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THE HINDU

Done enough for farm self-sufficiency: Centre

An affidavit filed by the Union Agriculture Ministry in the Supreme Court says the government has done enough and more to secure self-sufficiency in agriculture.

“The country has sufficient surpluses and is in a position of exporting to other countries,” says the affidavit filed on February 20 in response to a public interest litigation petition by the Consortium of Indian Farmers’ Association in 2011 seeking implementation of the recommendations made by the National Commission on Farmers’ Security in 2006.

“The only areas where production is deficient are pulses and oil seeds.” The government, it said, has initiated programmes such the National Food Security Mission to increase production of pulses and oilseeds to bridge the gap between domestic requirements and minimise imports. The level of food security attained is quite a feat, considering the scant geography of the country.

“India accounts for only 2.4 per cent of the world’s geographical area and 4 per cent of its water resources, but has to support 17 per cent of the world’s human population and 15 per cent of its livestock,” the affidavit said.

“[Despite this] India has not only ensured self-sufficiency in most agricultural crops but also built sufficient buffer stocks and is also in a position to export agricultural commodities to other countries. The government has taken all possible steps for implementation of the National Policy for Farmers, 2007 for development and growth of agriculture and allied sectors as well as for the betterment of farmers.”

The petition accused the government of sitting on the 2007 policy framed on the recommendations of the M.S. Swaminathan Commission. These recommendations were endorsed by the Working Group on Agriculture Production under the Prime Minister in December 2010.

The consortium highlighted how the BJP election manifesto had promised that profitability in agriculture would be enhanced by ensuring a minimum 50 per cent profit over and above costs.

The government defended that it had put forward various recommendations of its price policy adviser, the Commission on Agricultural Costs and Prices, to bring security to the agricultural sector and prevent farmers' suicides.

Bird watchers compete to spot more birds in Coimbatore



From entrepreneurs and employees to retired personnel, Coimbatore Bird Race that was organised on Sunday as part of the India Bird Races 2014-15 saw several participants here.

It was jointly organised by Salim Ali Centre for Ornithology and Natural History and Salim Ali Naturalist Forum, Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation Limited (HSBC) and Yuhina Eco Media.

The teams witnessed a wide variety of birds in a range of habitats from the city to hilly areas at the borders of the district at Walayar, Mettupalayam and Pollachi — covering large agricultural tracts, scrublands and inland wetlands.

Few teams started from the city and then spread to the outskirts, while most of them preferred the outskirts and ending the day-long bird watching in the city. The teams then had a reunion where they shared their experience and the pictures of birds that they clicked.

Like last year there were no prizes for the persons who spotted the most number of birds. “But there was competition on which team managed to spot more,” P. Pramod, Senior Scientist, Salim Ali Institute of Ornithology and Natural Sciences, said. Birds cited by the teams would be compiled and listed in a day or two.

Training in sheep rearing



Veterinary College and Research Institute at Ramaiyanpatti here organised a training programme for tribal youths in sheep rearing and distributed critical inputs to them.

Under the Indian Council for Agricultural Research's programme, 'Training-cum-critical input distribution to tribal sub-population of Tirunelveli district', was conducted on Sunday.

A total of 30 tribal farmers from Thalayanai in the district participated. During the training, lectures on feeding management of sheep, management for newborn lambs, prevention and control of diseases and first-aid for small ruminants and backyard poultry rearing were given.

S. Thilagar, Vice-Chancellor, Tamil Nadu Veterinary and Animal Sciences University, Chennai, who released a hand book on 'Sheep production basics', distributed inputs such as sheep, feed and TANUVAS Mineral Mixture to the tribal livestock farmers.

Lauding the services of VC and RI here to the farming community, Dr. Thilagar appealed to the beneficiaries to continue sheep rearing till the second generations of offspring was obtained in order to realise the contribution of livestock in uplifting their livelihood.

S. Prathaban, Dean, Veterinary College and Research Institute, Tirunelveli, highlighted the services being extended by the college to the livestock owners of Tirunelveli.

J. Johnson Rajeswar, Professor and Head, Department of Veterinary Microbiology, S. Malmarugan, Co-ordinator of the Project and Associate Professor, Department of Veterinary Microbiology, Veterinary College and Research Institute, and others participated.

‘Implement M.S. Swaminathan panel formula’

Federation of Tamil Nadu Farmers' Association has called upon the State Assembly to decide on implementing the M.S Swaminathan panel formula for arriving at support price for agricultural produce.

