugarcane. Vast swathes of fields could be seen in Gobichettipalayam, TN Palayam, Sathy and Bhavanisagar blocks. According to official sources, banana is cultivated in around 6,000 hectares every year. In Erode district, *neipoovan*, *poovan*, *androbusta* varieties are cultivated, says S. Jeyaraj of Kattukottai in Bhavani block, one of the directors of the newly formed producers' company based in Tiruchi.

The main purpose behind forming the company is to produce and market value-added products, including fibres, by ourselves, he said. Banana grows all through the year in cycles in Mettupalayam-Sirumugai, Erode, Tiruchi and Tirunelveli regions, he said.

The Myrada Krishi Vigyan Kendra has been training farmers in extraction of banana fibre that is traditionally used for stringing flowers and in manufacture of paper and rugs. About 120 kilograms of banana fibre could be extracted in a day per acre from 1,000 to 1,500 pseudostems. The fibre is procured for amounts ranging from Rs. 110 to Rs. 200 per kilogram.

The Tamil Nadu Agricultural University that has been imparting training in banana fibre extraction has played a pivotal role in the formation of the Producers' Company, farmers said.

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Need to adopt sustainable farming methods highlighted

N.K. Krishna Kumar, Deputy Director-General (Horticulture), Indian Council of Agricultural Research, speaking at the Foundation Day programme at the University of Agricultural Sciences in Raichur on Monday

Agricultural scientist and Deputy Director General (Horticulture), Indian Council of Agricultural Research, New Delhi, N.K. Krishna Kumar emphasised the need to develop sustainability in agriculture for achieving food security goals in view of the growing population of the country.



He was delivering the foundation day speech at the University of Agricultural Sciences, Raichur, on Monday.

Population growth

“Food security in actual sense means nutrition security that can best be supplemented by horticulture produces. A sizable population in India is suffering from malnutrition that can be addressed by horticulture crops,” he said.

Considering the demand for food in the years to come, Mr. Kumar said there was a need to grow more with less inputs. He also cautioned about the dangers of excessive use of pesticides and fertilizers in an attempt to grow more with limited resources. “We need to grow more with less resources such as water, land, investment. At the same time, we need to move away from the use of fertilizers and pesticides for sustainability.

Integrated farming

“Maintaining soil health and going for integrated farming will help developing sustainable agriculture. 21st century should be marked by not just increasing productivity in agriculture, but also by maintaining sustainability in farming. Increased investment in horticulture could help achieve this goal. It is really a challenge,” he said. He said the public sector had a pivotal role to play in the development of sustainable agriculture as the private sector could not be expected to chip in considering the low profit margin.

Mr. Kumar said a horticultural revolution must take place in three zones in India – dryland areas, temperate regions and north-eastern States. S.A. Patil, former director of Indian Agricultural Research Institute and the former Vice Chancellor of

University of Agricultural Sciences, Dharwad, was the chief guest. P.M. Salimath, Vice-Chancellor of UAS-R, presided over the event. B.V. Patil, Director of Education, D.M. Chandaragi, Registrar, were among those present.

“Gandhi’s philosophy led to regenerative agriculture”



Jostein Hertwig of Sweden, Head, Baltic Ecological Recycling Agriculture and Society Secretariat, at a conference in Madurai.

The world cannot afford external inputs for agriculture as natural resources are depleting. Chemical fertilizers and other farm inputs will become too expensive in future and hence there is a need to encourage regenerative agriculture. These are the words of caution from Jostein Hertwig, Head of Baltic Ecological Recycling Agriculture and Society (BERAS) Secretariat, which is involved in rejuvenation of Baltic Sea.

In an interaction on the sidelines of a conference on ‘Ecological approaches towards diet for a green planet’ here on Friday, Mr. Jostein said that they were on a quest for replicable regenerative agricultural practices and found that India, particularly Tamil Nadu, had “good farmers.”

“Such conferences will help us adopt new ideas and strengthen existing practices here with our experience,” he said.

The concept of ‘diet for a green planet’ has as its criteria organically produced, tasty, attractive and locally produced, seasonal, healthy food, with less meat component.

There should also be reduction in food waste. Reduced waste would contribute to a more healthy climate and environment and food waste should be used as animal fodder and for biogas production. It offers a sustainable lifestyle with consumption of enough and good food without threatening the environment. The basis for the concept of 'diet for a green planet' is the farm where ecological regenerative agriculture is practised.

On the reasons for looking at India for good agricultural practices, Mr. Jostein said, "The concept was inspired by Gandhi's philosophy." The BERAS, he said, wanted regenerative agriculture to become a movement and in this context inputs from practitioners of organic farming in Tamil Nadu would be valuable. This was necessary to protect the environment and Europe had enough research done on soil fertility. The focus of such conferences was to network farmers and create awareness of the need to take immediate steps to improve soil fertility.

"Farmers should stop using chemical fertilizers and begin to regenerate soil. There are good examples in the form of model farms in Europe. Certain universal principles can be adapted to local conditions," he also said.

While appreciating organic farming practices adopted by Tamil Nadu farmers, Mr. Jostein said that its practical side needed strengthening. Government-university linkages would help in this regard. He favoured creation of local models as in Europe to disseminate information and practice of organic farming.

Move to add 1,800 MW to ensure 9-hour supply to farm sector

The power utilities of Telangana are gearing up to provide nine-hour supply to agriculture sector in a single spell during day-time from April next by commissioning Bhupalapalli and Jaipur (Singareni) thermal power plants with 1,800-MW capacity by then.

The transmission and distribution companies have also taken up the work on augmenting the infrastructure required for supply of nine-hour power to the farm sector with an estimated Rs. 648.22 crore.

The works include providing new and interlinking of 33-KV lines with bay extensions, laying new transmission lines and installing new power transformers.

Infrastructure expansion

Official sources stated that the augmentation of infrastructure includes laying of 230 new transmission lines for a length of 1,894 km, installation of 328 additional power

transformers, enhancement of capacity of 313 existing power transformers and capacity addition. The utilities are planning to complete the work at least by February-end next. The demand of power, now ranging below 125 million units (MU) every day, is likely to go beyond 150 MU once the consumption of power for rabi crops under tubewells picks up from December, the sources said.

Successful trial run

“The second-phase of Kakatiya Thermal Power Station at Bhupalapalli (600-MW) is ready for commissioning after successful trial run, during which generation up to 105-MW was done and linked to the grid.

It will be commissioned anytime during the next fortnight, depending upon Chief Minister’s availability for the purpose,” Chairman and Managing Director of Telangana State Power Generation Corporation Ltd (TS-Genco) D. Prabhakar Rao told *The Hindu* .

It would take at least four days to reach the peak capacity of generation once the plant goes on stream, Mr. Rao said adding that the works on Jaipur thermal project of Singareni Collieries were also progressing as per schedule. It was being planned to trial run the first unit of 600-MW in January next and another unit of 600-MW two months later.

The two Discoms in Telangana were modifying the power purchase agreements drafted during combined Andhra Pradesh administration to suit the needs of the new State. Mr. Prabhakar Rao ruled out the possibility of sharing the two plants’ power with AP stating that the latter had no standing on that since it had annulled several PPAs, denied power from Lower Sileru and Krishnaptnam.

Power utilities of Telangana are gearing up to commission Bhupalapalli and Jaipur (Singareni) thermal power plants with 1,800-MW capacity by April next

Ripe for investment

“Migration is a development opportunity. The district with a good highway link to Hyderabad (about 100 km), rail link and the Shamshabad international airport on its border is ripe for investments across the spectrum in agriculture and industry,” says Dr. Sreedevi.

