

27-11-2015

# THE HINDU

## Central team visits rain-hit areas



Chief Minister Jayalalithaa holds discussions with the eight-member Central team at the Secretariat on Thursday.— Photo: Special Arrangement

The Central team will visit the flood-affected areas over three days. On Thursday, it visited hard-hit areas in the Chennai Metropolitan area including Tambaram, Perungalathur, Outer Ring Road, Rajakilpakkam, Sembakkam, Pallikaranai, Velachery and Saidapet.

“We will submit a report one week after visiting all areas in the State,” said Home Ministry Joint Secretary T.V.S.N.Prasad, who led the team.

### **Tanks inspected**

The team inspected many of the 20 major tanks breaches in southern parts of the city. It conducted an inspection of damage to highways, lake breaches, marooned households and damaged huts, which was put at Rs.955 crore in Kancheepuram district.

The Union Government has sanctioned Rs. 939.63 crore as immediate flood relief for the State.

### **Residents beware! More rain likely this weekend**

The city, which was recovering from the catastrophic impact of the last fortnight’s downpour, is likely to receive more rain this weekend. The Meteorological

department expects coastal areas, including the city, to get a heavy spell of rain for three days starting from Saturday.

An upper air circulation that lies over southeast Bay of Bengal is likely to move towards the Tamil Nadu coast and also intensify into a low pressure area by Friday, said S. Stella, director, Regional Meteorological Centre.

There will be an increase in rainfall from Saturday. While it will bring widespread rain over the coastal areas on Saturday, some areas may get heavy to very heavy rain up to 24 cm on Sunday and Monday.

The city has received 118.4 cm of rain this month. This northeast monsoon has already exceeded the average rainfall by 53 cm.

“Usually, the northeast monsoon takes breaks between rain spells. But, this year, there have been hardly two or three days of dry weather so far,” said S. R. Ramanan, director, Area Cyclone Warning Centre, Chennai.

The Meteorological department is monitoring the possibility of the weather system further intensifying into a well-marked low pressure area after Monday, he added. On Friday, Chennai may experience rain or thundershowers in some areas and the sky will be generally cloudy.

***A low pressure area is likely to bring heavy rain for three days from Saturday***

### **Rainwater harvesting is the way to go**

Nearly 65 per cent of the city already has stormwater drains and there is a proposal to provide the remaining area with the same in phases.

Coimbatore should have been free of water-logging during the rainy months, but it was not so.

While there are areas in the city that habitually get water logged every rainy season, this time other locations such as the Sungam junction, saw water stagnation for unusually long hours during the recent rains.

“We had a meeting even before the monsoon and ensured that storm water drains were cleaned,” a senior official of the Corporation said.

The officials say that only low lying areas were affected during the recent rains.

The local body plans to take up a complete study, map the entire city, assess areas where measures are needed to avoid water-logging, and encourage construction of rainwater harvesting structures.

On several streets, the residents have covered the drains by extending the front portion of the house till the road, or the storm water drain does not have a proper slope for water to flow into it, says Manoharan, who resides in Singanallur.

Constructing rainwater harvesting structures and cleaning the stormwater drains regularly will avoid water logging on the roads, says Vanitha Mohan, Managing Trustee of Siruthuli. “We have constructed over 500 rainwater harvesting structures on roadsides, institutions and open grounds,” she says.

She added that in the places where rainwater harvesting structures were constructed and maintained properly, there was no loss of water during the rains and the groundwater level had improved.

The residents of each locality could join hands and construct rainwater harvesting structure in their area so that water does not stagnate on the roads.

K. Viswanathan, former president of Builders’ Association of India, suggests that water harvesting should be at the local level.

*We have 4 rainwater harvesting structures on the 52 acre premises. Almost 90 per cent of the water is harvested and the groundwater level has gone up.*

*R. Jayakumar, Commandant of RAF 105 Battalion*

*The recent rain showed that Coimbatore needs a permanent solution to water logging*

### **In search of greener pastures**

After six years behind the desk at an IT job, Vinoth Kumar left it all to become a farmer. Hailing from an agricultural family based in Cheyyur, Kanchipuram district, the 32-year-old has been a full-time farmer since 2014, practising sustainable living and organic farming methods — teaching other farmers to do the same. While he has travelled extensively and studied the traditional farming methods of Tamil Nadu and other places in India, Nepal and Bhutan, his latest project will take him across 11 countries in South East Asia.



“When I went around TN to document organic farming methods, I found that most of them have been lost over the passage of time. It seems virtually impossible to do agriculture in India without electricity. However, in countries like Laos and Vietnam, that are still not very developed, they still follow a lot of traditional methods. We are planning to cover around nine to 11 countries to document these,” says Vinoth. The countries to be covered include Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam, Myanmar, Bangladesh and Bhutan.

Since the SE Asian countries also experience tropical climate and similar materials are available, studying their methods might help farmers in India revert to traditional farming, feels Vinoth. “Since this kind of knowledge is not documented properly, we are trying to collect and document it in a video format. We already have a YouTube channel, where we share sustainable farming and living methods. We will add subtitles, and share these with our partner organisations across the country. They will be able to do a better job of translating them into the native language and educating farmers.”

Vinoth will be accompanied by Raja S. Pandian, who has travelled with him on several earlier occasions. “We became friends on Facebook, and since we had common interests, we began travelling together. For travellers, it is that simple and easy to become friends,” says Vinoth with a laugh. They plan to cycle and hitchhike most of the way to spread the message of eco-friendly travel, and are currently

looking for sponsors. In a recently concluded indiegogo crowd-funding drive, they raised USD 4000 out of the USD 9500 they estimated they would need for the nearly six-month-long trip.

Of his expectations from the journey, Vinoth says, “The trip will be a learning experience for us, and a chance to create a rich repository of open source documentation that will be freely accessible to everyone who is interested in making the world a better place.”

*Since this kind of knowledge is not documented properly, we are trying to collect and document it in a video format*

## **Ragi Resurgence**

*Ragi is finding favour on menus in the city*

There must be a grain of truth in it, if ragi is everywhere and if everyone, not just the health conscious, is finding innovative ways of eating it these days. The humble ragi (finger millet), *kooravu* in local parlance, always only a superfood for infants, is, of late, enjoying a resurgence on menus in the city and beyond. And how!





Swapna K.V., a 35-year-old lawyer who “believes in healthy living”, for example, now turns to ragi flour to make everything from dosas, chappatis and idiappams to puttus, orattis and even pizzas! “Ragi is supposed to be rich in iron and I started eating it to bring up my haemoglobin level.

As such, for the past few months now, I’ve been substituting ragi wherever I needed to use rice, wheat or maida flour. My two-year-old daughter, Angel, is particularly fond of it as a pizza and loves to eat it dipped in sauce. Every few days I have a version of ragi for breakfast teamed with an omelette. It’s actually really tasty a flour, not to mention quite filling,” she explains, adding that she finds ragi chappatis a little more chewy than wheat ones. “Also, ragi dosas have the consistency of wheat dosas, only it’s slightly grainier and tastes rather earthy. Initially I found ragi a bit difficult to digest, perhaps because I was not used to eating it, but you quickly get used to it,” she adds.

Tarun Jacob, 28, who works in real estate insurance, meanwhile, has been eating ragi for a couple of years now. “We started buying ragi when my sister’s son was born – to give him *kurukku* [a porridge of cooked ragi flour that’s traditionally given to infants, which, supposedly, builds up their strength],” he says.

At the time his family had returned home after a stint in Bengaluru where they had seen ragi used more as a food item – ragi mudde [ragi balls, a traditional dish in Karnataka, that’s eaten with just about everything], for example.

“Ragi puttu soon became a regular breakfast item. I find that ragi puttu goes well with banana than the traditional accompaniment of kadala curry. I would say it is midway between rice and wheat in terms of heaviness,” he says.

Aswathy Ashok, a 28-year-old homemaker, took to the millet after sampling a ragi *vazhakkappam* (banana fritters) at a tribal food fete at Kanakakunnu.

“Apart from vazhakappam, they had ragi idiappam, ela ada and fried ragi balls with chicken curry, all of which I tried. My mother tells me I loved *kurukku* when I was a baby. Perhaps it was that long forgotten taste but it sent my taste buds into overdrive. I enquired further and they told me that ragi is a staple in their diet,” she says.

It brings to mind an episode on TV in which foodie and food travelogue host Raj Kalesh visited the Chokramudi Muthuvan settlement in the interiors of Idukki and sampled the tribe’s various ragi recipes. “Their main dish is ragi flour cooked with a local variety of spinach. They call it *kepaverakiyathu*,” says Kalesh.

