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# THE HINDU

## **Vegetable farming scheme launched**

Agriculture Minister K.P. Mohanan has said by the end of 2016, Kerala will attain the status of a complete organic farming State.

He was launching the district-level Vegetable Farming Development Scheme at the Holy Angels Convent School here on Monday.

Stating that this was the beginning towards attaining self-sufficiency in the production of fresh vegetables in the State, the Minister said new schemes including institution of Organic Gramasabhas in Corporation wards and allotting fallow lands in the city for cultivation of vegetables would be carried out from August. The State Farmer's Day celebrations to be held in Kannur on August 16 will be attended by Agriculture Ministers from the South Indian states, he added. Of the 18 Central government projects, the State had already implemented eight successfully, the Minister said.

Children ought to be encouraged to carry out vegetable farming, he urged.

Health Minister V.S. Sivakumar, presiding over the function, commended on the efforts of the Agriculture Department and the farmers for the increase in vegetable production in the State from 22 per cent to 50 per cent over the last four years.

More than 72 per cent of the production has met the needs of the State. The State is progressing on its own production, he noted.

## **Agricultural fete begins**

The Mannuthi Agricultural Fest, organised by the Malayoram Agriculture Society, with the aim of promoting organic farming began at the Comtrust grounds in Mananchira on Monday. The fest features high-yielding varieties of saplings and seeds. The stalls provide information on organic farming methods. The festival will conclude on July 31.

## Water released from three dams for 'kar' paddy cultivation



Collector M. Karunakaran releasing water from Adavinainar dam in Tirunelveli district on Monday.

*Discharge will be sustained up to October 25*

Collector M. Karunakaran released water from Adavinainar dam at Mekkarai in the district on Monday for 'kar' season paddy cultivation.

Speaking to reporters after releasing 25 cusecs, Dr. Karunakaran said water was being discharged from Adavinainar, Ramanadhi and Karuppanadhi dams from Monday onwards to enable the farmers to go for 'kar' season paddy cultivation.

The discharge would be sustained for 105 days (up to October 25).

The water being released from the Adavinaiar dam would nourish paddy to be cultivated on 2,147 acres.

He said that P.G. Rajendran, Alangulam MLA, released water from Ramanadhi dam for the benefit of paddy to be cultivated on 4,424 acres while PWD Superintending Engineer K.A. Abdul Hameed released water from Karuppanadhi dam for benefitting the crop on 1,082 acres. "Since farming operations will move to top gear in the next few days following the release of water from the dams, fertilizers and other agriculture inputs have been adequately stocked in all primary agriculture cooperative societies and also in the shops of private retailers. Special teams have been deployed to

ensure the sale of agro inputs at the right price. Those who dare to sell these products at inflated price will have to face serious consequences, including cancellation of licence and filing of cases,” Dr. Karunakaran warned.

Tenkasi MP Vasanthi Murugesan, Vasudevanallur MLA S. Duraiyappa, Joint Director of Agriculture C. Chandrasekar and senior PWD officials were present.

### **Soil health cards for Uttarakhand farmers**

Drive for distributing soil health cards among farmers will be intensified in Udham Singh Nagar, Haridwar, Nainital and Dehradun districts so that the process is complete within six months, Chief Minister Harish Rawat said on Monday.

Making the announcement while inaugurating the State’s first Mango Festival here, Mr. Rawat said soil health cards will enable farmers to increase productivity as they will carry crop wise recommendations of nutrients and fertilisers required for farms, making it possible for them to improve productivity by using appropriate inputs.

Though soil health cards have already begun to be distributed among farmers in the State, officials have been instructed to complete the process in these four mango producing districts within six months.

Promising all help from the State government for this Mr. Rawat said streamlining agriculture is necessary for a self-reliant and resurgent Uttarakhand.

## **Federation saves fishermen from moneylenders**



Good repayment has ensured that institutional credit supply at a reasonable interest rate reaches fisherwomen in Karaikal.

The floating of the Nagapattinam District Fishermen Sangam Federation – a body of fishermen and fisherwomen by the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) has helped fishermen escape from the clutches of money-lenders.

The viability of the federation can be gauged from the fact that the NABARD had sanctioned the second loan of Rs. 1 crore to the federation this year, based on their cent per cent and prompt re-payment of an equal loan released last year, said D. Ganesh, District Development Manager, NABARD, Nagapattinam, which has sanctioned the loan.

Talking to *The Hindu* on the sidelines of the “financial literacy awareness” programme organised at Sirkali in Nagapattinam district near here on Friday,

he said the federation comprised 27 groups of fishermen and fisherwomen of Nagapattinam and Karaikal districts with a membership strength ranging between 60 and 80 in each group.

Fishermen were often trapped in debt while meeting expenses such as repairing their boats and purchase of nets or engines. “The money-lenders in Nagapattinam and Karaikal districts were exploiting them. But the constitution of the federation has checked the exploitation to a great extent,” he said.

### **Company planned**

Based on the prompt repayment of loans by fishermen and fisherwomen, the federation has planned to float a fishermen producers company. “The NABARD would also extend adequate support to the company,” he said.

Earlier, G. Rajendraprasad, Joint Registrar of Cooperatives, spoke on the importance of financial inclusion.

R. Sivaramakrishnan, Lead District Manager, S. Lakshminarasimhan and Marimuthu, both bank officials, offered felicitations.

In all, 45 customers submitted papers for various Centrally-sponsored pension and insurance schemes on the occasion. The programme was organised to mark the anniversary of NABARD.

### **HC asks government to examine plea for banning eucalyptus plantations**

*They are a main cause for depletion of groundwater: petitioner*





Ganga Seva Mission, a private trust, filed a petition seeking a direction for removing existing eucalyptus plantations.

The Karnataka High Court on Monday directed the State government to consider a plea for banning eucalyptus plantations across the State, after studying the issue and if necessary, carry out investigations to ascertain that such plantations are a major cause for groundwater depletion in some districts.

A Division Bench comprising acting Chief Justice Subhro Kamal Mukherjee and Justice B.V. Nagarathna passed the order while disposing of a PIL petition filed by Ganga Seva Mission, a private trust, seeking a direction for removing existing eucalyptus plantations and banning such plantations in future.

Pointing out that a circular issued by the government in 2011 allowed eucalyptus plantations in certain types of land, the petitioner claimed that such plantations in Chickballapur and Kolar districts are one of the main causes for cessation of groundwater.

A study conducted by Mukund Joshi, Associate Professor of Agronomy Department, University of Agriculture Sciences-Bengaluru, and K. Palanisami of International Water Management Institute, Hyderabad, showed that eucalyptus plantations in Kolar are a major reason for reduction of water levels in borewells. The eucalyptus tree uptakes 90 litres of water a day, and in stress conditions it extracts water from 20 to 30 ft depth, the petition stated.

Water yield from a borewell reduced by 35 to 42 per cent when an eucalyptus plantation is situated within a one-km radius, and by 25 to 37 per cent when the plantation is situated between 1 and 3 km, the petitioner claimed, citing the study that was conducted in Kolar district.

“Eucalyptus plantations around Nandi Hills are largely, almost solely, responsible for cessation of water flow into Arkavathi and Pinakini rivers,” the petitioner said.

### **Quashed**

The High Court on Monday quashed the criminal proceedings against former Union Minister M. Veerappa Moily in a criminal case registered

against him for allegedly violating poll norms during his campaigning for the Lok Sabha elections in April last year.

Justice A.N. Venugopala Gowda passed the order while finding procedural violation in taking cognisance of the offence by the Judicial Magistrate First Class, Chickballapur, as it was not based on a criminal complaint, but on a police report.

The case was registered against him on April 12, 2014, for allegedly violating certain conditions imposed on him by the returning officer, while granting permission for a procession that was organised as part of his election campaign.

