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THE HINDU

E-auction facility in 100 APMC yards across country by March



Emulating Karnataka's initiative, the Centre will bring 100 Agricultural Produce Marketing Committee (APMC) yards in 11 States under the e-market network by March 2016, in a bid to help them take up e-auctioning of commodities.

Disclosing this to media persons on the sidelines of a workshop organised by the Karnataka Agriculture Price Commission (KAPC) here, Ashok M.R. Dalwai, Additional Secretary to Union Department of Agriculture and Cooperation, said the measure was part of the efforts to bring in a system of national agricultural market.

In all, the Centre wants to link 585 APMC yards in the country under the e-market network, he said.

The main intention was to break the monopoly of APMCs in the trading of agricultural commodities and widen the markets for farmers so that they could get remunerative prices for their produce, he explained.

The Centre will release the software for e-auctioning of commodities on a pilot basis in December.

Each of the chosen markets will be given a grant of Rs. 30 lakh to set up facilities for grading and testing for quality, Mr. Dalwai said. Farmers will have the option of directly marketing their produce without the intervention of APMC agents. But they can use the agents' assistance if need be by paying the commission, he said.

District irrigation plan

Mr. Dalwai said 100 districts had been chosen for the implementation of Prime Minister's Krishi Sinchana Yojana that aims at increasing water use efficiency.

Under this project, a district irrigation plan will be prepared for the efficient use of water resources through various schemes, including watershed.

He said soil health cards had been given to 9.5 lakh farmers of the total 14 crore in the country.

Expect more rain today, tomorrow

Upper air cyclonic circulation perched over Rayalaseema

Chennai might be cool and pleasant for two more days. The Meteorological Department forecasts that the day temperature, which was soaring beyond 36 degrees Celsius, will be around 34 degrees Celsius till Thursday. On Tuesday, murky sky and drizzle in several areas kept the temperature at 33.2 degree Celsius, lower than the average temperature for the month.

An upper air cyclonic circulation over Rayalaseema region will bring widespread rainfall over the State, it is predicted.

While a few stations in interior districts will get heavy rainfall, coastal districts, including Chennai, will experience rain or thundershowers in some areas for two more days.

The department has forecast that the temperature on the highways in Chennai and Puducherry will be 34 degrees Celsius and 33 degrees Celsius on Wednesday. People travelling on highways should be ready encounter rain or thundershowers. S.R. Ramanan, Director of Area Cyclone Warning Centre, said easterly winds blowing over the city have changed the weather.

The weather system may bring rain or thundershowers in some areas.

“Southwest monsoon is still prevailing and it normally withdraws around October 15,” he said.

Some places in Tiruvallur, including Poondi and Tiruttani, recorded 3 to 5 centimetres of rainfall till 8.30 a.m. on Tuesday.

Since June 1, Chennai has received 407.7 mm of rainfall, lesser by 26.1 mm for the season. Similarly, Meenambakkam has recorded a rainfall of 427.8mm, which is deficit by 49 mm for the season. However, officials note that the rainfall deficit is minimal and it can touch the seasonal normal with another rain spell.

Call to phase out highly hazardous pesticides

Global action to substitute Highly Hazardous Pesticides (HHPs) with safer alternatives will be on the agenda of the fourth session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management (ICCM4) that began at Geneva, Switzerland on Monday.

Pesticides Action Network-India director C. Jayakumar, who is participating in the five-day conference, has called for collective action to reduce the human rights impacts of HHPs and come out with a clear timeline for the global phase-out of HHPs.

A joint statement issued by Mr. Jayakumar and Hilal Elver, UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, urged pesticide manufacturers to ensure the traceability of hazardous pesticides throughout the supply chain to protect and respect human rights.

Mr. Jayakumar is also the trustee and executive board member of Thanal, an environmental action group based in Thiruvananthapuram.

Observing that agricultural workers, children and low income and minority communities were more vulnerable to HHPs, the statement said victims and their

families were unable to secure an effective remedy for human rights violation. It expressed concern over the slow pace of a global transition to safer alternatives. “Often, the residues of these hazardous pesticides are found in the food that we consume and this impedes the individual’s right to access safe healthy food”, Ms. Elver told the conference. She urged States to reorient their methods of food production towards systems that inflict less harm, are more sustainable, and truly contribute to the realization of all human rights.

Over 100 health professionals and toxicologists from Africa, Asia, the Americas, Australasia and Europe have written to the UN, demanding an end to the use of HHPs.

AGRICULTURE COOPERATIVE BANK

The government has revised the salary of primary agriculture cooperative development bank staff on Tuesday.

The minimum basic pay is Rs.9,200 and the maximum Rs.63,600. Earlier, it was Rs.6,200 and Rs.39,950 respectively. As per the revised scales, 40 per cent dearness allowance will be merged with the basic pay. It will have 6.5 per cent fitment benefit and will be given service weightage on the basis of three, nine and 14 years of service completed. Part time and contingent employees too will get dearness allowance and house rent allowance at the rates prescribed for them.

Krishi Mela at Shivamogga UAHS from October 3

The University of Agricultural and Horticultural Sciences (UAHS), Shivamogga, is organising a four-day Krishi Mela on its premises here from October 3.

Seminars on the problems faced by agricultural sector, including drought and spate of suicides of farmers owing to financial distress, would be held. More than four lakh farmers from Shivamogga, Chikkamagaluru, Udupi, Dakshina Kannada, Kodagu, Davanagere and Chitradurga districts coming under the purview of UAHS, Shivamogga, are expected to visit the mela.

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah will inaugurate the event on October 3.

Technical sessions focussing on providing vocational training for rural youth to prevent their exodus to urban centres, usage of solar energy in agricultural activities, importance of roof-top gardening, interaction with farmers, who were

once in financial distress but achieved success by adopting scientific agricultural practices, would be held.