In fact, food and agriculture expert S. Usha, director, Thanal, a city-based sustainable agriculture NGO, says that ragi once used to be a staple part of Malayali diet. Thanal is one of the first to bring about the millet’s revival by retailing ragi flour through its monthly Organic Bazaar.

“Firstly, the millet is packed with nutrients – iron, vitamins, calcium, fibre, amino acids, phosphorous and the like, which makes it a good option for weight loss, improving bone density and for people with diabetics. Secondly, it’s a plant that doesn’t need much of water for cultivation and so it was the crop of choice during the dry season.

Thirdly, it is a comparatively cheaper grain to grow and also to buy. When I was a child I recall ragi being extensively cultivated in Kerala. When the green revolution happened, wheat and rice came to occupy the millet’s – and muthira’s (horse gram) – place on our diet and that’s how it went out of fashion in the last few decades,” she explains.

While many, particularly old-timers, like to buy the millet (it looks like mustard seeds, only deep red) as a whole and make the flour themselves [a laborious process, at best] it helps that nowadays ‘organic’ ragi flour is readily available in grocery stores across the city. “I find the flour to be very versatile,” says Aswathy. Her friends swear by her ragi tea cakes, ela ada and ottada, idli, pancakes...

Also, in sync with contemporary tastes, ragi is now available as processed foods such as breakfast cereals (ragi flakes), biscuits, snacks, cake mixes, malt, instant idli/dosa mixes and the like. “I believe ragi went out of fashion because of a lack of innovation. What we did was to (re)package the millet in such a way as to appeal to urban customers, all the while retaining its intrinsic qualities,” says entrepreneur Prashant Parameswaran of Soulfull, one of the first brands to bring ragi back to kitchens, with its organics cereals and instant mixes. Bon appétit!

### **Google salutes India's milkman**



Honouring “Father of the White Revolution” Verghese Kurien, Google on Thursday made a doodle of him on his 94th birth anniversary. Kurien, the “Milkman of India”, made India the world’s largest milk producer.

### **Kerala scientists develop saltwater-tolerant paddy**



SalTol Jyothi, the new variety of saltwater-tolerant paddy developed by scientists at the Rice Research Station, Vyttila in Kochi.



scientists at the Rice Research Station of Kerala Agricultural University (KAU) at Vyttila have developed a new variety of paddy tolerant to saline intrusion, a major challenge faced by farmers in the lowlands.

The landmark achievement in rice research was made possible by the introduction of genes tolerant to salinity and iron toxicity into Jyothi, Kerala's most popular rice variety. The project which began in 2008 involved the incorporation of the SalTol gene present in Pokkali, the most saline tolerant rice variety in the world, into Jyothi. Thus Jyothi, known for its superior grain quality, yet restricted by the lack of saline tolerance, has become suitable for Pokkali fields, Kuttanad and kolelands as well, according to the researchers.

The scientists used the introgressive hybridisation technique to move the SalTol gene from Pokkali to the gene pool of Jyothi. The project was part of a long-term programme initiated by KAU for the development of stress-tolerant rice varieties for less favourable environments. The SalTol gene is the donor for salinity-tolerant rice breeding programmes all over the world.

“The attempt to introduce SalTol into Jyothi has borne fruit after seven years of research. The introgressed Jyothi lines have recorded a very high yield of 6.2 tonnes per hectare,” said P. Rajendran, KAU Vice-Chancellor.

V. Sreekumar, Professor and Head, RRS, Vyttila, said the introgressed Jyothi variety was suitable for cultivation in the eastern and western coastal areas of the Indian Peninsula. The research team is now working on the introduction of a submergent tolerant gene (Sabl) into Jyothi, to make the rice variety resistant to flash floods up to two weeks.

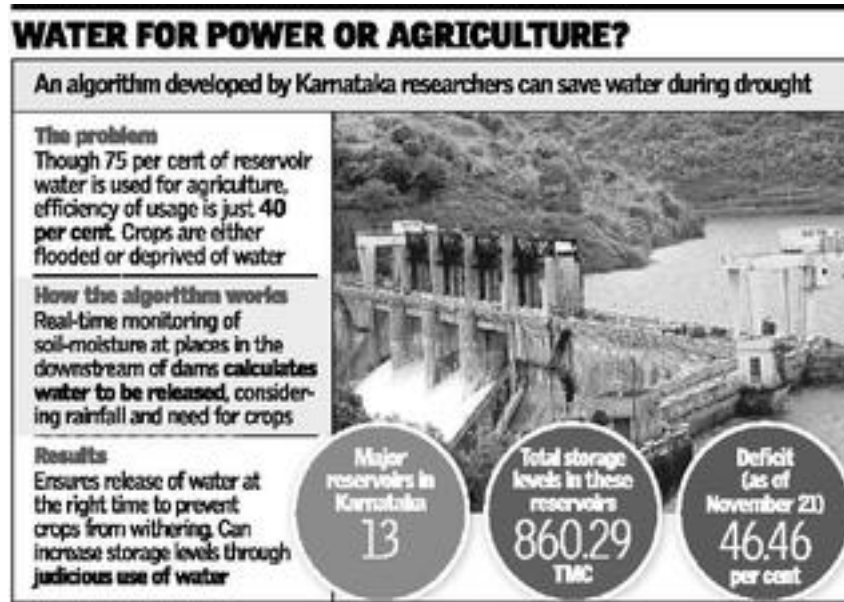
The work is in the final stage, he said. Submergence is another major challenge faced by farmers in the lowlands.

Shylaraj, who piloted the research work, said that introgressing the saline tolerant gene into Jyothi was achieved through the Marker Assisted Backcross Breeding (MABB) technique.

***Kerala Agricultural University scientists used introgressive hybridisation method to achieve this***

## ‘Fuzzy logic’ to optimise water use

*An algorithm developed by researchers that can save water in times of drought*



Should water be saved for power generation or should it be released for agriculture? This is the dilemma the Karnataka government finds itself up against at the end of a season of failed monsoons. It's much like the situation in the State a month ago, when crops had started to wither as reservoirs held back water.

However, researchers from the Indian Institute of Science (IISc.) have devised an algorithm that could possibly ease the situation. The complex number crunching was tested out at the 71.50-TMC storage Lakkavalli gravity dam across the Bhadra in Shivamogga district that irrigates 1.68 lakh hectares across Chitradurga, Shivamoga, Chikkamagalur, Davangere, and Ballari taluk.

“In India, about 75 per cent of water is used in agriculture. But, the efficiency in use of water is very low, at just around 40 per cent,” says Pradeep Mujumdar, Professor at the Civil Engineering Department, one of the authors of the recently-published paper, who believes that calculating the amount and times for release of water can go a long way in conserving large amounts of water.

For the Lakkavalli dam, his team placed data gathering equipment in 15 locations in the command area of the reservoir that monitored four major crops of the region — paddy, citrus, sugarcane and maize.

Soil moisture content for each of the crops was calculated, and based on the rainfall received at these stations, the researchers could calculate — through a mathematical tool called ‘Fuzzy logic’ — the amount of water that needed to be released.

The study notes that the irregular release of water currently results in days where there is very deficit water for the crops, while the real-time model ensures adequate water for the crops at most times. For instance, in paddy, the current policy results in at least four days of severely-deficient water in the developmental stage that can push it to wilt.

In the reservoir side of things, the models show that on an average, even during a dry year, more than 16 million cubic metres can be saved, while 19 million cubic metres less can be released.

*An algorithm developed by researchers that can save water in times of drought*

### **Credit plan projection estimated at Rs. 9,989 crore for Tirupur district**

The Potential Linked Credit Plan (PLCP) prepared by National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) for Tirupur district, has envisaged a credit potential of Rs. 9,989.23 crore to ‘priority sectors’ during 2016-17.

#### **Priority sectors**

The plan outlay, which is 25.36 per cent more than the projections made for 2015-16, was prepared by NABARD after taking into account the recent changes in lending norms to priority sectors that cover agriculture, education, MSME enterprises, renewable energy and housing, among a few other portfolios.

The increased thrust given by the Central and State governments for various sectors too were considered when estimating the projections, NABARD Assistant General Manager V. Sriram told *The Hindu* .

The PLCP is usually taken as the base document for the preparation of the Annual Credit Plan brought out collectively by the banking institutions.

#### **Crop loans**

Of the total credit potential projected to the priority sectors in the document, the estimated credit flow in agriculture and allied activities covering crop production, marketing and term loans for agriculture/allied activities was pegged at Rs. 2,556.71 crore.