### **Boosting their morale**

The Mysuru Zilla Panchayat has decided to collect mobile numbers of all the farmers in the district to send them voice messages to boost their morale. Messages will also include the weather report, scientific methods of cultivation and other agriculture-related information.

The zilla panchayat will guide farmers on the dos and don'ts of agriculture and allied activities, besides various loan schemes of banks. Chairing a review meeting of the Karnataka Development Programme (KDP) here on Monday, zilla panchayat president Pushpa Amarnath instructed Joint Director of Agriculture M. Mahanteshappa to put together the mobile numbers within a week. She asked the National Informatics Centre officials to suggest a service provider to send bulk messages on daily basis.

Mr. Mahanteshappa said there are over 3,68,000 farmers in the district and the department had collected mobile numbers of over 51,000 so far.

Ms. Amarnath enquired if Mr. Mahanteshappa had visited the houses of farmers who committed suicide in the district. She called upon all departments to join hands in helping farmers and said the zilla panchayat was there for the welfare of the farmers.

She appealed to Lead Bank to direct all banks not to insist on repayment of loans by farmers for another few months. The Superintendent of Police of Mysuru district had informed the zilla panchayat that steps had been to curb private financiers from charging exorbitant interest and demanding repayment of loan.

## In a first, monsoon spares veggies



According to traders, there has been no hindrance in the supply of vegetables so far.

Those concerned about a potential rise in prices of fruits and vegetables owing to the monsoons can heave a sigh of relief. Despite heavy rain, rates of such essential commodities in Delhi are unlikely to hit the roof.

According to traders at various markets across the Capital, there has been no hindrance in the supply of vegetables so far.

“This time, the monsoon has been quite uniformly distributed in States from where Delhi gets its supplies. Transportation is not hit nor is there any major incident of crop failure. The situation is under control and there is no likelihood of vegetable prices going up in the coming weeks,” said Azadpur Agricultural Produce Marketing Committee secretary Satnam Singh. Besides, the government has also kept a buffer stock of onions in Maharashtra, he added.

Another reason for stability in the prices is also that the country this year has produced a huge surplus of potatoes. Since Delhi is categorised only under “consuming” cities, vegetables have to be transported primarily from Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan.

Rain in the city usually results in skyrocketing prices of essential commodities. In March, prices rose by over 50 per cent due to untimely rain. Again, 2014 had witnessed 35 to 60 per cent increase in vegetable and fruit prices. The year 2013 was a nightmare for Delhiites as rates had soared by



almost 100 per cent due to floods in the supplying States. For example, muskmelon and watermelon were available at Rs.10-Rs.20 per kg, whereas potatoes, tomatoes and onions cost anywhere between Rs.40 and Rs.50 per kg.

### **Hyderabad to host meet on permaculture**

Aranya Agriculture Alternatives, an organisation promoting permaculture, is hosting a national permaculture convergence here on February 5 and 6 next year as a run-up to the XIII International Permaculture Convergence (IPC) to be held in the city in November 2017.

Permaculture is a philosophy of working with nature in the development of agricultural ecosystems intended to be sustainable and self-sufficient.

Headed by Narsanna Koppula, Aranya Agriculture Alternatives is one of the foremost permaculture exponents in India. He has more than 25 years experience in the field of permaculture and is on the board of Permaculture Council, the governing body for the global permaculture movement.

The IPC is an international meet of permaculture practitioners from across the globe and around 3,000 participants from over 100 countries are expected to attend the event in 2017. Permaculture practitioners, farmers, farm activists, scientists, policy-makers and others from across India and South Asia are expected to participate in the national-level event being held in next February as a run-up to the international event. Theme of the national event is “Towards Healthy Societies. Presentations, workshops, panel discussions and exhibitions would be held as part of the event to explore various means and practices that would lead to healthy societies.

### **Paddy sowing operations pick up in Udupi district**

Paddy sowing operations have picked up in the district on account of good rain over the last few days, said Anthony Maria Immanuel, Joint Director of Agriculture. He was speaking at the monthly Karnataka Development Programme (KDP) meeting at the Zilla Panchayat hall here.

Mr. Immanuel said that normally the district should have received 1,470 mm of rainfall in June. But it received only 1,080 mm on rainfall. However, there was good rainfall in the district since July 9. Aalur village in Kundapur taluk had received 456 mm rainfall on July 9, which was the highest in the district in the last 100 years.

So far, sowing operations had been completed in 26,350 hectares of land in the district, which was a progress of 58 per cent. The target for paddy cultivation in the district is 45,000 hectares. As much as 1,732 quintals of paddy seeds had been distributed to the farmers and the Department had a stock of 1,073 tonnes of fertilizer.

There was good demand from farmers for farm equipments in the rural areas. The officials had visited all gram panchayats in the district and interacted with the farmers, Mr. Immanuel said.

Gowri Devadiga, chairman of Zilla Panchayat Standing Committee on Education and Health, said that an eight-year-old girl had drowned at Maranakatte near Kollur in Kundapur taluk while crossing a wooden footbridge. Schools should be permitted to declare holidays when there was heavy rain. The authorities should take immediate steps to construct concrete footbridges in remote villages, she said. M. Kanagavalli, CEO of zilla panchayat, urged the zilla panchayat members to submit proposals for the construction of concrete footbridges under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme.

### **‘Identify land’**

She also directed executive officers of Udupi, Kundapur and Karkala taluk panchayats to identify land for the construction of offices for newly formed gram panchayats in the district.

Rohini, District Health and Family Welfare Officer, said that as many as 526 malaria cases and 86 dengue cases were reported in the district in June, but there had been no deaths. A public awareness campaign on malaria and dengue had been conducted in the district, she said.

Arun Shetty Padur, chairman of Zilla Panchayat Standing Committee on Agriculture and Industry, directed officials of the Revenue Department to set right the problems at the Nemmadi Kendra in Kaup.

### **Irrigation committee asked to release water**

The failure of the Irrigation Department to release water into irrigation canals came in for criticism at the Karantaka Development Programme review meeting held here on Monday.

Mysuru Zilla Panchayat president Pushpa Amarnath directed the Agriculture Department to prevail on the Irrigation Department to let water into the canals immediately to help farmers save standing crops.

### **No rain**

Earlier, M. Mahanteshappa, Joint Director of Agriculture, noted that there was no rain from the second week of June till the second week of July, and farmers needed water to save their paddy, cotton, and ragi crops.

An official from the Irrigation Department replied that the Irrigation Consultative Committee (ICC) had not met to discuss the date on which water should be released into the canals. Water was let into the canals on July 15 last year.

However, the official failed to inform the meeting why the meeting was not convened so far.

Expressing shock over the callousness of the Irrigation Department, Ms. Amarnath directed the Joint Director to meet top officials of the ICC and prevail upon them to release water.

Mr. Mahanteshappa said that both the KRS and Kabini reservoirs were filled to the brim and water was to be released from the KRS from July 9.

If water was not provided for standing crops in the district immediately, farmers may even lose the entire crop, he warned. Ms. Pushpa said that the Agriculture and allied departments should co-ordinate with the ICC and pressurise them to release water.

***The Irrigation Consultative Committee has not met to discuss when water should be released into canals***

### **e-PoS to monitor sale of subsidised seeds, fertilizers**

Plans are afoot to introduce e-PoS (Point of Sale) system in distribution of subsidised seeds, fertilizers and pesticides through Primary Agriculture Credit Societies (PACS) in Krishna district. Krishna District Collector Babu A. had recently briefed agriculture officials about the need for introducing e-pos system to ensure timely supply of seeds, fertilizers and pesticides to farmers during the Kharif season.

“The e-PoS system will be initially introduced in 425 PACSs. The system will help the authorities keep an eye on the availability of stocks of seed, fertilizers and pesticides. It is a transparent mechanism,” Mr. Babu said.

“The success of the e-PoS system lies in computerisation of farmers’ details,” he added.