Farmers would be happy to get as returns 50 per cent in addition to the cost of cultivation, as per the formula, Federation Secretary C. Nallasamy said.

Farmers, he said, would not mind forgoing subsidies, loan write-offs, free electricity or other concessions provided the price for the produce is determined on the basis of input costs akin to arrival of revised salaries for government servants based on price index.

Static

While the cost of cultivation has been increasing manifold, the support prices for the produce have remained static, Mr. Nallasamy said.

Israel plans to set up 30 centres of excellence in India to train farmers



Menahem Kanafi, Consul General of the State of Israel in Bengaluru, has stressed the need to develop cost-effective technologies to benefit small farmers in India.

Asked whether the small farmers of India could afford the highly advanced technology being used in Israel, he said the farm mechanism need not be expensive. It was possible to develop cost effective need-based technologies and modern farming practices to suit local needs.

Mr. Menahem was here to promote Agritech Israel 2015, the 19th international agricultural technology exhibition scheduled to be held at Tel Aviv from April 28 to 30, at the ongoing Agrovision-South Summit 2015.

Natural partnership

“Partnership between Israel and India is only natural as the Indian farmer will be able to reduce water consumption and increase the yield by using our technology,” he said.

Mr. Menahem said Israel had planned to open 30 centres of excellence in India, including three in Karnataka. They would promote research, training, and skill development. The centre at Belagavi would concentrate on cultivation of vegetables, the one in Bagalkot on pomegranate and the centre in Kolar on mango.

Talks were on between the two governments even as a few centres had been opened in India. These centres would provide training in new technologies, including on protected cultivation and drip irrigation.

Association

Rajendra Potdar, head, project planning and monitoring cell, University of Agricultural Sciences, Dharwad, recalled the long association between the UAS and Israel and said so far, 20 scientists had visited Israel to study technological advancements in the field of agriculture there.

He said recently, a few people from Dharwad had undergone a month-long training at Mashav, Israel’s International Agency for Development Cooperation. Mr. Potdar said that the scientists in India need to take up demand-driven research and the government should ensure that the successful experiments in laboratories reached the agricultural fields to reduce the technological gaps between Israel and India.

Horticulture park to come up in Chitradurga

A horticulture park will be developed on 40 acres at Timmannanayakakere village in Chitradurga taluk, G.H. Tippareddy, MLA, has said.

He appealed to the Deputy Commissioner to take steps to acquire land for the purpose.

Speaking at a flower show organised by the Chitradurga Zilla Panchayat and the Horticulture and Agriculture departments here on Sunday, the MLA said farmers in the district were growing quality horticulture produce, including export quality flowers, despite severe shortage of water. “If these farmers are provided better facilities, they will ensure that the district reaches the top spot in growing horticulture produce,” he added.

It had come to the notice of officers and elected representatives that about 35 per cent of the horticulture produce was getting spoiled every year owing to lack of storage facilities.

Mr. Tippareddy asked the officers to give priority to create awareness among farmers on storing their produce. Recently, a food park was opened at Tumakuru where farmers get an opportunity to store their produce, he added.

Chitradurga Zilla Panchayat Chief Executive Officer N. Manjushri, zilla panchayat president Giri Jankal and Jayamma Balraj, MLC, were present.

Cotton farmers protest against sudden drop in price



The cotton farmers staged an agitation in front of the Konganapuram branch of the Tiruchengode Agricultural Producers Cooperative Marketing Society in protest against the sudden drop in the price of cotton on Friday.

Since cotton did not fetch good price at the weekly auction on Friday, the farmers suddenly resorted to an agitation.

They said that the price of a kg of cotton had dropped by Rs. 10, from Rs. 48 last week to Rs. 38 yesterday. The decrease within a week would badly hit the farmers, they complained and alleged that the fall was mainly due to the syndicate formed by the traders.

The Konganapuram cooperative society sources said that the price of first quality crop remained the same as last week and the fall was only in the second quality variety.

Meanwhile, the farmers decided to organise a road roko agitation. On receiving information, the police rushed to the spot and informed the farmers that they could participate in the auction next week, if they found the price not up to the expectations. Following this, the farmers dispersed peacefully.

However, the cotton auction held as usual on Saturday without any disturbance.