C. Vasudevappa, Vice-Chancellor of UAHS, Shivamogga, told presspersons here recently that the event would serve as a platform for highlighting the importance of multi-cropping and integrated farming, which would enhance the income of farmers. To highlight the importance of multi-cropping, the university had developed a demonstration plot on a 2.5-acre plot by cultivating 144 varieties of crops on it. Farmers would be motivated to adopt integrated approach towards agriculture by undertaking cattle rearing, poultry farming and pisciculture. Diverse breeds of livestock would be on demonstration at the event, he said. For the first time, Matsya Mela, an exhibition on pisciculture, would be held as part of the event. The information on pisciculture and rearing of ornamental fish would be provided. Visitors could also relish the dishes prepared with fish, he said.

In all, 500 stalls would be set up for the mela. Representatives of premier institutions in agriculture research and extension, including Indian Institute of Agricultural Research, Directorate of Cashew and Cocoa Development would participate, he said.

Steps to increase forest cover in Attur division



The Forest Department has taken effective steps to increase forest cover in Attur division and has planted over more than 1.30 lakh saplings in the recent past in Attur, Thammampatti and Karumanthurai regions.

CII initiative to promote sustainable manufacturing

Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) will launch a cluster project in Coimbatore to promote sustainable, inclusive and innovative manufacturing (SIIM).

The manufacturing sub-committee of CII-Southern Region is conducting a two-day conference here on SIIM and it was inaugurated on Tuesday. The sessions are on total lean manufacturing, green manufacturing, Indian production system, etc.

Under the cluster project, the proposal is to have 10 – 12 units as members from different sectors - engineering, foundry, machine tool, pumps, textiles and leather. For 24 months, the cluster will focus on 24 key topics under four themes – parts handling, lean manufacturing, quality in manufacturing, green manufacturing and sustenance. The aim is to help the units reduce rejection and complaints, improve productivity, achieve optimal use of manpower, reduce carbon footprint, bring down inventory and cost, and improve the work environment.

According to V. Narasimhan, chairman of CII – Southern Region manufacturing sub-committee, the members will be mainly from the non-automobile sectors.

C.R. Swaminathan, patron of SIIM, said sustainability is the buzzword in the manufacturing sector now and green approach is needed across sectors.

N.K. Ranganath, former chairman of CII – Tamil Nadu, said innovation in manufacturing units could be in processes, materials and finances. Industries need to use resources multiple times and conserve natural resources. Innovation and green practices will make the businesses sustainable and the payback period for green initiatives is reducing. Small and medium-scale enterprises play a major role in an economy and with projects such as SIIM, these units will be capable of adopting sustainable practices.

Inflow drops in Mettur

There is further drop in the inflow of water into the Mettur dam on Tuesday. The dam which was receiving 22,444 cusecs of water on Monday, received 19,195 cusecs on Tuesday evening.

However, the water level continued to rise in the dam. The water level which stood at 69.15 feet on Monday, rose to 69.71 feet on Tuesday evening, against its full level of 120 feet. The storage level rose to 32.453 tmc on Tuesday against the dam's full capacity of 93.47 tmc. Mettur received 4.4 m.m. rain in the last 24 hours that ended at 8 a.m. on Tuesday.

Raise more trees: farmers

Farmers' representatives urged the district administration to grow more trees in the district taking advantage of the continuous rainfall.

K. A. Govindasamy of Attur said that Vashishtanadhi River has remained dry for many years due to monsoon failure. C. Vaiyapuri, president, United Farmers' Association – Tamil Nadu, suggested planting of one lakh saplings in the water bodies in the district. He favoured planting of Palmyra trees.

N. Elango, Joint Director of Agriculture, said that the department has adequate stock of fodder such *asthattapayir* for supplying to the farmers for feeding the cattle.

'Failure to insure paddy crops causes big loss'

As the State government failed to cover paddy crop cultivated in over 32,837 acre mainly in Cauvery Delta areas under the Universal Crop Insurance Scheme (UCIS), despite instructions, the exchequer suffered an avoidable payment of Rs. 28.54 crore to 38,856 farmers, the Comptroller and Auditor General of India report tabled in the State Assembly stated.

A scrutiny of records of the Revenue Department and Administration in three districts revealed that while 11.22 lakh acre were required to be insured under the scheme, only 10.89 lakh acre were insured and the remaining 0.33 lakh acre were not covered by the Agriculture Department, the report said.

The government had to pay Rs. 28.54 crore to farmers at the rate of Rs. 15,000 per acre, including the maximum insurance claim component of Rs. 8,692.

The State government had in 2013 declared all districts, except Chennai as drought-affected and ordered payment of Rs. 15,000 per acre to farmers who had suffered more than 50 per cent crop damage.

The government, in its reply had stated that non-co-operation, ignorance and inability of some farmers resulted in non-coverage under the universal insurance scheme.

Farmer producers undergo training in logistic work

Chief executive officers of farmers producers' organisations in the State were being exposed to various aspects of logistics, bulk handling, aggregation of farmers, producer capital management, and communication efficiency in the business promotion activities during a three-day capacity building training which commenced here on Tuesday.

The training is being organised by the Department of Social Sciences of Anbil Dharmalingam Agricultural College and Research Institute (ADAC&RI), Tiruchi, and Agro Marketing Intelligence and Business Promotion Centre (AMIBPC), Tiruchi.

The training includes field visits for the participants to interact with the successful CEOs of farmers' producers organisations and understand the intricacies involved in the business promotion.

P. Pandiyarajan, Dean, ADAC&RI, stressed the need for taking market intelligence to farmers at the grass-roots level.

S. Selvam, Executive Director, AMIBPC, Tiruchi, emphasised the need for focussing on sustainable business culture by chief executive officers.

Jawaharlal, Dean of Horticulture College and Research Institute for Women, called upon participants to focus on high-value crops and overcoming production and marketing constraints.

R. Chandrasekaran, Joint Director of Agriculture, elaborated on maximising profits and minimising wastage in agro produce.

