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THE HINDU

Investment target met: Jayalalithaa



TIME FOR BIG TICKET INVESTMENTS

TN has planned \$250 bn infrastructure investment by 2023

— Jayalalithaa, Chief Minister



State's marketing blitzkrieg leads to investment windfall

➤ Tyre maker MRF will invest Rs 4,500 cr in its units at Perambalur and Arakkonam

➤ Adani Group to invest around **Rs. 15,000 cr** in the state

➤ HCL founder Shiv Nadar said his **company will**

invest an additional Rs 6,000 cr in Tamil Nadu

➤ ITC Group has said it will invest **Rs 2,500 cr**

➤ Mahindra & Mahindra Ltd will pump in Rs. 2,000 cr in **R & D and manufacturing in five years**

➤ Solar energy firm SunEdison to invest **Rs.12,000 cr**

 **Tamil Nadu**

gives us a lot of opportunity

— Nirmala Sitharaman



Union Ministers promise support for State's industry plans.

Asserting that Tamil Nadu is a "[sound investment](#)", Chief Minister Jayalalithaa on Wednesday welcomed captains of industry to the first Global Investors Meet 2015

and urged them to use the high quality human resources, good infrastructure and welcoming policy in the State.

The [high-visibility event](#), with 5,000 listed delegates, was turned into a colourful city-wide jamboree, complete with music and dance, overcoming the disappointment for the AIADMK government which had to postpone it twice — first after Ms. Jayalalithaa stepped down as Chief Minister last year due to legal hurdles, and again in April this year.

Ms. Jayalalithaa viewed GIM to be a success, as the investment target of Rs. 1 lakh crore “has already been exceeded.” In concrete terms, she formally inaugurated projects worth Rs. 2,568 crore — the India Yamaha two-wheeler unit in Kancheepuram district involving investment of Rs. 1,600 crore, the TVS Motor-Sundaram Clayton units in Hosur put up at Rs. 800 crore, and TICEL Biopark in Taramani at Rs. 168 crore.

There was a clear indication that the BJP-led government at the Centre was keen to help Ms. Jayalalithaa advance her plans for industry. Commerce Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and Minister of State for Highways and Road Transport Pon Radhakrishnan promised the Centre’s support for the State’s plans.

Ms. Jayalalithaa stressed her government’s performance record, highlighting the number two rank achieved by Tamil Nadu among State economies, the rise of per capita income above the national average, rapid infrastructure growth and evolution of an industry ecosystem.

‘Time to ensure better future for farmers’

Nabard Chairman Harsh Kumar Bhanwala Speaking at the convocation at the Acharya NG Ranga Agricultural University in Bapatla on Wednesday.- Photo: T. Vijaya Kumar

Agricultural research strategies should be shifted from crop-centric research in irrigated areas to location-specific cropping systems in dry lands, hills and tribal areas, Harsh Kumar Bhanwala, Chairman, National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (Nabard), said here on Wednesday.

“Agricultural research should also take into consideration climate change, which continues to be a major area of concern, as it causes fall in yield by 4.5 to 9 per cent,” Dr. Bhanwala said while speaking at the fourth convocation of Acharya NG Ranga Agricultural University.

Expressing concern over the spate of farmer suicides owing to mounting debts, he said time had come to look at the root causes of the malaise. Quoting the Prime Minister, he said everyone should come together to ensure a better future for farmers. Though the World Bank indices of growth in crop production show that in 2013 India's achievement was better when compared to the neighbouring countries, the production of major crops was quite low.

“Factors influencing yield gap like bio-physical factors, water stress, flooding, sub-optimal planting, soil problems and weed pressures and socio-economic factors like insufficient credit, lack of knowledge on the best practices and profit maximisation approach need to be addressed,” he said.

Incidentally, Nabard created a Rs. 200-crore Producers Organisation for Development and Uplift of Corpus Fund to be utilised for setting up more than 2,000 farmer producer organisations (FPOs) in two years to address the requirements of new business opportunities with credit from financing institutions.

Presenting the annual report, Vice-Chancellor A. Padma Raju said the university had released 394 improved varieties/hybrids in different crops. Four mega varieties of rice released by the University - Swarna, MTU 1010, MTU 1001 and BPT 5204 - have occupied 10 million hectares of rice area in India.

BPT 5204, a versatile mega rice variety with good adaptability, was developed and released from Agricultural College, Bapatla, in 1986 as Samba Mahsuri. It occupies 10.27 lakh hectares accounting to 23.2 per cent of the total rice growing area of the State.

Later, awards were also presented in the best scientists category and extension scientists. The Acharya N.G. Ranga Young Scientist Award was also presented.

Central team visits Kolar to study drought

Make drip irrigation mandatory, says MLA K.R. Rameshkumar

A team from the Union government visited Kolar district on Wednesday to take stock of the drought situation. All the five taluks in the district have been declared drought-hit for the fifth consecutive year. The team also met with Deputy Commissioner K.V. Thrilokchandra. The crop loss due to drought, including agriculture and horticulture crops, was estimated at Rs. 173.84 crore, Mr. Thrilokchandra said.

8,700 works over under THAI scheme

They were executed at a cost of Rs.109.39 crore in Tirunelveli district

Over 8,700 development works have been executed in the rural areas of the district on an outlay of Rs. 109.39 crore so far under the THAI (Tamil Nadu Village Habitations Improvement) Scheme, Collector M. Karunakaran has said.

Addressing the mass contact programme at Oormelazhagiyan near Kadayanallur on Wednesday, Dr. Karunakaran said the State government had introduced the scheme with the objective of improving infrastructure like roads, drinking water, streetlights etc. in rural areas to make the hitherto neglected areas self-sufficient.

Moreover, Rs. 12,000 was being given for construction of individual household toilets to avoid open defecation in rural areas. To make the villages clean and green, solid waste management programmes were being implemented in 42 hamlets.

The Collector appealed to the villagers to make use of the AMMA special camps being organised in select hamlets for getting birth, death, community, nativity, income certificates.

Dr. Karunakaran, who received 376 petitions from the public, cleared 94 petitions on the spot and asked his subordinates to scrutinise the remaining appeals. Joint Director of Agriculture C. Chandrasekaran was present.

State to present memorandum to Centre seeking drought-relief



Minister of State for Agriculture Krishna Byre Gowda inspecting red gram crop in Hipparga S.N. village on Wednesday

Minister of State for Agriculture Krishna Byre Gowda has said that the State government would be presenting a detailed memorandum to the Centre seeking adequate compensation to tackle the drought situation and pay compensation to farmers as per the Natural Disaster Relief Fund (NDRF) norms after the completion of the ongoing joint survey of all the agriculture lands to assess the crop damage due to the failure of the rains.

Talking to presspersons after visiting drought-hit areas in Hipparga S.N. and Harwal villages in Jewargi taluk in Kalaburagi district on Wednesday, Mr. Gowda said that 80 per cent of the joint survey work had been completed and the remaining part of the survey would be completed in a couple of days. After the compilation of the joint survey report, the detailed memorandum would be prepared and submitted to the Union government.