In her 10-month stint thus far, she has pushed for awareness programmes in farming such as red gram (Kodangal), groundnut (Wanaparthy), maize (RARS Palem), animal husbandry, horticulture and the likes.

“Farmers here are an enterprising lot and grow crops despite low rainfall with the help of groundwater and drip irrigation. If the gaps in the infrastructure such as providing for mills, cold storage chains, milk dairying and others are filled, the district will prosper,” she explains.

To this end and to promote competitiveness of the district, Dr. Sreedevi had initiated ‘Advantage Mahabubnagar’ investors meet a few months ago where investments of Rs.695.50 crore were announced. Two among them – 3F Fuzi Industries in Burgula village and Thexa Pharma in Kolullapally village are grounded with combined investment of Rs.100 crore.

Meet on cage aquaculture

The Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI), Kochi, will host a four-day international symposium on cage aquaculture in Asia.

The event, organised by the Asian Fisheries Society and the Indian Council for Agricultural Research will begin here on Wednesday. “It will provide a platform for researchers, technologists, entrepreneurs and farmers to discuss the current developments in cage aquaculture in the region and its future,” said A. Gopalakrishnan, director of the Institute.

Delegates from around 10 countries will participate in the event, which will cover production systems, breeding and seed production, nutrition and feed. The issues related to environment management and economics, livelihood and policies too will form part of the deliberations.

About 300 participants from India and overseas are expected to attend. “Policy guidance on open water cage culture is expected out of the conference,” Mr. Gopalakrishnan said.

‘State government should identify alternative crops for tobacco growers’

Agriculture Department asked to carry out research

The onus of identifying alternative crops for tobacco growers lies with the State government, said Rajani Ranjan Rashmi, Additional Secretary to Department of Commerce, New Delhi.

Speaking to reporters on the sidelines of the International Pepper Community’s (IPC) 43rd annual conference here on Monday, Mr. Rashmi said the Tobacco Board, which comes under the Union Ministry of Commerce, will control the purchase of tobacco from the growers.

Remunerative crops

But, the State government should help the growers in identifying alternative remunerative crops. The Agriculture Department should carry out necessary research in the direction,” he said.

When asked whether Tobacco Board would reduce the crop size to meet India’s obligation to halve tobacco production by 2020, in accordance with the World Health Organisation’s (WHO) Framework Convention of Tobacco Control (FCTC), Mr. Rashmi said there were five more years to go and necessary steps will be taken in due course of time. “It is a sensitive issue concerning the livelihood of growers,” he said.

Import duty

Reacting to the sericulture farmers’ protest against the Union government’s decision to decrease the import duty on silk from 15 per cent to 10 per cent, Mr. Rashmi initially said the matter pertained to the Union Ministry of Textiles, but later added that the government was made aware of the matter when his attention was drawn to Union Textiles Minister Santosh Kumar Gangwar’s recent statement in Mysuru that he would discuss the issue with the Commerce Ministry. However, he said industry and producers will be at variance with certain decisions of the government pertaining to increasing or decreasing the duty on certain commodities.

Tobacco Board to control the purchase of tobacco from the farmers

‘There are five more years to reduce tobacco crop size and action will be taken in due course of time’

Training programme held

Farmers from Anaicut, Kaniyambadi and Vellore blocks participated in a training programme on agricultural technology for north east monsoon on Sunday.

Organised by the Department of Agriculture, Vellore in association with Agricultural Research Station (ARS) and Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK), Virinchipuram, the training programme highlighted the need to conserve water, such as rain water harvesting method,

Experts said majority cultivated dry land crops such as ground nut, red gram, mochai, millets and horse gram. With the high rainfall this year, farmers can take up cultivation of high profitable crops.

Farmers were requested to get technology from ARS and KVK. The programme also educated farmers about new varieties of paddy, groundnut, pulses and vegetables, and new technologies to be implemented during the north east monsoon season.

Among others, M. Kalaiarasu, MLA (Anaicut) and M. Pandiyan, professor and head, ARS and KVK were present, a press release said.

‘Few takers for farm innovations’

Like farmers, agricultural innovators from AP and Telangana rue negligence meted out to them from public and private institutions despite producing ideas that have been tried and tested.

Innovations in agriculture was part of Innofest organised at the newly inaugurated T-Hub at International Institute of Information Technology here on Saturday.

Brimming with ideas at various phases of their lifecycle, innovations from agriculture clearly stood out; they had been tried, tested and in most cases, deployed. For the innovators, however, the event was yet another prospective opportunity but one that may not help them find takers.

“Agriculture is not taken seriously in India. Innovations such as mine have received recognition but have not been promoted adequately. We do not receive financial support either from the government or any private entity though we demonstrate a working product with immense benefit,” said D. Babu Rao, a farmer from Vizianagaram district, who invented a pull-cart style contraption that can simultaneously plant multiple seeds, spray it with fertilizer and cover the top soil, saving farmers several man-days of work while assuring greater efficiency than

conventional farming. According to Mr. Rao, the cost of farming per acre is lowered to Rs. 1,000 per acre as against several thousands that farmers have to shell out today. Twelve other real-world innovations were put on display in a corner which did not see as many visitors as other sections of the fest.

One of them, a water hyacinth remover, has been used by the GHMC in more than six lakes of the city.

The innovators said they hoped the State's IT Minister K.T. Rama Rao, who saw their innovations during the fest's inauguration, recognises their ideas.

The fest also help showcase T-Hub which angel investor and former Infosys board member, who spoke at the fest, highly appreciated.

Agricultural innovators from Telangana and AP rue that they do not receive financial support either from the government or any private entity

Surging red gram price brings cheer to farmers



A farmer in his field at Busimetta in Adilabad district of Telangana.— Photo: S. Harpal Singh

The high price of *kandi pappu* or *toor dal* may have come as a big disappointment to the general public but red gram farmers in Adilabad district of Telangana are a happy lot. They hope to recover at least part of their losses incurred in cotton and soyabean cultivation during this year's kharif season as their produce which will be harvested in over a month is likely to command good price even if there is a slump in the markets during trading season.

“Even if we get the minimum support price of Rs. 4,626 a quintal, we will end up with some profit. This will be possible as the investment on the crop will not exceed

Rs. 10,000 per acre in fields where only red gram is grown,” says Kunta Keshav Reddy, a progressive farmer.

The beauty of red gram crop lies in the fluctuating investment in that it requires more money under irrigated conditions and the yield is also around 10 quintals per acre. On the other hand, a rainfed red gram field as in the tribal areas of Adilabad will need only about Rs. 2,000 to Rs. 3,000 as investment but the yield will be restricted to about 3 to 4 quintals per acre.

“As this lentil crop variety is sown as an inter-crop with cotton and soyabean, any income from it comes as a bonus. In fact, cotton and soyabean farmers are likely to recover some of the losses incurred by way of damage to the primary crops,” pointed out Gond farmer Kumra Jalpati Rao of Busimetta in Jainoor mandal who hopes to negate the loss of his soyabean crop through an average yield of red gram raised in dry conditions.

Red gram crop is cultivated in over 46,000 hectares which is likely to yield about 5.75 lakh quintals at an anticipated yield of about 5 quintals per acre on an average.

Training for forest rangers begins



Forest Minister M.S.M. Anandan (second right) giving away a cheque as compensation in Coimbatore on Monday.— Photo: S. Siva Saravanan

Minister for Forests M.S.M. Anandan on Monday inaugurated the 18-month certificate course for Forest Range Officer trainees at Tamil Nadu Forest Academy, marking the revival of the institute’s training programme for officers from other States after a gap of 27 years.