C. Sekar, Head, Department of Social Sciences, and B. Thiagarajan, Professor of Agricultural Extension, spoke.

Egyptian vulture finds its nest back in Delhi



Amidst spiking pollution levels and reeling under dengue cases, the city has something to cheer about. The Egyptian vulture – which had disappeared from the city – seemed to have made a come back. Also, this time around, ecologists have noted that “two pairs seem to have made permanent residence since April in the Bhatti Mines Forest area.”

According to conservationist T.K. Roy, these birds were previously spotted sporadically in Okhla and Yamuna islands. “This time, we have seen them for a longer period of time and feel that they are residing in the Bhatti Mines Forest area

(where they were spotted). Usually, these birds are known to cross over from Uttar Pradesh.”

Ecologists state that during this year, from April to date, the birds were spotted in the forest area. Few species of vulture used to be common in NCR, but have disappeared now except few vagrant sightings of Egyptian Vulture reported in Delhi in the past few years mainly on the Yamuna islands, Okhla Bird Sanctuary and Gazipur Landfill area.

Bhatti Mines Forest area falls under the Forest and Wildlife Dept of NCT of Delhi and is exclusively being developed and protected by Eco-Task Force of Territorial Army in collaboration with Delhi Govt.

“We have spotted two pairs of resident Egyptian Vulture here. It’s good indication that Egyptian Vulture is come back to Delhi,” added Mr. Roy.

The vulture is a useful scavenger and plays a key role in the environment as ecosystem service provider as it feeds on carrion and keeps the natural environment clean and controls spreading viral diseases from decaying carrions.

Overall vulture population has rapidly declined during the last three decades since mid-nineties and rapid population decline recorded in India between 2000 and 2007.

Egyptian Vulture (*Neophron percnopterus*), one among nine vulture species available in Indian sub-continent is a large range distributed species in Europe, Africa and Asia but its population has been rapidly declined in India due to facing several major threats as disturbance, poisoning, electrocution, scarcity of food, habitat loss but largely due to toxic effect of veterinary drug i.e. Diclofenac through livestock carcasses.

Continuous awareness and effort by BNHS for vulture conservation, Drug Controller General (India), Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and Dept of Animal Husbandry, Ministry of Agriculture, Govt of India has banned Diclofenac on veterinary use in the year 2006 and further Gazette Notification of Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Govt of India banned the sale of Diclofenac in multi-dose vials in 2015.

Due to growing vulture awareness people became much aware for vulture conservation and as a result vulture population gradually increases in the country. As per Birdlife International's preliminary estimation of global population size of this species 21,000 to 61,000 individuals and roughly 13,000 to 41,000 mature individuals at present.

Due to extremely rapid population decline in India this species has been enlisted as Endangered (EN) vulture species in the IUCN Red-list of Threatened Species in 2012.

“Women need to be trained in agro-tech”

Haryana Agricultural University Vice-Chancellor, K. S. Khokhar on Tuesday said that in view of the crucial role played by women in agriculture and livestock production, they should be imparted training to upgrade their knowledge and skills.

For agricultural development, it was necessary that women stays updated with all the latest technologies in this field, he said while talking to a delegation of agricultural experts from Swaziland. The situation in Swaziland was not different from here as women folk there also contributed in agriculture equally to their male counterparts, Mr Khokhar said.

The delegation which included seven agricultural officers and extension officers had been visiting the university since September 21 for training on good cultivation practices of maize.

The Vice-Chancellor said the developing nations are still plagued by challenges posed by food security, malnutrition, poverty and unemployment and need to cooperate with each other to get rid of those problems.

He said that Haryana Agricultural University had taken an initiative to share its improved and useful agricultural technologies with friendly nations.

The gates of the university were open for the students from Swaziland who after getting education from here would build a strong human resource to boost agricultural production of their motherland, Mr Khokhar said.

Christopher M, a member of the delegation expressed gratitude for the training and said it would help increase production of maize, which though a staple crop of Swaziland, had much less yield than Haryana.

CM dedicates cattle farm

Agriculture has been accorded top most priority as initiatives are under way to declare Kerala as the total organic farming State, Chief Minister Oommen Chandy has said.

While rearing of the indigenous cattle breed is gaining popularity among the people, the Animal Husbandry department is taking steps to safeguard the local species, Mr. Chandy said after dedicating the indigenous cattle farm, the first of its kind in the State, at Bela near Badiadukka here on Tuesday.

The function presided over by Animal Husbandry Department Minister K. P. Mohanan was attended by N. A. Nellikkunnu, MLA, district panchayat president P. P. Shyamala Devi, District Collector P. S. Muhammed Sagir and besides senior district officials.

CM ready to take one more delegation to meet PM

DHARWAD: Chief minister Siddramaiah said that state government will file an interim affidavit before the Mahadayi Water Disputes Tribunal seeking interim award for diverting water from Mahadayi to Malaprabha from Kalasa and Banduri Nala.

He said, he is ready to take one more delegation comprising leaders and elected representatives from all parties to meet Prime Minister Narendra Modi seeking his intervention to solve this issue at the earliest.

Speaking after inaugurating the Krishi Mela-2015 at University of Agricultural Sciences here on Tuesday, CM said the state government is seriously considering waiving the farmers' loans in the wake of severe drought.

On IIT issue, CM said state government had written to Union Minister for Human Resources Development to reconsider its decision to set up IIT at Dharwad and allot it to Raichur based on the cabinet decision taken by the BJP government when Jagdish Shettar was the chief minister.

"Since Dharwad has been given IIIT, we thought IIT should come up at Raichur. However, the MHRD's decision in the matter will be final and Karnataka government will extend all necessary cooperation and facilities needed to set up IIT either in Dharwad or Raichur" Siddramaiah asserted.

IT firm promotes organic rooftop garden as stress buster for employees

MADURAI: S Dhanu Saranya, an accountant in an IT firm in the city, rushes to office on days when she has an inkling that the shoe flower plant is going to blossom. The plant is grown in the rooftop garden of the office.