Mr. Gowda criticised the former Chief Minister B.S. Yeddyurappa for allegedly spreading lies that the State government had not submitted even the preliminary report of the loss due to drought and said a preliminary report as per the NDRF norms were submitted to Prime Minister Narendra Modi by Chief Minister Siddaramaiah. “We had sought an interim relief of Rs. 3,050 crore based on the preliminary report and the central government is yet to release the funds sought,” he said.

To a question, he said that as per the initial estimates available, the State would require Rs. 13,000 crore as relief from the Union government for taking up relief work and paying the compensation to the farmers who had lost their crop.

“We are confident that the Union government will liberally provide assistance to the State to help the farming community,” he said.

Mr. Gowda said that nearly 50 per cent of the sown crop in the kharif season in the State was lost due to the failure of the rain.

‘Drought situation in Karnataka is grim’

The drought situation in Karnataka, including Belagavi district, is indeed grim, remarked R.V. Sinha, Joint Secretary, Union Ministry of Agriculture.

Mr. Sinha, who heads the 9-member Central team deputed to assess the impact of drought in parts of Karnataka, and the team undertook field visits of villages in Belagavi, Bagalkot, Vijayapura and Dharwad districts in Belagavi division on Wednesday.



Farmers displaying damaged groundnut crop to the visiting members of the Central team in Mekalmardi of Belagavi district on Wednesday.

He said the Centre quickly responded to State government's request for sending a team to assess the crop loss and scarcity conditions made on August 31 and September 1.

The team has been split into four groups, one of which was in Belagavi. Narendra Kumar, Director (Wheat) in the Crops Division and Rekha Chouhan, Director, Department of Rural Development, are the other members.

The team members inspected the drying crops and interacted with farmers in Vannur, Argoppa, Somanahali, Nesargi, Yergatti and Mekalmardi of Belagavi, Saudatti, Gokak and Ramdurg taluks during the day.

In a brief chat with the presspersons, Mr. Sinha said the farmers need to explore crops with less water as an alternative to sugarcane by taking the best advantage of drip and other micro irrigation schemes of the government. A large number of farmers in Belagavi district were dependent on sugarcane, which consumed a large amount of ground water.

Farmers need to adapt with the climatic changes as it was not possible to change the climate and could take up crops using less water, which would also help them bring down the cost of cultivation, he said.

To a question, he said the State government was providing “relief” but not “compensation” for crop losses. Also, the government had enhanced the quantum of relief from Rs. 3,500 to Rs. 6,800 per ha for arid crops, Rs.9000 to Rs.13,000 for irrigated and from Rs.13,000 to Rs.18,000 for plantations from this year.

Also, the minimum criteria for award of relief had been reduced from 50 per cent to 33 per cent crop loss, he said. Mr. Sinha said the team would submit its report to the Centre within ten days.

Officials taken to task for tardy progress of development schemes

Expressing dissatisfaction over the slow progress of work on development programmes, H.C. Mahadevappa, Minister for Public Works and in-charge of Hassan district, on Wednesday, took the officials of district administration to task and put them in an embarrassing situation by quizzing them on various issues.

The Minister convened the Karnataka Development Programme review meeting after a gap of almost a year. While reviewing the implementation of programmes by the Horticulture Department, Health and Family Welfare and Women and Child Development, he expressed displeasure over the slow pace of progress. B. Suma, Deputy Director of Horticulture Department, had a tough time as H.S. Prakash, C.N. Balakrishna and K.M.Shivalinge Gowda, all MLAs, alleged that the schemes of the department had not reached the needy. Mr. Prakash alleged that the official had not initiated any measures to help potato growers, who suffered huge losses due to attack of late blight disease and scanty rainfall. Mr. Shivalinge Gowda alleged that the programme aimed at providing some support to coconut growers, who lost their trees due to continuous drought, had benefited only the rich and the mighty. The Minister intervened to suggest that the official should consult the MLAs while selecting the beneficiaries for schemes. Regarding the pest attack, the Minister asked the official about pest attacking coconut farms. He was disappointed as the official failed to provide a proper answer.

Further, the Minister warned Dharmappa, Deputy Director of the Department of Animal Husbandry, of imprisonment for his department’s failure to utilise Rs. 52 lakh meant for Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe sub plans. The official said, the Assistant Director of Arsikere was responsible for the lapse and that he had already been issued a notice in this regard.

Mr. Mahadevappa wanted to know from the veterinary doctor, why pig farms should be set up on city outskirts. The official said the foul smell from pig farms was the reason. Disappointed with the answer, the Minister said, mosquitoes that live on pigs would cause brain fever and that is why pig farms had to be located outside city limits.

B.R. Satyanarayana, president of the zilla panchayat standing committee, alleged that farmers were not getting the benefits of crop insurance schemes. While crores of rupees were paid as premiums, only a few farmers were getting a few hundreds of rupees in return. The scheme was benefiting only the insurance company, he rued.

T. Ramachandraiah, Joint Director of Agriculture Department, said scanty rainfall had affected agricultural crops in over 1.09 lakh hectares of land in Hassan district.

Seed bowl plan to begin with soyabean production

The plans of the Telangana government to make the State a seed bowl, particularly for crops largely cultivated in its soils, may take at least three years to take shape, though the combined Andhra Pradesh State met over 50 per cent of seed requirements of the country in major food crops.

According to officials, the government is planning to take up soyabean seed production to begin with, as the crop is being cultivated in area ranging from 1.8 lakh to 2.8 lakh hectares in the recent years. The State has been getting most of its soyabean seed supplies from Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra and the value of required seed has been in the range of Rs. 130 crore to Rs. 150 crore every year.

Long process

“The process of producing seed for the end-user, farmer, is long since it has to begin with nucleus seed in the lab to breeder seed production in the farms of research stations and finally production of foundation seed produced by selected farmers,” a senior official of the Agriculture Department stated. Production of maize and mustard seed would also be taken up as they had good demand in the country’s seed market besides requirement within the State, the official said.

Maize is being cultivated in the range of 4.5 lakh hectares to 6 lakh hectares in the recent years as its demand in human diet and poultry food has been growing constantly, the official explained adding that the farming community has been spending Rs. 25 crore to Rs. 30 crore for seed every kharif season. “Telangana meets about 30 per cent paddy seed required in the country,” the official said.

Telangana has been getting most of its soyabean seed supplies from Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra

Rain swells reservoirs

Copious rains in the last three days, reservoirs in Telangana in Krishna basin started receiving good inflows, but not so in the Godavari basin where the situation continued to be pathetic as Singur, Nizamsagar, Sriramsagar and Lower Manair Dam projects were still left high and dry.

The level at Jurala in Mahabubnagar district kept rising steadily and stood at 317.35 metres against the full reservoir level of 318.51 metres. The inflow was 10,000 cusecs. Downstream, Srisailem's level touched 801.9 ft against the FRL of 885 ft at 6 p.m. on account of inflows from Sunkesula at Waddepalli in Mahabubnagar where authorities lifted 14 gates to a height of one metre to discharge up to 50,000 cusecs. However, the flow decreased by evening. About 25,000 cusecs was also discharged from Sunkesula to KC canal.

Grim situation

On the other hand, the projects on Godavari had no inflows at all though some of the centres in north Telangana districts recorded heavy rainfall. Sirpur (U) in Adilabad recorded the highest of 68.4 mm rainfall.