The lion's share of credit flow, as per the document, would be towards the activities of micro, small and medium enterprises. "We estimate a credit disbursement of Rs. 5,912.08 crore in MSME sector," said Mr. Sriram.

### **New additions**

This year, the PCLP had incorporated 'incremental export credit' under a separate head as per the revised guidelines.

Similarly, estimated projections were made separately for social infrastructures such as toilet construction and working capital for schools wherever the bank credit could be involved.

### **Rs. 3,163-crore credit plan for Karur district**

The potentially linked credit plan for Karur district has projected a credit flow of Rs.3,163 crore for the year 2016-17.

Of this, the credit for short term crop loans is estimated at Rs.979 crore while the credit for thrust areas like water resources, farm mechanisation, plantation and horticulture is put at Rs.450 crore.

Other major estimates include Rs.716 crore for SME; Rs. 400 crore for export credit; Rs. 67 crore for education; Rs. 237 crore for housing; Rs. 7 crore for renewable energy and Rs. 170 crore for other priority sector.

An area-based scheme for rural mini backyard poultry/ goat farm and desi bird farm for providing sustainable livelihood and nutritional security to nearly 530 rural poor in Karur district formed part of the plan at an estimate of Rs.1.29 crore.

In tune with the sub-target of seven per cent fixed for 2015-16 to give credit to small, marginal and landless farmers within the over all 18 per cent target fixed for loans to agriculture under the revised priority sector guidelines of the RBI, banks have been asked to achieve a target of 1,500 joint liability groups.

As Karur district has three per cent forest cover, the plan suggests that all-out efforts should be made to improve the forest cover by tapping resources of watershed projects in association with leading banks and corporates.

Collector S. Jayandhi released the plan at a meeting held here on Thursday. G. Karthigeyan, Senior Regional Manager, Indian Overseas Bank, Tirupur, received the first copy.

## **Solar pumpsets slowly gaining ground**

A. Venkatachalam, a farmer of Podhavur near Tiruchi, has been spending about Rs. 400 every day to buy diesel to operate his agricultural pumpset to irrigate his fields situated about 1.5 km away from an open farm well.

The monthly expense of Rs. 12,000 on diesel was a heavy drain on his resources and affected his margins. But he seemingly had no option.

Just until the State government's solar-powered irrigation pumpset scheme came almost as a tailor-made solution for him. Having put up a solar-powered pumpset, Mr. Venkatachalam had now been saving big on his overheads and looks forward to better profits.

Mr. Venkatachalam is one of the 66 farmers who have installed the solar-powered pumpsets in the district over the past couple of years, availing a subsidy of about Rs. 2.30 crore from the government.

“Previously, I had to run the diesel engine for the entire day to irrigate my fields as the water pressure was poor. Now, using the solar-powered pumpsets, I could irrigate my fields sufficiently and quickly as the pressure is good,” he said. This year, Mr. Venkatachalam has raised sugarcane on about five acres of land and paddy on 10 acres, besides jasmine in a small area.

The State government extends 80 per cent subsidy under the scheme, implemented through the Agricultural Engineering Department.

The units come complete with the solar panels, the support structure, and 5 HP pumpsets. Mr. Venkatachalam only had to make a one-time investment of Rs.1.17 lakh to install the solar powered pumpset which totally cost Rs. 5.01 lakh.

According to Agricultural Engineering Department officials, the life of the units is 25 years and they come with a five year warranty.

“The units can be used to pump water from borewells, open wells, or sumps. Two models, one with fixed solar panels and the other with automatic sunlight tracking system, are available. Farmers can opt for either model depending on their requirement,” said V. Rajendran, Executive Engineer, and A. Kandasamy, Assistant Engineer, Agricultural Engineering.

Currently, 5-HP pumpsets are supplied under the scheme which can be used to pump water ideally from a depth of up to 200 feet. Each unit could give an output of 87,000 litres in eight hours every day.

The pumpsets could be operated even at 25 degree Celsius atmospheric temperature, they said. M. Muthukaruppan, another farmer of Podhavur who installed the solar powered pumpset about 18 months ago, said he has not faced any maintenance issue so far. “The solar panels only required to be cleaned periodically. Otherwise there is no maintenance involved,” he said.

With farmers often complaining of a long waiting period to get free power connections, the solar powered systems could offer an ideal solution. Farmers need not worry about voltage fluctuations, the beneficiaries say.

However, awareness seems to be low. During the current financial year, about 40 applications have been received from farmers and officials were conducting viability checks on the fields before the sanction orders are issued.

***The solar panels only required to be cleaned periodically. Otherwise, there is no maintenance involved***

### **Simple systems that allow water to percolate into the ground:**

- ♣ Drains can have a layer of pebbles instead of concrete
- ♣ The storm water drains can be covered with pre-cast slabs with holes so that waste materials do not fall in and choke them
- ♣ Putting up rainwater harvesting structures in every neighbourhood and roads will avoid wastage of rain water.
- ♣ Rainwater should be harvested locally instead of collecting the water through pipelines and draining it into a common area
- ♣ Storm water drains should be cleaned and maintained regularly for most efficiency

## **The Nilgiris in the grip of frost**

After heavy rain, The Nilgiris is now under the grips of frost.

On Thursday the temperature fell to 6 degree accompanied by a heavy fall of frost.

Officials at the Botanical Garden washed away the frost using sprinklers before sunlight sets in.

Failure to wash off the frost before sunlight will result in scorching of the grass, said N. Mani, Joint Director of Horticulture.

If frost fall continues, tea and coffee beans will be affected.

Farmers have already asked the government to take steps to protect the crop from scorching.

The flow of tourists has already declined because of the heavy rain.

## **Prosper through organic farming**



The Prajapitha Brahma Kumaris Aishwarya Viswa Vidyalaya has launched a campaign in the district to promote rural prosperity through organic farming.

President of Federation of All Trade and Industries Associations in Erode District N. Sivanesan inaugurated the campaign. The volunteers are moving about with their campaign vehicle explaining how crops also grow energetically if tended to with love and care. Just as human beings perform well with right encouragement, agriculture crops too respond positively to treatment with natural nutrients, they explain.

On the starting day, the volunteers covered Erode, Chithode and Kavindapadi. On Friday, they will continue their campaign in and around Gobichettipalayam, and thereafter in Sathyamangalam, Dhimbam, Hasanur and Thalavadi areas.

They have been using the opportunity to prevail upon the people to shed drinking and smoking habits, by initiating them into Rajyoga meditation.

According to Kumar, a team leader, regulating the human mind is akin to a driver controlling a bus. People are made to understand that the mind, if left astray, will result in disaster to the body. Yoga practice will regulate the body and mind to create positive energy, he explained.

### **Rs. 4,998 crore NABARD credit plan for Namakkal district**

The Potential Linked Credit Plan for 2016-17 prepared by the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) has assessed the credit potential for the district at Rs.4998.15 crore, a projected growth of 27 per cent more than the projections for the current year.

At the district consultative committee meeting held here on Wednesday, Collector V. Dakshinamoorthy released the report that was received by C. Thangavel, Zonal Manager, Indian Bank in the presence of Ravindran, Assistant General Manager, Reserve Bank of India and S. Chandrasekhar, Lead District Manager.

The Collector stressed on the need for increased credit flow aimed at capital formation both in agriculture and MSME sector.

He said that bankers have been advised to support up to Rs. 121 crore for SHGs and finance 1,500 Joint Liability Groups for the current year. There is an immense scope for lending to sectors like plantation and horticulture, dairy, poultry and marketing infrastructure in the district, he added.

Mr. Ravindran said that the Reserve Bank of India has recently modified the priority sector guidelines and prescribes sub-targets to banks for lending to farmers.

S. Bhuvarahan, District Development Manager, NABARD, highlighted that of the total plan outlay, 67 per cent is earmarked for agriculture sector consisting of farm credit (57 per cent), agriculture infrastructure (two per cent) and ancillary activities (six per cent). The MSME sector has been earmarked with 10 per cent while export credit was allotted (10 per cent), education (three per cent) and housing (two per cent).



Presently, under the Rural Infrastructure Development Fund of NABARD, projects valued at Rs.182.56 crore covering, bridges, rural roads and school buildings are under progress.

Mr. Chandrasekhar said that banks have been advised to increase the lending to the micro-enterprises in line with RBI's guidelines. He also advised the bankers to utilise the plan document while preparing their branch or bank credit plan.