Thirty nine trainees including 6 women from Andaman Nicobar, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu have been selected for the training.

According to S. Balaji, Principal Chief Conservator of Forest, this training session is to ensure the physical and mental fitness of the forest rangers to help them reach their maximum potential.

Mr. Anandan also gave away cheques paid in as solatium for loss of lives, injuries caused and damage to crops in human – animal conflict situations. As many as 80 persons were given Rs 23.5 lakh as relief. An interactive session with NGOs and farmers was organised at the 4th annual consultative and review meeting of Tamil Nadu Biodiversity and Greening Project Scheme held immediately after the inauguration of the training programme.

Hansraj Varma, Principal Secretary to Tamil Nadu Government Environment and Forest Department, V. K. Melkani, IFS Principal Chief Conservator of Forest, Chief Wildlife Warden and Head of Forest Force, Rama Kant Ohja, Principal Chief Conservator of Forest, took part.

The last batch from other States that underwent training in the Academy was during 1987-88 and it had 42 trainees from 6 States.

Dyke across riverbed helps harness water



The State government's recently completed dyke across the Palar river at Devanur helps store plenty of water —Photo: D. Gopalakrishnan

A dyke constructed across the Palar riverbed at Devanur near Chengalpattu in the district has brought good news to people in the region.

The river, which passes through Kancheepuram district for more than 60 kilometres, remained barren for the past five decades as several barrages and check-dams have been constructed across this river in Karnataka, where it originates, and in Andhra Pradesh, through which it flows before entering Tamil Nadu in Vellore.

The nine-metre high dyke at Devanur, completed at a cost of Rs.16.83 crore by Water Resource Department a few months back has retained plenty of water, officials said. Devanur residents, who till now have been exposed only to the barren riverbed, are delighted at the sight of the vast spread of water touching both the banks.

Kanchi Amudhan of Palar Paathukappu Koottiyakkam (Federation for Protection of Palar River) said that considering the immense benefits such dykes bring, the State government should construct similar structures across the river in other spots too.

Though last weekend's heavy downpour caused a lot of hardship to residents in Kancheepuram district, the Cheyyar and Vegavathi rivers, which merge with Palar at Palayaseevaram (Thirumukkoodal), received substantial inflows.

Activist P. Viswanathan said that if check-dams were constructed on the course of Palar, downstream of Palayaseevaram, precious water can be stored, instead of its draining into Bay of Bengal. Wells dug up along the Palar river at Palayaseevaram and its surrounding areas are the main source for drinking water to southern suburbs under combined water supply schemes.

(Additional reporting by T. Madhavan)

The 9-metre high dyke was completed at a cost of Rs. 16.83 crore a few months ago

Rain hits banana crop in Karaikal

P.R. Siva, Puducherry Minister for Fisheries, and other officials inspecting a waterway where hyacinth had blocked the flow in Karaikal on Monday.

Banana crop was affected in Keezhaveli near here on Monday, following sharp showers.

P.R. Siva, Minister for Fisheries, accompanied by E. Vallavan, District Collector, visited the fields of Mahalingam whose plantain plants numbering 250, had got uprooted following a mild gale.



The team visited rain-hit areas in various parts of the town and inspected the relief arrangements being made by them in and around Tirunallar and oversaw the arrangements for draining of water.

The Collector advised the officials to clear the vegetation and hyacinth in the water bodies for ensuring prompt draining of the water.

Evacuated

In Nagapattinam district, 201 members of 64 families of Ambedkar Nagar in Sirkali taluk have been shifted to safety following inundation of rain water in the low lying area.

Shiv Das Meena, Special Monitoring Officer, who inspected the arrangements for their stay, advised the officials to extend the stay for a few more days till the water completely receded in their areas.

Special steps

He said that special steps had been taken to check the incidence of any epidemic in the aftermath of the rain.

He inspected the inundated areas in Keezha Theru, Nadu Theru habitations in Tranquebar taluk.

Apiculture centre opened at Madurai college



The faculty from the Zoology Department of S. Vellaichamy Nadar College explaining the extraction of honey from one of the beehives in the newly inaugurated Apiculture Research Centre at the college on Monday.— Photo: R. Ashok

In an attempt to inculcate entrepreneurial and research skills among students, an Apiculture Research Centre with an apiary of 100 beehives was inaugurated at the Nadar Mahajana Sangam S Vellaichamy Nadar College (NMSSVN) in Madurai on Monday.

While a few beehives are often kept in many colleges for use by Zoology students for learning purpose, the college authorities claimed that the centre, named as PRC Anand Apiculture Research Centre, is the first to come up in such a scale in a college in Tamil Nadu.

K.S. Malar, Head of the Zoology department at the college, said students would participate in beekeeping at the centre and part of the revenue from the sale of honey would be shared with them.

She added that the department would also research on the effect of climatic conditions on production of honey and how different species of plants from which the bees collect nectar affect the chemical composition of honey. “Apart from the apiary here, we are planning to place beehives in forest areas dominated by different species of plants and analyze the honey produced there. We are also planning to explore the possibility of crossbreeding of different subspecies of honey bees,” she said.

The 100 beehives kept in the apiary in the college are designed by S. Josephine, a Madurai-based entrepreneur, with an additional rack attached to the bottom to feed the bees in rainy seasons when they cannot go out of the hive.

“This will help in maintaining the level of honey produced even during rains. I have applied for a patent for this design of beehive,” she said.

According to Ms. Josephine, an average of 1 to 2 kilograms of honey could be got from each beehive for every 20 days to one month and the students can sell it for Rs 400 per kilogram.

M. Pavithra, studying third year in the undergraduate course in Zoology at the college, said, “We have a paper on Apiculture in our curriculum. It would be exciting to get a hands-on experience on the subject through the centre.”

While a few beehives are often kept in many colleges, the college authorities claim the centre to be the first to come up in such a scale in a college in Tamil Nadu

‘Nilavembu kudineer’ distributed

With a view to preventing spreading of rain-related diseases during monsoon, nilavembu kudineer, ayurvedic concoction, was distributed in Amma Unavagam at the Vadaseri Christopher bus stand here on Monday.

Distributing it, Collector Sajjnsingh R. Chavan said that arrangements had been made to distribute the same at all the Primary Health Centres, Government Hospitals, all Amma Unavagams free of cost.

Moderate rain across Kanyakumari district

Moderate rains were reported across the district on Sunday night after a lull of two days.

Drizzling was reported in Mayiladi, Kottaram, Aralvoimozhi, Boothapandi, Keeriparai and Nagercoil. Drizzling along with heavy winds was witnessed here on Monday morning.

An old banyan tree was uprooted on Punnakkattuvilai-Holy Cross College Road. Many electric posts were damaged because of this and power supply was cut off for about two hours.

Inflow and outflow in Pechiparai and Perunchani dams considerably reduced. About 591 cusecs of surplus water from Pechiparai and 469 cusecs of surplus water from Perunchani dam were released in the downstream.

Over 800 houses were damaged across the district since the onset of the monsoon. On Sunday, seven houses were fully damaged and walls of 10 houses collapsed.

Meanwhile, Flood Monitoring Officer and Managing Director of ELCOT Atul Anand inspected Pechiparai and Perunchani dams. He checked the preparedness to face flood and stocking of 600 sand bags in Tiruvattar panchayat union.