An innovative idea of the IT firm has made its employees come to their workplace with anticipation sans Monday blues. All of them are eager to see what their latest love - a rooftop organic garden - has produced during the weekend.

Director of Elysium Technologies Pvt Limited Muthumari Ayyakannu said she and her partners, managing director K Sundaresh and Dhanalakshmi Sundaresh, had come up with the idea to start a rooftop garden on top of their office building in Anna Nagar six months ago as they felt that beautiful green plants would be the best stress-busters for their employees.

She said they were always concerned about the stress levels of their 150-odd employees. A green shade net was erected and they went in for organic cultivation of vegetables, flowers and fruits.

Every single employee was enthusiastic about the project from day one. They formed groups and took up turns to maintain the garden. They water, weed and fertilize the plants and tend to them caringly when their turn comes.

These tech-savvy youngsters also bring bags of kitchen waste and bottles containing water in which rice and vegetables were washed, so that it could be fed to the plants.

"Kitchen waste is good manure and we have been wasting it all these years and it is rewarding to see plants become robust and healthy with this natural diet," said an employee.

K Senthil Kumar, an employee, said an organic rooftop garden in a workplace has numerous benefits.

"If you set up a rooftop garden in your home, it would benefit only your family. But when we take these fruits and vegetables home, the message is spread among our neighbours who realize the goodness of organic fruits and vegetables," he said.

"I was thrilled when I saw a cucumber appear from the flower in the climber. It became a succulent cucumber one Monday," Dhanu Saranya said.

The employees also make their own concoctions with herbs like tulsi, Adathoda and Siriyangai when someone in office has cough or fever for instant relief.

When season starts, guava and pomegranate plants also produce many fruits and employees wait with anticipation for their turn to pluck.

"These fruits and vegetables are tastier than the ones we buy in supermarkets," they said.

Muthumari said that they also allow their employees to bring their kids to office and visit 1,000 sq.ft garden.

"India is an agricultural country and we take this opportunity to create awareness among young children. Nowadays, most children get to see a tomato plant only on paper," she added.

Poor rains hit sugarcane farmers across district

KOLHAPUR: Scanty rainfall and non-payment of fair and remunerative price (FRP) has hit sugarcane farming in the state, bringing down the area under cultivation 67,000 hectares in the state.

Sugarcane is a major crop cultivated in 20 districts in the state. The lesser area under cultivation would reduce the availability of sugarcane for crushing by 170 lakh tonnes. The sugar commissionerate recently briefed the state cabinet about the current situation.

The sugarcane plantation was on 10.54 lakh hectares in 2014-15, which dropped to 9.87 lakh hectares for the forthcoming crushing season of 2015-16. The agricultural divisions of Pune, Ahmednagar, Nanded and Amravati have reported reduction in sugarcane cultivation, mainly because of low rainfall and dues.

Sugar factories had crushed 930 lakh tonne sugarcane in the previous crushing season. With 11.30% average sugar recovery rate, about 1.05 crore tonne sugar was produced. However, most of the sugar is still in the godowns because of stagnant market rates.

The commissionerate has predicted that only 760 lakh tonne sugarcane will be available for crushing for the 2015-16 season and with same recovery rate, sugar production will be around 85.88 lakh tonne. About 99 cooperative and 79 private sugar factories are expected to start crushing in the forthcoming season in the state.

In 2014-15, most of the sugar factories had lobbied hard and refused to make the complete payment of the FRP to the farmers, except in Kolhapur district, where factories paid the amount on priority.

The Centre had announced the FRP of Rs 2,300 for 9.50% recovery of sugar from one tonne of sugarcane. For every additional one per cent of recovery, farmer would earn Rs 242 per tonne. Interestingly, Kolhapur's average FRP is estimated to be around 12.50%.

Prakash Awade, chairman of Kalappa Anna Awade Cooperative Sugar Factory Ltd, said, "It is true that the area under sugarcane cultivation has reduced but it is mainly due to the improper planning. There is no problem with sugar factories in Kolhapur and Sangli because water availability is not a major problem. In other districts, water scarcity is major and sugar factories were set up without understanding the water distribution facilities."

In a rare development, the Kolhapur zilla parishad has asked its village-level administrative officers to undertake a survey of water scarcity and its impact on the yield. The sugar bowl of Kolhapur is expected to be hit by the erratic showers and scanty rainfall, said Chandrakant Suryavanshi, agriculture officer, Kolhapur Zilla Parishad.

Rs 5,000 crore for green cover on National Highways: Gadkari

NEW DELHI: At least Rs 5,000 crore will be spent on providing green cover to the country's National Highways network in the next five years under the Green Highways Policy unveiled on Tuesday.

Under this policy, the government has made it mandatory to set aside one per cent of the total project cost of any highways contract to a "Green Fund" corpus for plantation.

"We are committed to take highway projects worth Rs 5 lakh crore and one per cent of it — Rs 5,000 crore would be spent on plantation alongside the National Highways," road transport and highways minister Nitin Gadkari said here.

Unveiling the Green Highways (Plantation, Transplantation, Beautification and Maintenance) Policy, Gadkari said the scheme would provide employment to at least 5 lakh youth.

Urging community, farmers, NGOs, private sector, government agencies, self help groups (SHGs) and the Forest Department to come forward to participate in the scheme, Gadkari said the non-serious entities should stay away from the scheme as funds would be released to the agencies only on the basis of the survival rates of plants.

"The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) and Airports Authority of India's GPS Aided Geo Augmented Navigation-GAGAN and BHUVAN would be used to map the plants and hence payments would be released strictly on the basis of survival rates. Those who are not serious should refrain from participating in the scheme," the minister said.

He said massive plantation would not only provide green cover to the highways but also minimise pollution and maintain ecological balance.

The persons or agencies doing exemplary plantation work would be felicitated on the World Environment Day on June 5 every year, he said.