*A projected growth of 27 per cent more than the projections for the current year*

### **“Government should pay special attention to safeguard waterbodies”**

The State faced a natural disaster due to the failure of the government in desilting tanks, rivers and water channels which were full of hyacinth, said Nizam Mohideen, State general secretary, Socialist Democratic Party of India (SDPI), here on Thursday. A majority of the waterbodies were encroached upon either by poor people or people with political clout, due to which the State faced unprecedented floods.

Most of the rivers were polluted with drainage and industrial waste, and hence it was the need of the hour to safeguard waterbodies.

Addressing reporters, Mr. Mohideen said that the party would undertake a State-wide campaign, ‘Makkalai Santhippom,’ from November 28 to December 13 from Kanyakumari.

### **Objective**

The objective of the campaign was to urge the government to implement total prohibition; protect waterbodies; increase reservation for Muslims to 7 per cent; retrieve Katcha Theevu and withdraw anti-labour, anti-farmer laws. It would also urge the Union government to shed its anti-Dalit and anti-minority stand, Mr. Mohideen said.

### **Farmers' markets make brisk sales**

All the eleven Uzhavar Santhais in the district together registered a sale of Rs. 69 lakh during the Karthigai Deepam festival day on Wednesday.

Expecting a good turnout of consumers, the farmers had brought additional stock of vegetables to these markets. A total of 1,077 farmers brought 196 tonnes of

vegetables to these markets. A total of 42,203 consumers visited the markets to make purchases, said sources in the santhai.

Brinjal was priced at about Rs. 60 a kg, tomato Rs. 42, beans Rs. 76, carrot Rs. 42, lady's finger Rs. 44; big onions Rs. 44, and small onions were priced at Rs. 50 a kg. The Suramangalam Uzhavar Santhai topped the list by registering a sales turnover of Rs. 16.24 lakhs. More than 9,000 consumers visited the santhai, and 265 farmers had brought 46 tonnes of vegetables.

The Thadagapatti santhai managed a sales turnover of Rs. 9.61 lakh, with 5,767 consumers visiting it. Vegetables worth Rs. 5.63 lakh were marketed at the Hasthampatti santhai, and vegetables worth Rs. 5.04 lakh were marketed at the Ammapettai santhai. Uzhavar santhais in Mettur, Attur, Aataiyampatti, Ilampillai, Thammampatti, Jalagandapuram, and Edappadi too saw a rush of consumers on the day.

### **KRRS demands establishment of arecanut board**

*'Arecanut Price Commission has recommended formation of such a board'*

K.T. Gangadhar, working president of the Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha (KRRS) has urged the Union and the State governments to initiate measures to establish an arecanut board to address the problems of growers.

In the past, the arecanut growers had incurred loss owing to fluctuation in price and pest and fungal infections.

The proposed board would be able to help the growers evolve solutions to these problems, he said at a press conference here on Thursday.

Following a recommendation by the Agriculture Price Commission, the State government, a technical committee, comprising agricultural scientists, officials of the Department of Horticulture and functionaries of arecanut growers' cooperative societies, had been formed. The proposed board should be on the lines of the boards established for spices, rubber, coffee and tobacco.

It should be formed through enactment of a law, he said. Mr. Gangadhar blamed the import of low quality arecanut for the decline in the price of indigenous variety. As the import duty being charged was low under the South Asia Free Trade Area (SAFTA), and imports from South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) countries enjoyed total exemption, arecanut was being imported from these countries under international trade agreements. This had led to a steep decline in the prices of local varieties of arecanut, causing severe loss to the producers.

Moreover, the yield of arecanut had come down drastically owing to fruit rot and yellow leaf diseases. The proposed board would guide the government on evolving suitable policies to curb the import of arecanut. It could also undertake a study and research on how to check the pest and fungal infection, he said.

Functionaries of KRRS Yashwanth Rao Ghorpade, Mohan Kudligere and Veeresh were present.

### **CCI purchases Rs. 26.35 crore worth cotton**



Cotton ryots waiting for their turn at a market yard in Khammam, on Thursday. The price of cotton this season shot up to a record high.

The Cotton Corporation of India (CCI) has purchased a little over 1.39 lakh quintals of cotton worth Rs. 26.35 crore from farmers through its six procurement centres in the district till November 24. The corporation had paid Rs.11 crore to the cotton growers for purchase of cotton up to November 9 and hastened the process of disbursing the remaining amount to the cotton farmers in a few days.

### **Stocking purchases**

Giving these details at a meeting convened by Collector D.S. Lokesh Kumar here on Thursday, the officials concerned said that efforts were on to identify suitable cotton ginning mills in the district for stocking the purchased cotton.

They apprised the meeting about the ongoing procurement of cotton at the minimum support price through the CCI's procurement centres in Khammam, Nelakondapalli, Burgampadu, Madhira, Kothagudem, and Enkoor mandals.

The Collector asked the officials to set up a CCI procurement centre in Wyra and ensure prompt payments to the cotton growers at all the CCI procurement centres in the district. He wanted the official to provide the basic amenities at the cotton procurement centres and check the menace of middlemen. The officials of the Revenue, Police, Marketing, Agriculture and other allied departments and agencies were present.

***Officials concerned said efforts were on to identify suitable cotton ginning mills in Khammam for stocking the purchased cotton***

### **Palm leaf products on sale at Khadi expo**



A prospective buyer looks at the marble statuettes on display at Crafts and Khadi Expo in Tiruchi on Thursday

A week-long crafts and khadi exhibition, organised by the Khadi and Village Industries Commission and Tiruchi North Sarvodaya Sangam, was inaugurated in the city on Wednesday.

The exhibits, among other things, included palm leaf products, leather and fancy material, khadi dhotis, readymade garments, and saris.

K.S. Palanisamy, District Collector, inaugurated the expo at SRT Hall in Thillai Nagar which is open till December 1. Special rebate is available for the khadi products. Apart from the promotion of khadi products, counselling is given to the unemployed persons to take to subsidy-based Prime Minister's Employment Guarantee Programme.

### **Collector promises measures to tackle drought**

District Collector A. Shainamol has said that effective and coordinated measures will be taken to tackle any possible drought threat in the district. She said that the district had been allocated Rs.1 crore from the Disaster Response Fund and called upon officers concerned to chart out special ad hoc schemes to effectively utilise the fund.

She called upon the Kerala Water Authority and the Public Works, Irrigation, Ground Water, Rural Development and Agriculture departments to come out with coordinated, sustainable projects. A special committee headed by the Additional Development Commissioner had also been constituted for the purpose.

The projects should be completed in December, Ms. Shainmol told the officers at a meeting she convened on Thursday. The projects include erection of check-dams by using locally available materials, construction of water kiosks, rainwater harvesting at public buildings, groundwater recharge and reviving small ponds and wetlands. She said that the maximum expense for each project should not cross Rs.50,000.

### **Water level at Mettur**

The water level at the Mettur Dam stood at 90.48 feet on Thursday against its full level of 120 feet. The inflow was 6,353 cusecs and the discharge, 500 cusecs.

### **NABARD projects credit potential of Rs. 7,314 crore for Tirunelveli**

*Enormous thrust to lending for agriculture with 75 per cent of credit estimates*

The Potential Linked Credit Plan (PLP) for 2016 – 2017, prepared by National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development Bank (NABARD) for the district, envisages a credit potential of Rs. 7,314 crore, an increase by 18 per cent over the credit plan for the current fiscal.

The plan document was released by Collector M. Karunakaran, in the District Consultative Committee (DCC) meeting held on Wednesday evening, and the first copy was received by S. Sundaresan, Assistant General Manager, Reserve Bank of India, Chennai.

Dr. Karunakaran noted that the credit plan had given enormous thrust to lending for agriculture as 75 per cent of the total credit estimates (Rs. 5,474 crore) had been projected for agriculture, the predominant profession of the district.

He exhorted the banks to disburse more loans to farmers, especially agricultural term loans for minor irrigation activities, acquisition of farm machineries, horticulture and animal husbandry activities.

He said that credit potential for micro, small and medium enterprise (MSME) activities had been assessed at Rs. 439 crore by NABARD and the bankers should encourage the young entrepreneurs to take up MSME activities.

The Collector urged the banks to give more educational loans and loans for Self Help Groups as plan document had given much emphasis for these sectors.

Mr. Sundaresan said that the RBI had revised the priority sector lending (PSL) guidelines in April 2015 and NABARD had prepared the PLP 2016 – 2017, taking into account the revised PSL guidelines.