### **GCC to promote Araku coffee**



Coffee plants in the Agency area of Visakhapatnam. —PHOTO: C.V. SUBRAHMANYAM

With a view to promoting coffee cultivation in the Agency areas of the district, the government has entrusted procurement of coffee from the tribal farmers to the State-owned Girijan Cooperative Corporation.

The GCC has been given a rotating fund of Rs. 26 crore for purchase of coffee from the farmers in the Agency areas and this would then be processed and auctioned. The farmers would be given a third of the traded price of coffee as first instalment and it would be directly paid to their bank accounts. After processing it and sale as clean coffee, the farmers would get the balance amount, Vice-Chairman and Managing Director of Girijan Corporation Ravi Prakash told *The Hindu* .

The present quality of coffee production would yield only 50 per cent as clean coffee. Even at that rate the amount realised by the farmers would be much more than what they are getting now.

## **Awareness campaign**

An apex committee under Commissioner Tribal Welfare would evaluate the quality and fix the price for the crop.

The GCC has taken up extensive awareness campaign to ensure all the tribal coffee farmers are registered with it. The farmers have to submit their details of bank account and Aadhaar number as part of the enrolment.

The coffee procured from the farmers would be processed at the Coffee Board centre at Chintapalli and AP Forest Development Corporation Centre at Narsipatnam, the MD explained.

“We expect to sell 1,000 to 1,500 tonnes of clean coffee this year,” Mr Ravi Prakash said. At present coffee is cultivated in nearly 1 lakh acres in the Agency area producing 6,500 tonnes of coffee. The average yield is 100 kilos per acre. There are nearly 1 lakh tribal families in coffee cultivation. The total business is estimated at Rs. 65 crore annually.

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*Ravi Prakash*

*Vice-Chairman and Managing Director of GCC*

## **Chamber to focus on water management**

The Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Coimbatore, will take up with the State Government, District Administration and Coimbatore Corporation the need for more measures for better water management in the State.

This was one of the resolutions passed at the annual meeting of the chamber held here on Monday.



The State has six per cent of the country's population and water that is available to the State is just three per cent. The State Government should constitute a high-level committee, including scientists and environmentalists, to prepare a Plan of Water Usage in the State.

There is an urgent need to strengthen the existing water resources such as reservoirs, tanks and lakes. The concept of reduce, reuse and recycle should be promoted, rain water harvesting structures should be constructed, sewage treatment plants set up and water bodies desilted on a periodical basis.

The State has introduced the slogan "More crop for each drop" for farmers. This should be extended to other segments too.

Regarding water management measures in the district, the Chamber pointed out that about 10 years ago, it was estimated that 600 rain water harvesting structures are needed in the city. Now, nearly 2,000 structures are required as the city has expanded.

So far, only 365 rain water harvesting structures have been constructed. Cost effective sewage treatment plants should be set up near the water bodies in the city to prevent contamination of ground water, action should be taken against processing units located in the Corporation limit if they are found letting out effluents into the river, unlicensed water bottling plants should be monitored, and the State Government should initiate talks to desilt the Siruvani.

The chamber also sought reconstitution of the Coimbatore District Traffic Advisory Committee so that representatives from the trade, industry and service organisations are included in it.

The chamber would also appeal to the Government to establish a trade facilitation council to settle trade disputes.

### **Plea for release of water from dam**

#### **PLEA FOR WATER RELEASE**

Tamil Maanila Congress leader B.S. Gnanadesikan has demanded release of water from Vaigai dam for double crop areas comprising nearly 45,000 acres of farmlands in Madurai and adjoining districts.

In a statement, he said that despite storage in Periyar credit reaching the desired level of 4,000 mcft by June-end, water had not been released on June 1. “The State government should immediately release water as farmers are in dire need of water to save their crop,” he said.

Mr. Gnanadesikan also called for implementation of river linking project to prevent wastage of surplus water from draining into sea. Encroachments must be removed from waterbodies to increase their storage capacity, he said.

### **Suspected yellow leaf disease hits areca nut crop**

*Phytoplasma is disease-causing agent: experts*

Symptoms of what is believed to be yellow leaf disease is being witnessed in the Marayur region, raising fears that it will engulf the entire areca nut cultivation there.

Last year, root-wilt disease with the same symptoms had spread among coconut trees in the area and experts’ opinion on controlling it proved ineffective. Tender coconut on disease-affected trees withered and started decaying. Once a plot was affected with the disease, it fast engulfed the entire area. The farmers were left with no option but to destroy the trees.

It is believed that the same disease has now affected the arecanut trees, with the leaf in the inner whorl yellowing and then spreading to the outer whorl of the crown. The trunk breaks off at the top, and rotting of roots has also been reported. The nut is reduced in size, the kernel turns black, the top decays, and finally the tree is killed.

Experts said phytoplasma was the disease-causing agent, and the disease had already affected hundreds of acres of both coconut and areca nut palms. The affected trees are mainly at Nachivayal, Anachalpetty and Kovilkadavu in Marayur and Chanalmedu, Missionvayal and Cheruvadu in Kanthallur.

An official of the Agriculture Department told *The Hindu* on Monday that a wide area in Marayur had already fallen to the disease. “Earlier we thought that it was a microplasm-like organism and directions were given to the farmers on counter measures. However it was found that the controlling measures were ineffective and the disease fast spread to new areas,” he said.

Farmers said coconut and arecanut palms on hundreds of acres were cut down in the last six months. Uzhavil Jose of Nachivayal said after the outer leaves turned yellow, the top of the tree started decaying within a month. “When the disease affected coconut trees, we applied pest control measures suggested by the Krishi Bhavan. However, it proved ineffective and the disease fast spread to nearby areas,” he said.

Agriculture Department officials said the failure to take continuous disease-control measures was the reason for the spread of the disease.

Block technology manager Manikandan said a team of pathologists from the Kerala Agricultural University would visit the farms on July 20, 21 and 22 and interact with the farmers.

It is also suspected that could be a new disease that has affected the area.

### **Growers cultivating ‘Jaaji mallige’ as alternative crop during monsoon**



‘Jaaji mallige’, a variety of jasmine which has the Geographical Indication tag, kept for sale at a shop in Udupi on Monday.

“Jaaji mallige”, a variety of jasmine flower, has been coming to the flower markets in Udupi district for the last 15-20 days. The district, though, is known for “Shankarpura mallige”, a variety of jasmine flower grown in Shankarpura and its surrounding villages, and enjoys the Geographical Indication (GI) Tag.

But “Jaaji mallige” too is grown in Shankarpura, Palli, Shirva, Manchakal, Belle and other villages in the district and is in the market during the rainy

season — usually from July to October. This is also the period, when the supply of “Shankarpura mallige” is low. According to Andrew Lobo, vice-president of Mallige Belegarara Sangha, who has been growing both these varieties for the last 50 years, while “Shankarpura mallige” required sunny and humid climate, the “Jaaji mallige” grows during the monsoon.

“Jaaji mallige” is an alternative crop for the growers during the monsoon. Most of the farmers grow both these types of jasmine in the Shankarpura belt,” he said.

Both varieties of jasmine flowers are tied with stalk of plantain stems.

While 800 jasmine flowers tied together make a “chendu”, four chendus (that is 2,400 flowers) together make an “atte”. The price of both these flowers depends on demand and supply and is determined by a growers’ collective at Shankarpura village. On July 13, the rate for one “atte” of “Shankarpura mallige” was Rs. 520, while it was Rs. 130 per “atte” of “Jaaji mallige”.