Mr. Atul Anand inspected Aruvikkarai panchayat, Punniyathukkulam, Vaikathukulam, Moovatrumugam, Tirparappu falls, Thengaipattinam, etc., along with Padmanabhapuram Revenue Divisional Officer M. Rajasekaran.

Rainfall registered in the catchment areas of Chitrar I was 5.6 mm, Chitrar II 4.2 mm and Balamore 3.4 mm, sources in the PWD said.

Inflow on the rise at Mettur Dam

The Mettur Dam registered increased inflow for the second consecutive day on Monday. The inflow which stood at 9,978 cusecs on Sunday rose to 10,751 cusecs on Monday.

The water level in the dam rose to 88.71 feet against its full level of 120 feet. The storage level of the dam stood at 51.190 tmc against its full capacity of 93.470 tmc.

About 500 cusecs is discharged from the dam for farm activities in Delta region and another 160 cusecs being released for the farm activities under the dam's East-West canal system in Salem, Namakkal and Erode districts, the PWD sources said.

Delta reels under heavy rain



Heavy rain lashing Thanjavur on Monday

Torrential widespread rainfall continued to wet several parts of Thanjavur, Tiruvarur and Nagapattinam districts with the intensity varying with every hour on Monday. While heavy rain lashed almost all parts of the three districts on Sunday night, intermittent drizzle, and occasional sharp showers disrupted life in the region on Monday.

In most areas, the sky was overcast and the intervals between spells of showers saw dark and cloudy skies with overhanging clouds on the verge of breaking into a shower any time.

Mayiladuthurai (195.6 mm), Manalmedu (165 mm), Lower Anicut (144.4 mm), Tranquebar (139 mm), Kodavasal (121.4 mm), Sirkali (108.2 mm), Kollidam (107.5 mm), Nagapattinam (102.8 mm), and Tiruvarur (100.8 mm) all recorded heavy rainfall during the 24 hours ending 8.30 a.m. on Monday, reflecting the intensity of the monsoon that has been active over the region for the past few days.

On Monday, Mannargudi, Muthupettai, and Tiruthuraipoondi in Tiruvarur district, Thanjavur, Vettikkadu, Orathanad, and Kurungulam in Thanjavur district as also Tranquebar, Mayiladuthurai, Sirkali, Poompuhar and Kollidam in Nagapattinam district experienced bouts of heavy rain.

In the 24 hours ending 8.30 a.m. on Monday, rainfall recorded (in mm) in the other major centres across Thanjavur district included Manjalaru 87.6, Tiruvaiyaru 82, Kumbakonam 76, Tiruvidaimarudur 75, Pattukkottai 73, Papanasam 68.2, Kurungulam 68, Vallam 62, Thirukkattupalli 61.4, Ayyampettai 61, Madukkur 55.2,

Neivasal Thenpathy 55, Peravoorani 52, Thanjavur 51.2, Budalur 39.2, Vettikkadu 32.8, Grand Anicu 31.2, Orathanad 28.8, and Eachanviduthi 24 mm.

In Tiruvarur district, Nannilam 74.2, Nidamangalam 70, Valangaiman 65.4, Pandavaiyaru Head 64.8, Tiruthuraipoondi 62.6, Mannargudi 36, and Muthupettai 32.2 mm rainfall was recorded during the same period.

However, in Nagapattinam district the rainfall was more intense in the corresponding period as apart from the six major centres that registered rainfall in excess of 100 mm, Tirupoondi recorded 51.5 mm followed by Talaignayar 37.8 and Vedaranyam 26.8 mm.

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Sathanur Reservoir nearing its full level, flood alert issued

As sathanur reservoir is nearing Full Reservoir Level (FRL) Tiruvannamalai District Collector has issued flood warning to the people living along the Then Pennai River in Tiruvannamalai, Villupuram and Cuddalore districts.

Water level in the 119 feet dam has reached 114.3 feet by 12 noon on Monday.

By then, the dam had 6,294 million cubic feet (mcft) of water in store as against the capacity of 7,321 mcft.

Inflow

Though inflow was roughly 5,000 cubic feet per second (cusecs) by morning it eased into 2,917 cusecs by noon.

District Collector A. Gnanasekaran has said that surplus water may be released through sluice gates at any time and hence people living along the banks of the river downstream in Tiruvannamalai, Villupuram and Cuddalore Districts should move to safer places.

Even if the moderate inflow sustains the dam would reach FRL in few days making it first time in five years.

It would definitely attract deluge of tourists to the dam site once monsoon clouds passed.

No significant rain in Tiruvannamalai

Meanwhile no significant rain in Tiruvannamalai since Monday morning as against the good rains on Sunday. Rainfall on Sunday as registered in different rain gauge centres in Tiruvannamalai district (in mm) : Tiruvannamalai-68, Chengam-63.2, Polur - 74.8. Thandampattu-71, Arani - 23.4, Cheyyar-34, Vandavasi - 84.6.

Mordhana Dam in Vellore fills up

Mordhana dam near Gudiyatham has reached its full storage capacity.- Photo: C. Venkatachalapathy

After Andiappanur Dam in Tirupattur, another reservoir has filled up in Vellore district. Following rains, water levels swelled up in Mordhana Dam near Gudiyatham, reaching its full storage capacity of 261.36 mcft on Saturday morning.



It was last in 2008 that the water level in the dam had reached its full capacity. Officials of the Public Works Department (PWD) said heavy rainfall in Andhra Pradesh and resultant water flow in Koundinya River led to the filling up of the dam. Already, the Andiappanur Dam in Tirupattur had filled up following heavy rainfall. As the dam received surplus water, close to 94.24 cusecs of water is being discharged

currently, officials said. The third dam in the district - Rajathoppu – has 8.72 mcft of water as against its storage capacity of 20.52 mcft.

A team of revenue officials led by District Revenue Officer K. Manivannan were rescued by personnel of the Fire and Rescue Services, Gudiyatham after they were caught up on one side the dam area.

“The six members had gone to the dam to inspect the water level. By the time the inspection ended, the water level had swelled up, filling up the dam.

The officials could not reach the other side due to the water. A team of eight personnel from the Gudiyatham Fire Station went to the spot at about 12.45 p.m. and brought them to the other side using a rope,” said a fire officer. One of the team members were also stung by a bee.

PWD tanks fill up

Of the 519 PWD tanks across the district, 246 have filled up following heavy rainfall. A total of 108 tanks have 75 per cent water, while 104 tanks have 50 per cent water level, officials said.



Chennai: Floodgates opened as Red Hills reaches brimful

CHENNAI: Following the record rain over the last two weeks, the shutter gates of the Red Hills reservoir were opened on Sunday as the water level reached 90% of the lake's capacity for the first time since 2005. Water gushed out of north Chennai's terminal reservoir at 200 cusecs (5,600 litres per second) on Sunday evening but PWD officials assured that the outflow will not cause any damage to nearby areas.

"Excess water is being discharged now at 200 cusecs. The speed of the outflow will increase if there is heavy rainfall," a PWD official said. Red Hills received 3.8cm rainfall on Sunday.

Water discharged from the reservoir will flow through a channel that passes through

Red Hills, Samiyar Madam, Vadakarai, Vadaperumbakkam, Kosappur, Amullavayal and Sadayankuppam before emptying into the Bay of Bengal through the Ennore Creek. According to PWD officials, the water channel can handle outflow up to 12,000 cusecs (3,36,000 litres per second). Excess water discharge at an outflow of 18,000 cusecs (5,04,000 litres per second) from the Chembarambakkam last week had resulted in floods that submerged many parts of south Chennai.