Convenor of the DCC and Chief Regional Manager, Indian Overseas Bank, Tirunelveli, S.C. Mohanta commended the efforts taken by NABARD in preparing the credit plan and urged the bankers to prepare the district credit plan for 2016 - 2017 accordingly so as to take earnest efforts to achieve the potential indicated in the PLP. Giving the highlights of PLP, Assistant General Manager (District Development), NABARD, Tirunelveli K. Ramalingam, said the NABARD had prepared the PLP based on the current credit flow from the banks, available scope for increasing credit flow, availability of infrastructure and support schemes / services from various government departments.

“PLP 2016 - 2017 has been prepared with the focus on accelerating the pace of capital formation in agriculture and allied sectors. Credit potential has been estimated with

the inclusion of medium industries under MSME and export credit, education, housing and renewable energy separately. The document includes the details of critical infrastructure required for the district and area development schemes with the promotion of sheep / goat farming for backward blocks in the district,” Mr. Ramalingam also noted.

Lead District Manager S. Alagarsamy assured that the District Credit Plan for 2016 - 2017 would be prepared on the basis of credit potentials indicated by NABARD.

### **Inflow to Amaravathi Dam reduces**

The water level in Amaravathi Dam in the district has increased to 85.5 feet against the total height of 90 feet at 7 a.m. on Thursday, against 84.4 feet recorded at the corresponding time on Wednesday.

However, the inflow to the dam has reduced from 1,500 cusecs on Wednesday to 1,047 cusecs on Thursday morning and to 800 cusecs by Thursday evening. Public Works Department officials told *The Hindu* that once the water level touched 88 feet, water would be released from the dam.

Collector G. Govindaraj and MLA (Madathukulam) C. Shanmugavel released water from Thirumoorthy Dam to the Poosarinaicken irrigation tank situated about 10 km in the downstream at Aalmapalayam village. The PWD officials said that water was meant for irrigating 88.56 acres and to recharge groundwater for a radius of five km around the tank.

### **Vegetable prices shoot up owing to rain**

Cost of tomatoes and brinjal touch the roof after the recent rain.

The rain might have brought both cheer and inconvenience for residents of Vellore but there is no good news for consumers from the vegetable markets.

Prices of several vegetables have skyrocketed due to damage caused to the supply in the heavy rain.

The cost of tomatoes, brinjal, beans and broad beans (avarakkai) have shot up since the start of the rain.



A kilo of tomatoes cost Rs. 60 to 80 now as against Rs. 20 before the rain. The price of local variety of brinjal has shot up from Rs. 20 -30 to Rs. 100. Traders said that the vegetables were quickly perishing in the rain, leading to less supply and higher prices. “The vegetables are not withstanding the rain for a day or two.

Use of urea and pesticides are reducing the shelf life of the vegetables. Once the bags get wet, the supply is getting spoiled,” said A. Balu, president of Vellore Town Nethaji Market Kaikari Vyabarigal Sangam. “At least 50 per cent of vegetables being supplied to Vellore market is arriving in poor condition. If the vegetables do not get sold in a day or two, if the lorry arrives a day late, then the produce is not usable.”

For instance, he said at least 20 gunny bags of cabbage perished due to the rain. “This is leading to huge losses for vendors. Tomatoes and brinjal are the worst hit,” he added.

With the supply getting damaged, the cost of vegetables will return to normal rates only after the rain stop and new yield arrives. Onions offer some solace to consumers with the prices dropping in the last one week. It is now sold for Rs. 20 to Rs. 30, while carrots cost Rs. 40. A kilo of beans could burn a hole in the purse as the rates had increased to Rs. 100, while lady’s finger cost Rs. 80.

Drumstick is priced at Rs. 120 a kilo, while cabbage costs Rs. 20 and potatoes Rs. 20. The cost of peas has soared to Rs. 150, while broad beans cost Rs. 80 from its earlier rate of Rs. 20-25 before the rain. Small onions cost Rs. 40, ginger Rs. 40 (new) and Rs. 50 (old) and green chillies cost Rs. 30, he added.



### **Give priority to farm loans: Collector**

Bankers should accord priority to providing loans to small farmers, said Collector L. Subramanian on Thursday. Releasing the potential-linked credit plan for Madurai district here, Dr. Subramanian said that though crop loans were essential, long-term farm loans were needed to facilitate agricultural development. He appealed to the government officials to work in coordination with bankers to expedite economic development of the district.

Assistant General Manager of National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development R. Sundaresan, who received the copy of the plan, explained the changes in guidelines for priority lending announced by the Reserve Bank of India. The credit plan estimate for 2016-17 had been increased by 17.26 per cent to Rs. 8,187.55 crore, against Rs. 6,982.05 crore for 2015-16. According to an official press release, the draft plan for 2016-17 envisages advances to the tune of Rs. 5,289.59 crore for agriculture. Those who participated in the meeting included K.S. Mahesh, District Development Manager, Nabard, R. Murugaprabhu, Lead Bank Manager, and P. J. Revathi, Mahalir Thittam Officer.

### **Sugarcane under NDSL to other factories**

In a crucial decision that would be helpful for the sugarcane farmers in Medak district, particularly at Mumbojipally under Nizam Deccan Sugars Limited (NDSL), the State Government has decided to divert the sugarcane that was produced under the factory limits to other sugar factories.

The decision was taken at a meeting held at Secretariat attended by Agriculture Minister Pocharam Srinivas Reddy and Deputy Speaker M. Padma Devender Reddy, representing the Medak assembly constituency where the factory was located.

The sugarcane farmers can transport their produce to Gayatri Sugar Mills located at Kamareddy and Nizam Sagar located in Nizamabad district and Ganapathi sugars located at the district headquarters depending on the distance and advantage they feel. The farmers will be paid transport charges that they would incur additionally for transporting the sugarcane for these three mills. They managements of the sugar mills were directed to pay Rs. 2,600 per tonne to the farmers.

## **CRDA planning different sizes of plots for farmers**

A laptop computer shows a map of the proposed Andhra Pradesh state capital "Amaravati" inside the Andhra Pradesh Capital Region Development Authority office in Vijayawada

The AP Capital Region Development Authority (CRDA) is contemplating allotting developed plots with a size of 125 square yards to 4,000 sq. yards. The CRDA is planning to give farmers plots of 1,000 sq yards, 700 sq yards and 500 sq yards.

The CRDA would allot the developed plots in proportionate to the lands parted with by farmers.

For instance, if a farmer gave an acre under the Land Pooling Scheme (LPS), he would get 1,000 sq.yards residential plot and 450 sq. yards commercial plot. Accordingly, if the land parted was less or more than an acre, the farmer would get residential and commercial plots in proportionate to their agricultural lands.

The CRDA is considering various options and issues involved in the size of plot. If a farmer has to get 120 sq. yard plot, and the standard developed plot was 125 sq. yards, the farmer would have to pay amount for remaining 5 sq. yards.

Likewise, if a farmer was supposed to get more sq. yards than what was allotted was another issue. The government was contemplating issuing saleable certificate by calculating the value of remaining sq. yards, CRDA sources say.

Municipal Administration Minister P. Narayana promised that the exercise of allotting compensatory plots – residential and commercial – to LPS contributors would be completed by the end of December.

But, the CRDA authorities say clear picture, however, will emerge only after the authority received the master plan of the Capital region. The CRDA calculated that it would have to earmark around 8,300 acre for farmers who parted with their lands. The farmers are demanding that they be given permission to construct high-rise buildings in the plots.



## **Puducherry CM N Rangasamy requests PM to release Rs 182.45 cr as flood relief**

Puducherry Chief Minister N Rangasamy has requested Prime Minister [Narendra Modi](#) and Union Home Minister [Rajnath Singh](#) to earmark Rs 182.45 crore as emergency relief to the union territory to tackle the flood havoc due to the heavy North East monsoon.

Normal life, standing crops and lots of physical infrastructures were badly affected due to the rains, he said in separate letters to them yesterday.

He said despite the steps taken by his government several houses were damaged due to the heavy rains. It also caused heavy damage to the public infrastructures encompassing roads, culverts, buildings and power lines and also to the standing crops of poor farmers.

He has sought assistance of Rs 182.45 crores for relief and reconstruction works consequent to the damage caused by heavy rain. This assistance will help the Union Territory to provide necessary relief to the affected people and to restore the infrastructures in Puducherry and Karaikal regions.

# hindustantimes

## **Basmati price improves, but only after many have sold produce**

Thanks to Iran and other countries opening up imports from India recently, basmati prices have gone up, but only after nearly 40% farmers have sold the produce at throwaway prices which most of the time hovered around Rs 1,700 against last year's Rs 2,700 to 3,000 per quintal.