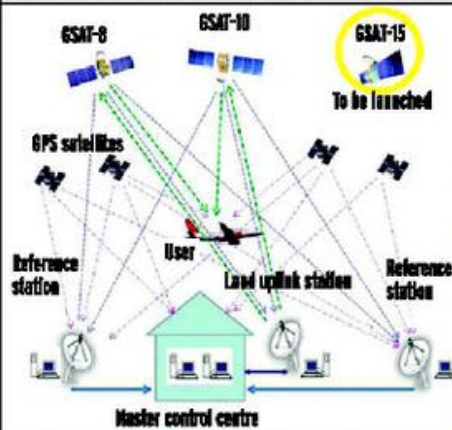
Whereas on July 12, the rate per “atte” of “Shankarpura mallige” was Rs. 250, while that of “Jaaji mallige” was Rs. 110. Bantakal Ramakrishna Sharma, a jasmine grower, said that wearing “Shankarpura mallige” or using it during religious rituals or function was considered a matter of prestige. “But this is not the case with ‘Jaaji mallige’ even during monsoon. The demand is always high for ‘Shankarpura mallige’,” he said.

The “Jaaji mallige” has a red tinge to it unlike the “Shankarpura mallige”, which is all white. “The shelf life of ‘Jaaji mallige’ is lesser than that of ‘Shankarpura mallige’,” said Mr. Sharma.

## Satellite-based navigation system launched

### FOR A SAFE AND SMOOTH FLIGHT

India becomes fourth nation to offer satellite-based navigation services to aviation sector



- GSAT-8 and GSAT-10 satellites will provide navigation signals
- Reference and uplink stations will verify GPS signals

- GAGAN has been developed by ISRO and Airports Authority of India over 15 years at an estimated cost of Rs.774 crore
- The new navigation system will benefit 50 operational airports in India for now

#### ADVANTAGES

- Enhances capacity of the airspace by reducing separation between aircraft
- Augments GPS signals over Indian land mass, Bay of Bengal, Southeast Asia, Middle East and expanding up to Africa
- Streamlines airline operations, increases air safety and fuel efficiency
- GPS receivers will help in precision guidance for landing of aircraft

Union Minister for Civil Aviation Ashok Gajapati Raju with Y.V.N Krishnamurthy scientific adviser to ISRO chairperson at the launch of the GAGAN System for aviation use in New Delhi on Monday.



The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) and the Airports Authority of India (AAI) developed the system, at a cost of Rs. 774 crore, over 15 years. India is the fourth country to offer space-based satellite navigation services to the aviation sector. The system also bridges the gap in the



coverage areas of the European Union's European Geostationary Navigation Overlay Service (EGNOS) and Japan's Multi-functional Satellite Augmentation System (MSAS).

GAGAN will provide augmentation service for the GPS over the country, the Bay of Bengal, South East Asia and Middle East and up to Africa. Some of its benefits are improved efficiency, direct routes, increased fuel savings, approach with vertical guidance at runways, significant cost savings because of the withdrawal of ground aids and reduced workload of flight crew and air traffic controllers, ISRO officials said.

The guided approach landing with the help of GAGAN would immediately benefit nearly 50 airports in India, said R.N. Choubey, Secretary, Ministry of Civil Aviation.

He said the system would be available for the member states of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC).

However, the aircraft now being used by Indian operators are not compatible with GAGAN, Director-General of Civil Aviation M. Sathiyavathy said. "The Ministry is in talks with the industry, and let us see how best the new system can be put to use," she said.

A.S. Ganeshan, project director, GAGAN, ISRO Satellite Centre, said South Korea and Japan were interested in the system.

### **Kovalam fishermen on conservation mission**

*Upload video to raise awareness about deadly fishing nets*



One fishing hamlet is setting an example in turtle conservation. Its exemplary work is however lost on the residents of the fishing villages surrounding it. Not only that, it is being undone.

The fishermen of Kovalam refrain from using certain fishing nets that are known to trap turtles.

However, to their surprise , they recently found a big turtle entrapped in a net (called *thirukkainet*) meant for catching sting rays ( *thirukkai* ) “in their waters.”

The hapless turtle was rescued.

The incident has brought to light the disturbing fact that the fishermen of the surrounding hamlets are using the *thirukkai* and *kuduva* nets, “banned” by the Kovalam fishermen.

Prithiviraj Manivelu, a resident of Kovalam, said these nets were being spread close to the shore thereby creating walls that prevented turtles from nesting on the beaches. Spreading of these nets also kept sting rays and many other marine species from the bay area of the Kovalam beach, he added.

For Mr. Manivelu, the recent incident involving the big turtle is proof that the primary reason for the reduction in the turtle population is the *thirukkai* net, being used by the fishermen in the neighbouring hamlets.

N. Desamuthu, the fisherman who was part of the team that rescued the turtle, said around 120 turtles had died in Kovalam alone due to the use of these nets.

A live video of the turtle being rescued by the young fishermen is available on Youtube (<https://youtube/oYGG1JDtjzk>).

The shooting and uploading of the video are aimed at raising awareness among sea life conservations and the government agencies concerned, about what these nets can do to marine population.

### **Cattle traders threaten to boycott shandies**

Cattle traders have threatened to boycott shandies in the district from July 19 in protest against confiscation of animals by authorities citing flouting of transport norms.

The grouse of the cattle traders is that the authorities have not released the confiscated cattle from the Goshalas despite several representations.

During April, a group of animal rights activists intercepted a few lorries transporting 40 heads of cattle from Anthiyur shandy along Athani Road and lodged a complaint with the Sathyamangalam police stating that transport norms were flouted.

Rules permit transport of six grown cattle or 12 calves in a lorry. An authorisation letter from a veterinarian certifying travel fitness of the cattle is a necessity. During transport, the cattle must be provided with water and feed at periodic intervals.

According to Ramasamy, who represents a forum of cattle traders, they were unable to survive in business due to the activism of animal rights organisations.

### **Training programme in goat farming**

A one-day training programme in prevention of mortality in goat kids and preparation of concentrate feed would be conducted at Krishi Vigyan Kendra on the premises of Veterinary College and Research Institute on July 20.

A press release from Dr. B. Mohan, Programme Coordinator, said that the programme will cover the types of diseases that affect goats, prevention methods and vaccination schedules.

Also, manufacturing of feed for goats would also be dealt during the training programme. Farmers, members of women self help groups, and youngsters can participate in the training. Registration should be done on or before July 19.

### **Contact**

For details, dial 04286-266345, 266244 and 266650. Farmers should bring their Aadhaar cards for registration.

*Farmers, women SHGs and youngsters can participate*

### **Insurance cover for 42 staff of Bhimgad Wildlife Sanctuary**

The Forest Department has insured 42 staff of the Bhimgad Wildlife Sanctuary in Khanapur taluk along the Western Ghats.

Range Forest Officer of Khanapur and in-charge of the sanctuary said it would go a long way in boosting the morale of the staff.

### **Hospitalisation**

Those below the level of Assistant Conservator of Forests are covered under the Nagrik Suraksha Policy (Group) by Oriental Insurance Company. The total premium of Rs. 8,619 per year has been paid from the Protected Area Development Fund.

As per the scheme, all temporary and permanent staff can avail themselves of personal accident coverage worth Rs. 1.6 lakh and hospitalisation expenses up to Rs. 40,000.

The cost of the premium is a minimum of Rs. 180 per person.

Injury or death caused while engaging poachers and battling forest fires are also covered under the policy.

### **Assistance**

Giridhar Kulkarni of the Kanana Wildlife Conservation Organisation assisted the department in implementing the insurance scheme.

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· *Temporary and permanent staff can get personal accident coverage worth Rs. 1.6 lakh*

· *Injury or death caused while engaging poachers and battling forest fires covered*

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*Injury or death caused while engaging poachers and battling forest fires covered*

### **Groundwater level drops**

Groundwater levels in many parts of Kalaburagi city has down sharply and a number of borewells have gone dry, adding to the problems faced by the Karnataka Urban Water Supply and Drainage Board (KUWSDB). Executive Engineer of the KUWSDB Ashok Madyal told *The Hindu* that 20 per cent of the city, which is not covered under the existing drinking water supply

system, is entirely dependent on borewells to meet the drinking water and other requirements. To solve the drinking water issue of Jewargi, it has proposed to draw water from Kollur barrage.