All expressways and access-controlled highways including Delhi-Katra would be built as green highways under the policy and the government may extend this Green Policy to Prime Minister Gramin Vikas Yojana and other schemes to realise the dream of 'Clean India and Green India', the minister said.

He said the government was against felling of trees for building highways and the existing trees would be transplanted, while the bodies desirous of working in this direction would be given assistance to purchase machinery.

He further said that planting trees in any particular area will depend on the soil suitability there.

Road transport and highways secretary Vijay Chhibber said the forest cover at present was only at 22 per cent of the land mass out of desired 33 per cent and the policy would play a pivotal role in bridging the gap of 11 per cent.

He said 12,000 hectares of land has been identified for plantation and the government plans greening of about 6,000 km of roads in the first year of the policy.

The Indian road network 48 lakh km is the second largest in the world and consists of about 96,000 kms of NHs, which constitute only 2 per cent of the road network but carry about 40 per cent of the total road traffic.

DECCAN Chronicle

Biggest solar energy park at Pavagada



Bengaluru: Stung by criticism on poor management of the power sector, the state government has decided to make amends by setting up the biggest solar energy park at Pavagada at a cost of around Rs 20,000 crore. Energy minister D.K. Shivakumar, who held a meeting with farmers in Pavagada on Monday, said that the park would come up in an area of 12,000 acres with farmers as partners in the project. The farmers will enter into a 30-year lease agreement with the government which will pay them Rs 21,000 per acre per year. The lease amount would be enhanced by five percent once in two years.

The Centre and state will jointly invest in the project. While the state will contribute 50% of the project cost, the Centre will bear the rest of the expenditure. Farmers have been asked to submit their land records to the Tumakuru DC by October 30. Once the documents are submitted to the DC, processing of the project would begin in three months as there is no land acquisition involved, he said.

Taking a dig at BJP leaders for their comments on the power situation in the state, Mr Shivakumar said that the Centre had allocated only an additional 200 Mw to the state, as against its request of over 1000 Mw. A recent letter from the Union energy ministry said that Karnataka would be allocated an additional 200 Mw by cutting 50 Mw allocation to Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, 20 Mw to Kerala and 80 Mw to Tamil Nadu. Even under scheduled allocation, the state is receiving only 1187 Mw of the allocated 2388 MW. BJP leaders were unnecessarily politicising the issue, he said.

Meanwhile, the power generation from wind energy has dropped drastically. While demand for power is around 7500 MW, the supply is only 6152 Mw. “To combat the power situation, the government will take a major decision on power purchase as well as production. “A meeting of all stakeholders has been convened on October 1. At the moment, the exchange rate of power is around Rs 11 per unit. The only problem is the availability of a power corridor,” he said.

Food Security Act deadline unrealistic, Jayalalithaa tells PM



Chennai: Reiterating apprehensions over implementation of National Food Security Act (NFSA), Chief Minister J. Jayalalithaa has appealed Prime Minister Narendra Modi to suspend the implementation of NFSA and extend the deadline to identify the beneficiaries by two years.

In a detail letter addressed to the PM, Ms. Jayalalithaa said that the time limit of September 30 to implement NFSA in Tamil Nadu was completely unrealistic considering the fact that district-wise break-up data under the Socio Economic Census was yet to be made available.

"Also, we have taken-up the process of end to end computerization of the public distribution system, cleaning-up the family card data base and the process of seeding the family card base with Aadhaar numbers. Only after this process is completed will it be possible to identify the priority households under the NFSA".

The CM also stressed that the Centre should first address the concerns and key suggestions made by the Tamil Nadu government ever since 2013 about several loose ends in the NFSA before imposing it on the State. Ms. Jayalalithaa said TN has been successfully implementing a universal PDS for the last several decades and would like not to be disturbed.

THE ECONOMIC TIMES

Government plans incentives for sugar mills to pay cane growers: Sources



NEW DELHI: The government is likely to give incentives to sugar mills to pay cane growers, government and trade sources said on Tuesday, as part of efforts to help sugar companies saddled with large stocks and lower prices.

"We are working out some sort of subsidy for mills so that farmers can be paid on time," a government source said.

Sugar mills owe 120 billion rupees (\$1.82 billion) to cane growers, as sugar prices have fallen more than 20 percent while cane prices have gone up by more than 50 percent since the 2009/10 season.

India's sugar marketing year runs from October to September.

Spices exports show 30% increase in the first quarter



KOCHI: Spice exports from India has recorded 30% increase in value despite a marginal rise in volumes for the quarter to June 2015. Spices exports touched 215,215 tonnes valued at Rs 3976.65 crore for three months.

It stood at 213,443 tonnes valued at Rs 3059.74 crore in the same period last year. The rise in unit value of several spices like pepper, chilli, cumin contributed to the increase in total value.

“The substantial increase in exports in first quarter is the result of market promotion activities by the board to promote Indian spices globally,” said Spices Board chairman Dr A Jayathilak.

Chilli at 81,000 valued at Rs 872.20 crore continue to lead the spices exports. In value it went up by 22% and in quantity by 4 %. But pepper has been the star performer for the quarter. Pepper ranks next at 10,750 tonnes valued at Rs 635.90 crore overtaking mint, spice oleoresins and cumin. Pepper export at 10,750 tonnes valued at Rs 635.9 crore has shown 148 per cent increase in quantity and 201 per cent in value.

The third position is bagged by spice oil and oleoresin . At 3725 tonnes valued at Rs 564.65 crore it recorded 24% increase in volumes and 40% in value. Mint products export came to 4520 tonnes valued at Rs 455 crore registering marginal increase in both quantity and value.

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Cumin at 27,000 tonnes valued at Rs 430.80 crore showed 45% fall in quantity and 18% in value as the shipments were sluggish with higher price in the local market and intense competition from Syria.

THE HINDU BusinessLine

Imports to help India meet 70% of edible oil demand



The country is expected to import 15.7 million tonnes (mt) of edible oil accounting for 70 per cent of annual edible requirement of 21 mt in the oil year (November-October) as the margins of domestic mills are squeezed with higher oilseed prices and falling oil prices.