The agricultural scene continued to be grim with only 5.68 lakh hectares out of 10.59 lakh hectares of paddy crop being sown. It included only 1,000 hectares of rain-fed area and 5.67 lakh hectares of irrigated area. The cotton crop exceeded the normal sowing as the coverage touched 103 per cent. The total area sown under all crops as on date was 34.64 lakh hectares against the normal of 41.43 lakh hectares in the season.

There was deficit rainfall in all districts for the season, except Warangal and Khammam. The deficit was 48 per cent in Nizamabad where the actual rainfall was 398 mm since June 1 against the normal of 772.2 mm. The India Met department forecast heavy rains in Telangana on Thursday and Friday but dry weather on Saturday and Sunday.

Singur, Nizamsagar, Sriramsagar and Lower Manair Dam projects in Godavari basin are still dry

Focus on organic farming

State to host Agriculture Ministers' meet

Agriculture Minister K.P. Mohanan said here on Wednesday that Kerala would become the venue for the formulation of a national organic farming policy towards the end of the year. Inaugurating a collective of organic farmers in the district, he said the Union Ministry of Agriculture was organising a conference of Agriculture Ministers from all States in Kerala to discuss the need for a national organic farming policy. Health Minister V.S. Sivakumar presided over the function.

Mobile app for farmers from KAU



A group of scientists at Kerala Agricultural University's Malappuram Krishi Vigyan Kendra has developed a new mobile app for farmers that covers 100 crops included in the university's Package of Practices recommendations.

The app works on Android, Windows, and other phones using HTML5 browsers.

This is for the first time that such a wide range of crops is being covered by an app and it has opened up avenues for making extension work easier and cost effective, says a scientist associated with the project. The app is suited to both big and small farmers and is structured simply to allow easy navigation.

The information on different areas of farming like fertilizer requirements is provided in a simple language. The app reduces time and location problems in transfer of technology, which is of great importance when small farmers in remote places are involved, the scientist adds.

The information flow is kept simple. The fertilizer information button makes clear how much fertilizer is to be applied, when and how. This assumes special significance in the homestead situation of Kerala. The fertilizer recommendations are made per plant basis or by taking unit area in cents.

The after-care button provides information on weeding, irrigation, and other intercultural operations. There is information on harvest and storage. The crop duration, maturity indicators, harvesting, and the activities immediately after harvest are simply presented.

There is also detailed information on topics like different organic and inorganic fertilizers, herbicides, fungicides and insecticides.

Honey in all its varied sweetness



Festival includes training for bee keepers and a session on epitherapy

The seventh edition of the honey festival got underway at VJT Hall here on Wednesday. The four-day festival provides the people of the city an opportunity to

taste several varieties of honey and familiarise themselves with a plethora of honey-based products.

Hundreds of honey farmers from different parts of the State are part of the festival and are displaying their unique honey varieties. The festival is being jointly organised by the Federation of Indigenous Apiculturists (FIA), State Horticultural Mission, Kerala Agricultural University, State Biodiversity Board, and HortiCorp.

The varieties range from Coorg honey and Wayanadan honey to sunflower honey, stingless bee honey and several others.

Also on sale are honey products such as honey wax, soaps and facial creams, and many products with honey as their base. Hives of stingless bees, Newton bees, honey extractors, and other honey production equipment are also on display.

A training programme is being conducted for apiculturists (bee keepers) over these four days. The training will also include a day's session on epitherapy, the treatment of various illnesses using honey and allied products.

Mission and museum

According to C. Manojkumar, a breeder from Kannur, the annual honey festivals in the capital city have helped the apiculturists earn good profits in a short time.

“At last year's festival, my stall had sales of around Rs.4-5 lakh. The total sale across all the stalls was well above Rs.50 lakh. This year, the government has announced that a State Honey Mission will be formed under the Horticultural Mission. Also, a honey museum on the lines of the Central Bee Research Institute is also being planned in Kannur,” says Mr. Manojkumar.

Central team visits Ramanagaram, Mandya



Ramanagaram Deputy Commissioner F.R. Jamadar and other officials accompanying the Central drought assessment team that visited Kanakapura taluk on Wednesday.

The Central drought assessment team, accompanied by State officials, visited Ramanagaram and Mandya districts on Wednesday to have a first-hand account of the prevailing situation.

Kanakapura taluk in Ramanagaram district and all seven taluks in Mandya district had been declared drought-hit, recently. At least 70 farmers from both the districts ended their lives owing to crop loss and severe drought.

Subsequently, the team, comprising P.K. Saxena, Director of Central Water Commission; A.K. Shrivastav, Under Secretary (Water); and S.K. Parashivamurthy, Additional Director of Horticulture (State), visited several villages in the two districts to assess the loss.

Deputy Commissioners, F.R. Jamadar of Ramanagaram and M.N. Ajay Nagabhushan of Mandya, presented grim pictures of the prevailing drought conditions in their respective districts.

First to Kanakapura

The team visited Shivanahalli, Achahalli and other places in Kanakapura and inspected the agricultural fields. After an interactive session with the people in villages and the officials, they arrived at Mandya by 5 p.m. After attending a meeting at the Deputy Commissioner's office here, the team visited Keregodu, Basaralu, SI Kodihalli, Chandagalu and Arishinagere Gate villages in Mandya taluk in the evening.

Relief measures

The team members collected details pertaining to farming sector, including rainfall, crop pattern, crop loss, irrigation source and expenditure incurred by farmers on agricultural activities.

Farmers in both the places demanded potable drinking water, fodder and initiation of other immediate measures aimed at providing relief to the drought-hit farmers.

The team members said, they would, after ascertaining the extent of damage caused by drought, would submit reports to the Union government.

Mr. Jamadar told *The Hindu* that he had demanded Rs. 58.21 crore from the Union government for taking up drought relief works.

“Failure of monsoon and severe drought has caused intensive damage to both agricultural and horticulture crops in Ramanagaram. The farmers had lost Rs. 36-crore-worth crops in the district. Hence, we have requested funds to provide compensation and to undertake drought relief measures,” he said.

Mr. Jamadar said, the team had been briefed on the situation in the entire district.

Exhibition on nuclear energy gets under way

Multiple uses of radiation in the processing of agricultural produce and food for extending the shelf-life of products and application of nuclear medicine techniques in healthcare, amongst the other benefits of nuclear energy, were highlighted at the “Anu Vignan” exhibition, which began here on Wednesday.

The exhibition is being organised by the Heavy Water Plant (HWP), Manuguru, at SR&BGNR Government Degree and PG College here.

N.K. Shah, Deputy General Manager, HWP, Manuguru, along with U. Veerabhadraiah, Principal, SR & BGNR College, inaugurated the exhibition. R.K. Gupta, DGM, G. Ramanujam, Manager (HRD), HWP, Manuguru, and others were present.

Non-nuclear applications of Deuterium in Information Technology, Electronics and other modern technology besides in the realm of life science, particularly in diagnostic and therapeutic techniques, were showcased through charts and other display material.