### **KVASU joins hands with UN for sustainable development**

*Varsity to collaborate with UNAI, UNICEF*

The Kerala Veterinary and Animal Sciences University (KVASU) is gearing up to collaborate with the United Nations (UN) in areas of technology for sustainable development and educational awareness programmes.

The varsity will collaborate with the United Nations Academic Impact (UNAI), a programme of the UN for institutions of higher education granting degrees or equivalent certificates across the globe, in the areas of technology for sustainable development and the UNICEF for educational awareness programmes.

The UNAI organised an international conference recently in New York on sustainable development in association with the Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham (Amrita University) and launched an online portal to encourage further discussion and collaboration among university researchers worldwide on technology for global sustainable development.

“We have decided to pursue further UNAI’s Skills and Technology Accelerating Rapid Transformation project in the areas of sustainable development as envisaged in the millennium development goals of the UN,” T.P. Sethumadhavan, Director of Entrepreneurship, KVASU, who participated in the discussions for identifying broad areas of collaboration, told *The Hindu* .

At a separate meeting between the KVASU and the UNICEF, Mr. Sethumadhavan presented a paper on educational initiatives taken up by the KVASU for schoolchildren such as the Jyothis project in Koothuparamba Assembly constituency, Insight and Sumedha in Payyanur and Kaipamangalam constituencies respectively.

UNICEF officials appreciated the programme and suggested that the project be scaled up in appropriate areas, he said.



The KVASU submitted a proposal to the UNICEF for educational awareness programme for tribal schools of Wayanad district as part of Wayanad 2030 programme of the University.

“The meeting with UN officials has opened a new vista for identifying broad areas of collaboration including sustainable development, tribal school development, communication technology, educational awareness and student entrepreneurship,” said B. Ashok, KVASU Vice Chancellor.

### **Kudumbasree to try poultry farming**



Increase in the production of eggs by setting up new farms is promising a better return for women engaged in the sector.

Around 35 Kudumbasree units in the limits of Maruthongare grama panchayat are all set to venture into large-scale poultry farming by forming an exclusive society of entrepreneurs. Bharath Sevak Samaj (BSS) will coordinate the implementation of the scheme.

Each of the 35 unit will get a financial aid of Rs.15,000 to set up the farms. At present, around 350 women are part of these 35 Kudumbasree units in the panchayat. Panchayat authorities hope that a minimum of 10,000 eggs can be brought to the open market once the scheme is on track.

Only the running of farms will be the responsibility of the Kudumbasree groups as the sales part will be directly handled by the BSS. The grama panchayat too will join hands with the initiative under the State government’s “egg village” project.

All the selected women entrepreneurs in the sector will be provided the required technical assistance and free medical support in case of any

diseases for the fowls. Panchayat authorities add that the feed for the farms too will be supplied to them as per daily requirements.

### **Food festival till July 17**

Pista House in association with *The Hindu* is organising a food festival with special focus on the Ramzan delicacy Haleem till July 17 at the Hyderabad Central in Punjagutta.

Pista house has now introduced vacuum tetra packs of Haleem with a shelf life of two months for export. “We are also selling Haleem through the Postal Department and Gati courier in metro cities,” said Mohd. Abdul Majeed, owner.

Food festival timings are from 11 a.m. to 10.30 p.m., according to Arprit Puri of Hyderabad Central.

### **Wholesale inflation in negative zone**



The overall Wholesale Price Index-based inflation was (—)2.36 per cent in May, according to the government data.

Deflationary trends continued for the eighth month in a row in June with the wholesale price inflation slipping to (—)2.4 per cent, largely due to cheaper vegetable and fuel prices.

However, pulses turned dearer.

The overall Wholesale Price Index (WPI)-based inflation was (—)2.36 per cent in May, the government data showed on Tuesday.

It has been in the negative zone since November 2014. A year ago in June 2014, inflation was 5.66 per cent.

The data come a day after the retail inflation for the same month rose to an 8-month high of 5.4 per cent.

In June, rate of price rise for food items, especially wheat, fruits and milk eased at the wholesale-level. Overall wholesale inflation in food category declined to 2.88 per cent compared with 3.80 per cent in May.

However, vegetable prices declined 7.07 per cent, with potato prices slumping 52.40 per cent.

However, pulses got dearer by 33.67 per cent as against 22.84 per cent in the previous month.

Inflation in fuel and power category stood at (—)10.3 per cent in June.

The manufactured products index inflation was (—)0.77 per cent as against (—)0.64 per cent in June. Prices eased for cement, non-metallic mineral products and transport equipment and parts.



### **Nabard plans Rs 30,000 cr irrigation loans to farmers**

This will be converted into five year loans, enabling farmers to take a fresh loan.

Even as the agriculture sector is facing distress and no letup is seen in farmer suicides, the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (Nabard) has offered to refinance the conversion of short-term crop loans of farmers into medium-term loans and spend as much as Rs 30,000 crore in irrigation projects in the next three years.

“We have assured all the banks about liquidity support,” said HR Dave, deputy managing director of Nabard.

“There are standing instructions from the RBI and Nabard that as and when there’s a problem, convert the loan and don’t allow the farmers to have distress... that I have to repay so much of money,” he said.

“The instruction says whatever is due from the farmer is converted into longer term loan. So mentally his pressure is taken off. Then he has to be given a fresh loan. Whenever banks are to be refinanced, we are already there,” Dave told [The Indian Express](#).

“Banks have already started converting loans. Maharashtra is converting almost Rs 3,000 crore of crop loans into medium-term loans. Rajasthan has asked for Rs 2,500 crore. Three or four states have already made demands,” he said.

Crop loans are normally for one year.

This will be converted into five year loans, enabling farmers to take a fresh loan.

“This is because if you default on a crop loan, then technically the borrower is not eligible for another crop loan. The loan conversion will enable the farmers to get a fresh loan,” Dave said.

When asked about the loan conversion figure at the all-India level, he said: “the process starts at the branch level. The first thing is passing of the claim. Second is they (bank) coming to us (Nabard).

Nabard chairman HK Bhanwala said, “we are pumping around Rs 30,000 crore into irrigation projects over three years.

This year we are spending Rs 10,000 crore in such projects.”

It uses two routes to spend this amount. First it has the RIDF (Rural Infrastructure Development Fund) where Nabard will be lending to farmers. “We have another window of giving refinance to banks. If farmers have drip irrigation projects, construction of wells, then we will refinance the banks,” he said. Out of this year’s amount, Rs 3,000 crore will be through refinance.

## **Tea-time snack: How to make crispy Rice Papdi**

It's easy to pick that bhujia packet off the shelf for your evening snack with tea, but it's healthy as well as a delightful experience to relish homemade Rice Papdi with a steaming cup of tea.



It's easy to pick that bhujia packet off the shelf for your evening snack with tea, but it's healthy as well as a delightful experience to relish homemade Rice Papdi with a steaming cup of tea.

### **Ingredients**

Rice flour – 3/4 cup (100 grams)

Salt – 1/4 tsp (as per taste)

Carom seeds – less than 1/4 tsp

Black pepper – less than 1/4 tsp, coarsely ground

Oil – 2 tsp (for kneading dough)

Chaat masala – 1/2 tsp

Oil – for frying papdi

### **Method**

\* Take flour in a big bowl, add salt, carom seeds, black pepper and 1 tsp oil to it. With the help of water, knead soft dough similar to what you prepare for making chapattis



\* Pour some oil over the kneaded dough to grease it. Bind it really well and make a one big dough ball. Now wrap this dough ball in thin polythene sheet or cling film nicely.

\* Microwave the dough ball wrapped in cling film on highest temperature for 1 minute. Dough is now slightly cooked and has turned a bit stiff as well.

\* Unwrap the dough ball and place it over a plate. Knead it immediately until soft. Grease your hands with some oil and knead until soft and smooth.



\* Break small lumps from the dough.