Despite huge imports from India, edible oil prices are expected to remain under pressure due to excess global supply, said the Dinesh Shahra, Managing Director, Ruchi Soya.

Speaking at the annual industry event Globoil, he said soyabean prices have to correct from the current level of ₹3,500 a quintal to ₹3,000 for mills to process domestic supply and maintain their margin.

The industry estimates the soyabean crop this year at last year level of 8.5 mt, way below the government estimate of 13 mt. With an expected edible oil production of 7 mt and import of 15.7 mt, the supply is expected to meet the ever growing demand this oil year.

Arrivals are expected to peak at end of the year and prices will drop with lower demand from the crushers.

Even if the farmers hold back 1.5 mt of seed for next year sowing they have to sell the remaining and this cannot happen till the prices come down, said Shahra. The farmers are reluctant to sell after seeing record prices last year.

The industry expects soyameal exports to remain low on robust domestic demand from poultry industry.

Shahra said India is getting a premium of \$30-40 for non-GM oilmeal and this will continue even though the quantity-wise export may slowdown.

Spices export surges 30% to nearly ₹4,000 cr in Q1

Spices export registered a 30 per cent increase in value terms in Q1 at ₹3,976.65 crore (\$626.81 million) against ₹3,059.74 crore (\$511.22 million) in the corresponding period.

Given this growth rate, the country has achieved 28 per cent of its full year export target in Q1 at ₹14,014 crore (\$2,260 million) set for the FY16.

The substantial increase in exports in Q1 is the result of market promotion activities. Garlic, pepper, small cardamom, fenugreek, nutmeg, fennel and spice oils and oleoresins contributed substantially to the export basket, Spices Board Chairman A Jayathilak said in a statement.

A volume of 215,215 tonnes was exported in Q1 compared to 213,443 tonnes of the corresponding period last year.

Pepper exports stood at ₹635.9 crore marking an increase of 201 per cent. In terms of volume, pepper recorded a growth of 148 per cent to reach 10,750 tonnes. Around 3,725 tonnes of spice oils and oleoresins worth ₹564.65 crore were exported during April-June this financial year, recording an increase of 24 per cent

in terms of volume and 40 per cent in terms of value from the same period last year.

Rain deficit slips back to 14% as monsoon resumes withdrawal

With a day to go for the season, the rain deficit during monsoon 2015 has slipped back to 14 per cent on Tuesday, two per cent higher than estimated by the India Met Department.

This emerged after a late surge over Peninsular India and parts of North-West seems to have run out of steam.

Also, the monsoon has resumed withdrawing from north-west and adjoining Central India.

Exits north-west

In one full swoop, it exited from entire Rajasthan, Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh, Delhi, Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, most of west Uttar Pradesh and parts of west Madhya Pradesh, east Gujarat and north Arabian Sea.

The withdrawal line passed through Dharchula, Etawah, Guna, Ratlam, Ahmedabad and Dwarka on Tuesday, the Met said.

But the monsoon held on its own over parts of the South, including in Tamil Nadu, Puducherry and Andaman and Nicobar islands. This indicates that withdrawal from the entire landmass will be delayed beyond September, in line with the trend observed in the recent past.

'Low' forecast

Additionally, a rain-generating low-pressure area is expected to be thrown up over the Andaman Sea after a 'monsoon pulse' from across the seawaters meandered in and has started evolving there.

Model forecasts do not indicate the formation of a major weather system (depression/cyclone) but the 'low' may wander about in the Central Bay of Bengal and trigger a surge of flows across southern peninsula.

The net result will be enhanced rain along the West Coast and the East Coast and parts of interior peninsula for the next two weeks, a bulk of which may fall beyond the scope of the southwest monsoon.

The trigger is being attributed to the evolving positive phase of the Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD) in which the western part of the Indian Ocean warms up relative to the East, but late for the current monsoon.

Beneficial impact

A positive phase of the IOD has traditionally had a beneficial impact on the concurrent Indian monsoon.

An Australian Bureau of Meteorology update said that the positive IOD is evolving to be the strongest one after the year 2006 event, first time in the history when it was replicated in three successive years.

Meanwhile, the late rains happening in the South may get accounted for in the North-East monsoon that sets in normally in the October 15-20 time band.

Model forecasts show that the monsoon reverse might reach fringes of South China Sea upstream by October 11.

According to latest forecasts by the US Centre for Climate Prediction, the West Coast, the East Coast and parts of interior peninsula may stay wet right until mid-October.

Cotton body expects huge closing stock

India will carry one of the largest closing stocks of cotton in its history when the new season begins on October 1, according to the Cotton Association of India (CAI).

“The projected balance sheet drawn by the CAI estimated total cotton supply for the season 2015-16 at 467.65 lakh bales (of 170 kg each), while the domestic consumption is estimated at 325 lakh bales, thus leaving an available surplus of 142.65 lakh bales,” said an official statement on Tuesday.

Opening stock at the beginning of the 2014-15 season stood at 58.9 lakh bales (lb), according to the CAI data and 52.58 lb the year before.

The industry body highlighted the stock situation while releasing its second estimate for cotton output in the 2015-16 season (October to September) and has revised expected production to 377 lb. The figure is 1.5 per cent lower than the expected output of 382.75 lb, according to the CAI’s August estimate during the current season.

Production in 2014-15 is estimated to have declined in key States such as Gujarat and Maharashtra but did register an increase in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.

Output in Gujarat, the country’s largest cotton growing State, likely declined to 108 lb from 129.25 lb in 2013-14. Production fell to 78.5 lb from 87 lb earlier.

Production in Gujarat is estimated to slide further in 2015-16 to 103 lb in Gujarat, but Maharashtra is likely to record an output of 85 lb.

Agriculture Ministry sowing data point out that area under the fibre all over India has declined by 8.4 per cent this Kharif season to 115.2 lakh hectares (lh) as of September 24, from 125.75 lh at the same time in 2014-15.