Extended ban brings cheer to fishermen

The Ministry of Agriculture has finally conceded the demand of the boat owners to increase the duration of annual ban (conservation period) in both East Coast and West Coast from current year bringing cheer to fishermen. This was a long awaited demand. While accepting this, the government has promised to consider the demand for exploring imposing a uniform ban to ensure unhindered fish breeding.

The demand for conservation arose two decades ago following unhealthy competition, spurt in the number of trawlers and shrimp-centric fishing approach leading to depletion of catch. There have been allegations due

to different ban period being observed in the two coasts for a shorter duration, the so-called conservation not serving the purpose in increased breeding activity.

Focus areas

Proper regulation on fishing and promotion activity on sustainable fishing and scientific exploration are the areas of focus for boat owners and the officials. The Ministry of Agriculture has decided in principle to enforce the ban this year from April 15 to June 14 in East Coast and June 15 to August 14 in the West Coast. Earlier period was from April 15 to May 31 in East Coast and June 15 to July 31 in West Coast.

Union Agriculture Minister Radhamohan Singh has already said he will hold talks with the Fisheries Ministers of various States to arrive at consensus for a uniform ban.

“It makes sense if a uniform conservation period is observed in all maritime States. We also want that the ban be applicable to all types of fishing boats – be it motorised or non-motorised to make it a grand success,” Federation of Indian Fishery Industries president Y.G.K. Murty has said.

Coastal security

The fishing industry has been pitching for implementation of three-tier coastal security viz. marine police in territorial waters of 0-12 nautical miles, Coast Guards in EEZ 12 to 200 nautical miles and Navy in international waters beyond 200 nautical miles to prevent poaching.

Immense scope for research in Biotechnology



Research areas in Biotechnology include genomics, bioinformatics, plant and animal biotechnology, medical biotechnology, environment and biodiversity, biofuels, product and process development, bio-instrumentation, human resource development, and biosafety.

Attention should be laid on aspects such as enhancing the knowledge base, generating highly skilled human resource, nurturing leads of potential utility, and bringing bio-products to the marketplace. The wide network of bioinformatics would help in sharing and exchanging information at the global level as well.

Research areas

The potential areas of research in Biotechnology are so vast and mind-boggling that it is not possible to make a comprehensive list. Further, new areas of study emerge continuously. However, an indicative list is furnished here, so as to give a feeling of the possibilities.

Agriculture: Transgenics of rice, wheat, cotton, potato, and vegetables.
Higher productivity

Basic research: On all aspects of molecular biology, genetics, genomics, proteomics, and neurosciences

Bioengineering of crops for biofuels and bioenergy

Bio-fertilizers and bio-pesticides

Bioinformatics: Algorithm design and development, software and tools for data mining and data warehousing applications. Strengthening infrastructure for handling complex and computationally intensive problems. Biological Data Curation, phylogenetics. Setting up dedicated network centres for developing data warehouses. Exploitation of microbial genome information. Training competent personnel.

Bioprospecting and Molecular Taxonomy: Prospecting, molecular characterisation and documentation of economically and ecologically important hotspots of biodiversity in the country.

Biosafety guidelines

Biotechnology for societal development: Implementing projects for massive employment generation

Development of diagnostics: For major diseases, genetic disorders, cancer, tuberculosis, HIV, malaria, and neurological disorders

Environment and biodiversity

Human Resource Development: Training teachers, technicians, scientists, industrialists, IPR experts, and so on covering biotechnology research and commercialisation.

Industry: More public-private partnerships for developing joint research and development programmes for commercially viable projects.

Infrastructure and institution development

Low-cost therapeutics: developing new vaccines, diagnostics, drugs and drug delivery system; to produce low-cost, small proteins and therapeutics using plants and animals as bioreactors

Marine resources

Medical biotechnology

Medicinal and aromatic plants: introduction and marketing of herbal products

Herbal drugs and nutraceuticals. Genetic engineering of medicinal plants

Metabolic engineering: use of recombinant DNA technology

Neurosciences: neurodegenerative diseases such as Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, and motor neuron disease, which would cover study of molecular genetics of these disorders. Neuro-AIDS, autism, and dyslexia.

Neuro-informatics

Plant tissue culture: providing tissue culture technology at the grassroots level to cover the most plant rich regions of the country which need

massive afforestation and wasteland recovery. Utilisation of tissue culture for enrichment of genetic diversity. Genetic manipulation of cell culture in forestry for disease resistance and reduction of regeneration time.