\* Take one dough ball and roll it out in a thin papdi. Papdi can be rolled out very easily. In case, it is sticking, place the dough ball over a polythene sheet and roll it out thinly. Likewise roll all papdi.



\* Place enough oil in a wok and allow it to heat sufficiently. When oil is hot, place 4 to 5 or as many papdis as possible into it and fry on low flame until it turns golden brown in color from both sides.



\* Take out the fried papdis in a plate with absorbent paper. Similarly, fry rest of the papdis as well. Sprinkle some chaat masala over the piping hot papdi. Allow the papdis to cool and then store them in any air tight container and relish eating for up to 2 months.



*A homemaker in Noida, and passionate about cooking, Nisha Madhulika at 54 started <http://www.nishamadhulika.com> in 2007. She started her YouTube channel in mid 2011. She is known for making recipes with easily available ingredients. She has posted more than 1100 videos on her channel so far. She is one of the most popular chefs online and was recently featured in YouTube Top Chefs coffee table book.*



# THE TIMES OF INDIA

## Agro traders to get marketing licences

As the regulated trading of agricultural products in the district has started gaining pace, the Agricultural Marketing Committee in the district has started issuing spot licences to all traders dealing with notified products of the committee.

As many as 20 agricultural produces- paddy, cotton, groundnut, silk cotton, chilly, sugarcane, jaggery, potato, tamarind, onion, coconut, gingely, sorghum, pearl millet, toor dal, banana, mango, tomato and grapes- have been notified by the marketing committee.

It is mandatory for traders dealing with these items to obtain Market Committee Licence under Tamil Nadu Agriculture Produce Marketing (Regulation) Act, 1987. To obtain the licence, a trader has to pay a fee of Rs 25 for the cap below Rs 2 lakh, Rs 75 for a trade size of Rs 2 lakh to 5 lakh and Rs 300 for above Rs 5 lakh of trading.

The licences are issued either for an annum or for three years.

Official sources said secretary to state government and agriculture production commissioner Rajesh Lakhoni has stressed that all the traders dealing with the notified agricultural products should have proper licences from the marketing committee so that both traders and the farming community could benefit from the transaction.

To facilitate the traders, the marketing committee has been doing door-to-door licensing in the last few months.

"We have issued 118 licences in the past months. We are continuing the drive with our staff visiting the establishments. We appeal to traders to contact the committee at 0452-2533940 to get information on licensing," said Marketing Committee Secretary, J Thavasumuthu.

## Where farmers become wealthy and people become healthy

In a two pronged effort to make farmers wealthy and keep Nagpurians healthy, a local organization, Nisarg Organic, has set up a shop that sells produces brought directly from organic farms around the city. Started in March by Hemant Singh Chauhan, a supervisor in agriculture department, the unit functions from Lendra Park in Ramdaspath.

The actual sentiment behind the effort is to give the farmer his due and also to bring pesticide and chemical free vegetables and cereals to the consumers, he says. "There are 400 farmers in this initiative, all doing organic farming. But for starting this project we selected around 10 who are closest to Nagpur and collected Rs10,000 each from them." The outlet in the park has come for a rental of Rs25,000 per month. "Initially we created a corpus of Rs1 lakh, half of which went into hiring this place. Another Rs20,000 were spent on furnishings," he says.

The shop sells vegetables, fruits, grains, groundnut oil, herbal medicines like aloe vera, geloe and mahua, barley and hibiscus juice and gels prepared by farmers. "Subhash Palekar of Amravati who is master of organic farming has taught me a methodology. Now we are making the farmers grow at least 15 varieties of vegetables in one acre farm. This will ensure a constant harvesting of one produce after the other and also preserve the eco balance and protect the soil," says Chauhan. The vegetables will start arriving in full flow from August end this year.

The focus is not much on grains as they are purchased in bulk at the time of harvest. "But we are in a position to provide it if orders are placed," he says.

In a module which is still being honed, the organization proposes to collect vegetables and fruits directly from farms. They will then be graded, weighed and packed. "We plan to enrol customers as members and give them updates about availability of items. They can place the orders either online or through text messages on phone. The items will be delivered to their homes," he informs. The members will also get an opportunity to visit these farms.

The prices will be at least 10 to 20% higher than the market rates but this is the cost of convenience and health he says. "This extra cost is for fresh,

organic food which is hand-picked from the farms and door delivered to the customer within 24 hours."

As of now some 50 to 75 kgs of vegetables are arriving at the outlet daily and being sold. "So far word of mouth publicity has worked and customers like the taste of the organically grown items," says Virendra Barbate one of the farmers supplying to the outlet.

"As I am all for organic farming so I promote this place. I buy rice regularly from here and its good and so are the veggies," says Shalini Arora, a homemaker.

### Heavy rain ruins green gram crop due to excessive May rain

Farmers, who sowed green gram in Nadupalayam village, have nothing to celebrate after they registered a massive crop failure this year.

According to the agriculture department officials, who visited these farms, the excessive rainfall in May and June led to the dire situation.

A gloom settled over farmers of Nadupalayam, which is 25km from Pappampatti Pirivu, after their crops failed to sprout pods. These pods contain the mung beans which when harvested is dried, roasted and sold as green gram in the market.

N Bhoopathy, 50, who owns a four-acre farm in Nadupalayam, had sown green gram in the first week of May. Despite majority of the crops growing to its full potential, no pods were sprouted in most of them.

"It is important for the crops sprout pods. Otherwise, we cannot harvest the mung beans," said the farmer, who has been cultivating green gram for over three decades in his land. Bhoopathy, who in fact bought the seeds from the agriculture department in the Sular Panchayat Union office, said "I did not do anything different this season, but the harvest has failed on a massive scale."

Another farmer in the area, N Ramasamy who cultivated green gram in his 1.25-acre farm said, "No pods sprouted in my farm either," he said. Both farmers have lost upto 5,000 per acre -- the investment made for the seeds,



fertilizers, pesticides and labour. "We hope it sells for cattle fodder atleast," he added.

According to them, farmers in Appanaickenpattipudhur in the district saw only 50% of sprouting in their farmlands. However, those who sowed Black-eyed peas and Urud Dal did not record any major loss.

The assistant director of agriculture department in Sular panchayat office, Jayashree, who inspected these farms, said, "We found that many farms, including Bhoopathy's, saw only a 30% crop yield and so we asked two TNAU scientists to discover what brought about the failure this year."

According to these scientists, the heavy unseasonal rain in May led to water stagnation in many of these farms, she said. "Extra manure was piled up in the land and had gotten mixed with the rain water and the lack of sunlight facilitated vegetation to grow between the sown seeds that used up most of the nutrients. And this led to the crop failure," she said.

Many other parts of the district have registered a good green gram yield, she added.

### [New wells, pumps for drought zone](#)

The state government on Monday decided to sink 13,000 borewells within a month and provide 40,000 pump sets to farmers to help them tide over drought-like situation even as the Hirakud Dam discharged season's first floodwater.

Kendrapada, Jagatsinghpur, Khurda and Puri districts have recorded scanty rainfall so far.

After chief secretary Gokul Chandra Pati reviewed farming situation this monsoon, agriculture secretary Rajesh Verma said the water resources and energy departments have been asked to expedite the work.

The agriculture department will review rainfall every week. Seeds of short-duration paddy varieties will be supplied to farmers, another government officer said.

The water level in Hirakud Dam stood at 615.75 feet before opening of the seven sluice gates on Monday. Chief engineer Biswajeet Mohanty said heavy rain in the upper catchments of the Mahanadi and its tributary, the Ib river, prompted them to take the decision.

Superintendent engineer of the dam R K Panda said, "While the inflow of water to the dam reservoir is 1.8 lakh cusec, 1.05 lakh cusec water is being released to the downstream and another 15,000 to the power house and canals."

The dam will maintain the water level at 610 feet throughout July, he added.

The government ruled out any fear of flash flood. "There is absolutely no danger to people in catchments of Mahanadi system. This water will pass smoothly," said deputy relief commissioner Pravat Ranjan Mohapatra.