With cotton prices having slid below the Centre-mandated minimum support price last season, government agencies such as the Cotton Corporation of India procured about 87 lb.

E-platforms to be deployed in 100 mandis by March

As part of creation of a unified national market for agriculture commodities, the government proposes to deploy the electronic trading platform in about 100 regulated wholesale markets across the country by March 2016, a senior agriculture ministry official said.

The pilot launch of the proposed e-platform will be done by December this year, said Ashok Dalwai, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture on Tuesday. He was speaking on the sidelines of a workshop on strengthening MSP and procurement mechanism of farm commodities in Karnataka, organised by the Karnataka Agriculture Price Commission.

Dalwai said the National Agriculture Market (NAM), being implemented through Agri-Tech Infrastructure Fund with a budget of ₹200 crore, is a virtual market and will have physical markets at the back-end. About 11 States have come forward to carry out reforms in their agriculture marketing laws, he added. TN Prakash Kammaradi, Chairman, KAPC, suggested that a statutory status should be granted for the MSP on the lines of the State advised price for sugarcane.

THE FINANCIAL EXPRESS

Think global, act local to mitigate climate change



In early December this year, the world is going to have a brainstorming debate in Paris on how to mitigate climate change. Whatever the shape of discussions and their result at the global level, the fact remains that *suo motu* best actions by all nations locally, at least, can do a lot of good to reduce climate change.

The various steps that have to be taken by countries at the local level should be in line with their Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs) now almost finalised by them and either submitted or going to be submitted shortly to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). Then, UNFCCC would be taking stock of them. It should further evaluate fully scientifically whether their composite contributions would be enough to limit the average global temperature rise to less than 2 degrees centigrade from the pre-industrial level.

Talking about India, what does the country need to do? Firstly, we should focus on generation of clean and renewable energy such as solar, wind, hydropower, nuclear and gas-based, etc, to reduce carbon emissions. The government of India has already committed to having installed capacity of 175 gigawatt (GW) of clean energy by 2022, including 100 GW of solar and 60 GW of wind energy. If approved by the Cabinet, we may have nearly 450 GW of clean and renewable energy by 2030, including 250 GW of solar, 100 GW of wind, 65 GW of hydropower, 15 GW of nuclear and 15 GW of gas-based energy. We need to ensure that we achieve these targets so that our credibility is not dented at the global level.

By achieving the above targets, India would have an impressive 40% of clean energy in the total energy mix by 2030, instead of just 6% at present. However, even this would not be enough since 60% of energy would still be fossil-fuel-based. Therefore, we would continue to have increasingly huge emissions for a long time to come because of our developmental activities to combat poverty.

In view of this, our second step should be towards conservation of energy (because energy saved is energy generated) in all spheres of activities— industrial/commercial, transportation, residential/household, agriculture, health and education, etc. For this, we need to use clean modern technology in all our processes and systems which would require sufficient investment. Although a clamour has been made at various Conference of the Parties (COP) meetings in the past for providing clean technologies to developing and underdeveloped nations at low cost by rich nations, there have been no concrete results so far. Even fast-track fund of \$100 billion to be created at the international level for poor nations for climate change mitigation and adaptation measures does not seem to in sight yet. Therefore, we must manage funds on our own.

Third plausible measure to control carbon emissions is to bring about lifestyle changes including our profligate consumption habits. The rich and the very well-to-do need to shun their lavish lifestyle. The greed of materialistic possessions greatly enhances environmental pollution risks, because we need to produce and manufacture more and then transport more from one point to another, which

requires lots and lots of land, resulting in a huge reduction in our forest areas which act as carbon sinks.

Mahatma Gandhi had said long ago that the world has enough for everyone's need but not enough for everyone's greed, and the statement is very relevant in the context of climate change today. Prime Minister [Narendra Modi](#) has also amply emphasised on the need of our lifestyle changes and adjustments and imbibing our traditional way of life which maximises the use of resources as one of the best ways to keep emissions low. All this would happen only by self-realisation and voluntary action on the part of the people. All rich western nations and developed nations elsewhere, which have a highly extravagant consumption, have to understand this much more than they do now.

At the international level, any discourse on global warming should change its focus from "climate change" to "climate justice", which means that the plight of the poor has to be shown much greater concern. This is eluding us so far because the rich nations are not prepared to take into account their historical emissions since the advent of industrial revolution. They should now allow more carbon space to poor countries so that can also develop to alleviate poverty of their teeming millions.

Fourth, in India, population explosion is a big curse on our society since it is continuously degrading our environment in a number of ways. We are getting suffocated with high air pollution, water pollution and water scarcity (even the world could have 40% water shortage by 2030). We are facing the challenges of sewage disposal and waste management of all kinds. Our rivers are getting dirtier by the day and the Ganga is a glaring example of this. More than 50% of our households are without sanitation facilities. Let us implement the ambitious Swachh Bharat Abhiyan in all earnest so that we can achieve our target of constructing 12 crore toilets by 2019 with water running in them.

The above issues have assumed alarming proportions over time because of ever-increasing population. So, stabilising our population is a must. It is high time the government takes some innovative steps to achieve this. The poor need to be

taught about the advantages of small family such as better health and good education for their children through well-designed and interesting programmes. The government may even think of providing some desirable incentives such as accelerated increments for serving persons who take to family planning according to government's regulations and advice.

While the climate change issues discussed here are primarily India-specific and would differ from country to country, the important point here is that all COP nations should take action on their declared INDCs locally with utmost sincerity irrespective of what happens globally at Paris. Any worthwhile treaty emerging there—which can be the basis of a good successor to Kyoto Protocol—would be a bonus. The world desperately needs a sustainable social and economic change to fight climate change.

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Maharashtra disbands two banana-promotion agencies

The government of Maharashtra has decided to disband MahaBanana and the Banana Growers Association of India — two agencies that promote the cultivation and marketing of banana. An announcement to this effect was made by Maharashtra agriculture minister Eknath Khadse.