Heavy rain over the next few days could prompt officials to increase the outflow from the Red Hills reservoir. On Sunday, the Red Hills reservoir held 2,790 million cubic feet (mcft) water against a capacity of 3,300mcft. Rainwater was flowing into the reservoir on Sunday at more than 2,000 cusecs (56,000 litres per second) against the outflow of 200 cusecs (5600 litres per second).

The Poondi reservoir, which is 60km north of Chennai, was discharging excess water at an outflow of 3,800 cusecs (1,06,400 litres per second) against rainwater inflow of 4,000 cusecs. Poondi received 1cm rainfall on Sunday. Meanwhile, excess water discharge from the Chembarambakkam reservoir has slowed down since Tuesday when the outflow was 18,000 cusecs. On Sunday, the outflow was 1,500 cusecs (42,000 litres per second) against an inflow of 1,500 cusecs.

The rate of outflow from the Red Hills reservoir is set to increase on Monday as the met office has predicted moderate rainfall over the next two days for the city.

Rain could begin easing today: Met

CHENNAI: The Met department on Monday forecast that the rain in the city would decrease steadily over the next two days, the only silver lining in the clouds that brought copious rain.

The rain was not caused by a low pressure area that triggered the heavy showers over the last few weeks. "Strong easterly winds surging over the Bay of Bengal caused the heavy rainfall. It is characteristic of the northeast monsoon," said area cyclone warning centre director SR Ramanan.

While Nungambakkam recorded 3.7cm rain, Meenambakkam registered 5.2cm in the 24 hours between Sunday morning and Monday morning. Rain increased on Monday evening, recording 10cm by night.

Private weather blogger Pradeep John said the rain was unexpected. "Though it rained heavily, it was confined to Chennai. However the downpour will reduce on Tuesday," he said.

There could 3-4 days of light rain from November 25, John said. "By November 29 we are expecting another low pressure area to develop which will bring copious rainfall." The maximum and minimum temperature on Monday was 31.1 degrees Celsius and 23.4 degrees Celsius respectively.

The city has received 96cm rainfall this month. The previous highest rainfall for November was in 2005 when the city recorded 60.8cm rainfall and the highest even was in 1918 with 108.8cm.

"The rainfall this season is likely to break the all-time record," John said. The highest rainfall for a day this month was on November 16 when the city recorded 24.6cm. The highest rainfall recorded in a day in over 100 years was the 45.2cm on November 25, 1976.

Continuous rain has ensured the city's four reservoirs have remained full since the last week. On Monday, the Poondi reservoir received 6.5cm rain, Cholavaram 5cm, Red Hills 4.5cm and Chembarambakkam 4.4cm.

Tamil Nadu has so far recorded 44% excess rainfall and the city an excess of 78%. Neighbouring Kancheepuram has the highest in terms of rainfall excess with 137%.

Forest academy holds training for 33 officers

COIMBATORE: About 33 officers including six women from six states have joined the 18 month training programme at the Tamil Nadu Forest Academy in Coimbatore on Monday. 12 male officers and one female officer from Andaman and Nicobar islands, 10 male officers and three female officers from Kerala, four male officer from Madhya Pradesh, four male officer and one female officer from Tamil Nadu, two female officers and one male officer from Uttarakhand and one male officer from Karnataka were part of the training.

All of them said while they faced some language troubles while making some purchases, they were excited and were looking forward to the training. Savithri Giri from Uttarakhand said she was away from her family for 18 months. "The main thing I would miss is the food as we are not used to eating much rice," she said. Their classes began on Monday and they would be trained in various aspects of the forests including laws, technology usage, fitness training and other aspects such as conservation, poaching and so on.

M S M Anandan, minister of state for forests, said that this was a proud moment for Tamil Nadu as the last time such training took place was in 1988. "The academy is known for its heritage, discipline and training. Equipped with all facilities, we wish the batch a successful training," he said. He also held a review meeting with forest officers and conservator of forests.

hindustantimes

Khattar for crop diversification, latest tech for agriculture growth



Haryana chief minister Manohar Lal Khattar on Sunday called upon farmers in the state to switch over from the traditional farming to the cultivation of flowers, fruits and vegetables by using the latest technology.

Speaking at the platinum jubilee function of ‘Saini Samaj’ here, he also said that the need of the hour was cooperative farming.

He said the government would advance loans up to rs 5 crore for cooperative farming to societies, which would include Rs 1 crore as grant-in-aid.

The CM said for crop diversification, the farmers would be afforded loans up to Rs 5 lakh without any guarantee.

Lauding the contribution of the Saini community in trade, army, services and agriculture, he said due to shrinking land holdings, the cooperative farming was the best option.

The CM said for the promotion of women’s education, a survey was underway in the state and women’s colleges would be set up on priority, wherever the need be.

He said a recruitment drive would be launched next year to fill the vacant posts of teachers in schools and colleges. Releasing a book on the history of Saini Samaj, he said it was creditable that the society had completed 75 years of its existence. He also announced a grant of Rs 51 lakh to the Saini Sabha, Ambala.

Praising the CM, health minister Anil Vij said that the Khattar government was bringing about all-round development of the state, without any discrimination of region.

He said during the previous Congress government, the development had remained confined to a particular region. He also announced a grant of Rs 11 lakh for the Saini Samaj from his discretionary fund.

Despite weak monsoon, dist records higher paddy yield

The monsoon may have failed the country this year but the Punjab farmers did not let this setback come in their way and once again they rose to the occasion to get a better yield of paddy and basmati as compared to last year.

Almost all districts of Punjab, including Amritsar, recorded higher paddy and basmati yields. The input costs rose, but farmers of Punjab are known for nursing their crops carefully.

Amritsar chief agriculture officer (CAO) Balwinder Singh Chinna when contacted said, “Paddy and basmati yields were higher this year compared to the previous years, despite the district receiving lesser rain.”

Giving details, he said so far results of 74 ‘experiments’ of the total 126 earmarked for this purpose have come in and it can safely be said that the average yield has shown a rise. The results of the remaining experiments are expected in the next one week.

To calculate the average yield of any crop, the agriculture department selects experimental plots or fields at random throughout the state. After the crop is harvested

from these selected plots, the yield is calculated and thereafter the average yield for the crop is obtained.

PUSA 1509 yield

Despite being rejected by owners of rice shellers and private traders, PUSA-1509 variety got a very healthy yield this year.

Of the 38 results obtained from experimental plots where PUSA 1509 basmati variety was sown, the average yield obtained was better than last year. The yield recorded last year was 4,768 kgs per hectare while this year it went upto 5,052 kgs per hectare.

Likewise, the yield of paddy varieties also rose this year as compared to the previous year. The yield which was 6,160 kgs per hectare last year rose by around 500 kgs per hectare this year.

“The rise in paddy yield is marginal but this is because the results from just a few experimental plots have come in till now. The process is on and hopefully the yield will be around two quintals above the previous year’s yield,” CAO Chinna said.

However, the yield of PUSA 1121 basmati variety showed a marginal decline this year. The results from 26 experimental plots have put the average yield this year at 4,262 kgs per hectare while last year it was 4,314 kgs per hectare.

“The fall in the yield of this variety is primarily due to the fact that the area under PUSA 1121 declined this year while area under 1509 rose. Then when the crop was nearing the harvesting stage, rains and winds lashed the region that adversely affected the 1121 yield,” Chinna added.

DECCAN Chronicle

Tamil Nadu seeks immediate release of Rs 2,000 crore for rain relief



Chennai: The northeast monsoon, which left a trail of destruction across Tamil Nadu, has caused extensive damage to property, crops and infrastructure. CM J. Jayalalithaa on Monday told PM Narendra Modi that Tamil Nadu will need Rs 8,491 crore towards flood relief and sought an immediate release of Rs 2,000 crore.