Students throng the venue

Students from various schools and colleges made a beeline for the exhibition to catch a glimpse of the exhibits. Even as the enthusiastic visitors raised queries, the staff manning the stalls explained to them about Heavy Water (D₂O), oxide of Deuterium, the method of its production and its use as moderator and coolant in nuclear reactor. They further apprised the visitors of the application of Deuterium and its compounds in advanced technology and life science.

Students of various town-based schools also put up exhibits, highlighting the importance of the optimum utilisation of renewable energy sources. The main objective of the exhibition is to familiarise students with the application of nuclear energy for societal benefits and promote a scientific temper, said Ramanujam.

Milestones

The exhibition highlights the significant milestones achieved by HWP Manuguru since its inception in 1990, he told *The Hindu* .

K. Viswanath, CGM, HWP, Manuguru, will be the chief guest at the closing ceremony of the exhibition, slated to be held at the college auditorium at 5 p.m. on Thursday.

The main objective of the exhibition is to familiarise students with the application of nuclear energy for societal benefits

Godavari comes to Krishna



Farmers and elected reps took a celebratory dunking in the water as the Godavari entered, a bit notionally, Krishna district at the village of Pallerlamudi on the way to her tryst with her sister river.

The interlinking of the Godavari and the Krishna, a pet project of Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu, is thus one step closer to reality.

Irrigation Minister Devineni Umamaheswara Rao, Eluru MP Maganti Babu, Denduluru MLA Chintamaneni Prabhakar and others performed special pujas on the banks of the Polavaram Right Main Canal at the village. “It’s a long-pending dream and it is finally going to be realized,” said Mr. Umamaheshwara Rao. However, the events of the day were a bit notional. With the Pattiseema project still to receive its pumps from China, Irrigation Department officials released about 6000 cusecs of the Godavari’s water stored in the Tadipudi Lift Irrigation Project in West Godavari into the Polavaram Right Main Canal. The borrowed water flowed 130 km to reach the edge of Krishna district at Pellarlamudi village on Wednesday. Officials said the water will reach the Prakasam barrage on the Krishna river in three to four days via the Budameru and NTPS canals. However, there is likely to be considerable transmission loss, normal for any irrigation project. “A 15-20 per cent transmission loss is inevitable,” said a senior official.

Addressing media persons later in the evening, Mr. Umamaheshwara Rao said the Chief Minister would operate the first pump of the Pattiseema project on September 16.

Standing crop loss on 5,11,068 hectares

The standing kharif crop in more than 88.95 per cent of the sown area in Kalaburagi district had suffered serious losses due to the failure of rain from June to August-end and more than 70.95 per cent of the area suffered more than 33 per cent loss becoming eligible to claim compensation as per the norms of the Natural Disaster Relief Fund (NDRF).

The district administration, in a power point presentation to a two-member Central study team, consisting of Manash Chaudhary, Deputy Advisor of the Niti Aayog, and R.B. Kaul of the Finance Ministry, here on Wednesday, said that out of the total area of 5,74,501 hectares, crop in 5,11,068 hectares suffered heavy losses. Most of the land holders, who suffered extensive losses, were small and marginal farmers.

As per the calculations of the district administration, the district was eligible to get compensation of more than Rs. 311.61 crore as per the norms of the NDRF. A sum of Rs. 301.22 crore was required to be paid as compensation to farmers who had lost more than 33 per cent of crops and Rs. 9.18 crore was required for paying compensation to horticulture farmers for losses due to moisture stress.

The memorandum said after the onset of the south-west monsoon in June this year, the district had been experiencing deficit rainfall in June, July, August and September till now.

Flood alert sounded

The district administration has sounded a flood alert along the banks of river Thenpennai, as the water level in Kelavarapalli Dam increased to 50.40 ft on Tuesday.

The flow of water into the dam was 1,495 cusecs, and the outflow 506 cusecs. If the water reaches 51 ft, it will be released into Thenpennai river flooding Periyamuthur, Sundekuppam, Thimmapuram, Kaveripattinam, Penneshwaramadam, Nedungal, Agaram, Pannandur, Sellakuttapatty, Irumathu. People should not take bath in the river, or attempt to cross it, according to officials.

Mettur: water level rises

Rain in catchment areas have increased the inflow of water into Stanley Reservoir in Mettur from 3,091 cusecs on Tuesday to 5,152 cusecs on Wednesday.

Public Works Department officials said that the water level at 8 a.m. on Wednesday stood at 83.240 ft against the full reservoir level of 120 ft. They said that 15,800 cusecs of water was discharged for irrigation.

“Conserve Gulf of Mannar Bio-sphere Reserve”

A clarion call was made to conserve the Gulf of Mannar Bio-sphere Reserve by A.P. Lipton, former Principal Scientist of Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI) at a seminar on environment at Scott Christian College.

While addressing the participants, he said conservation of natural resources was highly vital for a balanced eco-system, without which human life would be in jeopardy. He pointed out that the Mannar Biosphere was rich with a host of marine resources, including the protected whales, dolphins, dugong, turtle and sharks.

Delivering a presentation on the Bio-diversity of the Western Ghats, S.S. Davidson, environmental educator, said that the Western Ghats was a rich repository of fauna and flora with animals of the highest order as elephants, tigers, leopards, sloth bear, Indian gaur and many minor animals, rare medicinal herbs and reptiles, including the King cobra.

SMJ Chandran, Lions District Governor, said that saplings should be regularly watered till they were established to survive by themselves. As an awareness initiative to avoid plastics, cloth banners were used and food was served in eco-friendly areca nut plates and cloth bags were distributed as compliments. More than 300 saplings of herbal medicinal plants were distributed to the participants. A photo exhibition on wildlife was a highlight of the seminar.

Vice District Governors Suthanthira Lakshmi and M.A. Sundararajan and district Chairperson J Joe Prakash and MP Azad, District Chairperson for Environment Literacy, participated.

Fibreglass boats for fishermen



Each boat costs Rs. 33,000.

Chief Minister N. Rangasamy handed over fibreglass boats to four fishermen on Wednesday under a scheme of the Pondicherry State Fishermen Co-operative Federation.

Mary Chinna Rani, Director, Department of Fisheries and Fisherman Welfare, said each boat costs Rs. 33,000 and the government has provided a 50 per cent subsidy. The remaining expense has been borne by the fishermen. The event was attended by Local Administration Minister N.G. Pannir Selvam and Electricity Minister T. Thiagarajan.

Makes farming a profitable venture



An edible food forest raised on zero-cost principle

Purvabhumi, the 'adisil vanam' (edible food forest), spread across 107 acres at Mudukulam village of Gandarvakottai taluk in Pudukottai district of Tamil Nadu, was once a cashew grove. It has been brought to this shape over 22 years of hard work, continuous financial loss and a determination to make farming a profit-making venture. The turnaround was made possible with analytical reasoning, costing and application of appropriate technology.

The cashew grove was bought in 1993-94 for raising palmarosa grass when R. Senthilnathan, an entrepreneur of Tiruchi, who now manages the farm, was a student. The project was given up soon as the yield was low. Sugarcane replaced palmarosa, but it was also given up due to delay in receipt of cutting order and payment from sugar mills. It gave way for banana, which again, proved to be labour-intensive and failed to yield profit due to price fluctuation. Coconut was planted in 1997-98 but the revenue was low due to disease and lower yields.