Vaccine research for major livestock diseases

Research centres in India

What follows is a list of centres in the country which offer facilities for research in Biotechnology.

(<http://www.indiabioscience.org/jobs/research-institutes>)

Agharkar Research Institute, Pune (www.aripune.org);

Anna University, Chennai (www.annauniv.edu);

Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi (www.bhu.ac.in);

the Birla Institute of Technology and Science, Pilani (www.bits-pilani.ac.in);

Bose Institute, Kolkata (www.boseinstitute.org);

the Cochin University of Science and Technology (www.cusat.ac.in);

Delhi University Campus (www.igib.res.in);

Goa University (www.unigoa.ac.in);

ICGEB : International Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology, New Delhi (www.icgeb.trieste.it);

IIT, Kharagpur (www.iitkgp.ernet.in);

IIT Roorkee (www.iitr.ernet.in); the Indian Institute of Chemical Biology, Kolkata (www.iicb.res.in);

the Indian Institute of Science, Bengaluru (www.iisc.ernet.in);

Industrial Toxicology Research Centre, Lucknow (www.itrcindia.org);

Institute for Stem Cell Biology and Regenerative Medicine, TIFR, Bengaluru (<http://instem.res.in>);

the Institute of Bioresources and Sustainable Development, Imphal (ibsd-imphal.nic.in);

the Institute of Genomics and Integrative Biology, New Delhi (www.igib.res.in);

the Institute of Life Sciences, Bhubaneswar (www.ilsc.org);

the Institute of Microbial Technology, Chandigarh (www.imtech.res.in);

Jawaharlal Nehru Centre for Advanced Scientific Research, Bengaluru (www.jncasr.ac.in);

Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi (www.jnu.ac.in);

Madurai Kamaraj University (<http://mkuniversity.org/direct/#>);

the MS University of Baroda, Vadodara (msubaroda.ac.in);
National Botanical Research Institute, Lucknow (www.nbri-lko.org);
National Centre for Cell Sciences, Pune (www.nccs.res.in);
National Centre for Plant Genome Research, New Delhi (ncpgr.nic.in);
National Chemical Laboratory, Pune (www.ncl-india.org)
<http://www.aripune.org/>);
National Environmental Engineering Research Institute, Nagpur
(www.neeri.nic.in);
the National Institute of Immunology, New Delhi (www.nii.res.in);
the National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences, Bengaluru
(nimhans.kar.nic.in);
the National Institute of Oceanography, Goa (www.nio.org);
Rajiv Gandhi Centre for Biotechnology, Thiruvananthapuram
(rgcb.res.in);
School of Biosciences, MG University, Kottayam
(www.mguniversity.edu);
the SCMS Institute of Bioscience and Biotechnology, Kochi
(<http://scmsgroup.org>);
the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research, Mumbai (www.tifr.res.in);
TERI University, New Delhi (www.teriuniversity.ac.in);
the University of Agricultural Sciences, Bengaluru
(uasbng.kar.nic.in/Default.htm);
the University of Calicut (www.universityofcalicut.info);
the University of Delhi (www.du.ac.in);
the University of Kerala (www.keralauniversity.ac.in); and
the Department of Computational Biology & Bioinformatics.

Some global centres

Harvard University, USA; Johns Hopkins University, USA; the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, USA; Stanford University, USA; the University of California, Los Angeles, USA; the University of Cambridge, the U.K.; the University of London, the U.K.; the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, USA; the University of Tokyo, Japan; the University of Washington, Seattle, USA; Washington University, St. Louis, USA; and Yale University, New Haven, USA.

Some of the Biotechnology companies in India

Bharat Biotech, Hyderabad; Biocon, Bengaluru; Dr Reddy's, Hyderabad; GlaxoSmithKline, Mumbai; Indian Immunologicals, Hyderabad; Krebs Biochemicals and Industries, Hyderabad; Monsanto, Mumbai; Nicholas Piramal, Mumbai; Novo Nordisk, Bengaluru; Panacea Biotec, New Delhi; Piramal Healthcare, Mumbai; Ranbaxy India, Gurgaon; Reliance Life Sciences, Navi Mumbai; Serum Institute of India, Pune; Sisco Research Labs, Mumbai; Wockhardt, Mumbai; and Zydus Cadila, Ahmedabad.