“Many parts of the state have been severely affected due to flooding. (A total of) 169 lives were lost during this northeast monsoon since October 1, and there was widespread damage to property including dwelling units and crops,” she said in a letter to the PM on Monday.

Funds required for immediate rescue and relief and restoration of infrastructure have been worked out at Rs 8,481 crore in all, she said. She sought the assistance from the National Disaster Response Fund and other central funds.

Despite her government's preventive efforts, the state suffered severe damage because of “extremely heavy and sustained” rainfall. Her government had allocated Rs 500 crore for relief work.

The funds required are well beyond the resources available with the state, including the State Disaster Response Fund. She sought the deployment of a central team for an assessment of damage and immediate release of funds.

Roads, bridges, electricity supply systems battered: Infrastructure, including roads and bridges, storm water drains, water supply, sewage and electricity supply systems had been battered in many areas.

A deep depression of high intensity formed in the Bay of Bengal hit the Tamil Nadu coast near Marakkanam on Nov. 10, 2015, resulting in extremely heavy rains particularly in the four northern coastal districts of Cuddalore, Kancheepuram,

Chennai and Tiruvallur, Jayalalithaa said. More than four lakh people were shifted to relief camps and provided food and shelter.

Acknowledging the services of the National Disaster Response Force, Army, Air Force, Navy and the Coast Guard in rescue operations, she thanked Modi for the promptness in the dispatch of these forces.

Tamil Nadu floods: Rain uproots 800 trees

Chennai: The Chennai corporation's lack of planning to preserve the city's green cover was exposed after the north east monsoon brought down many trees in its wake.

Over 800 trees, and still counting, have been uprooted so far with the local body bracing for more uprooting as rain increased on Monday.



During the last council meet, Mayor Saidai S. Duraisamy had said the city had less than six per cent of tree cover remaining, against the recommended 33 per cent. The monsoon induced tree casualty is likely to have done more damage. Experts said unscrupulous and uncoordinated underground work by different service agencies was contributing to the short life of trees.

“We have metro water, TNEB, corporation and others who lay cables, drains and pipes with no coordination between them. When laying they remove some portion of the trees' roots. Such unplanned activities weaken the trees and a small amount of rainfall causes the tree to fall,” said K.K. Suresh, Dean (i/c), Forest College and Research Institute, Mettupalayam.

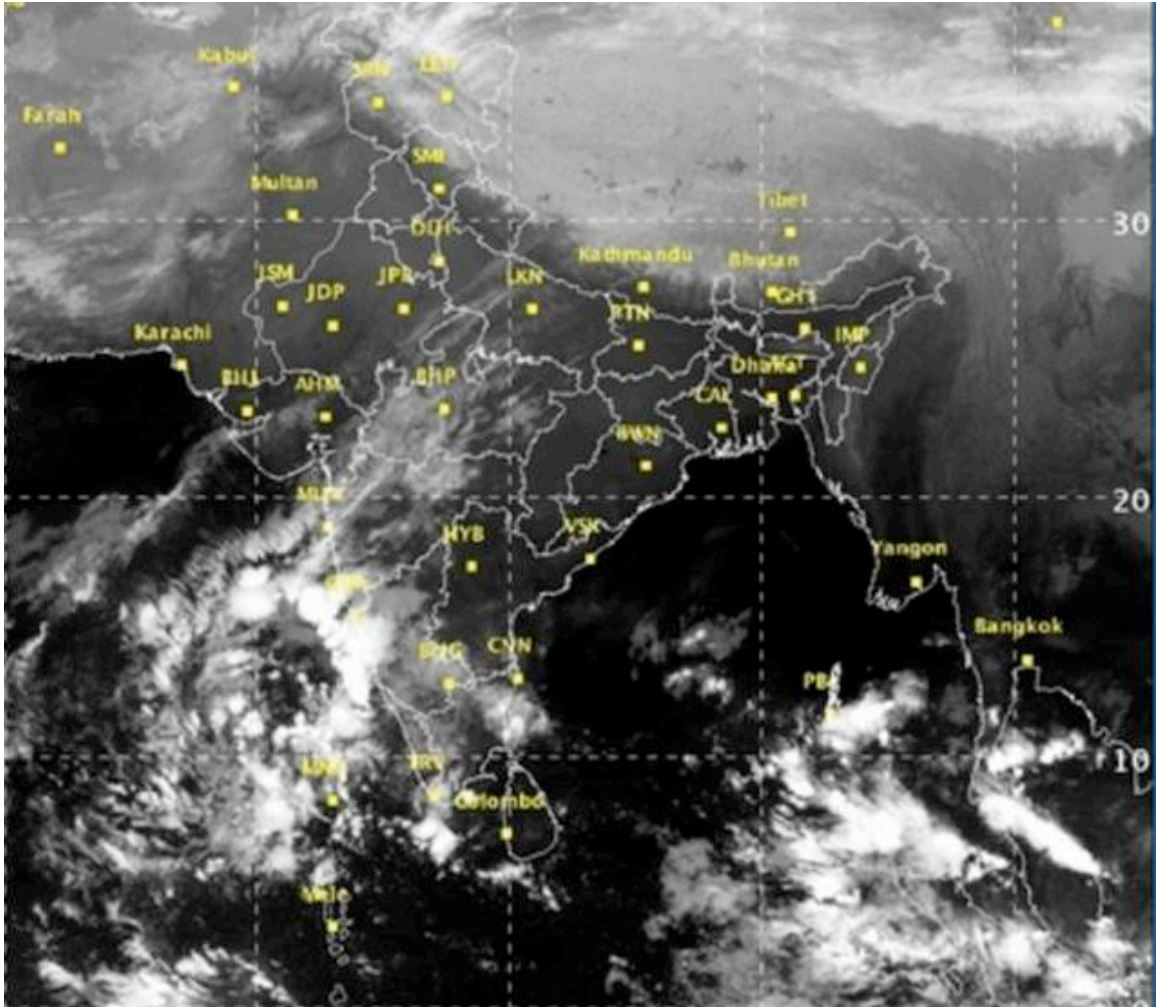
Not only trees, the corporation's parks have also suffered losses. For instance, parks on the Cooum and Adyar river banks like the one on Langs Garden Road and Kotturpuram Tree Park, have lost a few trees and other greenery. "We will have to take note of the losses suffered and subsequent action will follow," said a senior official.

Officials attributed manpower shortage in the parks department as one of the reasons why the local body could do only very little about protecting trees. "The whole set up of the department has to be re-engineered. There are a very few ground staff available," the official said.

A MoU is in place with the Tamil Nadu Agricultural University to help with the reformation process. But it is yet to be processed, officials added.

THE HINDU **BusinessLine**

Thundershowers seen along West Coast, interior TN for today



Chennai in Tamil Nadu and Nellore in South Coastal Andhra Pradesh feature scattered clouds while Puducherry remains partly cloudy with a possibility of a thunderstorm during the day.

Thundershowers have been forecast for parts of interior Tamil Nadu and the West Coast today as a causative low-pressure area persisted over East-Central Arabian Sea. An offspring trough linked the 'low' with the West Coast has sent clouds so far to the North-Northeast as Uttar Pradesh, satellite pictures show this morning.

CLOUDS TO EAST

This has set up cloudy skies/scattered clouds over many parts of West Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh with possibility of thundershowers at some places.