Mr. Senthilnathan returned from the U.S. to look after his farm in 2005. He opted for precision farming after Geographical Information System mapping of the farm, including the co-ordinates of each tree. This helped in identifying the nature and yield of each tree and eliminate the ones that bore less than 75 nuts.

Five hundred trees were removed and fertigation was optimised. The yield went up to 225 nuts per tree in 2010, against 135 in 2006. “Still it was unprofitable as the price was not under the farmer's control,” says Mr. Senthilnathan.

The price has not improved much -- it was Rs.6 per coconut in 1998, Rs.4 in 2008 and Rs.8 in 2015.

At this time, a study of daily weather readings at the farm revealed a truth – rainfall is falling due to global warming. Against an average annual rainfall of 90-120 cm, it was 47 cm in 2012, 54 cm in 2013 and 62 cm in 2014. “I foresaw a problem for agri business in this weather pattern, which paved the way to work with nature. After consulting experts, I tried different schools of scientific methods. The results were good but failed on economics. I realised that the only way out was ecological farming,” recalls Mr. Senthilnathan.

By stopping the use of fertilisers and bringing down the labour cost by focusing on essentials, the cost of production came down. Every rupee that was spent afterwards was only towards planting seedlings, which is an investment rather than expenditure. A matrix of crops was drawn up for the farm and a variety of trees planted by applying permaculture principles, simulating the features of a natural eco-system. The farm has a variety of timber, fruits, vegetables, spices, sugarcane, coffee and cocoa. A zero-cost principle adopted in the farm meant that coconuts would be collected after they fall from the tree and not plucked. A solar dryer is used to convert coconut into copra and oil is extracted. “Everything, except the oil, goes back to the soil. Ultimately, I want only profit, not revenue,” says Mr. Senthilnathan.

After continuous losses since 1997-98, the farm registered a profit of Rs.1.5 lakh per acre in 2014.

Today, it adopts multi-tier cropping to enhance the soil quality and profit. “We do not allow sunlight to fall on the ground. The trees and plants harvest sunlight, converting energy into money,” says Ammapettai Venkatachalam, an expert in organic farming. The farm plans to start a centre to offer training in organic farming and various other practices.

More details about the food forest can be had from Purvabhumi, Mudukulam, Gandarvakottai Taluk, Pudukottai District 622203. Phone: 94425 70075 (P. Sunderraj, Farm Manager).

From the drought zone: Sugarcane becomes fodder for Maharashtra's farmers

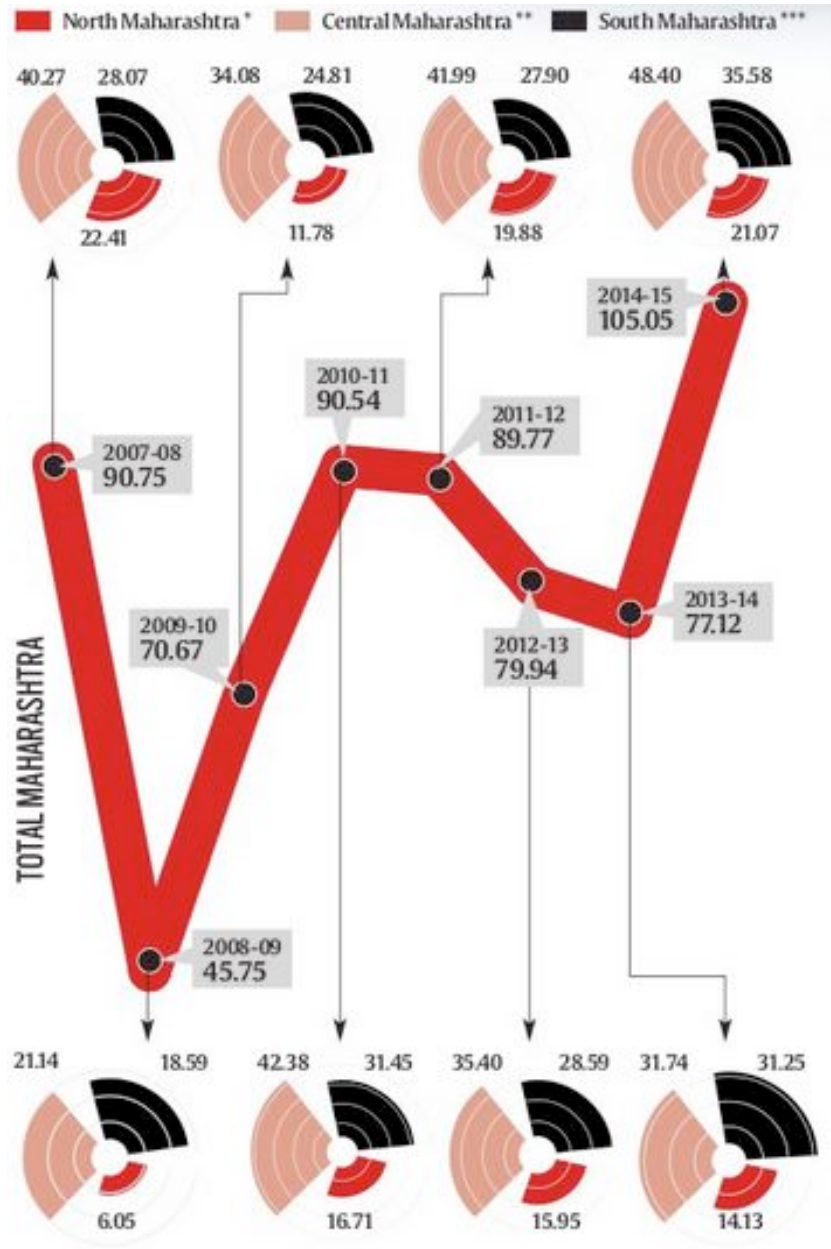


A typical sugar mill crushing 5,000 tonnes cane daily (tcd) requires 10 lakh litres of water per day.

At 10 in the morning, Vishwas Bhimrao More steps into his six-acre sugarcane field, sickle in hand. After three hours of labour, this 35-year-old farmer from Siddheshwar Wadgaon village in Osmanabad's Tuljapur taluka makes bundles of his harvested dry crop for selling in the market as fodder.

More had invested Rs 1.5 lakh on planting his cane in December-January and taken a Rs 3 lakh bank loan for tending it thereafter. But the monsoon's failure dwarfed the growth of the crop by a third or more. The saving grace, if any, has been the severe fodder shortage resulting from the drought: It has created a market for dried cane, now selling at Rs 2,000-2,500 per tonne, which is more than the Rs 1,800-2,000 per

tonne price that sugar mills paid in the 2014-15 season (October-September). And unlike the mills, the payments for fodder cane are on the spot.



Graphic: Sanjay Tambe

*Eight Marathwada districts plus Jalgaon, Nandurbar, Yavatmal, Wardha, Nagpur and Bhandara. **Solapur, Pune, Ahmednagar and Nashik. ***Satara, Sangli and Kolhapur.

Region-wise sugar production in lakh tonnes in Maharashtra

“My cane was completely burnt. Now, I can use at least some of it to feed my four cows and sell the rest as fodder for other farmers,” says More.