National plan gets going in Kerala's dairy sector



The State government will institute awards for farmers and societies or agencies engaged in conserving indigenous cattle breeds in the State, Agriculture Minister K.P. Mohanan has said.

Inaugurating the State-level implementation of the National Dairy Plan (NDP) at Koothuparamba here on Saturday, Mr. Mohanan said that 'Gopalratna' award would be presented to the farmer adjudged best in his/her efforts for the conservation of indigenous breeds such as Vechur cows and Kasaragod dwarf. 'Kamadhenu' award would be given to the dairy societies and agencies conserving the indigenous breeds. First, second, and third prize winners would get a purse of Rs.1 lakh, Rs.50,000, and Rs.25,000 respectively, the Minister said.

The Minister said that milk production in Malabar had increased from 3.5 lakh litres to five litres a day in the past two years. He said that the problem of cattle feed shortage in Malabar would be solved by April.

The NDP, being implemented by the Kerala Livestock Development Board for strengthening the State's dairy sector, involves financial assistance of the National Dairy Development Board. It is being implemented in Kannur, Kozhikode, and Wayanad districts. The objective of the NDP is to improve the productivity of milch animals by ensuring availability of quality frozen cattle semen under the artificial insemination programme, KLDB officials said. The NDP is being implemented in association with the Animal Husbandry Department and the Malabar Regional Milk Producers' Cooperative Society

The Minister also inaugurated the KLDB's scheme of free disbursement of cattle feed. The board also launched a scheme of providing for free calves of quality indigenous cattle species to farmers to promote organic farming.

Move over coffee, Kodagu now looking at high-value vegetables

If things go according to plan, Kodagu, the land of coffee and pepper, may turn into one of the major destinations for high-value vegetable cultivation a few years from now.

A survey conducted by the Indian Institute of Horticultural Research (IIHR) showed that paddy was being cultivated on about 35,000 hectares of plain land in the hilly district of Kodagu. Most of this is being left fallow for six months from October to March after the monsoon. Vegetable experts in the IIHR want to make best use of the land during the "off- season" by motivating people to take up vegetable cultivation.

"It is possible to cultivate vegetables during the off-season as their water requirement is not as huge as paddy," says A.T. Sadashiva, Principal Scientist in the IIHR's vegetable Crops' Division. Also, the weather in Kodagu is similar to that of Ooty, where vegetables are in high demand, he said. Above all, vegetable farming fetches at least one-and-a-half times more returns than paddy, he says.

Preliminary work towards promotion of vegetable cultivation has already begun. The IIHR has developed model farms on about 50 hectares in different areas of Kodagu where high-value hybrid varieties developed by it are being cultivated. "We have also held four field days since 2012 in different areas such as Suntikoppa, where cultivation of different

vegetables at the model farms has been showcased. Observing the overwhelming response to such events, we plan to have two more such field days shortly,” he says, while expressing confidence that it may be possible to encourage farmers to take up vegetable cultivation on a minimum of 100 hectares this year.

At present, vegetables like okra, tomato, beans, yard-long beans and chillies are being promoted, while other vegetables such as carrot will be introduced in the next phase, he says. Onion cultivation has also been introduced on an experimental basis.

The marketing network for the vegetables in Kodagu is not advanced. The IIHR is in talks with the State Horticulture Department, which has promised to provide facilities for sale of vegetables in different parts of the district, Mr. Sadashiva says, adding that plans are also afoot to sell the vegetables to other districts and States as and when the production increases.



Global price boom improved farmers' terms of trade under

UPA: Panel

Indian farmers saw significant improvement in their terms of trade (ToT) during the last 10 years notwithstanding some reversal of late, says an agriculture ministry-appointed working group. ToT refers to the ratio of prices that farmers receive for their produce to what they pay for goods and services purchased.

The working group, headed by the director of the Indira Gandhi Institute of Development Research S Mahendra Dev, has undertaken a comprehensive exercise of constructing year-wise indices of prices received (IPR) by farmers for 79 commodities. These cover 40 agricultural crops, 29 fruits and vegetables, and 10 livestock, fishing and forest products.

The IPRs, in turn, have been compared with separate indices of prices paid (IPP) for products bought by farmers. They include final consumption items (74 of them – from rice and edible oils to toilet soaps, medicines, mobile and cable TV services, two-wheelers and gold jewellery), intermediate inputs (seed, fertiliser, pesticide, livestock feed, electricity/irrigation charges, diesel, hired labour, marketing costs and interest on loans), and capital goods (tractor, electric motor/pump, cement, bricks, steel and other construction materials).