Most farmers sold off their produce as soon as they harvested it because of the storage problem and their need for money. Till Diwali, the prices of basmati were much low as compared to those of the last year. The prices shot up to Rs 2,800 per quintal on Monday for a day before settling at Rs 2,400 to 2,500 per quintal.

According to data available with Punjab Mandi Board, about 71,000 metric tonne (MT) of basmati was sold in Muktsar and 80,000 MT in Faridkot by Wednesday against last year's total arrival of 3.5 lakh MT in Muktsar and 2 lakh MT in Faridkot. District Mandi Board officer Kulbir Singh Matta said, "In Muktsar, about 30% produce has arrived so far while in Faridkot, it is around 40%. We expect more arrival as the prices have improved. The produce sold at Rs 2,400 to 2,500 per quintal in Muktsar and Faridkot on Thursday."

Surjeet Singh Baba, president, Jat Mahasabha, Faridkot, said, "The government has failed to act in time. Most farmers have already sold the produce except the big ones who can afford to store it for some time. The poor farming community has been allowed to be exploited. Instead of focusing on saving farmers, the government is focusing on Sadbhawna rallies."

Ashish Kathuria, general secretary of Punjab Basmati Manufacturers Association, Muktsar, said, "Now Iran has opened imports and we can also sell basmati to some other countries. The demand in the international market is high whereas the production has fallen by almost 50% in Punjab as the area under it was reduced. But the business of exporting basmati is in the hands of big businessmen who control the

prices. If more farmers bring the produce to the market, the prices may not go up, but if farmers hoard the produce till January, they may go up to Rs 3,500 to 4,000 per quintal. The state and the Centre must intervene to save farmers and small basmati millers.”

### **‘Dependence on US for oil behind low prices’**

Agriculture economist and Punjab Farmers Commission consultant PS Ranghi cited India’s shift to the United States for purchasing oil as the reason for Iran and other west Asian countries dragging their feet on importing basmati from India.

“Only three days ago, Iran and other countries re-opened imports from India. He said the prices were Rs 4,900 per quintal three years ago, which fell to Rs 3,900 two years ago, to Rs 2,900 last year, and touched their lowest ebb this year at Rs 1,200.

Basmati arrivals had also reduced by half -- from 39 lakh tonne last year to 18 lakh tonne this year -- as the area under the crop was reduced, he said, adding that rice millers had even issued advertisements saying they would not lift the 1509 variety of basmati that discouraged farmers to sow basmati.



# **THE TIMES OF INDIA**

**Central team to tour rain-hit Tamil Nadu starting Thursday**



CHENNAI: The Centre has appointed joint secretary of the Union home ministry T V S N Prasad to head an inter-ministerial team to assess the flood situation in Tamil Nadu.

The team, which will have representatives from the Union agriculture, finance, rural development and drinking water and power ministries, will visit rain-hit areas starting Thursday.

"A high-level inter-ministerial central team led by Prasad has been deputed for an on-the-spot assessment of the situation in the wake of the recent floods following heavy rain in Tamil Nadu," said a press release issued by the Union home ministry.

Representatives of ministries of road transport, highways and health from Chennai and the Central Water Commission from Bengaluru will also join the team for the flood assessment.

The team has been deputed following a request from the state government to Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

On Tuesday, the Centre released Rs 939 crore as flood relief for Tamil Nadu. "The Centre, taking note of the severe flood situation in Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh, took immediate steps to release funds to the two states to augment their liquidity position," said a finance ministry release.

# DECCAN Chronicle

## **Tamil Nadu flood: Team asked to speed up relief**

**Chennai:** They came, they saw and, hopefully, they would sanction. That is how matters stand after the flood damage assessment team from the Centre surveyed the rain-battered city of Chennai and its surrounding districts Thursday. The money the Centre sends as flood relief may help many citizens conquer adversity after one of the rainiest Novembers in history left Tamil Nadu in a mess after flash floods inundated without mercy.



The Tamil Nadu government asked the visiting team to make an in-depth assessment of the damages suffered by the state due to the monsoons and submit its report to the union home ministry at the earliest so that financial assistance can be released without any delay.

Briefing the team on the extent of damage across Tamil Nadu, Chief Minister J. Jayalalithaa said, “Chennai has received the second heaviest monthly rainfall recorded in the past 100 years within the first 20 days of November and the state during the month has already received rainfall of 483.6 mm, which is higher than the total annual monsoon rainfall, leaving a trail of heavy damage and destruction to state.” She specifically cited the example of Neyveli in Cuddalore, where it rained 437 mm on November 9, choking the district.

Interacting with the central team led by T.V.S .N. Prasad Ms Jayalalithaa emphasised that the four northern coastal districts of Cuddalore, Kancheepuram, Chennai and Tiruvallur had suffered large scale damage and destruction on account of the extremely heavy deluge. She pointed out that more than 4 lakh people were shifted to relief camps and provided food and shelter by the state government.

**Central team to visit Tamil Nadu to assess flood damage**



**Chennai:** A nine-member central team will begin its on-the-spot assessment of the damages caused in Tamil Nadu due to recent rain and floods in the state on Thursday. The inter-ministerial team, headed by Union Home Ministry Joint Secretary TVSN Prasad, has been deputed on the directions of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, following a request by Chief Minister J. Jayalalithaa.

The team will conduct inspections for two days in Chennai, Kanchipuram, Tiruvallur and Cuddalore districts and submit their report to the Union Home Ministry.

The state Government, in its memorandum to the Centre, had on yesterday said that the total damages have been worked out to be around Rs 8,500 crore.

A Rs 940-crore package has been released by the National Disaster Relief Fund (NDRF) for the rehabilitation work.

Of the nine member high-level inter-ministerial team headed by Union Home Ministry Joint Secretary TVSN Prasad, four members from Delhi and one from Bengaluru have reached the city and one more member is scheduled to arrive in a few hours.

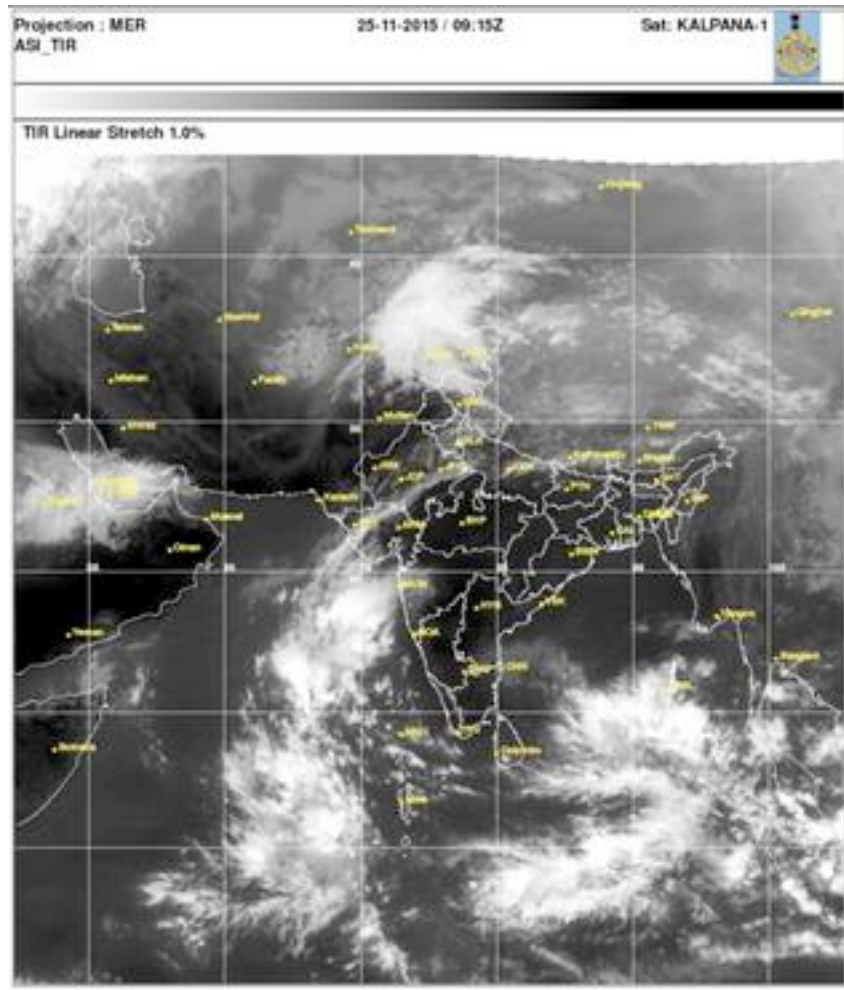
Two more representatives are stationed in Chennai itself.