There is a second trough to the South of the Arabian Sea linking Maldives, Comorin and Lakshadweep. This has helped amplify associated thundery weather along the West Coast (Kerala-Karnataka-Goa-Mumbai-Surat coast) with a number of places expected to receive thundershowers during the course of the day.

The interior of Tamil Nadu is being served jointly by this trough along with a counterpart trough in the Southwest Bay of Bengal and adjoining equatorial Indian Ocean.

LIKELY 'LOW'

Chennai in Tamil Nadu and Nellore in South Coastal Andhra Pradesh feature scattered clouds while Puducherry remains partly cloudy with a possibility of a thunderstorm during the day.

Coimbatore and Madurai remain partly cloudy with possibility of rain or thundershowers while mostly similar climes prevail in Bengaluru and Hosur.

Meanwhile, the Tamil Nadu, Puducherry and South Coastal Andhra Pradesh coasts need to take cognisance of the thunderclouds consolidating over the Andaman and Nicobar Islands in South-East Bay of Bengal.

This is where a likely low-pressure area would get initiated over the next few days, which global weather models believe would track towards these very coasts.

Typhoon In-Fa

Typhoon In-Fa in the Northwest Pacific may have started turning away from South Asia but it would have already sent down a storm 'pulse' that is of import to rain-wary Tamil Nadu coast here.

In-Fa has been moving along a course to towards the Philippines for the past few days but has since taken a U-turn in a North-Northeast direction towards the South of Japan and further away.

STORM 'PULSE'

Its West-ward course may have been sufficient to lob in the 'pulse' across the Philippines into the South China Sea and further West to the Andaman Sea/Southeast Bay of Bengal, according to an assessment by the European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts.

The 'pulse' is expected to show up to the South-West of Vietnam-Cambodia as early as tomorrow (Wednesday) before it negotiates the Gulf of Thailand to enter the Andaman Sea in another two days.

The North-East monsoon flows are already very strong in the Gulf of Thailand, just upstream of Andaman Sea.

Wednesday forecast

India Met Department has already forecast heavy rain over the Nicobar Islands tomorrow (Wednesday) and the day after.

The Thailand Met Department has warned of isolated heavy to very heavy rain in the area and strong wind waves of 2- to 4 metres high.

According to the Thai Met Department, there already is a low-pressure area around the Malacca Straits, which would get accentuated by the incoming typhoon In-Fa 'pulse.'

The combined system is expected to move into the Andaman Sea by Friday, from where it would travel towards the North Tamil Nadu-South Andhra Pradesh coast to reach there by December 1 (Tuesday).

India Met sees rains coming down heavily over parts of Tamil Nadu and Puducherry from at least four days ahead (Friday onwards).

Flooding rains are possible from December 1 for the coast of Tamil Nadu, Puducherry and Coastal Andhra Pradesh, which would be propelled into adjoining Rayalaseema, South Interior Karnataka and Kerala.

Cooperatives should push farm credit



The decline in share of cooperatives in total farm credit is a cause for concern and needs to be corrected, says Ramesh Chand, Member, NITI Aayog . An agriculture expert and a full-time member of the Aayog, Chand believes that financial inclusion in the sector has three dimensions – geographical distribution of farm credit, more long-term credit, and larger role of cooperatives.

In an interaction with *BusinessLine*, Chand shares his views on financial inclusion for agriculture sector, whether minimum support price is needed, and why cooperatives could play a vital role vis-à-vis commercial banks for farm credits as well as distribution of food subsidy. Excerpts:

A lot is being spoken about financial inclusion. How different is ‘financial inclusion’ for agriculture sector?

Financial inclusion in agriculture sector needs to be viewed in a slightly different way than what is the general perception. In this sector there is a strong geographic disparity even in distribution of institutional credit.

If you look at inter-state distribution of institutional credit, you find that in some states we are giving more short-term credit than what is being spent on inputs, while in some we are not even giving 10 per cent of the cost of inputs.

I would look at financial inclusion not only from social perspective, but also from the geographical angle. We need to bring states like Jharkhand, Assam and even West Bengal into the fold of institutions. In South India, lot of agriculture credit is going for jewellery and investment in gold. But, in Eastern India their input and cost of hired labour in proportion of institutional credit, in some cases is as low as 10 per cent.

How do you deal with it – commercial banks versus co-operatives?

Yes, inclusion should also be seen from different types of credit -- short, medium and long-term. Medium and long-term credit is important from investment point of view. Over time, the share of long-term credit in the total institutional credit has declined. To see credit distribution is also properly balanced is a component of financial inclusion.

The second concern in terms of institutional agricultural credit is that the share of medium and long-term credit has been declining. I would like to add a third dimension to financial inclusion --scheduled commercial banks and co-operatives.

The share of cooperatives in farm credit is quite low. We may have better inclusion in terms of social classes if co-operatives play their role properly. This is becoming a serious issue and at some point we are likely to enter into some problems because scheduled commercial banks, after you remove the priority sector lending limits, have a tendency not to give more. Co-operatives are the natural partner for the farmers. We need to see that the institutional co-operative, which is getting weakened, is strengthened.

So there is a differentiation among various farmer categories ...

States with high concentration of institutional credit normally don't see much discrimination between high and low class farmers. But, for those who have tenants,

who are leasing the land, something needs to be done for them. We are debating it in NITI Aayog. A Working Group has been constituted.

Can co-operatives be used for direct benefit of cash transfer for food?

I do not think there is any restriction that DBT can be done only through commercial banks. The only issue to be sorted out before we assign this responsibility to cooperatives is they need to be computerised. I discussed this matter with NABARD - to go for computerisation. Commercial banks are much more advanced here. If DBT is to be linked to Aadhar, then you require computerisation. If co-operatives are to be involved then their level needs to be raised. Co-operatives are better candidates (for DBT) as they are at the village level and have intimate knowledge of people.

The volatility in pulses prices raised debate on the entire concept of minimum support price. There has also been issues raised at WTO, some countries want India to do away with MSP. What according to you should be the right approach?

I don't think WTO requires India to do away with MSP. What they want is that whatever support we are giving is compliant with our commitment and should not exceed *de minimis* level of 10 per cent. Only if it exceeds this can they say that we are crossing it and therefore, other countries may take some retaliatory measure. Without price incentive, farmer will not go for adopting new technology and investments will not come into farming. Unfortunately, our markets have not evolved over time.

Today, there is a vertical disconnect between retail, wholesale, and farm harvest level prices. Prices of Arhar and other pulses goes up abnormally high in lean periods but that increase seldom gets passed on to the farmer. If your markets are not mature, they are not competitive, then state intervention in prices is a must.

The option we have is to create a competitive environment and allow big investments to come in. But, at this stage, where we are right now, I think we cannot do away with price intervention. MSP will have to continue till we make the markets competent.

The price volatility seen in onion and some other produce has raised the issue of cartels. How does one tackle them?

Liberalise agriculture markets. Unless you do not do that, these kinds of things will keep happening and happen more frequently. These incidents will become more severe.

You have to see whether APMC and Essential Commodities Act are serving the right purpose or causing an adverse effect.

Questions are being raised at India's sugar scheme also at the WTO compelling the government to rework the subsidy. Do you feel that some of the Western countries are intervening too much?

An agreement has its advantage as well as disadvantage. Once you reach an agreement, you cannot blame others on individual items.

We are able to do something which may be harming the agriculture of other countries. India is the largest exporter of rice and exports 10 million tonnes. We are also giving huge subsidies on rice. So, then those countries can object that their rice farmers are suffering. When we negotiate any agreement, we should be careful.