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has forecast moderate rain this week. "The monsoon rain will continue in some pockets. But there is no chance of heavy rainfall at least till Saturday," said director of India Meteorological Department, Bhubaneswar, Sarat Sahu.

### [A coconut farm in Bastar? Unheard of but true](#)

Taking benefit of favorable agro-climatic conditions of tribal Bastar region, nearly 1,000 farmers have taken up coconut farming by adopting saplings from Kondagoan based Coconut Development Board established on a 100-acre Demonstration-Cum-Seed Production (DSP) farm. DSP produces quality planting material for farmers of Chhattisgarh.

"We have 4,996 coconut plants of four varieties," farm's assistant director Ravindra Singh Sengar told TOI. He said the production of quality planting material determines the ultimate returns. The seedling vigor is highly correlated with adult palm characters such as early flowering, nut yield and khopra production, important for successful coconut cultivation. In the absence of a viable technology for vegetative method of propagation, coconut is propagated through seeds.

In Bastar region, Sengar said, the production of coconut needs more care and management practice during establishment of orchard or even for homestead garden.

The seed nut harvested from available mother palm in DSP farm was insufficient to meet the local demand hence the procurement of seed nut from outside source like Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Orissa from selected mother palm.

In non-traditional belt, many factors are responsible for producing quality planting material such as selection of seed nut, storing period, time of sowing, sowing method, irrigation system, site selection, weeding etc. Hence in Chhattisgarh, extreme temperature in summer and winter poses challenge for quality production.

Germination of seed nuts generally start after three months of sowing.

## THE HINDU BusinessLine

### **India asks Russia to buy products from small dairies**

Seeks relaxation in clause that says dairies with captive farms alone can export



The Indian dairy industry will have to wait for some more time before it starts exporting cheese and other milk products to Russia.

The two countries are yet to sort out differences over a stringent export condition put in place by Moscow that disallows dairy plants with less than a thousand cattle from exporting.

## **Hope for India**

Russia's decision to extend the ban on Western food imports for another year has, however, given India reasons to hope for an early settlement.

“Earlier this year, we had proposed a compromise to enable exports to start early, but Russia did not respond. Now with the extension of Russia's ban on the EU, we expect action. Our embassy in Russia is holding meetings with relevant departments to get the agreement on dairy expedited,” a Government official told *BusinessLine* .

Russia imports more than \$40 billion of food items from Western countries, and New Delhi has been making efforts to grab a part of the business.

## **Captive farm condition**

India had rejected Russia's draft agreement on dairy imports on the ground that the condition that only dairy plants with more than 1,000 cattle be eligible for exports would exclude most of the competent dairy farms from exporting.

Russia's logic is that if a dairy has a captive farm, it can get a certificate from an authorised veterinarian stating that the cattle have been vaccinated, and there was no risk of foot-and-mouth disease (FMD).

“Our dairy industry is very different from the West where dairy plants own cattle ranches. Most of our competent dairy producers, including Amul, will be excluded if this condition is accepted. Only a couple of Indian companies will qualify,” the official said.

## **Dairy clusters**

India suggested that instead of insisting on a captive farm, clusters of villages from where dairy plants source their milk could be identified.

Veterinarians could then be assigned for those specific clusters who could give a similar certification related to vaccination and FMD outbreak.

In order to get exports started, the Centre had proposed that Russia could start importing from large plants with captive farms, such as Parag and

Schreiber Dynamix Dairies, to begin with but six months later it has to re-negotiate the terms so that other dairy plants could also export.

Because of Russia's refusal so far to respond to the suggestion, the agreement has been held up and even companies which qualify under the present terms are not able to export.

**Cotton sowing 95% higher but overall acreage may be the same as last year, say experts**



Sowing of cotton may be up 95 per cent, according to Agriculture Ministry data, but experts are not bullish about much higher acreage overall than last year.

Data showed that acreage of cotton, among the main Kharif crops, stood at 8.78 million hectares (mh) last week, against 4.51 mh at the same time in 2014-15. Compared with the week before, acreage was up 46 per cent as of July 10.

### **Almost flat acreage**

“Let's not get excited. If you compare it to the same juncture in 2013-14, it's lower by about a percentage point. Overall, sowing may be the same or a little lower than last year,” said Dhiren Sheth, President, Cotton Association of India.

Sheth was alluding to the late monsoon onset last year which had delayed sowing across key States such as Maharashtra, Gujarat, Telangana and



Andhra Pradesh, where sowing traditionally takes place in late June and early July.

Most States, except some Northern ones and Tamil Nadu and Karnataka, have reported higher cotton acreage. In Maharashtra, the country's largest cotton producer, almost 3 mh have been covered, from 835,000 hectares last year.

Cotton has also been sown over 2.1 mh in Gujarat, the second-largest producer, from 966,000 ha at the same time in 2014-15.

### **Low rainfall**

Steady rain through June and fears of a dry spell after the first week of July appears to have prompted more planting since the crop can thrive even with less moisture.

“Farmers are planting more cotton due to chances of low rainfall even if returns are low. In Telangana, for example, there's been no constant rain for the last 15 days and sowing is up 5 to 10 per cent,” said B Ravinder Reddy, President, Telangana Cotton Millers & Traders Welfare Association.

### **Bearish prices**

Prices shot up marginally in the beginning of July on a spurt in export demand but have since stabilised. The benchmark Shankar-6 variety was selling between Rs. 33,000 and Rs. 34,500/candy (355.6 kg) as on Monday and is likely to remain at this level through 2015-16 as well.

“Cotton prices were low last year and will continue to be around Rs. 34,000-34,500/candy, which is higher than global price of Rs. 31,000-31,500/candy. Acreage may rise marginally,” said DK Nair, Secretary General, Confederation of Indian Textile Industry.

Prices are likely to be pressured, with China unlikely to import Indian cotton in the near future and surplus domestic stock.

### **Mahyco to introduce hybrid cottonseed to African farmers**

Having acquired a controlling stake in Zimbabwe-based Quton Seed Company, India's agri biotech major, Maharashtra Hybrid Seeds Company

Limited (Mahyco) is now looking to introduce hybrid seed varieties of cotton in the African market.

The company will emerge as a major cotton-seed supplier to the region.

### **Foray into Africa**

In November last year, Mahyco had announced acquisition of 60 per cent stake in Quton from Africa's largest seed supplier, Seed Co Ltd for an undisclosed amount.

"The governments in African nations are proactive about farm bio-technology. We will introduce hybrid variety of cotton there. The development and testing has been under way and by the start of next season in November we will start marketing," said Usha Barwale Zehr, Chief Technology Officer, Mahyco, here at the R&D facility in Dawalwadi near Jalna.

### **Hybrid first**

"In spite of being a major cotton growing region, Africa doesn't have a hybrid variety. So in the first phase, we will introduce hybrid varieties. And after its success we will introduce Bt seeds. But that will require additional regulatory clearances, hence it will take about 2-3 years," she added. Having its base in Zimbabwe, the company will cater to other African markets including Malawi, Tanzania, Kenya, Zambia among others.

"The African region has significant potential on the agri bio-tech front to increase farm productivity by using modern seed technology. This will benefit the local farming community," she said.

### **No R&D units**

Zehr ruled out a possibility of future investments in setting up R&D facilities for African markets. In Zimbabwe, Mahyco will use the R&D and seed making facilities already established at Quton.

Also, the company will focus on research, development, production, and distribution of cotton seed in these African nations.

The foray into African market is likely to strengthen Mahyco's positioning in the cotton market. Set up in 1964, Mahyco was the first seed company in the world to successfully commercialised F1 hybrid cotton.

It is currently conducting research, production, processing and marketing of approximately 150 products in 30 crops, which includes cotton, grains, oilseeds and vegetables.