After their discussions with the state Revenue Department Principal Secretary Atulya Mishra and senior officials, they are scheduled to proceed on to their first hand assessment of the flood damages by splitting into different groups. Their consolidated report would help decide on the next course of action to help the state.



# THE HINDU BusinessLine

Heavy to very heavy rain forecast for TN, Puducherry for next four days



India Met Department has forecast four days of heavy to very rains for Tamil Nadu, Puducherry and coastal Andhra Pradesh from tomorrow (Friday).

Satellite pictures this morning showed an advance batch of clouds having penetrated the North Tamil Nadu coast after travelling hundreds of km from South Andaman Sea.

## 'Low' brewing

It is here that a low-pressure area is expected to form in the next 24 hours, an India Meteorological Department update informed this morning.

Meanwhile, the clouds have spread as far apart over land as to Salem, Dharmapuri, Krishnagiri, Tirupattur, Tiruvannamalai, and closer to coast in Cuddalore, Puducherry, Mahabalipuram, Kanchipuram, and Sriprumbudur.

A passing shower or two is the forecast for Chennai today before they grow into sustained rain and thundershowers from tomorrow, according to forecasts.

An India Met update had to say the following in its outlook for four days from tomorrow:

### **Heavy to very heavy rain**

Today, Thursday: No weather warning.

Friday: Heavy rain at isolated places over coastal Tamil Nadu, Puducherry and Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

Saturday: Heavy to very rain at isolated place over coastal Tamil Nadu and Puducherry and heavy over south coastal Andhra Pradesh and Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

Sunday: Heavy to very heavy rain at isolated places over coastal Tamil Nadu and Puducherry and heavy over coastal Andhra Pradesh and Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

Monday: Heavy to very rain at isolated places over Coastal Tamil Nadu and Puducherry and Coastal Andhra Pradesh.

### **Pvt traders seen ruling arecanut market**

It is almost five years now since the arecanut market has been witnessing an upward trend, barring a few corrections.

One of the common grouses of arecanut cooperatives is that many farmers sell arecanuts to private traders when prices are good and approach cooperatives when prices fall.

A comparative analysis of purchase of arecanuts by Campco (Central Arecanut and Cocoa Marketing and Processing Cooperative) over the last few years correlates with the above trend.

In a paper presented at the international conference on 'Future of arecanut', organised by Arecanut Research and Development Foundation (in 2008), Vigneshwar Varmudy, agri-economist and professor at Vivekananda College in Puttur, gives an overview of the average price trend of arecanuts since 1956. The commodity, purchased at ₹2.90 a kg in 1956-57, touched the double-digit mark of ₹15.80 a kg in 1980-81.

After remaining below ₹100-a-kg for two decades, it crossed ₹100-a-kg mark in 1999-2000.

### **Peak of 1999**

Interestingly Campco, which procured 28,692 tonnes of arecanut valued ₹282.45 crore in 1998-99, could purchase only around 23,575 tonnes valued at ₹309.29 crore in 1999-2000.

The average price of the white arecanut came down to ₹96-a-kg in 2000, and around ₹51-a-kg in 2001 and 2002. Campco's purchase went up to 35,049 tonnes valued at ₹324 crore in 2000-01 and to 41,242 tonnes valued at ₹238 crore in 2001-02.

Subsequently, the average price of arecanut came below ₹100-a-kg and remained in that range for almost a decade. The purchase of arecanut by Campco increased significantly during that period.

After remaining below ₹100-a-kg mark for almost a decade, arecanut growers started witnessing an upward trend in the market in 2011. The old stock of white arecanut touched ₹130-a-kg in April 2011, ₹170-a-kg in June, and reached ₹200-a-kg in September.

### **Stable period**

Campco, which purchased 52,622 tonnes of arecanut valued at ₹548 crore in 2010-11, procured only 47,195 tonnes valued at ₹662 crore, from farmers in 2011-12. The price of white arecanut stabilised at around ₹190-250-a-kg in 2012 and 2013. This stabilisation in price helped bring higher quantity of arecanut to Campco again.

The cooperative purchased 50,021 tonnes valued at ₹745 crore in 2012-13 and 52,235 tonnes valued at ₹878 crore in 2013-14.

In 2014, white arecanut crossed another significant milestone, with farmers getting ₹300-a-kg for old stocks. In fact, the purchase quantity at Campco came down to 45,497 tonnes in 2014-15. However, the purchased arecanut was valued at ₹1,241 crore during that period.

Farmers with whom *BusinessLine* interacted said private traders offer at least ₹10-15 more for a kg than what cooperatives offer, when there is good demand. This incentivises them to sell it to private traders.

They agree both cooperatives and some private traders pay them immediately. Some private traders, who seek time to pay the extra amount over what was quoted in the market, cheat them by not paying it.

People active in the cooperative marketing said the quantity of arecanut traded by private traders is four-five times more than that being traded by cooperatives. Though the cooperatives face pressure when there is a glut in the market, they have in-built mechanisms such as price fluctuation funds to manage such situations, they said.

### **Farmers want millets back in focus**



Vishwanath Patil, 82, spent his childhood in millet fields as his parents grew ragi and jowar in remote Bidar (Karnataka) villages. But over a period of time, he witnessed gradual disappearance of millets both in the fields and on the menu.

“Millets have fallen from the grace. As I crossed 80, I notice disappearance of millets. We need to do something to bring millets back on the agenda. It will be disastrous for us, if we allow millets to go into oblivion,” Vishwanath has said.

Giving a ‘Peasant View of Millets’ at the national convention here on Thursday, he said the youth in the villages had lost touch with millets because of the domination of rice and wheat in the public distribution system. “In order to increase interest in the food crops that are relevant for countries like us, we need to include millets in the public food systems. It helps us achieve food and nutritional securities,” he said.

78-year-old S Malla Reddy, Vice-President of All-India Kisan Sabha, echoed this view. He said that the seed firms were not interested in promoting millets as it would hurt their hybrid seed business. The governments too were not supportive.

“The cost of seed in a farmer’s budget is very small in case of millets. But they would have to spend up to 10 per cent on seeds in case farmers choose to grow crops such as cotton. Besides, spending on pesticides and fertilisers too would be minimal for millet farmers,” he said.

Nimmaiah, a farmer from Nalgonda district, had said that millets gave minimum returns even in worst drought conditions. “In some pockets of Nalgonda where they grew, farmers were able to reap 50 per cent of the produce despite the fact that monsoon failed this year,” he said.

“Most farmers used to grow millets about 30 years ago but gave in to commercial crops such as cotton that is not suited for the region. They ended up in huge losses,” he felt.

The two-day convention was organised by the Millet network of India (MINI) and Centre for Economic and Social Studies.

### **Kerala govt setting up panel to study plantation woes**



The Kerala Government is setting up a one-man commission to study problems faced by the ailing plantation sector, particularly tea, rubber, cardamom and coffee.

Retired judge N Krishnan Nair has been asked to present the report in a month. The decision to appoint the panel was taken at the weekly meeting of the State Cabinet on Wednesday.

During the recent negotiations to end the labour strike for higher wages, the government had offered to appoint a commission to study the crisis in the plantation sector.

The plantation sector in Kerala, particularly tea gardens and rubber plantations, is undergoing one of the worst crisis in the recent times, caused by dwindling commodity prices and rising cost of production, causing both corporate plantations and individual planters too make heavy losses.

The price fall has hit the High Range region in Idukki the worst. The fall in price of tea has enveloped all tea gardens in the country, including those in the Nilgiris, Darjeeling and Assam. As for rubber, large tracts of plantations in Kerala are left untapped. Small farmers, who dominate the rubber sector, find it uneconomical to tap the trees, and have abandoned harvesting.

Recently, following the two-week strike by labour unions for higher wages, the basic wages were raised by around 30 per cent in trilateral negotiations that included the State government.

An Association of Planters of Kerala (APK) functionary told *BusinessLine* that the APK would present a detailed report on the current situation.

### **Ginning margins narrow as cotton prices slide**



Cotton ginning units have a tough time ahead with shrinking margins, amid falling cotton prices and costly finance from lenders.

The fibre commodity has shown a steady decline in prices despite damage to the crop in several growing regions. Cotton prices continued to slide from ₹32,800 to ₹32,000 per candy (356 kg) during November.

“Ginners are in a fix as export demand is less. Major buyers like China have not turned up this time. This is hurting realisation from processed cotton, thereby reducing profit margins for ginners,” said Arvind Patel, Vice-President of Saurashtra Ginners’ Association (SGA), one of the largest clusters of the cotton ginning industry in the country.