But, once it is done, at that time we cannot wake up and say that this is favourable to you therefore it is harmful to us. Then we should play smart. We also do certain things that other countries may find objectionable.

Modi sanctions Rs. 940-cr assistance for flood-hit TN



Prime Minister Narendra Modi today instructed the immediate release of financial assistance of nearly Rs. 940 crore to deal with the flood situation in rain-battered Tamil Nadu, hours after Chief Minister J Jayalithaa wrote to him for funds to sustain relief work.

“Prime Minister Narendra Modi has instructed the release of financial assistance worth Rs. 939.63 crore immediately to Tamil Nadu to assist it in dealing with the situation arising from the floods,” an official release said.

The Centre is also sending a team to Tamil Nadu to assess the damage and “further action will be taken after the team submits its report,” it said. The assistance was sanctioned in response to a request of the state government.

With the North-East monsoon leaving a trail of destruction in the state, the Tamil Nadu government has pegged the damage at Rs. 8,481 crore, with Jayalalithaa today urging Modi to immediately release Rs. 2,000 crore to sustain relief work.

The Chief Minister, in her letter to Modi, gave a detailed memorandum on the flood damage. It was sent to the Prime Minister's Office by a delegation led by S T K Jakkayan, Special Representative of Tamil Nadu.

She said 169 lives have been lost in various rain-related incidents since October 1, 2015.

The state government had also asked for a central team to be deputed immediately to make an on-the-spot assessment of the damage.

“This assessment has been made as an immediate measure since the Tamil Nadu government requires assistance from the Centre to meet the high expenditure requirements that such a severe calamity has caused. The funds required are well beyond the resources available with the state, including the State Disaster Response Fund,” she said.

TN floods: Jayalalithaa writes to PM seeking funds for relief work



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Jayalalithaa urging Prime Minister Narendra Modi to immediately release Rs. 2,000 crore to sustain relief work.

In a letter to the Prime Minister, she said that 169 lives have been lost in various rain-related incidents since October 1, 2015.

Detailing the extent of the damage, Jayalalithaa told the PM that despite her government's preventive efforts, the state had suffered severe damage on account of the "extremely heavy and sustained" rainfall which, she said, had left a trail of destruction and that her government had allocated Rs. 500 crore for relief work.

The assessment of damage and requirement of funds for immediate relief and restoration of infrastructure, which she said had been speedily carried out, indicated a much higher financial requirement.

"The requirement of funds for immediate rescue and relief and the temporary and permanent restoration of infrastructure has been worked out at Rs. 8,481 crore in all...."

"This assessment has been made as an immediate measure since the Tamil Nadu government requires assistance from the Centre to meet the high expenditure requirements that such a severe calamity has caused. The funds required are well beyond the resources available with the state, including the State Disaster Response Fund," she said.

She requested Modi to depute a central team immediately to make its on-the-spot assessment of damage and to release central financial aid without any delay keeping in view the urgency of restoring many of the infrastructure facilities and services to the flood affected people.

"In the meanwhile, I request that an on account release of Rs. 2,000 crore may be sanctioned immediately to enable the state government to sustain the relief and restoration operations with the same vigour," Jayalalithaa said.

Cage Aquaculture Intl Symposium at Kochi from Nov 25

The 5th international symposium on Cage Aquaculture in Asia (CAA5) is being organised by Asian Fisheries Society (AFS) and ICAR- Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI) here from November 25 to 28.

The symposium is expected to provide a platform for researchers, technologists, entrepreneurs and farmers to meet, share, discuss and evaluate the current developments in cage aquaculture in the region and its future.

Delegates from more than 10 countries including India will be participating in the symposium, which is focused on 5 major themes covering various aspects cage

farming such as Production Systems (marine & inland); Breeding and Seed Production; Nutrition and Feed; Health and Environment Management; Economics, Livelihood and Policies.

The symposium will bring to the table, key issues related to ownership of the open water bodies in India for cage aquaculture, which needs translation into strategies and action at national and local levels, with a distinctive role for development cooperation with international players for its sustainable development.

Jute from Bengal being brought to Kochi thru coastal shipping route



After rice shipments from Andhra Pradesh, the coastal shipping route is now being used for the movement of jute from Bengal to Kerala.

The first vessel operated by Shreyas Shipping and Logistics has brought raw jute to Kochi Port and the cargo is meant for coir product exporters in Alappuzha. Shreyas has been operating regular services connecting Kolkata and Kochi ports moving both coastal and transshipment cargoes from the North-East to be shipped through ICTT at Vallarpadam.

Coir-jute combo

Alappuzha, the coir hub of Kerala, has been manufacturing value-added coir products by blending jute and coir fibre. At present, the jute movement from Bengal is over 50,000 tonnes a year and depends on roadways, which is costly.

Besides, the limitation of 11 tonnes per cargo truck for a single journey has resulted in the deployment of more trucks for moving jute, which has become time-consuming and costly, a senior port official said.

The port management has taken the initiative to bring together shipping companies and coir exporters to push for a modal shift to transport the jute using coastal vessels. The port has lined up several plans to boost coastal shipping movements, especially in

containerised format, which would substantially reduce cargo seepage while loading and unloading.

Container service

Meanwhile, the first ship of the weekly Far East container service connecting Kochi with ports in China and Korea called at ICTT, benefitting exporters from Pollachi, Dindigul and suburbs focussing on coir fibre exports to destinations near intermediate ports such as Ningbo and Chiwan.

The maiden service handled 872 containers in its first call. The ship on its east-bound route will call at ports at Shanghai, Ningbo, Chiwan (all in China), Busan in Korea, Singapore and Port Klang.

According to the port official, the direct sailing ensures savings of 4 days of transit time and overall cost of transport besides providing logistic competitiveness to Pollachi exim sector.

The easing of procedural delays at Walayar Check Post following the State government's intervention has helped increase cargo arrivals from Coimbatore, Tirupur and Pollachi. It is also pointed out that the rise in container flow is expected to push up container trailer operators business as well as increase allied commercial activities at the port.

Business Standard

Poultry farmers in the soup over higher input cost

Rural demand for eggs, broilers and other poultry products are falling due to drought. Raw material cost, largely feedstock, for farmers has risen significantly; their realisations have not improved.

Retail prices of these products have not changed much. Feedstock like soyameal and maize prices have risen 25 per cent in six months. Feed prices are nearly 70 per cent of the total cost in the sector.



Balram Yadav, managing director of Godrej Agrovet, one of the major animal feed producers, with Rs 3,000 crore coming from this segment yearly, told Business Standard: “Animal feed producers are not able to recover their cost, with poultry farmers facing such a bad time. They're either planning to exit or cutting the cost of animal feed.”

Six months ago, ex-farm gate prices (realisations) of broilers were Rs 65 each; it is now Rs 55. There has, however, been a small increase in the farm gate price of eggs.

Mangesh Wane, vice-chairman of CLAFMA (earlier the Compound Livestock Animal Feedstock Manufacturers Association) said: “There is shortage of soyameal and the cost has skyrocketed due to fall in the soyabean crop. This being an important ingredient for animal feed, we recommend the government to cut the duty on imported soyameal.”

There is, he adds, oversupply of eggs and broilers. In 2015, egg production is estimated to increase by seven per cent, to 74 million.

As for imports from the US of chicken legs, Wane noted we'd lost one case at the World Trade Organization; an appeal is planned. The US is a consumer of chicken breast; legs are an export surplus there. However, if chicken legs are exported to India, it will further dampen the poultry sector here. “The government should make all efforts to oppose the import,” he said.