A ratio above one (or 100 per cent) between IPRs and IPPs implies farmers enjoying better pricing power, in terms of what they sell versus what they buy. This, over time, also leads to a shift of incomes and wealth in their favour. A ToT index ratio below one indicates unfavourable conditions of exchange.

The working group, which recently submitted its report, has found the ToT index moving clearly in favour of farmers between 2004-05 and 2010-11, reversing the decline that was noticeable from 1997-98 to 2004-05. While some may view this to signify farmers getting a good deal during the United Progressive Alliance's (UPA) tenure, as opposed to that of its predecessor National Democratic Alliance (NDA), the reality is more complex. To start with, the ToT index fell below one (i.e. 100 per cent) even in the last three years of the UPA regime. This was despite the index in 2013-14, at 95.55 per cent, being still higher than its level of 87.82 in 2004-05.

Besides, ToT movements are considerably influenced by global agri-commodity prices. These recorded steep falls in the aftermath of the 1997 Asian financial crisis and rebounded only with the commodity "super-cycle" boom from 2004. As global prices rose, the ruling UPA, then, was forced to hike minimum support prices (MSP) to align them with the former. The result: improved ToT for farmers. But from 2011-12, they, too, started getting squeezed, especially on account of spiralling rural wages and diesel costs. "Global prices are a significant factor affecting ToT", Dev pointed out.

The last one year has, in fact, witnessed a renewed worldwide crash, while also making it difficult for raising MSPs. The agriculture ministry, last week, told the Supreme Court that MSPs cannot be increased to guarantee a minimum 50 per cent return over costs, as it “may distort the market”. “ToT is only one indicator of farm incomes, which are also dependent on crop yields. Keeping on raising MSPs cannot be a solution. Increasing yields/productivity and reducing cultivation costs are needed for higher incomes today,” Dev told The Indian Express.

Govt plans to stock up on food to avert price spike in summer



Budgeting for the summer, the Delhi’s department of Food and Civil Supplies (FCS) may scale up its plan to stock up food items through the National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India (NAFED).

As prices of foodgrains are expected to rise between May and September, the department, following a review meeting with Chief Minister Arvind

Kejriwal, plans to ask NAFED and the Small Farmers Agri-business Consortium (SFAC) to procure food items from producing states.

“The idea is to ensure that retailing is done at reasonable prices. We will work out the modalities to bring prices under control. Usually prices escalate after May and fall after September. The plan is to control the price rise from May to August,” a government official said.

In June 2014, Lt-Governor Najeeb Jung too had asked NAFED to purchase onion on behalf of Delhi government to build up stock. He had also asked SAFAL outlets to double their stock and the government ran about 60-70 mobile vans to sell onions.

While the same method may be adopted this year, government officials said it may be done on a much larger scale.

Development minister Gopal Rai had the effort was to cut down the price escalation between buying a farmer’s produce and its purchase by a consumer.

“We will down all barricades that lead to increase in the prices of vegetables. With summer arriving soon, prices of some goods are expected to rise but we are trying to control these prices,” Rai said

THE HINDU BusinessLine

Cheaper loans to women

Rajkumari Mishra, who is 48, is a Noida-based homemaker. She owns agricultural land and is involved in social work in village Gurh, Madhya Pradesh. With inflation pinching quite a bit, there is a case to increase the tax slabs, she feels. “I would be happy if the Finance Minister increases the basic tax exemption limit from Rs. 2.5 lakh to Rs. 5 lakh and the 30 per cent tax slab from Rs. 10 lakh to Rs. 13-15 lakh.” Rajkumari wants the government to review its rural job guarantee scheme, MGNREGA. There is a sharp rise in cost of labour, there's also shortage of labour, she says. Rather, the government should subsidise education and business loans in the rural areas.

If she were the Finance Minister, Rajkumari would try to bring more people, especially in the business community, under the tax net. She would also improve the rural education infrastructure, and introduce policies to empower women.

Rajkumari, who prepares the budget for her family, says, “Considering how tough it is to manage a home, I have my sympathy for the Finance Minister.” But “I adhere to my Budget as households don’t have the luxury to borrow as conveniently as the Government,” is her parting shot.