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***The development and testing of hybrid varieties has been under way and by the start of next season in November Mahyco will start marketing.***

### **Rains hit arrivals at Kochi tea auctions**

Heavy rains in the last few days have affected tea arrivals to Kochi auctions this week, resulting in a declining price trend for several varieties.

In CTC dust market, a few select best sold around last level, while others were irregular and lower by Rs. 2-3 a kg and sometimes more as the sale progressed. In sale no 28, the quantity on offer in CTC was 13.08 lakh kg, which was lower compared to last week.

According to auctioneers Forbes, Ewart & Figgis, there was a subdued demand from exporters, while a fair support extended by both upcountry buyers and Kerala Loose Tea traders.

In orthodox grades, the quantity on offer was 19,500 kg and a small quantity sold was absorbed by exporters.

In Cochin CTC dust quotation, good varieties quoted Rs. 90-126, mediums fetched Rs. 65-95 and plain grades stood at Rs. 55-65.

In orthodox leaf category, the market for better Nilgiri broken and whole leaf was steady to firm and sometimes dearer. The quantity on offer was 175,000 kg, which was lower compared to last week. CIS and other exporters were active and there was a better demand from Tunisian account.

In CTC leaf, Good Liquoring teas were steady to firm. The quantity on offer was 72,000 kg with upcountry buyers remaining the main stay of the market.

## **27% teas unsold at Coonoor sale despite dip in prices**

Nearly 27 per cent, worth Rs. 3.33 crore, of the 17.60 lakh kg on offer at Sale No: 28 of Coonoor Tea Trade Association auctions remained unsold despite marginal fall in average prices to Rs.69.11 a kg from previous week's Rs. 69.29.

Homedale Estate tea, auctioned by Global Tea Brokers, was the only CTC grade to enter Rs. 200-a-kg bracket. Its Red Dust grade topped the CTC market when TRP Tea and Commodities bought it for Rs. 203 a kg. Its Pekoe Dust grade fetched Rs. 202. Darmona Estate got Rs. 198 and Deepika Supreme Rs. 190. In all, 61 marks got Rs. 125 and more.

Kodanad topped orthodox market from corporate sector fetching Rs. 246, followed by Kairbetta Rs. 244, Chamraj and Havukal Rs. 226 each. In all, 35 marks got Rs. 125 and more.

Quotations held by brokers indicated bids ranging Rs. 40-44 a kg for plain leaf grades and Rs. 100-140 for brighter liquoring sorts. They ranged Rs. 47-55 for plain dusts and Rs. 110-180 for brighter liquoring dusts.

There was some purchase for Pakistan in wide range Rs. 44-120 a kg.

## **Slack buying, higher arrivals rob aroma off cardamom**

Cardamom prices declined in last week auctions due to slack demand amid good arrivals.

The supply was more than double from that of same period last year, market sources pointed out. The increase in number of auctions, of late, is also pointed out as the reason for the rise in arrivals, they said.

The individual auction average last week was vacillating between Rs. 630 and Rs. 660 a kg whereas it was in the range of Rs. 725 and Rs. 810 a kg in the same period last year.

The demand from north Indian markets has been poor probably because of unfavourable consuming season. At the same time, nobody would prefer to buy from a declining market, PC Punnoose, General Manager, CPMC, told *BusinessLine*.

According to the growers in Kerala's Idukki district the erratic weather conditions so far this year might affect the crop. Therefore, the actual crop position would be known only after the North-East monsoon, they said.

Contrary to the earlier projections the output, the trade claimed, might be good though it is unlikely to be a bumper one. At the Cardamom Planters' Association auction, total arrivals stood at 29.5 tonnes against 18.1 tonnes last Monday. Of this 27.9 tonnes were traded. The maximum price was at Rs. 817 a kg and the auction average dropped to Rs. 629.73 from Rs. 631.30 a kg last Monday.

The individual auction average declined marginally and was vacillating between Rs. 630 and Rs. 660.

Total arrivals during the season up to July 11 stood at 21,877 (21,504) tonnes. The sales were at 21,280 tonnes and 20,777 tonnes respectively.

The auction average as on July 11 was at around Rs. 645/kg ( Rs. 775).

Prices of graded varieties ( Rs. /kg): 8mm bold good colour 950-990; 7-8 mm 770-780; 6-7 mm 630-650; below 6 mm: 580-600. Moderate bulk was being traded at Rs. 600-620 a kg.

### **Weather Vane: Surplus evaporates in crucial July**





Progress of kharif sowing			
as of July 10		In lakh hectares	
Crops	Area sown in		% change
	2015-16	2014-15	
Rice	89.59	94.73	-5.4
Pulses	32.61	22.71	43.6
Coarse cereals	81.80	38.36	113.2
Oil seeds	101.26	22.24	355.3
Sugarcane	44.29	43.92	0.8
Jute & Mesta	7.74	8.05	-3.9
Cotton	87.83	45.10	94.7



Nearly one-third of the season's rain falls in this month

The rainfall surplus at the end of June has evaporated and the monsoon has dipped into the red with a big deficit of 51 per cent during the first week of July. This is in line with an India Met Department assessment that the crucial second month of the monsoon may fall short by 8 per cent. But the extent by which it has gone off the normal is unnerving. A full-scale revival of rains is ruled out at least until the last week of the month.

July and August are the most productive months of the monsoon. Nearly one-third of the rain for the season falls during July. The country receives almost 20 per cent more rains in July than August; about 40 per cent more than June; and 70 per cent more than September.

### Crucial months

At least 21 out of 30 Met subdivisions surveyed (of 36 overall) receive the highest monthly rainfall in July. This ranges between a high of 40 per cent of seasonal rainfall in Saurashtra and 21 per cent in Tamil Nadu. July and August combine to contribute two-thirds of the seasonal rainfall in about 14 sub-divisions. Madhya Pradesh gets more than 70 per cent during this period.

The National Agromet Advisory Service Bulletin based on Extended Range Weather Forecast (valid for July 10 to 23) and issued by the India Met Department in association with the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology,

Pune, and the Indian Council of Agriculture Research facility at Hyderabad, gives the following update:

During the last fortnight, good rainfall occurred mainly over Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand and West Bengal. The next fortnight will see rainfall confined to eastern and northern belt and the Gangetic Plains while it will be subdued in central India and the northwest. Increase of rainfall is likely over North-eastern States and parts of south peninsula. However, the western parts of central India, Rajasthan and western coastal states of India will remain mainly dry.

### **Forecast**

The US Climate Prediction Centre too shares this outlook. And therein lies the rub. Rainfall has been mostly scanty over large parts of peninsular India, central India and adjoining west India. It is now left to the next visit of Madden-Julian Oscillation (MJO) wave that circumnavigates the globe to trigger a revival of the monsoon.

The wave is just about exiting the Pacific where its amplitude was at a historic high (the most since 1981) which was evidenced in the way it has set up typhoons (cyclones) one after the other in the Pacific.

It was during its earlier visit over the Indian Ocean in June that it helped the monsoon here drive to a peak. It is now expected to show up during the last week of July, if at all.

Given this, the forecast for the next two weeks is as follows:

Normal or above normal rainfall would occur over Jammu & Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Punjab, Haryana and Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, East Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, West Bengal, Odisha, Assam, Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura and Kerala. Normal or above normal rainfall would occur in either of the next two weeks in Telangana, Rayalaseema, West Rajasthan and Tamil Nadu.

Below normal rainfall is forecast over the remaining parts of the country that covers most of the affected area in south, central and west India.

**Progress in sowing**

The total kharif-sown area as on July 10, 2015, as per reports received from states stands at 445.11 lakh hectare (ha) as compared to 275.10 lakh ha on the same day last year.

Significant increase has been recorded in oilseeds sowing this season; it has reached 101.26 lakh ha while last year on the day it was 22.24 lakh ha, an increase of 355 per cent. Similarly, pulses has touched 32.61 lakh ha this season, and cotton 87.83 lakh ha, almost double than the last year.