Both these bodies have not been active for the last few years for want of funds, industry sources said. The problems of farmers have been compounded by the lack of demand from other states and export markets inspite of bumper production. The two agencies are expected to be replaced by a corporation, the framework for which is in the process of being prepared, senior officials said.

Dyandev Mahajan, president, MahaBanana, said no funds have been coming from the government for the last few years because of which it had become difficult to run the board. The Agriculture Marketing Board of the state had established

‘Mahabanana’, a farmers’ marketing organisation in 2002 with headquarters at Jalgaon.

There are 26 co-operative societies registered under Mahabanana and each such member society has 300-350 small and marginal farmers. About 8000 farmers have enrolled themselves as members under the organisation.

“It is a sad decision. But if this will be replaced by another body, that will be good for farmers. Mahabanana has been working for the betterment of farmers and has helped bring in new practices which helped farmers get an additional Rs 50 per quintal. It has also been responsible for bringing in the box system of packaging and instead of artificial carbide ripening, introduced ethylene ripening which is much healthier for consumers,” he explained.

We will continue to bring in best practices and help farmers with new technology, he said. Ethylene ripening is even and does not cause dark spots on the fruit, he explained. Moreover, the erratic weather conditions have led to Karpa — a disease that has been causing damage to the crop, he said.

During the UPA rule, MahaBanana had managed to obtain a fund of Rs 90 crore for using pesticides and insecticides to treat the disease. However, there is not much awareness among farmers about this, he said. In countries such as the Philippines, a major banana grower, farmers spray the crop at least 22 times. In contrast, here farmers spray the produce just a few times as a result of which the disease persists, he said.

There has been a bumper production of bananas this season with little demand from other markets, he said. Around 55,000 hectares in Jalgaon, the main hub of banana cultivation in the state comes under banana with a productivity of 65 tons to 75 tons per hectare.

BV Patil, president of the Banana Growers Association, agrees and pointed out that the demand from Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Punjab has been declining as banana cultivation is growing in these states as well.

Initially, bananas from Maharashtra were transported to these markets but now there is no demand, he said.

Moreover, since banana is a perishable crop, farmers are forced to accept whatever rates are available. Banana is now grown across all seasons and is no longer a seasonal crop, he said.

Mahadev said that the export demand is also less and Pakistan remains a seasonal market. They export only when there is a shortage, he said. Pakistan has turned out to be a major market for the Jalgaon banana. Around 10,000 tons are sent to Pakistan annually. This season around 3,25,000 tons of the crop is expected to be produced.

Moreover, the extreme heat conditions across the state has led to early ripening of the fruit which, in turn, has led to farmers being forced to dispose off their produce, he said.

In India banana production is highest in Maharashtra (3924.1 thousand tons) followed by Tamil Nadu (3543.8 thousand tonnes). Within India, Maharashtra has the highest productivity of 65.70 metric tons /ha against the national average of 30.5 tons/ha. The other major banana-producing states are Karnataka, Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh and Assam. Now more states have begun cultivating banana.

India exports bananas mainly to UAE, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Bahrain and Qatar. The varieties which are in demand internationally include Grand Naine and Cavendish.

The Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (Apeda) believes that India has tremendous export potential for bananas and has, therefore, declared eight traditional banana growing districts in Maharashtra as agricultural export zones (AEZs). Apeda has also opened a couple of export facilitation centres at Jalgaon and Hingoli. However, farmers have been shying

away from these centres since the rates have been pretty high, a local farmer revealed.

Cotton procurement may plummet to 30-40 lakh bales next season: CCI

With the likelihood of another bumper crop in the coming season that could weaken prices yet again, Cotton Corporation of India (CCI) has begun preparing for another year of minimum support price (MSP) operations. This time, however, the agency feels that the quantum of cotton under MSP could go down to 30-40 lakh bales, top officials of CCI said. In the 2014-15 season, CCI had purchased 87 lakh bales.

“The prices of cotton seeds are much better than last year. Moreover, the carryover stock with CCI from 2014-15 is to the tune of 19 lakh bales. These will have to be liquidated before we go in for MSP operations. CCI, however, has begun preparing for MSP purchase this year as well in the 11 cotton growing states and has set into motion the tendering process as well which should be completed by the month end,” BK Mishra, CMD, CCI told FE.

As in the previous year, CCI will set up 300 purchase centres this year as well. Mishra felt that market intervention by CCI may not be required to a great extent since market prices may not fall beyond the support price. Cotton prices are currently in the region of Rs 32,000 to Rs 34,000 per candy.

Last year, China had played a major role in determining the MSP operations in the country when it decided to stop cotton imports. This led to a huge stock of cotton in India that led to weakening of prices, which in turn resulted in the need for market intervention. Indian cotton production touched 400 lakh bales in the 2014-15 season.

CCI had begun procurement operation at the support price from October 2014 to protect farmers from sharp decline in domestic prices in view of expected higher production, though it didn't have to do large-scale procurement to support prices.

This time, CCI has urged the government to appoint more agencies for cotton procurement so that it could ease pressure on the corporation. In Maharashtra, the Maharashtra State Cotton Growers Federation was the sub-agency of CCI last year. This time, CCI wants similar agencies in states such as Telangana and Andhra Pradesh as well. CCI has written to the Ministry of Agriculture to appoint Nafed as well as other agencies in different states. Last year, CCI had procured Rs 16,000-crore worth cotton from farmers incurring losses to the tune of Rs 2,700 crore. Cotton seed prices are currently in the range of Rs 2000 per quintal and should the prices go below Rs 1500-1600 per quintal, MSP may be required, Mishra said.

The acreage under cotton is likely to be 5-8% less than last year and the output is likely to touch 350-380 lakh bales.

The first estimates given out by the Ministry of Agriculture say that cotton output is likely to touch 335 lakh bales this season.