### **Closure of units**

Out of over 4,300 ginning units, about 1,300 are spread across Gujarat, with major concentration in Saurashtra and North Gujarat. “About half of them are shut because of the economic unviability. They are looking to shift to other businesses, even as the cotton arrivals are likely to begin soon,” added Patel.

As per industry estimates, it requires about 1,000 kg of raw cotton to make one candy (356 kg) of cotton. The cost economics puts the total cost to make a candy at ₹42,000-43,000, including processing cost, while the price stands at ₹32,000 per candy.

Raw cotton comprises of about 34 per cent of cotton, 63 per cent of cotton seed and about 3 per cent wastage. Seed fetches anywhere between ₹390-410 per 20 kg. This puts the overall realisation for a ginner at around ₹44,000 per candy, including cotton and seed. This leaves ginners with a thin profit margin.

Ginners have also raised concerns about the high cost of finance, which has left a large number of units shut.

“There doesn’t seem to be good days for ginners. In addition to the lower demand, a high interest rate on term loans taken by unit owners is also hurting. Most lenders charge in the range of 13-14 per cent. Most of the units in Punjab and Haryana and also in other parts of the country would require an average ₹3-4 crore as working capital to process the cotton,” said Bhagwan Bansal, President, Punjab Cotton Ginners’ Association.

## **Financial support sought**

Bansal added they will be raising the issue with the Union Finance Minister and the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), seeking financial support.

“The business model of ginneries is such that price fluctuations are part of it. In absence of Chinese demand, there is a pressure on prices,” said Dhiren Sheth, President, Cotton Association of India. He added that a small quantity continues to be exported to Pakistan, Bangladesh and Vietnam.

# **Business Standard**

## **Green revolution needs urgent mending**

Indian farming was transformed after the mid-60s, on a wave of new agri technology and allied changes, but the costs of this model can no longer be ignored or its addressing be postponed

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It was around the mid-1960s when the Paddock brothers, the ‘prophets of doom’, predicted that in another decade, recurring famines and an acute shortage of foodgrain would push India towards disaster.

Their prophecy was based on a rising shortage of food because of droughts, which forced India to import 10 million tonnes of grain in 1965-66 and a similar amount a year before. Little did they know that thanks to quick adoption of a new technology by Indian farmers, the country would more than double its annual wheat production from 11 mt during the triennium ending (TE) 1966-67 to 23 mt during TE 1971-72, and raise its rice production 30 per cent in the same period.



In the four decades starting 1965-66, wheat production in Punjab and Haryana has risen ninefold, while rice production increased by than 30 times. The twin states and parts of Uttar Pradesh now not only produce enough to feed the country but to leave a significant surplus for export.

The technology and the subsequent state support is perhaps the single vital event that changed the face of Indian agriculture. At a time when the country is to mark the golden jubilee of that momentous event, it is also time to look back at the gains and losses from that revolution.

### **Then & now**

“The green revolution helped India move out of a ship-to-mouth situation and India was made self-sufficient in food production but since the mid-1980s, its second-generation environmental impact and the intensive farming it promoted started showing its impact. We've now reached a stage where we need to understand that the green revolution has done its job and it's time to consign it to history, and shift to a more sustainable method of farming,” says noted food policy analyst Devender Sharma.

M S Swaminathan, considered ‘father’ of the change, said, “Almost 50 years ago, we had to import wheat and rice. This year we are about to import 10 mt of pulses, despite being its original producer. The reason is, we could not take good care of pulses. What disturbs me today is that there is no green revolution. Those days we adopted modern technologies but now we have to move towards a more environmentally sustainable agriculture. I am not satisfied with the condition of farming in the country, as there are too many barriers to the movement of goods. In the report of the National Farmers Commission tabled in 2005, we had talked about having a common market. The Centre’s concept of a common market will solve some of the issues, but not all.”

S Mahendra Dev, director of the Mumbai-based Indira Gandhi Institute of Development Research, said he regarded the single biggest contribution of the green revolution as the raising of the yields of wheat and rice, saving much land from being converted for agriculture, apart from, its contribution to our food security.

Its biggest drawback, he said, was its limitation to a few states, promotion of monocropping and encouraging the use of more chemical fertiliser. These associated issues should have been addressed, too.

Around the time, the Paddocks predicted doom for India, the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Centre in Mexico came out with a high-yielding variety of wheat. Followed by a similar breakthrough at the International Rice Research Institute in the Philippines. These twin technologies were adopted here to boost domestic production.

Alongside, a well-oiled mechanism of price assurance to producers through a system of Minimum Support Prices, implemented through obligatory procurement, inter-year and intra-year price stability through open market operations and distribution of subsidised foodgrain through a network of ration shops was put in place.

All these changed India from a grain-deficit state to one of the world's biggest producers today of wheat and rice. The entire north-western region of Punjab, Haryana and western UP were early adopters of the technology, as land in these parts was suitable for adoption of new varieties, water was abundant and farmers were willing to alter their cultivation patterns.

“It is because of the green revolution that big gains have been made in India's food production capacity. Also, our research capacities and its spread have improved tremendously, a vital offshoot. But, managing the other challenges like that of water,

etc, has not been up to the mark, which cannot be blamed on the green revolution,” said Shashanka Bhide, director of the Madras Institute of Development Studies.

### **Challenges**

Balancing its benefits to all farmers, across all crops, has been weak, he noted. Critics say indiscriminate use of fertiliser, excessive exploitation of groundwater, driven by cheap power, and difficulty in adopting new farming patterns is gradually turning barren the erstwhile green revolution belt.

Studies show the net annual groundwater draft in Punjab exceeds availability by 45 per cent and in Haryana by nine per cent. Indiscriminate use of fertiliser due to massive subsidies has changed the nutrient balance in the soil. As against the N:P:K norm of 4:2:1, farmers in Punjab and Haryana apply these in the ratio of 26:7:1 and 37:11:1, respectively.

In sum, promoting the green revolution here and elsewhere in a sustainable manner, unlike till now, is the need.

### **Small steps on sugar**

Of the various bailout packages doled out by the government to the sugar sector in the recent past, the latest is distinctly different in its basic approach and mode of payment. It involves a production subsidy of Rs 4.50 per quintal of sugarcane to be paid directly to cane growers.

It will also benefit the sugar industry which will have to pay correspondingly less to farmers. This marks a new beginning, of paying production-linked crop subsidies in India. So far, agricultural subsidies were routed mostly through inputs like fertilisers, power, seeds, or farm machines. Production subsidies, notably, are permissible under

the World Trade Organisation (WTO) rules provided they do not exceed 10 per cent of the total value of crop output. Earlier, the government gave an export subsidy of Rs 4,000 per tonne to the sugar industry to help it ship out raw sugar to raise the cash to pay its dues to farmers - which had mounted to over Rs 21,000 crore by April 2014. But this move had to be retracted as other sugar producing and exporting countries objected, maintaining that such a trade-distorting measure violated WTO norms.

In another bid to help the sugar industry clear cane price arrears, the government had offered it a soft loan of Rs 6,000 crore which was to be deposited directly in the cane growers' bank accounts on behalf of the sugar mills. However, these packages yielded only limited results. The cane price arrears pertaining to the last sugar season still stand at an untenably high level, over Rs 7,000 crore, though the new cane crushing season has already begun. This seems to have spurred the government to thinking that it could pay the subsidy directly to farmers as part payment of the cane supplied to the sugar mills. The government is likely to take a hit of over Rs 1,000 crore on this account. Both the cane farmers and the sugar industry have welcomed it, but they are not fully satisfied and feel that more may need to be done by the government to solve the recurring problem of accumulation of cane price arrears. They deem the subsidy to be too little compared to the fair and remunerative price (FRP) of Rs 230 a quintal for cane.

The government should, however, be cautious in dealing with such pleas. There is a danger that an output-linked subsidy of this kind may encourage overproduction of both sugarcane - a water-guzzling crop that depletes groundwater - and sugar, perpetuating the liquidity crisis in the sugar industry. Instead, it should strike at the root cause of the sugar sector's woes, which is the lack of any link between the prices of cane and sugar. The way out is the revenue sharing model suggested by the expert committee on sugar headed by C Rangarajan. According to this, mills have to share with farmers 75 per cent of the revenue realised from the sale of sugar or 70 per cent of the total revenue generated by sugar and its byproducts. Such an approach would

result in demand-driven production of both sugarcane and sugar. This will also protect the interests of all players in the sugar sector, including those of consumers.