Normally, it is the top green leaves of the cane left in the field after harvest that gets used as fodder. But currently, farmers are harvesting the immature cane itself for use as fodder. The yield of this poorly-grown cane is only 10-15 tonnes per acre, as compared to 35-40 tonnes from fully mature cane. The lower yields are partly compensated through higher price and instant payment for cane sold as fodder.

At Handogri village of Bhoom taluka, Bapurao Patil has already booked 100 tonnes of sugarcane for the 4,000-odd cattle housed in a 300-acre ‘camp’ being run by him. “I have adequate stock to feed these animals for next two months. But since the cattle numbers are increasing, I need to make fodder provision for the next six months,” notes Patil, whose camp is getting a subsidy of Rs 70 for every cow and Rs 35 per calf from the Maharashtra government.



Vishwas More cutting his immature cane crop for fodder. (Express Photo by: Shubhangi Khapre)

Across the Marathwada region’s eight drought-hit districts — Osmanabad, Latur, Nanded, Beed, Parbhani, Hingoli, Jalna and Aurangabad — and even parts of western and northern Maharashtra, farmers driving tractors loaded with dried cane to fodder markets or state-subsidised cattle camps are an increasingly common sight.

The implications of these are not lost on sugar factory owners.

In the 2014-15 season, the 52 mills in Marathwada crushed 190 lakh tonnes (lt) of cane to produce 19.8 lt of sugar. For the new season, the total cane crushed even before the start of monsoon was pegged at 150 lt, because of farmers planting less on account of lower prices and delayed payments by mills.

BB Thombare, chairman of Natural Sugar & Allied Industries at Kallam taluka of Osmanabad, believes that the monsoon rainfall deficit alone would reduce cane availability in Marathwada by 35-40 lt. In addition, there will be 20-25 lt of cane diversion towards fodder, which leaves hardly 85-95 lt available for crushing by mills.

But it is not Marathwada alone. Even the main cane belt of western/central and southern Maharashtra — especially Solapur and the eastern parts of Sangli, Satara, Pune and Ahmadnagar — have been affected by poor rains.

Sanjeev Babar, managing director of Maharashtra State Cooperative Sugar Factories' Federation, is for now projecting a 30 per cent reduction in the cane crushed for the 2015-15 season, over the 929 lt that mills in the state processed to produce a record 105 lt of sugar in 2014-15.

However, production falls can be very steep, as was the case in 2008-09 when Maharashtra's sugar output practically halved to below 46 lt. For a state which produced 37 per cent of India's 281.08 lt of sugar in 2014-15, that can be fairly significant.

Right now though, there are many imponderables in the way of estimating production for 2015-16. That includes the behavior of the 'returning' monsoon — when the rain-bearing winds from the south-west reverse direction — in the second half of September. In the event of it, too, failing, not only could cane yields take a further hit alongside more diversion to fodder, but there may also be a serious issue of water availability for drinking and animals. That would, in turn, make it difficult for even mills to take up crushing operations.

A typical sugar mill crushing 5,000 tonnes cane daily (tcd) requires 10 lakh litres of water per day. Maharashtra's agriculture minister Eknath Khadse has suggested that the state government may prohibit mills to undertake crushing this time, given the priority accorded to drinking water and saving cattle.

But according to Thombare, mills need water only in the initial 3-4 days, mainly for the boilers to produce steam. Once crushing operations stabilise, factories can use the water present in the cane itself. Sugarcane has 70 per cent water, which includes 15 per cent in the baggase that is burnt in boiler.

“Out of the remaining 55 per cent water, at least 50 per cent can be recycled for use by the mill. From 5,000 tonnes of cane, you can recover 25 lakh litres, which is more than the mill’s own water requirement,” he claims, adding that most factories in Marathwada have facilities to condense the evaporated vapour during boiling of sugarcane juice.

But the real concern today is whether mills, even if allowed to crush, will have enough cane to crush in the first place.

THE ECONOMIC TIMES

Monsoon revives in central India, southern peninsula, says IMD



NEW DELHI: Monsoon rains have revived in the worst-hit central India and southern peninsula regions that would help boost kharif crops and water level in reservoirs, a top official of MeT Department said today.

Monsoon deficit has been at 12 per cent so far this season (June 1 to September 2).

However, the rain deficit in the southern peninsula and central India was 22 per cent and 16 per cent, respectively, according to India Meteorological Department (IMD) data.

Southern peninsula comprises of states like Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Kerala, while Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra and Gujarat are part of central India.

"Monsoon rains have already revived from today in south peninsula and central India. More rains are likely in this region as pressure is building in the Bay of Bengal and moving into inland by September 15," IMD Director General L S Rathore told reporters.

Revival in rains augur well for kharif crops and would also help narrow rainfall deficit in September, he said.

The rain deficit in September is 50 per cent.

Rathore said that overall monsoon deficit for June- September period is expected to be 12-14 per cent below normal as projected earlier.

Water level in reservoirs in southern peninsula is very low and revival in rains will help, he added.

"For the country as a whole, cumulative rainfall during monsoon season till September 2 has so far been 12 per cent below the Long Period Average (LPA). Rainfall activity was less than normal in all the broad homogeneous regions of India except east and northeast India, where it was near normal," IMD had said in a statement last week.

MeT department had forecast that the season (June to September) rainfall over the country as a whole is likely to be 88 per cent (± 4 per cent) of LPA.

Agriculture, which contributes about 15 per cent to the country's GDP and employs more than half of the population, is dependent on monsoon as only 40 per cent of the cultivable area is under irrigation.

Despite deficit rains, the total sowing area under kharif crops as on September 4 was at 998.67 lakh hectares compared with 979.40 lakh hectares in the year-ago period. Sowing of pulses has increased 11 per cent while paddy acreage has risen marginally by over 1 per cent so far.

Centre prepared to tackle drought situation: Agriculture minister Radha Mohan Singh



NEW DELHI: Agriculture minister Radha Mohan Singh on Wednesday said the government is prepared to deal with any drought situation in the country even as he hoped the water availability for drinking and irrigation will improve with good rains good rains forecasted over Maharashtra and Karnataka in the next seven days.

"I want to assure people, that the government along with state governments are geared up in its preparations to tackle drought situation," Singh said in a statement. The minister held meetings with officials from various ministries including food, fertiliser, earth sciences and water resources earlier in the day.

He is expected to visit the southern states to see the ground situation in the next few days. "Since, the past two days the Marathwada region in Maharashtra has been receiving good rains and the India Meteorological Department says rain will continue in the southern region. We should expect rains in interior Maharashtra, Telangana and Karnataka where rain deficit has remained high," Singh said.

On Wednesday, the seasonal deficit for the country touched 15%, with poor showers in northwest and central India. Marathwada region and Madhya Maharashtra recorded 76% and 52% above normal rain, respectively, for the day.

North interior Karnataka got 301% and south interior Karnataka got 100% above normal rain for the day.

The agriculture minister said a new system developing over Bay of Bengal would bring rains in coastal Andhra Pradesh and interior districts of southern states. "In the next 10-12 days, we expect good rains in the South and northeastern states. This will help farmer's standing crops and also ease situation of drinking water," said Singh.

As on date, only the government of Karnataka, which has recorded seasonal rain deficit of over 28% in some districts, has asked for Rs 3,050.72 crore relief assistance from the National Disaster Relief Fund. Out of 30 districts in the state, 27 districts have been declared drought hit by the state.



THE TIMES OF INDIA

Demarcation of eco-sensitive area within Western Ghats gets delayed for two more months

NEW DELHI: The Center has extended the date for issuing final notification on earmarking Ecologically Sensitive Area (ESA) in Western Ghats by two more months, awaiting reports from Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu.

Final notification for the ESA had to be issued within a period of 545 days of the last draft notification issued during the UPA government in March last year. After expiry of the deadline, the government has now issued fresh 'draft'notification, reiterating all the points of the 2014 draft that made it clear that any 'final'notification in future will not at all affect agriculture and plantation activities of the villagers fall within the eco-sensitive area,

"The central government issued a fresh draft notification (on September 4) for notifying an Eco-sensitive Zone for the Western Ghats. The fresh draft notification has been issued in supersession of the notification of March 10, 2014", said an official statement on Wednesday.

The earlier draft notification was issued under the provisions of the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986 for declaring an Ecologically Sensitive Area in the Western Ghats covering the six states -- Gujarat, Maharashtra, Goa, Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu.

While responding to the draft notification, many stakeholders and state governments of the Western Ghats region had expressed their apprehensions and concerns with respect to ESA in the Western Ghats. Though four states have already submitted their reports including suggestions, the ministry is waiting for similar reports from Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu. States' views will be incorporated in the final notification.

In order to clarify the provisions stated in the draft notification and to dispel the apprehensions and concerns raised by the stakeholders with respect to provisions of the 'draft' notification and the concept of Ecologically Sensitive Area, the ministry has now decided in public interest to supersede the earlier draft notification with a fresh draft notification addressing these concerns/apprehensions.

"The government is fully committed to protecting the ecology and sanctity of Western Ghats. At the same time, the government is determined to ensure sustainable development of the population staying in the Western Ghats region," said the Union environment and forests minister Prakash Javadekar.

The ministry in its statement said, "It is important to mention that the extent of ESA and the other provisions stated in the earlier draft notification remain unchanged pending the finalization of proposals from the state governments on demarcation of Ecologically Sensitive Area by physical verification.

"The main focus of the ministry is to conserve the biodiversity of the Western Ghats region, while providing adequate opportunities for livelihood security of the local people in the broad paradigm of Ecologically Sensitive Area which is not just about regulation of development, but is intimately linked to positive promotion of environment-friendly and socially inclusive development".

* The ministry also emphasized that the lives of about 50 million people living in Western Ghats region will not be affected. "Their agriculture and plantation will not be adversely impacted. Their normal businesses and their other activities will also not get adversely affected", it said.

Monsoon revives in central, southern India: IMD



The revival of monsoon in central and southern India will hopefully help boost kharif crops.

NEW DELHI: Monsoon rains have revived in the worst-hit central India and southern peninsula regions that would help boost kharif crops and water level in reservoirs, a top official of Met department said on Wednesday.

Monsoon deficit has been at 12 per cent so far this season (June 1 to September 2).

However, the rain deficit in the southern peninsula and central India was 22 per cent and 16 per cent, respectively, according to India Meteorological Department (IMD) data.

Seeds sown, but dry conditions may hit Kharif crop

LUCKNOW: Farmers in UP have hit the target by sowing 95.6 lakh hectare for Kharif crop but dry September has made them apprehensive. Unpredictable weather has been hitting agricultural production in the state for last two years and this is the third consecutive year when farm production might hit a low if it does not rain this month.

Against the average production of 515 lakh metric tonne, the state could produce only 381 lakh metric tonne in 2014-15. Weather reduced farm production and the staple crops of wheat and rice were hit worst.

Production of wheat declined from 314.9 lakh metric tonne previous year to 200 lakh metric tonne in 2014 while rice fell to 132 lakh metric tonne from 145.6 lakh metric tonne. In 2013, freak rains had hit the Rabi cultivation, while in 2014 it was first drought and flood later which affected both rabi and kharif crop of UP.

This year as the fear of loss looms large, officials at the UP agriculture directorate said farmers have been provided with inputs like seeds and urea but in a state which has 85% area irrigated by way of surface canals, private and state tubewells, it is now the responsibility of irrigation department to ensure availability of water till the tail-end of the canals.

"Good rains even in the coming week can save the crop," said sources. From July when sowing continued till August, the state has received 65% normal rains which is more than 51% the state saw last year till August.

But dry September might prove costly for Kharif crop mainly paddy which needs fields flooded with water. "Pulses can survive, but not rice," added sources.

The state has more than 400 lakh hectare are under cultivation of cereals, pulses, foodgrains and oilseeds. Out of approximately 120 lakh hectare area under Kharif crops, 50% is under paddy and out of another about 130 lakh hectare under Rabi cultivation, 75% area has wheat grown on it.

In 2014-15, state suffered severe crop loss. While 44 districts were declared drought affected which hit Kharif crop, at least 12 districts were declared flood-affected which further hit farm production. Rabi crop was hit mainly due to unseasonal rains and hailstorm.

"It rained during harvesting of Rabi which affected grain formation. Though sporadic rains till February made us expect a bumper crop, rains in March-April did the damage," said sources.

This time, too, while it rained during sowing, it has gone dry now. "We need good rains throughout September," said A K Bishnoi, UP agriculture director.

Erratic weather also affects yield per hectare and quality as the composition of the crop gets affected.

'Conserving crop diversity essential to achieve zero hunger'



MUMBAI: With the twin challenges of population growth and climate change, there is a need to conserve native seeds from the world over that will help in achieving food security, a top Crop Trust executive has said.

"In order to achieve zero hunger and food security, there is a need to ensure the long-term conservation and use of crop diversity worldwide. Natural diversity can be used as building blocks of agriculture or raw material to improve crop through traditional breeding in time of need," Crop Trust executive director Marie Haga told PTI here.

Crop Trust is an international organisation working to safeguard crop diversity.

Haga said there has already been a tremendous amount of indigenous varieties lost in many parts of the world.

India has lost 90 per cent of rice varieties since 1900, China has lost 90 per cent of rice varieties since 1950, Mexico has lost 80 per cent of corn varieties since 1900.

In the USA, 90 per cent of fruit and vegetable varieties have been lost since 1900, according to Crop Trust.

"We have 2,00,000 varieties of rice and 4,500 varieties of potato in the world. Similarly, there are lots of varieties of each food grains, fruits and vegetables, pulses among others."

"We are concerned about preserving them as one of them might have traits that can be utilised in future that can resist heat and climate among other things," she said.

The conservation of diversity is also essential as it can bring farmers more and better options in the future, to be more competitive and secure, she said.

"India is conscious about the importance of crop diversity and has very good gene banks compared to many other countries. The awareness level is also very good," Haga said.

THE HINDU BusinessLine

Cotton Corp hopes to trim stocks this month



Cotton Corporation of India is fast unloading its stock of 25 lakh bales (lb) and expects to cut inventory to 5 lb before September-end, the close of cotton year 2014-15, even as it gears up for new season.

The agency had bought 87 lb of cotton worth about ₹17,000 crore from farmers as part of the Government's minimum support price assurance and has now been auctioning them on its electronic platform.

Speaking to *BusinessLine*, BK Mishra, Chairman and Managing Director, CCI, said the domestic demand for the fibre is picking up and it managed to sell 62 lb for about ₹12,000 crore, so far.

“Of the remaining 25 lb, we are close to selling 15 lb in next few days and put another five lb on auction by end of this season. The demand has been strong even as we marked up prices keeping with the global trend,” he said.

Allaying fears that CCI will be left with huge inventory, Mishra said the industry is appreciative of the role being played by the corporation in ensuring that the supply is maintained at the fag end of the season and has expressed satisfaction on the quantity of cotton being auctioned monthly.

The textile industry needs 25 lb of cotton every month.

Prices surge

The Corporation expects scanty rains in major growing regions of Maharashtra, Punjab and Gujarat to hit cotton output next year.

Strong demand coupled with lower output is expected to hold prices above the minimum support price leading to less intervention of CCI to support farmers, said Mishra.

Cotton (Shankar variety) prices have gone up by ₹1,200 per candy (of 356 kg) to ₹35,200 in last one month due to robust demand. Domestic cotton production in 2014-15 is expected to be 354.75 lb – marginally down from 359 lb recorded in 2013-14. Cotton output in the season starting next month is expected to dip to 340-350 lb as the acreage under fibre crop has dipped eight per cent to 114.17 lakh hectares from last year's 124 lakh hectares.

Lower output

This apart, poor monsoon in most growing States and pest attack is threatening cotton output in the coming season.

“There are whitefly pest attacks in Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan. The drought-like situation may dampen cotton output in Maharashtra. We may have to buy a small quantity in Andhra Pradesh and we are well prepared for it,” he said.

After a good start, rains have been patchy in Gujarat – a major cotton-producing State. Rainfall in the State was 28 per cent below normal.

Symposium on plant pathogen

The Indian Institute of Horticultural Research, Bengaluru; the Central Plantation Crops Research Institute, Kasaragod; and the Association for Advancement of Pest Management in Horticultural Ecosystems, Bengaluru, are conducting a four-day international symposium on ‘Phytophthora: taxonomy, genomics, pathogenicity, resistance and disease management’ at Bengaluru from Wednesday.

A press release by P Chowdappa, Director of Central Plantation Crops Research Institute and organising secretary of the symposium, said here on Tuesday that the pathogen phytophthora causes devastating diseases on a wide range of agricultural crops, natural vegetation and forestry worldwide. There are over 120 phytophthora species.

Coconut oil steady as festival demand ends



Coconut oil market in Kerala remained steady this week, with the end of the festival season. Prices are quoting at ₹11,600 a quintal in the absence of local demand.

In Tamil Nadu, the rates are hovering at ₹10,800. The market, according to Thalath Mahmood, Director, Cochin Oil Merchants Association (COMA), is witnessing a selling spree with copra prices quoting at ₹7,800 in Kerala, while the figure stood at ₹7,600 in Tamil Nadu.

However, he said that the market is expected to revive next month with the starting of the Diwali season in North India.

There was a good upcountry demand for virgin coconut oil. Prices of raw coconuts in Kerala have also come down to ₹24/kg in Kerala.

According to Bharat Khona, former Board member, COMA, majority of traders are concerned over the decline in prices of other edible oils such as palm kernel, which may affect the prospects of coconut oil in the long run.

There is a consumer preference especially for palm oil, sunflower, rice bran, etc due to low price.

The high prices of coconut oil in the recent period had pushed back coconut oil from the leading position in the domestic market, he said.

Bureaucratic hurdles may drive more seed companies away from AP, Telangana

The seed industry in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana has cautioned the governments that if bureaucratic hurdles are not removed the States might see flight of more seed firms. Frequent vigilance raids, delays in assigning licences and payment of subsidies are hurting the interests of the industry that helped the region earn the sobriquet Seed Capital of the country.

The two States account for about 60 per cent of all the seed that the country produced, with production payments touching the ₹7,200-crore mark. Over two lakh farmers are engaged in seed production in pact with over 400 firms. “The industry is moving away from the region because of these hurdles. There is no clarity on co-marketing of the seeds despite several appeals from the industry,” ASN Reddy, a leader of Seedsmen Association, has said.

Addressing the 20th annual general meeting of the Association here on Wednesday, he said the region had 45 lakh sq ft of seed warehousing capacity and a cold storage capacity of 60 lakh sq ft. The industry employs 17,000 people, while indirectly supporting over one lakh casual labour.

Seedsman Association President M Harish Reddy said the seed industry requires huge capital for investments in technology, manpower, processing and other infrastructure.

THE FINANCIAL EXPRESS

With monsoon deficit at 14%, agriculture ministry, IMD issue sowing advisory

With several regions facing severe deficit in the monsoon, an agriculture ministry advisory has asked farmers to grow contingency crops such as short-duration pulses...



With several regions facing severe deficit in the monsoon, an agriculture ministry advisory has asked farmers to grow contingency crops such as short-duration pulses and millets and prepare the soil for the coming rabi, or winter, crops. (Reuters)

With several regions facing severe deficit in the monsoon, an agriculture ministry advisory has asked farmers to grow contingency crops such as short-duration pulses and millets and prepare the soil for the coming rabi, or winter, crops.

A region-specific advisory by the ministry and India Meteorological Department (IMD) has urged farmers in the flood-hit north-eastern states to immediately drain out excess water from standing crop fields and transplant submergence varieties of paddy. In the rain-deficient south and north interior Karnataka regions, the advisory has urged farmers to undertake sowing of short duration crops like pulses, minor millets besides growing fodder crops like jowar, maize and bajra.

For the Rayalaseema region, which has received 8% less rainfall than the normal benchmark long-period average (LPA), the advisory has urged farmers to continue sowing contingency crops like sorghum, cowpea, horsegram, korra and bajra, utilising the expected rainfall.

In Marathwada and Madhya Maharashtra, where rainfall deficiency is 49% and 43% of LPA, respectively, the advisory suggested preparation of fields for sowing of rabi jowar and safflower. It also suggested undertaking of compartmental bunding for rainwater harvesting for sowing rabi crops.

In Gujarat, the agri ministry note has suggested intercultural operations like hoeing and weeding and applying mulch in standing crops for conserving soil moisture. Besides, it also suggested sowing of castor and sorghum, transplanting of brinjal, tomato, chilli and other vegetable crops in the coastal zone. "As there was no significant rain during the last few weeks and mainly dry weather is likely to continue, apply protective irrigation for standing crops like pearl millet, vegetable, cotton, castor and groundnut crops," the advisory said.

Meanwhile, the overall monsoon rainfall deficit continues to be 14% below LPA. The quantum of average monsoon rainfall across the country during June 1-September 8 has been 658 mm, 14% less than the LPA of 768 mm. The LPA is calculated on the basis of annual rainfall recorded during 1951-2000 (89 cm). IMD on Tuesday said the southwest monsoon has been vigorous over Karnataka and active over Marathawada, Vidarbha, Telangana and Kerala in the last 24 hours. The met department also said the monsoon has withdrawn from parts of Punjab, Haryana & Rajasthan.

